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ARCHE NOAH Reaction to Wine Diversity in the CAP proposals

The European Commission has published its proposals to reform the Common Agricultural Policy („CAP“) on 1st June 2018. While the potential impact of these proposals are wider for seeds and agrobiodiversity, this brief is solely concerned with the proposals that impact wine grape diversity, which we believe go in the right direction.

Indeed, the Commission Regulation proposal 2018/0218 (COD) proposes in its Article 1 to amend Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 establishing a common organisation of the markets in agricultural products so as **to allow the classification of so-called direct producers and their hybrids as wine in national laws**. It also opens the possibility to obtain geographical indication protection for wine products obtained through breeding using direct producers and *Vitis Vinifera* varieties.

Justified in the Preamble as a measure “to ensure that wine production in the Union develops a higher resistance to diseases and that it uses vine varieties better adapted to changing climatic conditions”, it lifts the prohibition that has affected Noah, Othello, Isabelle, Jacquez, Clinton and Herbemont for too long. Should the proposals be adopted by the European Parliament and the Council, wine farmers would be allowed to plant these wine varieties directly, selling their products as wine. In addition, breeders would be allowed to dig into the potential offered by these varieties’ interesting resistance and other traits, which is an important tool to address the looming climate challenge and high pressure to reduce pesticide use in European viticulture.

ARCHE NOAH welcomes this development and actively supports the proposed provisions in the European legislative process. This proposal constitutes a huge step forward for the so-called direct producers and the hybrids developed by using them. It is a liberation of wine grape diversity and an important stepping stone to reduce the dependence of European viticulture on environmentally harmful pesticides. Once the prohibition is lifted, in order to truly recognise the environmental and socio-economic potential of these hybrids, they should be classified as quality wines.

In order to incentivise the lengthy and costly research and innovation in sustainable wine breeding, the Commission proposals allow wine products from vine varieties stemming from a cross between *Vitis vinifera* and other species of the genus *Vitis* to be accepted as designations of origin. This proposal would give more incentives to wine producers to use new varieties that are more resilient and adapted to climate change. This opportunity has however not been granted to direct producers themselves, and we regret the lack of recognition of these varieties’ contribution to sustainable viticulture, but also to the local socio-economic fabric in regions where they are still traditionally grown and made into wine, such as parts of Austria (as Uhudler in Burgenland), Italy (as Fragolino and Clinton), France (as Clinton, Jacquez, Noah) or Portugal (as Isabella, *vinos de cheiros*).

ARCHE NOAH welcomes the fact that protected designations of origin could in the future be obtained for hybrids developed using direct producers; a development that should promote the recourse of wine farmers and producers to new varieties better suited to adapt and curb climate change. However, we would like to see the opportunity extended to direct producers themselves, recognising the environmental, social, cultural and economic contributions of *Vitis Labrusca* varieties.

About ARCHE NOAH:

ARCHE NOAH (Noah’s Ark) is a seed savers association in Central Europe, founded in 1990, and dedicated to the conservation and sustainable use of agrobiodiversity. With more than 14.000 members, we closely and actively follow seed and agricultural policies that impact our activities. It is politically active in Austria and in Brussels. www.arche-noah.at

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