

Planeta: how to overcome seasonality? Through production diversification and wine tourism

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Alessio Planeta explains how the Sicilian wine company tackles seasonality by diversifying crops and investing in wine tourism. He emphasizes the role of training, remote work, and inclusive policies in workforce development, while calling for deeper cooperation between academia and producers to meet real labor needs.

“Finding seasonal labor, remote work, the importance of training, inclusivity, the most in-demand roles, and the connection between academia and business”—these are all themes Alessio Planeta, CEO and Technical Director of [Planeta Agricultural Estates](#), discusses in depth. His insights, part

of the “[Amorim Wine Vision](#)” project, reflect the real challenges of managing human resources in the wine industry today.

Based on your experience, what are currently the main challenges related to employment in the wine sector?

We are a company operating in Sicily, a region where, until recently, there was an excess demand for work, unlike other wine-growing areas of Italy. Now this situation has balanced out, and finding labor during key moments of the season has become more complex.

The other, more important challenge for us concerns smart working. Before the pandemic, even employees dedicated to marketing or sales were always required to be physically present in Sicily. This could be a difficulty because having someone manage the German or Asian market from Sicily is complicated and expensive. Today, it's possible to manage remote employees more easily and efficiently.

In summary, the first aspect, regarding the search for labor, has become a bit more complex, while the second, related to managing remote work, has become simpler.

What is your view on the creation of training paths aligned with company needs and the rapid evolution of markets?

We have always been very attentive to training. The technical area uses external consultants whose role is to train and update the technical team in oenology, viticulture, and management.

We train our staff through consultancy, educational trips, and ad hoc courses. **Clearly, we are a farming company, not a high-**

tech firm, so our dynamics are not very complex but are defined according to our needs.

Do you believe that company initiatives and policies to promote diversity and inclusion can be realistic and useful in the wine sector, or do they often remain good intentions difficult to implement?

Wine companies are small avant-garde realities but are also tied to traditional past rituals. Sometimes they operate in territories that are isolated and rural, but **when they encounter the opportunity to open up and welcome diversity, they are absolutely willing to do so.** It's clear that for agricultural companies these opportunities are less frequent due to geographic reasons rather than management choices.

But when these paths are feasible, we are attentive and available to inclusivity.

In your opinion, what are the main gaps in the current training offer in the viticultural and oenological field?

In our sector, what happens is the same as in many others: **there is no shortage of administrative, technical (oenologists, agronomists), marketing, or sales figures, because universities produce more than the market needs.** What is increasingly lacking are specialized workers such as professional pruners or tractor drivers. **This is a significant critical issue.**

What effective solutions could help

promote a better balance between labor supply and demand in the sector?

One fundamental aspect concerns **collaboration between training institutions and the productive fabric**. I was part of a consulting group that worked with the University of Pollenzo to create a training offer suited to the needs of the productive system.

The job market is not static; it is constantly evolving. If the goal is to create new energy, it is necessary to keep our ears open to the labor world. Open forums should be created between universities and businesses.

Then it is clear that training also concerns the cultural dimension, not only the pragmatic and professional one, so it is up to the university system to choose whether or not to listen to companies' needs. **But I believe that the dialogue and exchange between academia and the business world should be significantly developed.**

What strategies do you adopt to maintain a positive and motivating work environment for your employees?

I would highlight two aspects: **the first concerns the fact that we are a family business, 100% active within the company, with roles that are not only managerial but also operational.** This is very important and has an impact on staff motivation.

The second aspect concerns the quality of the workplaces. For example, we created new marketing offices with glass windows overlooking the olive groves. This ensures balance and harmony, which fosters the well-being of our collaborators.

How do you address the challenge of seasonality in the wine industry in terms of human resource management?

This is a fundamental issue. You can't assume that people, especially in a territory that is homogeneous in terms of production like ours, will always be able to find alternatives. You can't build anything without continuity.

To reduce seasonality and guarantee that continuity, we decided not to be a monoculture company but to diversify our production by developing olive growing, almond growing, and wine tourism. This also allows us to professionalize people and be more competitive globally.

This interview was conducted in partnership with [Amorim Cork Italia](#) as part of the “[Amorim Wine Vision](#)” project – a network of thought leadership on technical and topical wine-related issues, spotlighting the original visions of industry entrepreneurs and managers.

Key points

1. **Planeta overcomes seasonality through diversification and wine tourism.**
2. **Remote work has simplified talent recruitment beyond Sicily.**
3. **Skilled labor like pruners and drivers is in short supply.**
4. **Stronger dialogue between universities and wineries is essential.**
5. **Workplace quality and family involvement boost employee motivation.**

