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**Article**

## Ethics + economy + environment = sustainability: Gambero Rosso on the front lines with a new concept of sustainability

Wine Economics and Policy

**Provided in Cooperation with:**

UniCeSV - Centro Universitario di Ricerca per lo Sviluppo Competitivo del Settore Vitivinicolo,  
University of Florence

*Suggested Citation:* Cuccia, Paolo (2015) : Ethics + economy + environment = sustainability: Gambero Rosso on the front lines with a new concept of sustainability, Wine Economics and Policy, ISSN 2212-9774, Elsevier, Amsterdam, Vol. 4, Iss. 1, pp. 69-70, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wep.2015.05.003>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/194500>

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# Ethics + economy + environment = sustainability: Gambero Rosso on the front lines with a new concept of sustainability

A Business Article by Paolo Cuccia

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Received 8 May 2015; accepted 13 May 2015

Available online 27 May 2015



What does being sustainable mean for viticulture? Above all, to be sustainable, a winery has to be a company: it has to be a business and be competitive on the marketplace. It must work in an ethical way and operate for social betterment. And, obviously, it has to be respectful of the environment, paying particular attention to its emissions of greenhouse gases, water consumption, and direct or indirect pollution. At the same time, a winery has to maintain the biodiversity of the ecosystem. To sum up, it must take into account both social and economic factors as well as environmental ones.

Peer Review under the responsibility of UniCeSV, University of Florence.  
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Starting with this broad vision of sustainability, two years ago Gambero Rosso, together with the Unione Italiana Vini, took on the role of promoting the Forum for Environmental Sustainability. A detailed report followed and work for the second phase of the project is in progress. Let's go into detail. The report involved 37 experts of the technical-scientific community confronting the theme of wine-sustainability. Two work groups outlined a pathway of research into the overall system, with investigations that involved over 1000 winegrowing firms – chosen among those in the database of the Gambero Rosso wine guide from where questionnaires were sent out and data were collected – as well as 15 national programs for the sustainable development of wine. Eighty percent of the entrepreneurs interviewed considered environmental sustainability of utmost importance. It is clear the trend is towards improving price/quality rapport as well as favoring the perception of added value in terms of exports and internationalization.

Helped by their more favorable climate, wineries located in southern Italy and the islands are further ahead on the road to

sustainability. The sustainability lever seems to act as a value driver both at the level of the differentiation of the offer and on the strategy of cost reduction. The perceived economic advantage comes from better management of resources as well as from the efficiency of the process. Wineries that are directly involved in specific processes of sustainable development represent at least a third of the wine GDP, a value estimated at over 3 billion euros of sales volume. Now the priority is to reach a joint system of evaluation and certification for a concrete improvement of the entire sector. Among the dominating themes are: innovation and energy efficiency: precision viticulture that disperses into the air as little of vine treatments as possible; the use of detailed information as to the conditions of the vineyard and of leaf wetness; micro-zoning thanks to satellite imaging. Reducing waste, evaluating one's own energy situation and searching for the passive efficiency of architecture to optimize space and air-conditioning systems are broadly-shared goals. Think of Antinori's up-to-the-minute

winery in Tuscany (Bargino – San Casciano in Val di Pesa), or that of Alois Lageder in Alto Adige (Magrè) and of Salcheto in Tuscany (Montepulciano). Now we can recycle the energy of renewable sources in the production process, using pruning discards and marc, or grape residue. And then there's packaging. It's much talked about, but there are still few light-weight bottles on the market. The myth that it takes a heavy bottle to conserve a great wine refuses to die, a fact that has an impact on the environment, starting with transportation alone.

In the next edition of the Vini d'Italia guide, 2016, over 4000 wineries will be interviewed with detailed questions about the three dimensions of sustainability: environmental, social and economic, with special attention to the analysis of the data on labels in terms of information transparency. The goal is to attain a complete picture leading to a wider certification agreed on by all, able to respect all the steps on the path towards sustainability, stimulating and requesting the active participation of the increasingly knowledgeable consumer.