Wine at Coop Italia, Eleanna Pizzinelli: a more dynamic approach and shorter timeframes are needed

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Eleanna Pizzinelli, Coop Italia's Beverage Manager, outlines a structural transformation in the large-scale retail wine market. The decline in red wines and the rise of lighter, alternative formats demand dynamic assortments and shorter planning horizons. Coop balances its cooperative values with commercial sustainability, enhancing private labels and carefully exploring the emerging no/low alcohol segment.

The wine market in large-scale retail is not experiencing a passing turbulence. It is changing its skin. This is the clear premise with which Eleanna Pizzinelli, Head of the Beverage &

Frozen Food Business Unit at Coop Italia, opens a conversation that goes well beyond the usual reading of category data. **What emerges from the interview is a structural transformation in consumer behavior, with everything this implies in terms of assortment, brand identity, and the ability to anticipate where the consumer is heading.**

The contraction of still reds, the resilience of whites and sparkling wines, the growth of alternative formats, the attention to price: signals that, read together, tell of a consumer who moves away from wine as a daily habit and approaches it as an experience, towards moderation and lightness. **A profound change of register, which requires large-scale retail to keep tradition and innovation together without yielding to nostalgia or an uncritical pursuit of trends.**

In this scenario, Coop plays a particular game: that of a brand with a strong value identity, cooperative, transparent, close to the territory, that must translate its principles into concrete shelf choices, without losing sight of commercial sustainability. **The private label remains a pillar, but it too evolves, while packaging becomes a tool for positioning and environmental responsibility.** The no/low alcohol segment, still small, is patiently monitored as a sign of a longer change to build.

The result is a lucid, pragmatic vision, far from superficial optimism: **wine in large-scale retail will change again, and those who want to keep up will have to learn to plan on the move.**

The wine market in large-scale retail is changing permanently. How does the way assortment is planned change concretely

when you have this awareness? Are you working with different time horizons compared to a few years ago?

For some years now, negative trends in the category have been repeating themselves; we can no longer speak of a temporary contraction, but of a structural change in consumption habits that affect purchases. So yes, it becomes necessary to think differently about the assortment. **We have moved to an interpretation of the shelf that can no longer only consider sales history, strength and loyalty of denominations, and brand awareness.**

A more dynamic approach is needed that takes trends into account and works on shorter time horizons. This does not mean forgetting the consolidated elements and neglecting tradition, but renewing the offer and adapting it over time to take into account everything that has emerged in recent years, including attention to moderate consumption, easy-to-drink wines, alternative formats, and also price sensitivity.

It has become fundamental to have a stable base of high-selling and well-known products and a part dedicated to territoriality and emerging trends, keeping in mind the premium and entry-level parts.

Coop has a very marked value identity. How much does this identity guide purchasing choices in the wine category? Are there producers or denominations that are preferred because they are consistent with Coop’s mission?

Let us start from the fact that the consumer expects consistency between the brand’s values and the offer; however,

a balance is needed between identity, customer expectations, and commercial sustainability. **This translates into paying attention to some aspects that are increasingly relevant today: territoriality, supply chain transparency, production sustainability, perceived quality, and producer reliability.** Suppliers who best interpret these aspects will be particularly in tune with the brand's positioning.

Data shows that large retailers and private label products are among the most affected by the contraction. Coop has a very strong tradition in private labels. How is the range of Coop brand wines evolving in this context?

Is the answer to differentiate upwards, simplify, or something else? **At Coop, the private label is supporting the categories with excellent sales results; it is highly segmented and covers various price points.**

It represents an element of trust for the consumer and a way to oversee the quality-price ratio. **The goal is to maintain an accessible and reassuring proposal on the more daily segments and to enhance some references with greater distinctive content**, whether for territory or quality, essentially a clear positioning.

Still reds are losing ground on all fronts, while whites and sparkling wines resist better. Is something changing in the consumer identity?

In recent years, the consumer has been looking for products that are easier to drink, more suitable for informal moments, and often compatible with a more moderate consumption style;

wine is less daily and increasingly tied to an experience. Whites and sparkling wines better interpret these needs, perceived as more versatile and contemporary. **For Coop, the challenge is to continue overseeing the tradition of Italian wine while intercepting consumption evolution.**

Formats and packaging can be levers of innovation. How much does packaging weigh in your purchasing decisions? And how much has the sustainability of the container, light bottle, carton, bag-in-box, become a real selection criterion, as well as a declaration of principle?

We confirm that packaging has a much more significant weight compared to the past, especially as an element of sustainability, not just as the aesthetics of the product.

In this category, there is the search for a balance between the need to innovate and the attention to sustainabilitythat directly affects environmental impact, transport costs, and supply chain efficiency. To this, we add the attention that the evolved consumer places on these issues, which plays a fundamental role in brand perception. We interpret which packaging is most consistent with the consumption occasion, product positioning, and customer expectations.

No or low alcohol wine is still a tiny niche but fits perfectly onto a health agenda that Coop has always championed. What is your forecast on this segment?

To date, the segment still has limited values, but **I believe it can represent an indicator of a broader change in consumption behaviors, even a cultural shift**, at least for

some segments for whom attention to well-being and conscious consumption are a consolidated trend.

The bet is on timing; for wine, the path could be slower than for other beverage categories, because here very strong elements such as tradition and territoriality come into play. **We oversee the segment with attention, evaluating certain innovations and performance improvements that could potentially become relevant within an evolving market.**

Key points

1. **Structural consumption changes require a highly dynamic assortment** and much shorter planning horizons for retail buyers.
2. **Coop’s private label remains a reliable pillar**, evolving to balance everyday accessibility with distinctive premium positioning.
3. **Packaging sustainability is now a crucial selection criterion**, directly impacting environmental footprint and overall **supply chain efficiency**.
4. **The no/low alcohol segment indicates a broader cultural shift** towards conscious, moderate consumption and well-being awareness.