

## **German environmentally sustainable wine – what are the differences?**

### **A change of perspective: motives and drives of vintners.**

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When it comes to wine, consumers are faced with multiple choices. Some of the wines available on the shelf exhibit some traits of sustainability, that is, they are produced according to some sustainability criteria. Environmentally sustainable wine represents 1.3% on average of the total branch sales in Germany in 2013/14 (own calculation, source (AMI, 2015; Lernoud and Willer, 2015; Statista GmbH, 2016)) and could consequently be classified as a niche product. Research done by Hoffmann and Szolnoki (2010) confirm this hypothesis. This notwithstanding, these wines represent a huge paradigm shift in production and consumption terms and deserve more attention.

In general, by buying environmentally sustainable labelled products consumers mainly expect fulfilment of high quality standards, natural taste and the absence of pesticides (Hölscher, 2016). Logos are commonly used to simplify the identification of environmentally sustainable products for the consumers. Grieger & Cie. Market Research investigated in 2015 the general knowledge of German consumers by confronting them with different eco-logos. With 94.2% the German governmental BIO logo ranges on the first position. The second most recognized label in this study was BIOLAND (65.4%), followed by DEMETER with 43.5% and the EU organic farming logo (38.5%). Lastly, ECOVIN, a dedicated wine label, reached an awareness of 9.5%.

Broadly speaking, all of these wines can be defined as environmentally sustainable, and although informally people may even refer to all of them as “organic”, they present many differences since the names used to define them convey specific concepts, practices, beliefs and interests. In fact, organic is just one approach to produce environmentally sustainable, others are e.g. bio-dynamic, organic-biological and orange wines (in Germany bio-dynamic and organic-biological are the two main implemented farming practices (Bechmann, 2009)).

This thesis aims at investigating the differences between the EU organic farming logo (as a supranational certification imposed by membership to the European Union), BIOLAND, ECOVIN and DEMETER as selected representatives of these major streams, and question what drives a producer’s decision to subscribe to one of them.

Following a qualitative research approach, the comparative data are determined through an analysis of public and official documents, provided by the four certifications bodies, and a literature review. Furthermore semi-structured interviews are conducted with selected wine producers from South and South-West Germany.

**Research questions:**

What are the motives and drives of vintners in Germany to devote themselves to environmentally sustainable methods?

Why did the vintners decide to subscribe to one of the selected certification bodies (Bioland, ECOVIN, Demeter or the EU organic farming)?

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