

Vineyard Agribusiness in Plovdiv Region – Current Status, Spatial Organization and Opportunities for Development

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ABSTRACT

Viticulture and wine production have occupied an important place in the livelihood of the Bulgarian population since ancient times. The main direction of viticulture in Bulgaria is the production of wine grapes, which provides the raw material for table, quality and other wines, for the production of wine distillate, grape juice, must for the production of grape concentrate and a number of other directions. This largely predetermines the strong integration links between viticulture and winemaking, which allows the literature to speak of a viticulture and wine sector of the national economy. The main focus of this study is aimed at studying the leading conditions and resources for the development of viticulture and winemaking and their importance in the economy of the Plovdiv region. The study also examines its role in the labor market. The study concludes with identifying the main challenges facing the development of viticulture and winemaking and the possibilities for overcoming them. The findings contribute to a better understanding of the spatial organization and development potential of viticulture agribusiness in regional contexts.

Keywords: Viticulture, Winemaking, Vineyards, Grape, Conditions, Production, Market

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INTRODUCTION

Viticulture and winemaking in Plovdiv region are an important part of the economy and cultural heritage of the region, providing employment and generating income for a significant part of the population in the region. Plovdiv region is located in the central part of Southern Bulgaria and covers part of the western Upper Thracian Plain, Karlovo Field, the southern slopes of the Stara Planina and part of the northern slopes of the Rhodope Mountains. The area has a long tradition in wine production and vineyard cultivation. The climatic conditions, combined with suitable soils, create ideal conditions for the development of viticulture and winemaking.

The viticulture and wine sector is a traditional industry for Bulgaria, which is of particular importance in rural areas, as it creates employment, solves some of the demographic problems, contributes to the sustainable development of agriculture, and diversifies the local economy. On a national scale, the sector has enormous potential for export and expansion of markets worldwide, increases competitiveness and revenues in the country's overall economy, improves its image abroad, and supports the development of other economic sectors such as tourism and the food industry.

The National Strategy for the Development of Viticulture and Winemaking in Bulgaria 2005-2025 comments that: "The viticulture and winemaking sector in Bulgaria has deep roots and great potential with its characteristics to fit into the model of a sector producing a product that meets the challenges of the 21st century." Wine meets the future requirements for an ecologically clean, healthy and environmentally safe product. The development of the wine sector by 2025 should make it, on the one hand, a leading sector for the national economy, and on the other hand, to ensure an authentic place for Bulgaria in international wine markets and, above all, in the common European market."

The development of the sector over time is characterized by a strong dynamic, reflected in periods of growth and reduction of its production potential. Numerous and very diverse factors influence the development directions of Bulgarian viticulture, including a number of institutional impacts related to changes in policies affecting the sector. In view of the described complex dynamics, the role of the wine sector in the Bulgarian economy also varies over different historical periods. There are large fluctuations in value in the absolute and relative share of the sector in agricultural production, imports and exports of Bulgaria by year (Roycheva, 2019).

The main direction of viticulture in the district is the production of wine grapes, which provides the raw material for table, quality and other wines, for the production of wine distillate, grape juice, must for the production of grape concentrate and a number of other directions (Kirechev, 2013).

The main objective of the study is to conduct a spatial analysis of the production and territorial structure of the viticulture agribusiness in the Plovdiv region.

To achieve the set goal, it is necessary to solve the following tasks:

- to carry out a spatial analysis of the production of grape and wine types in the Plovdiv region
- to assess the role of the viticultural agribusiness in the economic development of the studied territory
- to carry out an analysis of the grape and wine market in the Plovdiv region
- to examine the role of state policy on the grape and wine market through relevant policies and subsidies.

The spatial organization of agribusiness is a key factor for regional economic development, influencing production efficiency, market accessibility, and rural sustainability.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Agribusiness and agriculture have always been the focus of geographers and their research in our country – Boiadjiev and Patarchanov (2001).

