

Wine consultation Summary of feedback from 1st round

The first consultation period ran from 9th March to 8th May 2012. We contacted Soil Association Certification licensees and had feedback from members of the public.

Licensees:

All licensees of Soil Association Certification have been contacted directly.

- importers
- UK growers

They were emailed in March with details of key points of the Regulation 203/2012 asking for their feedback. They all received follow up telephone calls in April.

The consultation was announced in *Certification News* which was published on 13th April. The article directed readers to the website www.soilassociation.org/consultation

Members/public:

The consultation was launched on the Soil Association website on 13th April. It was announced in the Spring 2012 edition of our membership magazine *Living Earth*. The consultation was also tweeted on Twitter.

Feedback to 1st consultation

Licensee feedback:

Licensee 1 (UK grower):

Re organic wine production - nothing struck me as obviously 'missing' – at least in respect of key ingredients that we need to use. The caveat of using organic 'where available' is a bit vague and either lets you off completely (eg if you can't 'find it') - or puts you in an invidious position (e.g. if there is organic Isinglass available in Brazil – do they expect you to go to the ends of the earth?). I might mention on the back that the grapes are grown organically but to be honest 'organic wine' sounds a bit like an end in itself. It does not really add much in terms of value to this kind of product.

Licensee 2 (UK grower):

Regarding delaying the new regulations until after the 2012 harvest, I am sure many organic growers would be disappointed. For us it would be OK because we are used to operating with the current SA regulations anyway. The main differences are the higher sulphur levels and one or two additives, most of which we would not be intending to use even after the new regulations come into operation.

Licensee 3 (importer) - "organic is such a tiny part of our business, one third of one per cent. Being able to label wine 'organic' is sensible. The current wording 'wine made from organic grapes' is either ignored or confusing".

Licensee 4 (UK grower) – the additives and processing aids are unnecessary. We have no need to use any. We have 1.5 acres of vines, don't add any yeast and have no problems in meeting the sulphite levels.

Licensee 5 (grower, New Zealand): We do not currently import any 'Organic' wines from XXXX in to the UK, however they do make some organic wines according to local regulations and are certified by BioGro. They requested that I share the following concerns with you, relating to your request for feedback below:

The Head of Winemaking & Viticulture is very concerned by the suggestion that they want to remove the use of copper sulphate from winemaking from 2015, detailed under the Annex at the end of the document, and believes we should object strongly.

He sees it as potentially a huge issue around wine quality. With no DAP (currently) and no copper (potentially), he believes it could make producing an attractive, clean, fruit driven wine a real challenge.

If organic wines are not of the highest quality standards, they risk being considered as a lesser alternative based on more earthy, less pure characters resulting from not being able to provide a clean wine. Excluding copper sulphate will also impact the use of lees ageing - again a quality issue.

Consumer feedback:

We received two consumer responses.

Consumer 1:

- disappointed you are planning to relax the current standards: to whose benefit? What is the benefit to the consumer, whom surely organic standard are there to protect and who trusts the brand of the Soil Association to ensure food is as healthy and natural as possible, minimising processing (I quote from your standards)?
- If your standards have worked so far without allowing certain substances, why should you include them now?
- concerned that availability on the market will dictate whether some additives and processing aids are organic or not. Rather unfair to expose consumers to non-organic substances that could well have not been there in the first place.
- I can see how objections can be raised by some of the producers, based on market principles i.e. competition etc. but I guess then the question is what does organic stand for?
- I would draw your attention to an article I read recently, available at <http://www.iol.co.za/lifestyle/food-drink/drink/eu-organic-rules-for-wine-too-lax-1.1283717> [provided] It seems Italian organic winemakers complain the EU rules are too lax. One is quoted saying they need to add only “20-25 mg of sulphites” and apparently it is feasible to do without sulphites altogether.
- If that is what the organic industry is prepared to do, then why raise the Soil Association sulphite standards to match the EU rules? You should rather tighten them further!
- In general, I cannot see who's the winner from relaxation of the standards: why are you doing it?

Consumer 2:

- 1) I think any and all substances used in general wine making should be used in organic wine making as long as an organic provenance (or non gmo) can be demonstrated
- 2) I cannot see what difference to organic status any of the processes would make so I think they should be allowed.
- 3) One of the problems with organic wines is that with less sulphur in the wine, the quality seems to fade but people seem to forgive this because it's organic and therefore good for them and the planet. I think that organic wines need to concentrate more on quality and if that means having more sulphur in the wine then so be it.
- 4) Thank god we can call wines organic and not just label them as made from organically grown grapes.