

## **Conclusions from the "Organic wines without sulphites, an alternative for the future?" conference**

On 26 February, at the ENOMAQ 2015 trade fair (Zaragoza, Spain), a technical conference was held, organised by the trade fair and the magazine *La Semana Vitivinícola* (SEVI), entitled "**Organic wines without sulphites, an alternative for the future?**". This conference was placed under the patronage of the International Organisation of Vine and Wine with Dr Jean Claude Ruf, Scientific Coordinator of the OIV, acting as president of the conference, accompanied by Mr Salvador Manjón, Director of SEVI.

A large number of participants from the vitivinicultural sector attended the conference.

The first communication presented by Dr Esteban Garcia, Director of the IVICAM (Castilla-La Mancha Vine and Wine Institute) Department of Research and Technology, focused on "Possible technological routes for the production of wines without or with low doses of sulphites". Different alternatives, both chemical and physical, were presented. The conference placed emphasis on solutions used by oenologists during winemaking to avoid undesirable changes, oxidation and the proliferation of lactic acid and acetic acid bacteria, and *Brettanomyces*– which, in some cases, could affect the quality of the wine.

A communication on "Microbiological action of the kaolin-silver complex" was presented by Dr Anna Puig from IRTA-INCAVI (the Catalonia Agri-Food and Technological Research Institute in collaboration with the Catalan Vine and Wine Institute). Her work focused on the effectiveness of the kaolin-silver complex (KAgC) against acetic acid bacteria and *Brettanomyces* without affecting the development of alcoholic and malolactic fermentation. This processing aid could also be used as a preventative measure during the barrel ageing of wine. As was reiterated, this compound is currently being evaluated within the OIV.

Dr Susana Buxaderas, from the Department of Nutrition and Bromatology (University of Barcelona), presented the topic "The food safety of new food additives and processing aids". The development of sulphur dioxide levels in still wines over the last 13 years was presented, demonstrating a certain degree of stability, which is far below the maximum limits set. A review of various alternatives to sulphur dioxide was carried out, including the mode of action of lysozyme (a product that acts against lactic acid bacteria), chitosan (which acts against *Brettanomyces*) and the kaolin-silver complex (which acts against acetic acid bacteria and *Brettanomyces*).

On another topic, Dr Carmen Valor, from the E-SOST (Companies, Economy and Sustainability) Group at Comillas Pontifical University, gave a presentation entitled "Organic wine: nearing demand", which showed that in Spain the market penetration of sustainable wine has increased by 8.6%. The organic wine market was then addressed, with it being indicated that health reasons are guiding consumers' decisions even in relation to wines without sulphites, whose prices are 25-30% higher.

The last presentation was given by Miguel A. Mainar, from the Spanish Association for Agri-Food Journalists, entitled "Communication in wine: a process under review". It stressed the rather ineffective role of communication as it is at present, due to a certain

lack of credibility, excessive complexity and indeed absence of attractiveness of the messages that consumers are subjected to, who are treated as critics or experts in tasting. It is therefore important to use credible, clear and simple messages. A pooling of communication elements between senders (wineries or media) and the receiver (young people) will contribute to a better communication strategy.

The conference concluded with a round table entitled "Problems in the winery, use of and communication about wines without sulphites". This was presented by Dr Ernesto Franco, Head of the Oenology Unit of the General Directorate of Food of the Government of Aragón, with the participation of Mr Juan B. Chavarri, Head of the experimental winery *La Grajera* (Department of Agri-Food Research and Technological Development – CIDA) in La Rioja, of Mr Delfi Sanahuja, Oenologist at the *Castillo de Perelada* winery, of Mr Marco Tebaldi, Founder of the FreeWine project, and of Dr Rosana Fuentes, Head researcher of the COMINEL (Communication, Emotional Intelligence and Leadership) Group at San Jorge University.

It would appear that many companies in Spain are interested in producing wines without sulphites. However, there is considerable confusion among consumers regarding the different designations (sustainable, organic, ecological...) and it seems necessary to provide clear messages explaining the different ranges of quality products. Some projects were mentioned concerning the production of wines without sulphites and the techniques used, as well as advice as to communication and labelling. Finally, the difficulties encountered by consumers in differentiating the various designations of wines (organic, biodynamic, natural, without sulphites, no sulphites added, sustainable, etc.) were stressed, thus specifying the need for retail establishments to be well organised so as to effectively present products to consumers.

At the end of the day, Dr Ruf highlighted the advantages of this conference both for the vitivincultural sector and for responding to certain consumer demands with regard to food safety. Indeed, it is vital that the vitivincultural sector rallies to try to minimise the impact of sulphur dioxide during wine production. It was specified that sulphites, which have been used for hundreds of years, must meet food safety requirements. Within this context, the EFSA is currently [re-evaluating certain additives](#), including sulphites. Additionally, the EFSA recently published a [scientific opinion on the evaluation of allergenic foods](#) and food ingredients for labelling purposes.