



PRESS KIT

Faugères, Fine Wines by Nature - 2018-2028



FAUGERES, FINE WINES BY NATURE...

CONTEXT, AMBITION, OBJECTIVES

Although 50% of its acreage is already farmed organically and 83% of its winegrowers comply with at least one agri-environmental scheme (organic certification, biodynamics, HVE, mating disruption, AECM), **the Faugères appellation has decided to take its approach to protecting and optimising the natural potential of its vineyards a stage further, by adopting a new ten-year plan called "Faugères, Grands Vins de Nature" (Faugères, Fine Wines by Nature).**

Drafted since the summer of 2017, this collective project is based on:

- **A clear ambition:** to be exemplary, to achieve excellence, to set an example;
- **A new concept:** the production of "Fine Wines by Nature";
- **And a momentum that goes beyond organic:** driven by passionate expertise and a genuine respect shown by winegrowers for their natural surroundings.

The objectives have been set and pledges made. Most notably, the Faugères appellation aims to ultimately forgo the use of herbicides and insecticides.

"I think Faugères can be exemplary in the connect between its winegrowers and their natural surroundings, thanks to the work that has long been undertaken by the appellation, and more recently the creative and decisive support of Yannis Gilbert and the facilitators at the Orb and Libron Valley joint association (SMVOL)".

Nathalie Caumette, chair of AOP FAUGERES, AGM, 12 June 2018





AGM ON 12 JUNE 2018

SPEECH BY NATHALIE CAUMETTE,
CHAIR OF AOP FAUGÈRES

« **T**here may seem to be a great distance between nature and the world of wine enthusiasts, and yet in Faugères, they are extremely close, due to the area's winegrowing vocation, its affiliation with the Haut Languedoc national park, and its location as a balcony overlooking the **inspirational Mediterranean Sea**. Agriculture forms the everlasting bond between man and nature. But, I hear you say, wine lovers dream of labels, top names, luxurious chateaux or boutique wineries; of supple, mellow tannins, fruit or undergrowth aromas, and of minerality. Not of tiny birds, let alone bees, and certainly not of water, however pure it may be. All right, at a push, of acetic acid, horse sweat, even the flavours of small rodents, but this is not about real wine. Ok, but **between the gatekeepers and the groupies in search of points of reference, there is the normal, urban consumer**, who is neither old nor young, could be French, Belgian or Canadian, is demanding but laid back, and drinks wine on a Friday evening after a long week's work, with friends and whatever happens to be in the fridge. **This consumer can no longer/will no longer avoid issues related to the environment and his or her health. The time for doubting is over, and that's now all we ever talk about.**

Within the wine industry, the turnaround point dates back to 2016, with the first Cash Investigation programme on Bordeaux schools being sprayed with pesticides. Just afterwards, in 2017 and 2018, two studies on the dramatic decline in insects and birds in the countryside would upset the tempo of the general-interest media and take the subject out of strictly scientific circles. This is the niche that we are targeting, and they can be both wine connoisseurs and sensitive to a genuine, skilled proposal to change our relationship with nature. This does not imply that we are all going to become passionate naturalists, or eco-converts. No, these normal people don't like flies, they're afraid of spiders, they think that all small birds are sparrows, and would rather watch a Sunday series on Netflix while knocking back a glass of good wine, than explore the countryside around them. But they are now convinced that we will not be able to go on living without nature.

Everything points in that direction: **nature only has a 4-billion-year head start on us; it is able to live off fresh air and clean water whilst the tiniest man-made machine stops when its tank is empty.** The complexity of the brains of vertebrates can be rivalled by no present-day computer, as is the case with bat sonar. The yarn of a spider's web has no equivalent in the world of manufacturing for its fineness and resistance. Nature invented antibiotics, resistance to phylloxera, active lime, downy and powdery mildew. The point here is not to draw up an exhaustive list, but to become aware of what we risk losing and how high the stakes are.

Nature has become an unavoidable topic of discussion and reflection, the new focus of people's interest and concern. Something is happening; new values linked to this theme are spreading. It is a highly disputed theme, where everyone wants to play a part, as evidenced by the hysterical stir caused by some about eco-practices, where everything is being washed greener than green. Consequently, the subject is sometimes approached in a confusing way and there is a risk of conflation.

