

Viticoltori Alto Adige (integral text sent by Viticoltori A. A.)

The South Tyrolean Winegrowers' Association is an umbrella organisation engaged in the marketing of wines from six growers' cooperatives. It can be proud of its achievements, remaining true to its principles and its unwavering strive in the quest to achieve the highest standards of quality in South Tyrolean wines.

Our basic principles include direct marketing: guaranteed quality from the producer directly to the consumer.

The Association of South Tyrolean Winegrowers has made great strides in this respect and works according to the following concepts:

- Wine production is the complete responsibility of the individual winery until the wine is ready for bottling. In this way the individuality and origins of the wine from specific sites is guaranteed. The wines are in no way the kind of mass-produced products which they could easily become, but remain individual specialties produced by the growers' cooperative in each growing area.
- The Growers' Association's winemaker selects wines from the vast range available which correspond to the high expectations of our customers. For technical reasons and with a few exceptions, the wines are bottled in our facilities in the cooperative winery of St. Michael, Eppan, which also accommodates our central warehouse and offices.

In South Tyrol cover crops (grass cover) are left on the rows between the vines in 98% of the vineyards. This protects the soil from erosion, increases the humus content and is an ideal habitat for "useful" insects. With targeted fertilizing, mainly organic, deficiencies or imbalances in the soil are evened out and nutrients are provided to the vines.

Integrated insect and disease control (*lotta integrata*) is followed. The Alto Adige Region supports the vine growers with consultants and technical staff for the monitoring of insects and of diseases.

In this region there is great attention not to use harmful products (or low doses of products that are not harmful) as the vineyards are mostly near villages and towns.

With pesticide treatments, the "threshold of damage" principle is observed: only with proven need may targeted measures be applied. Organic pesticides (insect and disease control products) are

preferred over chemicals to the greatest extent possible. Spraying takes place much less frequently, but in a more targeted and efficient manner.

I. APPENDIX

We would like to very briefly introduce some agricultural practices that are utilised by the producers of our portfolio and that can be defined as low environmental impact/sustainable/natural practices. We would also like to add that in Italy only the agricultural aspect can be certified as organic or biodynamic, there is still no certification for organic or biodynamic wine. In order to have a certification for biodynamic viticulture it is necessary to first have a certification for organic viticulture.

I.1. Integrated insect and disease control ("Lotta integrata" in Italian)

Integrated insect and disease control is a control practice where the use of substances such as insecticides or fungicides is drastically reduced. It is based on three stages: prevention, observation and intervention. Besides spraying the vines,

other means of control are also utilised which can be agronomical (maintaining healthy vines and vines that are “balanced” so that the incidence of diseases is much lower, managing the canopy so to prevent humidity building up and so on) or for example the coupling of insects is prevented (“male confusion” where strips emanating insect sex attractants - pheromones – mask the female insect’s own attractant so that the sexes fail to get together), or insect predators are introduced or bacteria that kill certain types of insects (as products made with *Bacillus Thuringiensis*) are used etc.

In practice control treatments are carried out only when strictly necessary and this is established by monitoring of various kind such as agro-metereological stations (according to weather conditions alarms for diseases are given), pheromone traps (when the captured insects reach a certain number, control measures are necessary) etc. One of principles of this method is, as far as insect pest control is concerned, to control only the harmful insects (without necessarily eradicating them) and to protect the “useful” ones.

In the EU, and consequently in Italy, there are various regulations that foresee integrated insect and disease control and subsidies are given to those growers that apply such practices. Controls are very strict and are carried out by professionals hired by the various Italian regional entities.

I.2. Use of cover crops (*inerbimento* in Italian) in viticulture

Cover crops are planted between the rows of vines or the spontaneous crops (grass cover) are left. This can be done between all the rows, or between every two or only in certain plots. This naturally depends on the soil conditions and also on the type of grape varietal (more or less vigorous).

Why is this practice carried out?

First of all there is competition for nutrients and water between the cover crops and the vines, therefore the production of the vines is lower (i.e. higher quality of the clusters). In fact this practice cannot be carried out when the vines are young nor, for example, when the area is very hot in the summer to prevent hydric stress of the vines.

Due to this agronomical practice, the roots of the vines are compelled to go deeper in order to find water (in this way the vines are less subject to hydric stress).

The roots of the cover crop “explore” the soil, permitting better aeration, drainage and life of micro-organisms.

Nutrient complexes are formed which are more easily absorbed by the root system of the vines.

This is a very efficient mean to control erosion (water drains into the soil without flowing on the surface).

The cover crop is usually mowed (a few times) and the plant substance forms compost which is left on the ground (the turf is left in place) or the crop can be mowed (a few times) and the soil can be tilled so to work the plant substance (compost – green manure) into the soil.

Other advantages of this practice is that no herbicides are utilised and it is possible to enter the vineyard with machinery during wet weather (while it would be impossible on tilled ground).