

# The international market of Sicilian wine: where we are and where we can reach

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*Sicilian wine exports are growing across Northern Europe and North America, but the main challenge remains qualitative. Overcoming a past reputation for bulk wine requires leveraging DOC certifications to elevate price points and perceived value. Despite the success of native varietals, a cohesive regional narrative is needed to overcome brand fragmentation.*

Anyone familiar with Italian wine export data knows that Sicily has made significant progress in recent years, gaining market shares especially in Northern European countries and some areas of North America. However, those who also know the profit margins understand that **the remaining challenge is qualitative in a commercial sense rather than quantitative,**

ensuring that Sicilian wine is perceived, and therefore purchased, at a price level reflecting its true value.

The problem is quite common. The whole of Italy knows it, as the reputation built on decades of low-cost table wine is difficult to update, even when the quality in the glasses has genuinely changed. **For Sicily, having built much of its international fame on blending and bulk wines, the operation is even more delicate.**

Appellations are in this sense one of the most effective tools available. They provide the consumer and the commercial operator with a credible, verifiable reference system certified by third parties, rather than automatically guaranteeing quality. Salvatore Marino, commercial director of Cantine Birgi, summarizes that **when a foreign importer sees DOC Sicilia on a bottle, they know there are regulations and controls behind it**, and they are buying a product with a distinct history.

The success of Grillo and Nero d'Avola as recognizable varieties on international markets is an encouraging sign. Since these varieties fully entered the DOC Sicilia, their commercial trajectory abroad has accelerated. **This is the result of communication efforts that brought these varieties from anonymity to recognizability**, representing a highly intentional strategic shift.

Some open questions still remain. **The fragmentation of the Sicilian offer, with thousands of producers, cooperatives, bottlers, and brands, makes it difficult to build a coherent regional identity.** The perception of quality varies enormously across producers, leaving foreign consumers disoriented. Collective investments in systemic communication would be necessary alongside individual company initiatives. The potential is there, and the raw material is excellent. What is still missing is a unified narrative strong enough to transform interest into habitual purchases.



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## Key points

1. **The primary challenge for Sicilian wine is improving commercial perception, shifting focus to higher value.**
2. **DOC certifications are crucial tools, offering foreign importers verifiable quality standards and distinct history.**
3. **The international success of Grillo and Nero d'Avola demonstrates the power of targeted communication.**
4. **Market fragmentation among producers complicates the creation of a coherent regional identity for foreign consumers.**
5. **A unified systemic narrative is necessary to transform initial global interest into habitual purchasing behaviors.**