So what does changing our relationship with nature in our habits or behaviour imply? It is always more burdensome than to carry on as before, of course, but **I think that Faugères can be exemplary in the connect between its winegrowers and their natural surroundings, thanks to the work that has long been undertaken by the appellation, and more recently the creative and decisive support of Yannis Gilbert and the facilitators at the Orb and Libron Valley joint association (SMVOL).**

So-called intensive, or conventional, agriculture considers nature in the following, caricatured way:

- The soil is merely a physical medium (through to the so-called soil-less crops) which must therefore be as clean as possible.
- The plant is infused with the simple elements Nitrogen, Phosphate and Potassium.
- Pests are enemies that must be controlled by spraying active ingredients to eradicate them if possible.

It is certainly simple but not that effective: there is no eradication, resistance to active ingredients is emerging, yields are stagnant or even decreasing, food products are posing problems and there are the environmental consequences already mentioned above.

The new relationship that must be established between agriculture and nature is proposing, on the strength of new and plentiful scientific knowledge, to seek to understand the biology and ecology of pests in order to better keep them at bay and to promote the natural physiological mechanisms of plants so that they are more resistant. Soil life plays a central and now well-established role in this process. This is not about minimising the problems that serve as reminders to us every day, nor of considering nature as exemplary, which it is not, as we were reminded by this incredible month of May 2018 and its mildew attacks. **The solutions have yet to be invented.**

In Faugères, forgoing the use of weed killers and insecticides seems to be an ambitious but feasible objective in the medium term. Similarly, attention should be paid to trees and hedges, which provide habitats for auxiliary fauna and flora, when replanting or clearing. And in the future, we should consider global management of the space to be shared between farmed and natural areas: creating untouchable havens is not necessarily the ideal solution everywhere, as biodiversity is higher in open farmed areas surrounded by hedges than in woodlands, for example.

Organic farming is increasingly popular with consumers, so it is up to each of us to do our sums. The producers' organisation and the SMVOL can provide assistance.

But above and beyond the technical changes, the decisive factor in Faugères' success will be our capacity for cohesion in this major shift in direction. This seems impossible given the differences, hostility, jealousy and difficulties that sometimes exist: the human ecosystem must also evolve in the interests of everyone. This is not about loving each other, nor of going on holiday together, but of showing a minimum of respect for each other. We spoke above about natural wines. It is quite obvious that some winegrowers referred to as "natural" are pioneers. They innovate when the self-righteous sneer or are outraged. So if we settle for definitive conclusions like "if you do nothing, you make vinegar" or "with phenols, terroir disappears and the wines are all the same everywhere", we will miss the boat, and then have to chase after it. Winemaking that does not involve 25mg/l of free SO₂ is now a new challenge that consumers are imposing on us. Acknowledging our differences is part of the strategy. "



AOP FAUGÈRES



30 hl/ha
AVERAGE YIELDS
MAX. AUTHORISED YIELDS 45 hl/ha



83%
OF WINERIES
WITH AT LEAST ONE
AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL*
COMMITMENT

* Organic certification, biodynamics, HEV, mating disruption, AECM.



75%
OF WINERIES
INVOLVED IN

ORGANIC

CERTIFIED WINERIES, IN CONVERSION
AND BIODYNAMIC

50% OF VINEYARD AREA
OVER 1780 HECTARES

FOR MORE INFORMATION: www.faugeres.com



Defining features and key figures for 2021

- ◆ 7 villages
- ◆ 1780 ha producing 54500 hl
- ◆ 30 hl/ha (average – 10 years): yields are naturally low (max. authorised yield 45 hl/ha)
- ◆ 58 wineries, including one co-operative
- ◆ Creation of the AOC:
 - ◆ 1982: Red and Rosé
 - ◆ 2005: White
- ◆ Marketing:
 - ◆ France: 87% / Export: 13%

Region and vineyard sites: vineyards woven into the unspoilt natural fabric

Location: appellation situated 20 km north of Béziers, **adjacent to the Monts de Faugères**, the lower foothills of the Cevennes and of Haut-Languedoc. **Elevations up to 400m above sea level.**

Nature

Fauna and flora: small woodlands, scrub/garrigue plants and **biodiversity** are entwined with vineyards **over significant areas**. They play a pivotal role in the ecosystem and therefore the vineyard sites and identity of the wines.

