

ABSTRACT: Elaborating the future of the viticulture in Belgium

MOTIVATION

From a love story to an immersion in Belgian viticulture. Family reunification by moving to Belgium and the fact that winemaking is actively developing here are the most significant events in 2020.

Being halfway through the completion of WSET Level 4 Diploma, understanding that Belgium (now becoming home) was being overlooked, played a crucial role in the choice of subject.

The eagerness to get to know local wines and promote their export to St. Petersburg led me, however (then in 2020), to a very “dark forest”.¹

OBJECTIVE

The aim of the thesis is to identify and elaborate possible strategies for the development of viticulture in Belgium.

Belgium is a cool climate country with little experience in winemaking and viticulture, amounting to less than 25 years. Despite the fact that the country is small and the viticulture is young, the cacophony in the field is felt quite strongly.

Studying what is relevant in Belgian viticulture today and systematizing all the information received is an important part of determining and choosing a strategy.

METHODOLOGY

The meeting with Jeroen Houben, a winemaker from the province of Limburg, and with his father Prof. Dr. Ghislain Houben turned out to be a happy coincidence. This made it possible to get firsthand information and to immerse in viticulture through participation in the Jerom winery's export development project.

Studying reports, articles and research about the experience of other countries with a cool climate proved to be very useful in transforming a cacophony into a symphony.

Mailing and interviews took place in spring 2022. This enabled valuable updated information and additional opinions to be obtained from real people, and to shed light on some assumptions, to either confirm or exclude them.

Participation in Prowein 2022 was an unexpected great opportunity to test how certain strategies (of 9 leading wineries from Flanders) are perceived by sommeliers and other intermediaries in the international arena (by tasting the final product). The part which still needs to be properly studied in further steps.

RESULTS

This scientific work provides a more complete picture of what is relevant in the Belgian viticulture today: its growing environment, soils, vineyard management, planting materials and wine styles.

¹ Something completely incomprehensible or completely unfamiliar for somebody. - Dictionary of the Russian language: In 4 volumes / RAS, Institute of Linguistic Research (1999).

CONCLUSION

Belgium viticulture management models are in the process of being formed and development strategies can be based on the following:

- Focus on sparkling
- Focus on sustainability
- Focus on well-known grape varieties

Whichever one is chosen, it needs to be approached wisely, being ready to go beyond the usual. Each strategy has its pros and cons. Therefore, it is important to carefully assess the possibilities and think over the positioning in the market.