

GRK LUMBARDA - A new PDO for Croatia and potentially Europe

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ABSTRACT

Motivation for Choosing the Topic

The preservation of indigenous grape varieties has become increasingly important within the global wine sector, where origin, authenticity, and cultural heritage are central to product value. The Grk grape variety, cultivated almost exclusively in the village of Lumbarda on the island of Korčula, represents one of Croatia's rarest and most distinctive viticultural resources. Once close to extinction, Grk was revived in the early 1990s through the initiative of local winemakers, most notably Branimir Cebalo, and has since become a symbol of Lumbarda's cultural and economic identity. Despite its growing recognition, Grk remains largely absent from academic literature. This thesis was therefore motivated by the need to document and analyse the mechanisms through which a small wine-producing community seeks to protect a highly localised variety within the European system of geographical indications.

Problem Statement and Research Objective

As interest in Grk has increased, experimental plantings have expanded beyond Lumbarda, raising concerns regarding authenticity, typicity, and the dilution of origin-based value. The central problem addressed in this research is how the unique relationship between Grk and the terroir of Lumbarda can be legally and institutionally protected in an increasingly globalised wine market. The primary objective of the thesis is to examine the role of the Grk Lumbarda Association in obtaining national Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), known in Croatia as Zaštićena oznaka izvornosti (ZOI), and in pursuing EU-level PDO recognition. The study further aims to assess the challenges encountered during the application process and to evaluate the potential implications of EU PDO status for producers, consumers, and regional development.

Methodology

Due to the limited availability of secondary academic sources, this research adopts a qualitative case study approach. The methodology is based on analysis of primary documents, including the national PDO specification and the EU PDO application submitted under file number PDO-KR-02869. These materials are supplemented by semi-structured interviews with the President of the Grk Lumbarda Association and officials from the Croatian Ministry of Agriculture. Additional contextual analysis of

terroir, production data, and market trends is used to situate Grk Lumbarda within the broader European wine and geographical indication framework.

Content Overview

The thesis first outlines the historical and viticultural characteristics of the Grk variety, emphasising its biological uniqueness, including its female-only flowers and dependence on cross-pollination. It demonstrates that Grk's sensory profile—marked by high acidity, structural tension, and a subtle bitter finish—is closely linked to the sandy soils and maritime climate of Lumbarda. The terroir analysis highlights the significance of the Lumbarda polje (field) and surrounding vineyards, reinforcing the argument that Grk is highly site-specific.

Subsequent sections examine Croatia's PDO system and its integration into EU geographical indication policy. Grk Lumbarda was granted national ZOI status in 2022, and an application for EU PDO recognition followed the same year. The research shows that delays in the EU approval process are administrative rather than substantive, linked to regulatory changes and procedural reviews. Interviews with institutional stakeholders indicate strong confidence that the PDO will be granted in the near future.

The study also analyses the wine styles authorised under the PDO, including still, sparkling, and traditional dessert wines. Yield limits, quality classifications, and sensory evaluation procedures are shown to play a central role in maintaining product integrity. Finally, the thesis explores the economic and touristic significance of Grk, demonstrating how scarcity, wine tourism, and PDO certification contribute to place-based branding and local economic resilience.

Conclusion

The case of Grk Lumbarda illustrates how a small, geographically defined community can mobilise regulatory frameworks to safeguard an endangered agricultural heritage. PDO protection serves not only as a legal instrument, but as a mechanism for preserving the link between grape variety, terroir, and cultural identity. Although EU recognition has been delayed, evidence suggests that approval is highly likely. Once granted, EU PDO status is expected to enhance Grk's visibility, strengthen its protection against misuse, and reinforce Lumbarda's position within Croatia's evolving wine landscape. Ultimately, the pursuit of PDO recognition for Grk Lumbarda represents an affirmation of place, tradition, and collective stewardship within the European quality wine system.