Climate: Mediterranean

Soils: Faugères is a unique Languedoc appellation in that its soils are **100% schist** (a compression of sand and clay from the erosion of ancient mountains subsequently cut into sheets during the upthrust of the balcony overlooking the Béziers plain). The soils are not very fertile but offer good drainage: water seeps through and is stored deep underground. Vines are therefore forced to develop deep roots. Water stress is high in summer, but the distinctive features of schist – forming sheets and cracks in the rock – limit water stress by allowing vines to access the deeply-stored water.

This fragile *terroir* producing naturally low yields has driven winegrowers to better understand the ecosystem and adapt their techniques to safeguard it for the future.

How human input shapes *terroir*...

Specifications incorporating agri-environmental measures from 2011 (extremely rare at the time: a ban on chemical weed control between vine rows; permanent grass cover on the headlands; and a limit on mineral nitrogen inputs).

A strong environmental commitment: 83% of wineries with at least one agri-environmental commitment

- ◆ **Organic agriculture / Biodynamics in 2021:** 75% of wineries and over 50% of vineyard area involved. Also, new wine growers either immediately farm organically or very quickly start the switch-over.
- ◆ **HVE** (High Environmental Value, level 3): 15% of wineries.
- ◆ **An active GDON** (protection group to combat pests) **managed by the producers' organisation** in a bid to reduce / eliminate insecticides.
- ◆ **Mating disruption:** 560 ha (32% of vineyard area).
- ◆ **2 collective washing stations** for agricultural tools to preserve water quality.
- ◆ **The desire to strive towards an ideal that is increasingly respectful of the environment:**
 - ◇ **Grass cover** (including experiments by the EEIG 'Les Enherbeurs' in conjunction with INRA).
 - ◇ **Restoration of dry stone walls** and plots planted along contour lines to combat soil erosion and enhance the landscape.
 - ◇ **Mixed farming, hedge planting, maintenance of rivers and streams, introduction of agri-ecosystems**

Varietal range:

- ◆ **Reds and Rosés:** Syrah (32%), Grenache and Lledoner Pelut (29%), Carignan (20%), Mourvèdre (11%), Cinsault (8%).
- ◆ **White:** Roussanne (43%), Vermentino (25%), Marsanne (15%), Grenache Blanc (12%), Viognier (4%), Clairette (1%).



INTERVIEW OF NATHALIE CAUMETTE

CHAIR OF AOP FAUGÈRES

“What exactly does “Faugères, Fine Wines by Nature” mean?

- It is probably a good idea to start with a brief explanation of the **Faugères appellation, a wine region adjoining the lower foothills of the Cevennes, a kind of Piedmont in Upper Languedoc that covers 5,000 hectares.** This is a small, **artisanal-style appellation. Only 1,900 ha are planted to vines.** Seven villages make up a small part of the remaining area **and unspoilt countryside for the vast majority.** This is garrigue and maquis, or scrubland, on hills up to an **elevation of nearly 400 metres.** The soils are **entirely schist** and not very fertile, forcing winegrowers to look for solutions in their natural environment that allow them to produce enough quality grapes to make a living. The winegrowers on the plains once thought that their counterparts in Faugères were mad to want to farm this relatively arid land. But the winegrowers of Faugères were not fazed, convinced that they could produce very fine wines with unique/singular characteristics: in short, that Faugères offered **an exceptional terroir.** However, in order to achieve this, they were forced to **re-establish a connection with nature at a relatively early stage.** In **2008,** a diagnosis led the appellation to introduce **the strapline NATURE SCHISTE.** An appellation, however, is not static: ten years later, **in 2018,** a new study showed that philosophies, practices and ideals converged and drove growers, for the love of their land, towards **an ideal of harmony with nature and the environment.**

“Fine Wines by Nature” are therefore produced by winegrowers who, out of a passion for their natural surroundings, have developed a style of winegrowing expertise that stems from those surroundings and which they are constantly seeking to perfect. No resources means no terroir: “Faugères, Fine Wines by Nature” is therefore tantamount to **a collective desire** to gain a better understanding of natural resources so as to better protect and “interpret” them by making wines in their image. **Above all, the ethos reflects an appellation’s, our appellation’s, momentum.**

Does this mean that all the appellation’s wines are organic, biodynamic or “natural”?

