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# From guidelines to obligations: sustainable practices in the production of PDO and PGI Products



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# Art. 7 “Sustainability”

## The so-called “sustainable practices”

- sustainability standards higher than those laid down by Union or national law in terms of environmental, social or economic sustainability or animal welfare.
- sustainable practices with objectives such as: “(a) climate change mitigation and adaptation, [...] the transition to a circular economy, including the reduction of food waste, pollution prevention and control, and the protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems; (b) the production of agricultural products in ways that reduce the use of pesticides and manage risks resulting from such use, or that reduce the danger of antimicrobial resistance in agricultural production; (c) animal welfare; (d) a fair income for producers [...] (e) preservation of agricultural employment by attracting and sustaining young producers and new producers of products benefiting from a geographical indication; (f) improving working and safety conditions in agricultural and processing activities.

If the group decides that the sustainable practices referred to in paragraph 1 are mandatory for all producers of the product concerned, those practices shall be included in the product specification in accordance with the registration or amendment procedure.





These new provisions rise two interconnected issues:

- ➔ How are sustainable practices integrated into the product specification of a PDO or PGI and how effectively?
- ➔ How to communicate sustainability to consumers?

# A few examples of integration, in form of...

## Guidelines

### Vademecum viticolo for Prosecco DOC

- integrated pest management according to Disciplinari di produzione integrata of Veneto and Friuli Venezia Giulia;
- limited use of active substances 'candidates for substitution' according to Annex E of Regulation (EU) No 540/2011 or characterised by high acute toxicity or suspected for chronic effects such as Carcinogenic, Mutagenic and toxic effects for Reproduction, - or containing active substances classified as hazardous to the aquatic environment (Water Directive 2000/60/EC);
- pathway to the Equalitas standard;
- some critical issues...



## Obligations

### Dispositions agro-environnementales-type (DAE) in France

The organisme de défense et gestion applies to the INAO to include one or more DAE in the PDOs and PGIs product specifications.

- examples on PDO and PGI wines: obligation to plant grass on headlands, ban on full-scale chemical weeding of vineyards, respect for the original morphological sequence of soils, ban on the use of insecticides, etc.

And also by including a requirement to obtain sustainability certification within the specification, as done in France

Haute Valeur Environnementale (HVE)

- 2nd level of the Certification environnementale des exploitations agricoles (art. art. L.611-6 CRPM);
- four themes: biodiversity protection, phytosanitary strategy, fertilization management, water resource management;
- achieved individually by farms or through collective initiatives.



Lussac Saint-Emilion PDO,  
2024



## About communicating sustainability:

The regulation recognises the important role of producer groups in communicating sustainable practices

According to Article 32 producer groups can “**take** action to improve the performance of the geographical indication, in terms of environmental, social and economic **sustainability**”: collective marketing and advertising campaigns; dissemination of information and promotion activities aiming at communicating the attributes of the product; advice, training and dissemination of best practice guidelines to current and future producers, including on sustainable practices [

According to Art. 8, a producer group may prepare and regularly update a sustainability report providing a description of existing sustainable practices implemented in the production of the product, a description of how the method of obtaining the product impacts on sustainability, in terms of environmental, social, economic or animal welfare commitments, and information necessary to understand how sustainability affects the development, performance and position of the product. The Commission makes the sustainability report public.



# Two examples of certification in Italy



- private certification;
- certification for companies (corporate level), products (supply chain level) or consortia (Denominazione per la sostenibilità);
- good agricultural, processing, social, economic and communication practices;
- first recognition of the standard for a consortium: Consorzio del Vino Nobile di Montepulciano DOCG;
- but...compliance with the standard is not included in the product specification, so it is not mandatory for all producers.



- production in accordance with integrated pest management rules established by Regions;
- possibility of using the trademark, which is owned by the Ministry of Agriculture;
- free certification system;
- but... only usable for certain products; only environmental sustainability



# Final remarks

- Sustainability rules are not mandatory; producers can choose to include them.
- Private and public certifications exist but have high costs and limitations.
- Social and economic sustainability aspects are often overlooked (see JRC study, 2024).
- Lack of an EU-wide sustainability certification leads to reliance on national laws.
- EU guidelines could clarify stricter sustainability rules and classify best practices (see Art. 210a, Reg. 1308/2013).
- A harmonized EU sustainability certification could ensure uniform recognition and accessibility, especially for small producers.





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# Grazie!



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