



31.1.2019

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Subject: Petition No 0750/2018 by Katherine Dolan (Irish), on behalf of ‘Arche Noah’, on the discrimination existing in the European Union against direct producers of varieties of wine-making grapes with less use of pesticides

1. Summary of petition

The petitioner complains of the discriminatory treatment given to the cultivation of certain varieties of grapes for traditional wine-making (Noah, Othello, Isabelle, Jacquez, Clinton and Herbemont) reflected in Article 81(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 establishing a common organisation of the markets in agricultural products. The petitioner considers that this prohibition is anachronistic and that there are no scientific reasons sustaining it. The petitioner also indicates that the prohibited varieties are more respectful of the environment than those permitted by the Regulation, as they are able to be cultivated with the minimal use of pesticides. The petitioner requests the amendment of Article 81(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 to permit wine producers and farmers to take their own decisions on the varieties of wine-making grapes that they want to cultivate. She indicates that the classification of the varieties of wine-making grapes should be in the form of a recommendation rather than the current list that the petitioner considers disproportionate, restrictive and authoritarian. According to the petitioner, this change would be an important step forward in the promotion and protection of local traditions and cultural heritage that use these varieties.

2. Admissibility

Declared admissible on 26 November 2018. Information requested from Commission under Rule 216(6).

3. Commission reply, received on 31 January 2019

Prohibited wine grape varieties:

The Commission fully shares the views of the petitioner on this issue. This is why it removed this prohibition in its proposal for a reform of the Common Agricultural Policy adopted on 1 June 2018¹. This proposal is currently under discussion in the European Parliament and in the Council.

Classification of wine grape varieties:

The wines produced in the EU enjoy international prestige and renown. This success is largely due to the varieties of grapes used in wine production. Wine's raw material, the grape, is a deciding factor (although not the only one) in the organoleptic characteristics of the final product.

In order to establish a quality policy in the wine sector, it was decided several decades ago that only the vine varieties listed in national classifications could be planted, grown and harvested. In this way, European wine growers would be encouraged to select the most appropriate varieties for their particular area and improvements in quality would be achieved.

This fostering of quality production fits in with the following EU objectives in the wine sector:

- adjusting supply to demand. The classification of vine varieties encourages the planting of vines with a proven reputation and takes into account the evolution of market demand;
- limiting the yield of EU vineyards. Very high-yield varieties do not usually produce good quality wines. There is a negative correlation between quality and the quantity produced per hectare. The yield per hectare also depends on other factors such as the type of soil, cultivation methods, climate, etc., but it is quite obvious that the pursuit of quality in the selection of vine varieties and rootstocks will help control productivity in EU vineyards;
- guaranteeing sound genetics and health in vegetative vine propagation material. The classification and certification systems are closely related. Control of vegetative propagation material is also aimed at optimum health of the planted vines

The classification system facilitates the experimentation and control of varieties by Member States. It is also a basic instrument for monitoring the names of varieties used in the description of wines, particularly quality wines, and to master the relationship between names of varieties and names of protected designations of origin and protected geographical indications. Lastly, this system is not static. The national lists of authorised varieties may

¹ COM(2018) 394 final.

evolve over time when research institutes or nurseries produce new promising varieties or existing varieties appear no longer interesting.

The Commission considers that the original aims of the mandatory classification of wine grape varieties are still valid today and that such a system shall remain managed at the level of Member States.

Conclusion

The removal of the prohibition of six wine grape varieties will depend on the outcome of the discussions in the European Parliament and the Council.

Given the importance of vine varieties for wine quality, the Commission does not intend at this stage to propose removing the requirement to classify wine grape varieties at national level.