- **No. Not all AOC Faugères wines are “natural” wines** in the sense that is frequently understood nowadays (NB: there is no official definition for a natural wine). On the other hand, the vast majority of the wines are made by winegrowers who are committed in one way or another to protecting nature and vineyard sites. So “Wine by Nature” does not mean “natural wine” at all. It is above all a collective approach and momentum that the appellation aims to promote, strengthen and hasten the speed of. It is a shared desire to work together towards an ideal of winegrowing in harmony with nature. **58% of wineries are already involved in organic farming** (certified or in the switch-over), which represents **40% of acreage.** This is the result of work carried out internally for many years that we have publicised very little, or not at all. **The figures are extremely high** compared to the 9% national average for organic winegrowing, and also very high even in the heart of Languedoc where 14% of acreage is organic. But organic is neither the sole method nor the only commitment...

How can you claim to produce “Wines by Nature” if not all the wines are produced using organic techniques (with no synthetic chemicals)?

- The dynamics of agriculture in Faugères are far from being limited to organic farming. They cover a set of diverse and varied techniques, experiments, questioning and research in a bid to find new solutions; the commitments are certainly disparate but numerous. One of the objectives is indeed, in the long term, that all the vineyards be farmed organically. Faugères does not claim to be a “perfect” appellation if, that is, there is such a thing.

“100% organic” is in any case only an intermediate objective and not an end in itself. Organic is not perfect either. Referring to “Fine Wines by Nature” therefore implies setting our sights even higher. Placing nature ever more at the heart of the appellation and vineyard sites is a way of speeding up the process.



Also, among the 42% of wineries that are not officially committed to organic farming (neither certified nor in the switch-over phase), some do not use synthetic products. Certification guarantees the techniques and quality of the product, and so without that guarantee, we cannot take them into account in our figures. However, **all of these wineries are subject to minimum agri-environmental obligations imposed by our specifications** (a ban on blanket spraying, restriction of nitrogen inputs, mandatory grassing of headlands). 80% of the wineries go beyond these specifications for the protection of natural resources. Some of them actively participate in insecticide-free control (mating disruption, pest control organisations, *Flavescence Dorée*); entirely forgo herbicides; are certified High Environmental Value; restore or build dry stone walls to combat soil erosion and promote biodiversity, for example. Among those certified, there are also wineries that go much further than their certification requires: there are the ‘grass cover group’ (GIEE monitored by INRA), those who are involved in mixed farming and those who work to create real agro-ecosystems, for instance. The appellation also has 2 collective washing areas (including the first in France!).

“Faugères, Fine Wines by Nature” therefore goes beyond mere organic figures: it implies a profusion of investments and a vast majority of winegrowers who work, each at their own pace, towards the same goal. They want to move the appellation forward, to strive for an ideal and to encourage the last sceptics to join them as much as possible. It is an appellation dynamic that we want to promote and encourage! Certainly, we would like things to go faster sometimes, but we should not **underestimate the ideological barriers** (inherited from decades of propaganda) still in place, nor the **fears prompted by the economic stakes involved...** Each winegrower has his/her own history and we cannot expect them all to evolve at the same pace. In a favourable societal context, however, we hope that the project will break down some of these barriers.

So in your opinion, are certifications pointless?

- **No, quite the opposite.** They offer **guarantees** for the consumer, professionals, neighbours, everyone. They mainly certify companies and products. They also have a strong **“pollination power”**: when 58% of wineries are organic, proudly display their AB logo and produce wines of excellent quality, the remaining 42% question their own methods and show an interest. What we thought impossible becomes possible, and conceivable. And then one day, we eventually take the plunge. This is true of the chairman of the co-operative winery who became convinced by the discussions, debates and observations: it was a clear signal sent out to the world of Faugères co-operative winegrowers, who already have a high level of involvement through their environmental charter and mating disruption techniques, in particular. Also, just because a technique is not certified does not mean that it does not actually exist. Of course, it is impossible to promote it; but it is nevertheless a choice on the part of the winegrower that we must respect even if we feel it's a pity.

