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Consultation

A major topic of the workshops in the LIFE VineAdapt project regions was the provision of advice. A low-threshold advisory service helps to communicate sustainable methods in viticulture to winegrowers. Within this context, the respective regional and national winegrowing associations should be strengthened, because they usually have direct contact with the winegrowers in their region. Individual consultations in the winegrowing businesses, as well as various lecture and training course formats, could then be expanded. The LIFE VineAdapt project shows that winegrowers need information on greening, particularly regarding the seed mixture, seeding technology, seeding time and pruning. In Austria, borrowing equipment, e. g. through associations of winegrowers in machine communities or through agricultural machinery manufacturers, has proven very successful. This means that appliances such as a flower strip mulcher can be used by several companies, eliminating the need for expensive individual purchases. This also makes it easier to focus the advice or to combine it with the loan of an appliance.

Photo: ÖMKi

Further workshop results

In the workshops in the LIFE VineAdapt project regions, winegrowers also discussed ways of generating additional income and doing even more for biodiversity. One option is to install photovoltaic modules above the vines. A certain structural diversity in the vineyards promotes biodiversity. Flowering areas, hedges and rock piles, for example, provide food, nesting and hiding places for beneficial insects. Further support is also needed for the cultivation of fungus-resistant and drought-tolerant grape varieties. In addition, wine tourism is an important source of income for wine growers. According to a survey by the German Wine Institute and Geisenheim University, primary wine tourism in Germany generates a total turnover of around 5.5 billion euros per year. According to the Statista database, viticulture in Germany generated a total turnover of 3.08 billion euros in 2023. The interlocking of viticulture and wine tourism could also be expanded in other countries.

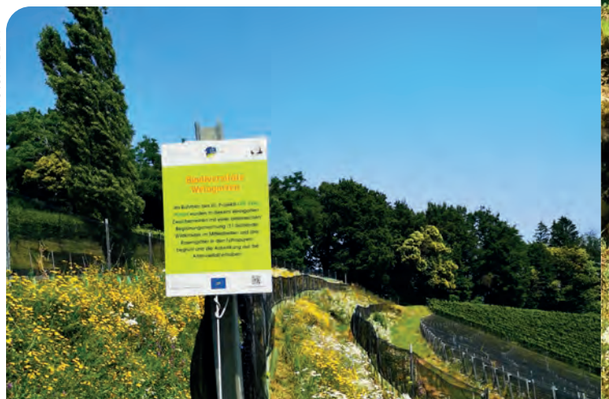

Photo: HBLFA

Life VineAdapt

Measures for climate-adapted and biodiversity-friendly viticulture

Photo: LGSA

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LIFE VineAdapt project

Viticulture in Europe is already struggling with the effects of climate change. Increasing droughts in summer, a high risk of erosion due to heavy rainfall and the immigration of new pests require innovative solutions. The international LIFE VineAdapt project provides practical insights into how to make viticulture more resilient to climate change. Increasing biodiversity and adapting vineyard management are crucial to this. Eight practical and research partners from Germany, France, Austria and Hungary have joined forces in the project. From 2020 to 2025, they will be dedicated to five work packages:

- **Innovative greening of alleyways to increase biodiversity**
- **Alternative understock management**
- **Resource-efficient fertilisation methods**
- **Resource-saving irrigation**
- **Transnational assessment of ecosystem services in vineyards**

Public relations and knowledge transfer measures round off the work. Together, the partners have, for example, developed the project label ‘Biodiverse winegrowing’. Winegrowers who sow regional wild plant seed mixtures to promote biodiversity in their vineyards are allowed to use it.

Sustainable viticulture to adapt to climate change

The project findings should be used in the best possible way in future viticulture. This depends on winegrowing businesses and on decision-makers in politics and administration. It is the latter who can create the appropriate framework conditions and incentives for the application of sustainable methods in viticulture. Viticulture shapes the landscape in numerous regions, creates identity and offers opportunities for earning a living in rural areas. In the winegrowing regions of Luberon in France, South Styria in Austria, Eger/Tokaj in Hungary and Saale-Unstrut in Germany, which are participating in the LIFE VineAdapt project, the project partners have worked with winegrowers to develop possible measures for adapting viticulture to climate change. The first results from the project’s investigations and the results of the workshops with winegrowers from all partner countries are summarised below for all countries.

Photo: Marrenon

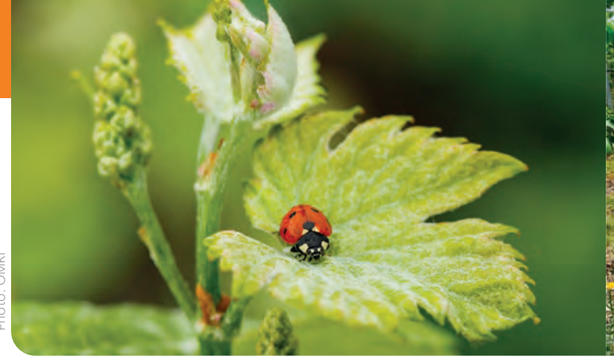

Photo: ÖMKi

Photo: Hochschule Anhalt

Initial results

The wine industry is not only facing a climate crisis, but also a biodiversity crisis. Habitat, species and genetic diversity are dwindling rapidly. However, biological diversity is key to countering climate change. The LIFE VineAdapt project shows that, for example, the greening with native, site-adapted wild plants in vineyard alleyways reduces soil erosion, protects the soil from drying out and promotes beneficial organisms such as spiders, ladybirds and hoverflies. The occurrence of wild bees is also significantly higher in biodiversity vineyards. The research has also shown that mechanical vegetation management measures are the most effective and economical in the area below the vines. This means that the use of synthetic chemical herbicides can be reduced or avoided. Furthermore, research is being conducted into the minimisation of mineral fertilisers and alternative methods such as organic fertilisation with sheep’s wool pellets. These methods could be eligible for funding in the future. Drip irrigation is already eligible for funding in many winegrowing regions. The results will be finalised at the end of the project.

Green cover to increase biodiversity

Workshops with winegrowers in all LIFE VineAdapt project regions showed that greening the vineyard alleyways is a central issue. However, the respective site conditions must be taken into account. Appropriate site-adapted seed mixtures are often expensive. There could therefore be graduated environmental bonuses for sowing the mixtures. Those who use the most ecologically valuable mixture, the certified regional seed, in the long term, would receive the highest bonus. Region-specific lists of indicator species would be helpful for assessing and optimally promoting biodiversity in vineyards. Apps for identifying indicator species, such as LaFIS®-GEOFOTO, Pl@ntNet or Flora Incognita, could help to identify certain plants. In addition, a reward for ecosystem services could be included. Wild bees were found more frequently in the experimental vineyards of the LIFE VineAdapt project, which is why, among other things, the ecosystem service of ‘pollination’ was positively influenced.