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**VINNATUR: CERTIFIED NATURAL WINES**

**The Association was the first to create a Procedural Guidelines Document, guaranteeing that VinNatur wines abide by stated principles: no pesticides, low sulphur content, no invasive cellar techniques.**

1. *Background of VinNatur and its purpose*
2. *Creation of the Procedural Guidelines Document*
3. *Implementation of the Procedural Guidelines Document (checking for pesticides and sulphites and more)*
4. *The Biodiversity Project*

**1/**

VinNatur was created in 2006 in order to reunite small producers of natural wines, mainly Italian but also from other European countries, and provide them with a proper tool for promotion and growth. The Association aims to develop specific knowledge of natural viticulture and natural wine-making amongst producers and consumers.

At present, VinNatur represents 187 producers from nine countries (Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, Austria, Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia.)

Back in 2006, VinNatur’s main purpose was to provide associate wineries with a proper tool for promotion in a time when natural wine was not so popular yet. Villa Favorita Wine Fair was therefore created. The three-day event has become one of the biggest natural wine fairs in Europe attended by over 4000 visitors.

**2/**

It’s not enough. In July 2016, the VinNatur members voted to implement **the first Procedural Guidelines Document in the natural wine panorama** ([here](http://www.vinnatur.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Procedure-guidelines-of-VinNatur-wine.pdf)).

Nowadays, natural wine is one of the most interesting trends in the wine world but not many producers intend to go beyond this attractive but blurry label. It was high time for transparency and definition to prevent “natural wine” from becoming an empty marketing smokescreen.

This document, a point of honour for VinNatur, is our definition of natural wine. It was not an easy task and it took more than a year to develop and render executive.

**3/**

**Implementation of the Procedural Guidelines Document: Pilot Tests**

Pilot tests on ten wineries began in the summer and are being carried out by CCPB and Valoritalia certification authorities. Angiolino Maule President of VinNatur explains: “We wanted to go **beyond a simple self-certification**. It is important that VinNatur wine consumers drink wines which have been officially certified by external laboratories.”

Tests involve vineyards, cellar and also producers’ knowledge. Officers check no pesticides are being used - they analyse soil, leaves and check vineyard machines. Questions too are asked to producers in order to understand how the Procedural Guidelines are applied. Until now, checks were already carried out on all associate wineries but were limited to specific issues such as pesticide absence and sulphur content.

**VinNatur Wines are Pesticide-free**

For the last 10 years, VinNatur checks its members’ wines annually for the presence of pesticides. In 2017, a great result was reached by VinNatur associates. None of the 80 samples analysed contained traces of pesticides, thus confirming that VinNatur offers consumers real guarantees and not simply declarations. **Research had been carried out to identify 188 different pesticides and none of these were found**, thereby guaranteeing the wines' authenticity and coherence with VinNatur’s principles.

“It is the first time all samples analysed reveal negative test results. In 2016 on 150 samples analysed, 4 (3 Italian and 1 French) contained pesticides” discloses President Maule. “For us it is a very important outcome. It confirms that we are moving in the right direction. It is not our final goal but it is certainly an important stage in the growth process we are doing as VinNatur association”.

**Sulphite content**

The natural approach is not limited to the vineyard but extends also to the cellar. Selected yeasts are not allowed, neither are additives (of any kind) or invasive techniques which do not respect the raw material. The aim is that of reducing and, if possible, eliminating the use of sulphur dioxide, whose side effects on human health are well known worldwide. This is possible thanks to a constant improvement of spontaneous fermentation, with indigenous yeasts, which gives a distinctive value to wine as far as personality and uniqueness.

All producers who have joined VinNatur association in the last 5 years have been checked. **Sulphur analysis reveal that, in 2017, all 80 samples were below 50 mg/l** ‒ as stated in the Procedural Guidelines ‒ **and 45 of them contained even less than 10 mg/l** (the limit for organic wines in Europe is 150 mg/l for white wines and 100 mg/l for red wines).

**4/**

**The Biodiversity Project**

“Natural wine” is the name given to a product derived from a healthy agriculture which rejects the use of pesticides, herbicides and chemical, soil and foliar fertilizers. Great attention is given to soil and soil natural balance. VinNatur is carrying out research in order to get rid of copper and sulphur, traditionally used for treating diseases in the vineyard, and replace them with natural extracts which help the vine build up resistance.

**“We are focusing on building up vine resistance**. This is why our project on biodiversity plays a key role”. The biodiversity project has involved 17 wineries in 2017 and is supervised by agronomist Stefano Zaninotti from “Vitenova - Vine Wellness” in collaboration with biologists, botanists and entomologists. Data deriving from surveys on soil, flora and fauna will be used to develop a sophisticated scientific model enabling wineries to understand which are the most suitable plants that can be used for **preserving soil microbiological fertility and helping vines develop properly**. This will lead to a higher resistance of the vine itself, further reducing the need for human intervention and getting closer to VinNatur’s principal aim: a healthy viticulture as naturally-driven as possible.