“Fine Wines by Nature” is more the hallmark of a momentum within an appellation area: the producer is located within this appellation, in a region that is mainly committed to protecting nature, where every possible measure is taken to show greatest respect for the environment.

Are you not worried that there will be confusion / conflation between “natural” wines and Faugères wines?

- There is a risk of confusion and we are aware of that. Winegrowers will **have to take an educational approach** and continually explain the issues involved to the general public and professionals. **The project has the merit of opening up a dialogue between winegrowers from different movements. It first caused divisions within the area before creating cohesion.**

Some winegrowers are a little frightened by the deviations from the norm that are sometimes associated, rightly or wrongly, with “natural wines”. Their intention is to make wines that they consider to be without “deviancy” and certainly do not want there to be any confluations.



On the other hand, natural wine producers fear their work will lose credibility and may feel that those who do not work in exactly the same spirit are benefiting from their image.

Nevertheless, many of them can visualise and adhere to the common objective: to change attitudes and therefore techniques even faster within the boundaries of the appellation to begin with. There is a consensus on this point. The Fine Wines by Nature project is also there for that reason: to bring people together at appellation level around one of the major challenges of our century and to move forward together towards a better future.

Don't you think you will come under fire from the natural wine community?

- It's true that there is a risk of that. But **the issue is not about "stealing" a concept from natural wine producers, but of taking back a word that belongs to everyone and which has, in fact, been one of the appellation's core dynamics for over 10 years**, as demonstrated by the NATURE SCHISTE strapline launched in 2008. Nature belongs to no one: in the overall scheme of things, Man is just one component part. Nature has always been closely related to the concept of terroir in Faugères. **Today, the appellation has collectively decided to place it back at the very heart of the concept of terroir and to make it a watchword**: firstly for itself, within its boundaries, but also globally.



Just because you don't produce natural wine doesn't mean you're a winegrower who is insensitive to nature. There are different degrees of commitment. Our hope is that the rungs of the ladder will be climbed and this is what the project tends to encourage. In Faugères, what is impressive is the **sum of individual commitments to nature, all levels combined, within the same appellation.**

Our hope is that producers of "natural wines" will understand that the objective is above all to push people in the right direction and not to step on their toes. In fact, even they use words other than "natural", such as "free" wines or "naked" wines.

So... Is the ultimate ambition to only produce natural wines in Faugères?

- **The ambition is to get as close as possible to a winegrowing ecosystem where winegrowers are aware that they are part of a whole (nature), that they must take it on board, and interact with it as harmoniously and therefore sustainably as possible, for their generation but also for those that will follow.**

The primary ambition is therefore to show respect for the environment, and the first step would be to do without herbicides entirely.

The second ambition is of course also to produce wines that reflect what nature offers in its purest form: to produce a terroir flavour (because there are several!). This can only be achieved if the first ambition is realised.

But this does not necessarily lead to the production of "natural" wines. There cannot be a single interpretation of what this original nature or what the terroir is. Take two artists and ask them to paint a portrait of the same model. Each one will view the model through the lens of their own sensitivity, will use different tools, colours, techniques, and in the end the paintings produced will be significantly different even if we recognise the model because there are broad strokes that stay common to both. In the same way, **winegrowers are interpreters of nature.** Sensitivities, techniques, expertise and mastery can also evolve throughout the life of the artist and the winegrower. And all this diversity, all these movements, create the appellation's wealth. **Terroir does not have a single taste, and there cannot be a single method to "paint its reflection(s)".**

Why this change in the appellation's identity now? At a time when the environment is a buzz word, it seems rather opportunistic... Don't you feel that you are capitalising on the rise in popularity of natural wines?

