

Molon: “Sustainability is no longer just a priority, but a founding element of productive action”

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Sustainability is no longer optional in wine, it's a prerequisite. Graziano Molon, Director of the Trentino Wine Consortium, explains why true progress demands measurable practices, resistant varieties, and efficient water use. He also highlights the power of wine tourism in environmental education and the need for transparency to restore credibility to sustainability claims.

Sustainability in the wine sector is no longer a simple trend but an essential condition for staying competitive in international markets. This is the belief of Graziano Molon,

General Director of the Trentino Wine Consortium, who in this interview explores the challenges and opportunities of a path that is increasingly inevitable for businesses. From the proliferation of sustainability certifications—which often confuse rather than guide consumers—to solutions for reducing water use and combating climate change, Molon highlights the need for a pragmatic and concrete approach in which **technology and tradition must find common ground**.

The interview is part of the [Amorim Wine Vision project](#), a thought network on contemporary topics, at the center of which **emerge original perspectives from entrepreneurs, expert professionals, and managers**, with the aim of sharing know-how, experiences, case studies, skills, networks, and offering original viewpoints, concrete ideas, forward-looking perceptions, and brilliant prospects.

The discussion with Molon touches on crucial topics for the sustainable future of viticulture: **the use of resistant grape varieties, the role of communication in enhancing sustainability, and the potential of wine tourism as a vehicle for environmental education**. A testimony that provides strategic and practical insights for those operating in the wine world, amid bureaucratic challenges, market demands, and the need for sustainability that is not just claimed but genuinely measurable.

Sustainability is now a priority for the wine sector. In your view, what are the main drivers accelerating this transition?

Sustainability, in its three traditional dimensions, environmental, social, and economic, must no longer be considered merely a priority but a foundational component of our production behavior, without which we cannot have a future outlook. Sustainability is increasingly required at multiple

levels for our products and is considered a **prerequisite for market access**. Among the trends that have reinforced its importance, we can certainly cite the growing focus on the environment and its preservation (driven by climate change), a greater awareness of overall product health and intrinsic quality, as well as the ethical and social aspects of wine production.

Sustainability certifications are becoming increasingly requested and widespread. Do you believe they are truly perceived as added value by consumers, or is public understanding still limited?

Acknowledging the demand, the proliferation of sustainability certifications does not help consumers orient themselves, and they struggle to identify a specific added value. The word “sustainability” has almost become a cliché—if not overused—when referring to wine products, risking a loss of meaning. Consumers are attentive, but we must improve in delivering clearer, more identifiable signals about the processes that lead to certifications and their concrete, measurable content—ultimately enhancing credibility and consistency.

What are the main obstacles that member wineries face in pursuing greater sustainability?

The first barrier is the complexity of the procedures, which inevitably bring some bureaucratic complications and additional tasks to the already demanding duties of grape growers. We must understand how the ultimate goal justifies the extra workload through an open mindset that sees the **competitive advantage in the medium to long term**. Much of

what has been done in the past—stemming from traditional knowledge passed down through generations—has sustainability in its DNA; we simply need to systematize this knowledge in an organized manner. As a Consortium, for instance, by centralizing the management of field logs for our SQNPI certification via a dedicated digital platform—with the invaluable help of our member wineries—we are able to **make growers' daily operations less burdensome**, which is a significant support.

Climate change is altering wine production conditions. What are the most realistic and effective solutions to face this challenge?

Trentino offers us the possibility of looking upwards, thanks to its morphology shaped by woods and extraordinary mountains like the Dolomites. Speaking of climate change and rising temperatures, it is essential to consider moving crops towards the hills, **gradually increasing production altitude**. Another key issue is the adoption of resistant vines, which should be more widely used than they are today. Closely connected is the entire world of experimentation (TEA) and, more broadly, **new technologies that should implement all available options**. In this regard, our country must quickly adapt to EU regulations, enabling producers to conduct the necessary experiments.

Water use in viticulture is increasingly under scrutiny. What strategies can help reduce consumption without compromising yield and quality?

Water is one of the most fundamental issues for the future of global agriculture—perhaps the most critical one. Just consider what is happening nationwide with the dire situation

of crops in southern Italy. In Trentino, nearly 100% of the vineyards are equipped with **drip irrigation systems**, which can precisely manage the water needs of vines without waste. Nonetheless, the issue of water consumption belongs to a broader preservation culture that **goes beyond agriculture and encompasses humanity's entire relationship with the environment**. Here too, technology will increasingly play a role in managing critical situations.

Many companies are experimenting with resistant grape varieties to counter climate change and reduce treatments. Do you believe this is a large-scale solution or only suitable for specific areas?

It's hard to give a single answer to such a complex topic with so many possible variables. In general, resistant varieties provide a possible solution, as they reduce the need for certain treatments—though not all. I believe the **biggest challenge will be developing resistant grape profiles that are also marketable**, transitioning from mere experimentation to actual products on which wineries can base their sales. Some positive examples already exist, but **the road ahead is still long**.

Some aspects of the circular economy are already embedded in the DNA of the wine sector, but is there room for further development?

The core idea behind the circular economy has always belonged to agriculture and winemaking, if we think of the by-products of winemaking used as compost in vineyards or grape stems repurposed for distillate production. These are all excellent

examples of circular economy practices that **maximize reuse**. Further synergies could be explored with livestock farming (effluents) and, more broadly, with all complementary productive sectors.

Consumers are increasingly attentive to sustainability. How can the wine sector communicate its commitment more effectively?

There are no particular secrets or magic formulas to be more effective—it's about being truthful and transparent, clearly stating what is being done and how. All sustainability processes must be **verifiable, measurable, and validated**. The term “sustainability” is now widely overused, becoming a catch-all for every product (who doesn't claim to be sustainable today?). We need to give communication the right content and **strike a balance between technical and general messaging**, clearly highlighting the three main pillars of sustainability: environmental, economic, and social. An excellent communication tool is also the **Sustainability Report**, targeted at a general audience, which our Consortium has already issued twice.

Can wine tourism serve as a vehicle to spread sustainability awareness? If so, how?

Absolutely, letting tourists directly experience sustainable practices in the field is an excellent way to educate. First-hand experiences are more memorable and become effective vehicles for word-of-mouth. Conversely, poorly managed wine tourism can have multiple negative effects. Therefore, it is crucial to **promote experiences competently** and carefully organize visits, perhaps with a focus on the sustainability of production processes. It's also important to remember that

the primary goal of wine tourism should be to create an additional sales and promotion channel. If that's successfully integrated with a sustainability experience, we achieve the ideal result.

Key points

1. **Sustainability is now a core requirement** to access markets.
2. **Certification systems must be clearer** and more credible.
3. **Resistant varieties must become market-ready**, not just lab-tested.
4. **Drip irrigation and tech are key** to reducing water use.
5. **Wine tourism can enhance sustainability** education if managed well.