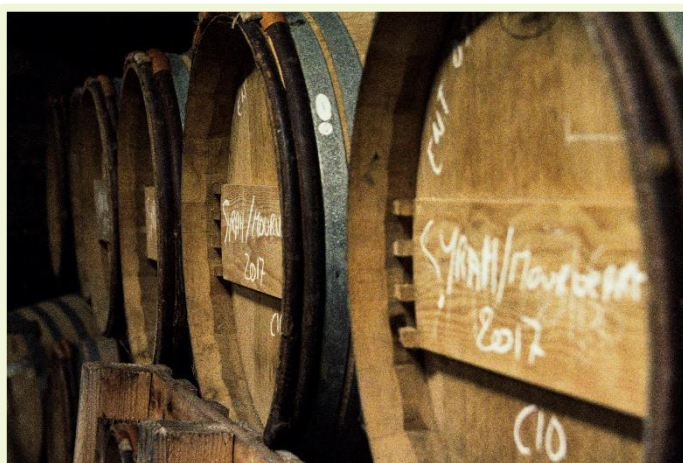
- **Faugères is ahead of its time, but didn't know how to, want to, or was able to communicate effectively on the issue...** It wasn't that long ago that it was difficult: organic was almost a dirty word when it came to wine, agri-environmental techniques were disparaged, and winegrowers who used them were considered crazy... So we took a low-profile approach with "NATURE SCHISTE". And then, many felt that what we were collectively achieving was still not "enough".

Nowadays, things have changed: breaking through the 50% barrier for wineries involved in organic farming sent out a signal to winegrowers. Society, too, has also matured exponentially in recent years. **So yes, it is appropriate in the sense that "it is the right time" because consumption patterns have converged with the environmental dynamics of the appellation:** we CAN finally publicise the dynamics of the appellation. When Faugères is in a position to satisfy demand for wines where ethics are important, why not publicise it?! **There is a lot of expertise in Faugères, but you have to get the word out there!** And it's true that making good wines is not enough to sell them at a price that allows the winegrower to earn a decent living and to continue to invest in applying ethical practices: it is now necessary to publicise existing commitments more effectively.

The work that has been carried out collectively for years and that is now bearing fruit gives Faugères real legitimacy. Efforts by winegrowers deserve to be better known and promoted, and it is important that they are if we want to move forward. Also, the issue is precisely about acting as a catalyst for change, about intensifying and accelerating the trend: this is what a majority of wineries want.

Are you really ahead of the other appellations? Do you have a more legitimate claim to being producers of "Fine Wines by Nature"?

- It is difficult **to say if we stick to numbers alone:** few appellations have figures, update them and/or publicise them.



Conversely, **Faugères does have something of a head start, once again, in terms of collective reflection and collaborative dynamics on environmental issues.** Proof of this is that, **in 2008, the appellation had its specifications amended to include agri-environmental measures:** a ban on blanket spraying with chemicals, restrictions on mineral nitrogen inputs, mandatory grassing of headlands. It was laborious, INAO was quite reluctant, but we succeeded: this huge step forward already dates back 10 years. Our **prior experience** alone in this process partly gives us legitimacy.

Also, our legitimacy also rests on the fact that we are not prepared to accept organic alone (which once again has its limitations), but must set our sights higher, starting today. By making nature once again the focal point of our communications, we also intend to make it the focus of the concept of *terroir* for everyone: to continue to raise awareness, to **recreate the** (sometimes forgotten) **connect** between winegrowers and nature and to **reflect now on ways of avoiding pitfalls in the future**.



Another point that makes us feel legitimate is **the means to our end**.

The appellation wants to evolve its specifications again so that they include more **agri-environmental** obligations and more **varietal freedom**, but we also want **unspoilt areas to be ring-fenced**; although they are potentially arable at the moment, they would become untouchable.

The producers' organisation (ODG) has its own protection group to combat pests (GDON) which it supervises, thereby coordinating insecticide-free control and working on arrangements for treating *flavescence dorée*, the aim being to do without the treatments completely.

In addition, we work **in close partnership and in a spirit of complementarity with the Water Agency and local stakeholders**.

Concurrently with this, we are also working to set up **internal training courses to support our winegrowers**, to help them become more familiar with nature, the *terroir* and good practices, to share their knowledge and experiences with each other and with others to move towards the ideal mentioned above. This is a mammoth task that strikes a sensitive chord, that pushes winegrowers to their limits and that sometimes calls into question a whole lifetime of beliefs and practices... There is still a very long way to go. We have progressed on our journey but must not stop: this is not a sprint we have started but an endurance race!

But from a certain perspective, you are right: **Faugères is not designed to have a monopoly on "natural wines". That's a good thing: it takes many to push the boundaries, especially to make sure that research progresses. And the appellation would be delighted to share ideas with other appellations on the issue of agri-environmentalism, both within or outside the region. The aim is to set an example** by showing, at appellation level, that there can be an alternative farming model and by helping to deliver the final blow to an agro-industrial model that is destined to disappear. We hope this will help "shake up" an industry that has long been based on principles that have contributed to marginalising (even demonising at times) agri-environmental practices. Today, change is in the air, people are waking up; even INAO has recently opened up to reflection. That's good news. **Research needs to follow suit** because too often we find ourselves hamstrung from an agronomic perspective, preventing those who "would like to do better" from "actually doing better" for nature.

That said, for the time being, Faugères is the first to lay claim to being the "Fine Wines by Nature" appellation and therefore to agree to facing all the difficulties that this entails

(managing disparate situations, not discriminating against producers). This, in itself, is already a strong message being sent out and a significant risk-taking exercise. But the challenge is worth it.

And within the “Fine Wines by Nature” collective, does this draw a line between those who have made the pledge and the others? Aren’t you afraid you might divide your appellation?



- **Firstly, 80% of companies within the appellation apply at least one agri-environmental measure that goes beyond the requirements of our specifications!** For the majority of people that rally round our environmental dynamics (already well-established) and the “Fine Wines by Nature” project, we are preaching to the choir. The project itself is new in that it spells out the ideal towards which we must strive and sets objectives, at least intermediate, to be achieved.

Secondly, history is in motion: there is an urgent need to take environmental issues

on board on a large scale. This is a notion that has grown considerably in recent years and is bordering on becoming mainstream, or perhaps already has. So the question won’t be raised much longer: we need to **make a move now!**

Thirdly, we are anticipating future bans and intend to prepare the appellation’s winegrowers: it is a way of taking part in the “ecological transition” and protecting winegrowers!

What actions will you take over the coming months and years to honour this standpoint?”

- Honouring this standpoint primarily implies that everyone continue to honour it in the vineyards and the wineries. What happens out in the field is at the crux of maximising respect for the environment. So a lot of work will be conducted internally, as it has been so far. These actions may not necessarily be visible from the outside. Saying that, showing respect for the environment is costly for producers, it involves a lot of investment, with a return on investment that takes a long time, when indeed there is one... So valuing those actions, in every sense of the word, is absolutely critical! And one vital aspect of this is **communication. This has been one of our weak points for a long time... But now, we will do our utmost to keep “the world” informed of progress and results, via our new website (due to go live on June 25) and via social media in particular. Appellation and winegrowers’ news will be posted there.**

And, without wanting to give too much away, we recently met the Yann Arthus Bertrand Foundation, Good Planet, because the aim is not to work alone. There are synergies to be found and so we are currently exploring several possible avenues of partnership with the foundation. We will soon define the one, or ones, that will best be able to serve our common objectives, particularly for **organising events, such as symposiums**, which would bring together a wider community of stakeholders interested in the project. They might be winegrowers from other appellations or producer groups in France or abroad, scientists, researchers or

politicians, why not? And finally, there is the general public, the community: it too must eventually be able to understand the project or even collaborate on it...

How will each winegrower be able to join or be incorporated into this momentum?

- We do not want to leave anyone by the wayside and everyone must have the opportunity to be informed, to sense the possibilities for changing practices, and to receive training. **Securing access to scientific information, raising awareness and prompting inquisitiveness, reflection and idea sharing between winegrowers are therefore major components of our project.**

There is already a lot of expertise within the appellation, but it is not always or not sufficiently shared, most often through lack of opportunity. We want to ramp up these opportunities.

Also, **the producers' organisation will continue monitoring and keep its members informed, of course.**

Finally, we are **currently working on setting up a specific training plan** to complete idea sharing by calling on partners such as the Orb and Libron Valley joint association (SMVOL) and the Water Agency or various external stakeholders (agronomists, scientists, environmental education associations, industry stakeholders and perhaps even winegrowers from other appellations). The training plan **must respond to the specific questions and needs of Faugères winegrowers from an agri-environmental perspective, both theoretically and in practical terms, also taking into account the disparities in experience.**

21st-century winegrowers must be very versatile. They have to multi-task and there are only 24 hours in a day. We already know that we will have to **work to rally people** around our project, but we also think that **a collective drive will generate increased interest in agri-environmental issues and create additional needs related to a desire to push the boundaries ever further.** Requests for training have already been voiced and interest in sharing knowledge should be exponential over the coming years. That's our prediction anyway.

Which indicators will you use to measure the success of your collective drive?

- **There is a variety of indicators and our quantified objectives vary depending on whether they are considered over the short term (2 to 5 years) or the medium/long term (10 years):**

First of all, there is the surge in organic farming and a complete phasing out of herbicides: this will be measured by the increase in the number of companies and the areas involved.

For independent wineries, we aim for an increase of 20% over 2 years and 50% of the current number over 10 years, which would bring us to almost 75% of independent wineries. For newcomers, we aim for 100% organic over 10 years and we have set a target of 80% for organic newcomers by 2020.



For the co-operative winery, the objective is to double the current organic vineyard area by 2020 and to reach 50% by 2028. There is a real outburst of interest at the moment, thanks to the commitment of the winery's chairman who has already switched his entire farm to organic. However, winegrowers already have good awareness about organic and are very active in other agri-environmental aspects, particularly mating disruption.

We are also aiming for additional arrangements in villages within the appellation area as part of the fight against flavescence dorée with the consent of the authorities: this would allow us to increase the number of villages where local adjustments are authorised from 3 now to 5 in 2020, and 100% in 2028. Ideally, we would like to only have to spray around outbreak areas, or even to leave the mandatory treatment area altogether!

Also, we hope that use of mating disruption will become widespread. For the moment, no adverse effects have been reported and results in the vineyard are convincing! This year, the technique is used over 447 hectares, and we would like to be able to create new pockets that would bring us up to at least 500 hectares in 2020. And in 10 years' time, our objective is for more than half of the appellation's area under vine to be covered by mating disruption.



Obviously, there are other indicators that will allow us to measure the impact of our actions, without necessarily being able to gauge them scientifically. One of the most notable indicators is the level of commitment by local stakeholders. **The project is also designed to make the appellation area a place where all stakeholders, either from the industry or the community, can subscribe to the commitment that we want**

to encourage in the vineyard. Most of the villages within the appellation are already well ahead of schedule; 3 of them are recipients of the Terre Saine endorsement. Actions carried out by the communities over the coming years may also attest to the impact of the project, at least partially. We are also in contact with the Haut-Languedoc National Park, which of course is encouraging us in the process. We have begun to discuss possibilities for synergies.

Finally, the extent to which Faugères wines are listed in markets and distribution channels that share our values will allow us to assess whether our success also has a commercial dimension, whether progress is recognised and encouraged beyond the boundaries of the appellation. To succeed, we need to enter into a virtuous circle: our environmental pledge in the vineyard must primarily serve the interests of our vineyards, but in doing so, also contribute to the image of the AOC, which in turn serves the interests of the winegrowers, who can then make an even stronger commitment and so on.

How much time have you allowed for all the winegrowers to join and actively participate in this collective project?

- **Approximately 10 years.** To date, **80% of businesses and nearly 70% of growers are committed to at least one scheme that goes beyond the agri-environmental obligations of our specifications.** But, to answer your specific question honestly, this does not yet mean that these structures are already 100% active in the collective project. Provided that this is feasible, it will take time. Let's say 10 years..."





AOP FAUGERES

Route des près, 34480 Laurens

www.faugeres.com

04 67 00 80 80 / contact.odg@faugeres.com

Photographies © Diabolo Bohème