One of the researchers with the most in-depth geographical knowledge, who has published a number of studies on viticulture and winemaking in our country, is Iv. Markov (2001, 2011). The study of the varietal structure of the viticulture and winemaking sector is also the subject of analysis by (Dimitrova, Simeonov, 2015). In the study "Varietal structure as a source of competitive advantage in the viticulture and wine sector", the authors analyze the status and trends of change in the varietal structure of wine vineyards in the country.

In his work "Agroclimatic Resources of Bulgaria" (Hershkovich, 1984) he examines the normal development of the vine, which depends to a high degree on the impact of the climate, i.e. on its factors and elements, the most important of which are heat, light and moisture. They determine the possibility of its existence.

The classification and development of rural areas, as well as their problems in our country, is the focus of research by authors such as: Patarchanova and Guneva (2016), Radomirska (2021, 2022). The profile of the rural economy and the opportunities for its diversification are the subject of research interest of Patarchanova (2019 a, 2019 b).

RESEARCH METHODS

The leading methodologies are the horological (spatial) and chronological (historical) approaches. The horological approach focuses on the spatial location of vineyards and wineries, as well as on the geographical and natural factors that influence wine production. This approach includes: Geographical analysis – Research of the territory of Plovdiv region using geographic information systems (GIS) that help map the most suitable regions for growing different grape varieties.

These regions are analyzed according to various factors such as climate, soils, elevation, water resources and other natural conditions. Microclimatic studies – Field measurements are used to study local climatic conditions that can be crucial for the quality of grapes and wine. This may include studies of temperature ranges, rainfall, winds, and humidity. Vineyard topography – A study of the location of vineyards in relation to local geographic features (mountains, rivers, valleys, etc.), which can provide important information about optimal areas for growing specific grape varieties.

The chronological (historical) approach examines the development of viticulture and winemaking in the region during different historical periods. It includes: historical study of traditions – research into the development of winemaking in the Plovdiv region over the centuries, starting from antiquity (Thracian period) and passing through the Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman eras to modern times.

General scientific methods are applied - systemic analysis and synthesis - and a number of specific scientific methods - literary, historical and geographical analysis. A review of some authors



and their publications on the topic and object of the study is made. The chronology of the development of the viticulture agribusiness in the studied territory has been consistently traced.

The methodology is based on: quantitative and qualitative spatial analysis of viticulture and winemaking at national, regional and local levels. Through a situational analysis, the place and role of viticulture and winemaking in the agricultural economy on the territory of the Plovdiv region is determined. The brief analysis of the factors for the localization and development of grape production defines the agro-ecological resources with their geographical features and production capabilities. A special place in the analysis is given to the production and territorial structure of the production of grapes, wine and other alcoholic beverages based on it.

Statistical and correlation analysis enrich the presentation of individual producers and determine the place of each of them. The analysis of the market situation in the sale of viticulture and processing industrial production, as well as their service, outlines the overall spatial picture of the viticulture agribusiness in the region. The summaries and conclusions at the end of the study outline some of the main challenges facing its development, as well as possible future directions. The use of the cartographic method illustrates the analysis of the studied processes and objects.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of development

The viticulture and wine sector is a traditional industry for Bulgaria, which is of particular importance in rural areas, as it creates employment, generates income for the population, solves some of the demographic problems, contributes to the sustainable development of agriculture, and diversifies the local economy. On a national scale, the sector has enormous potential for export and expansion of markets worldwide, increases competitiveness and revenues in the overall economy of the country, improves its image abroad, and supports the development of other economic sectors such as tourism and the food industry.

Viticulture has deep traditions in Bulgaria for centuries - the territory has been known for the production of fine wine since the time of the Thracians and the Roman Empire. In our lands, viticulture originated around 3000 BC and initially developed mainly along the Maritsa River. Today, the studied Plovdiv region continues to be famous for the highest and highest quality production of grapes and wine, as the climate and relief are extremely favorable for the development of viticulture and winemaking.

The main wine variety in the region is Mavrud, which has been grown for centuries in our lands, but it is believed that the center of its origin is the region of Plovdiv and Asenovgrad (formerly Stanimaka), where the largest concentration of Mavrud vineyards is still located today. The sunshine in the Thracian Lowland is one of the longest in Bulgaria. The soils are black earth, rich in humus, with good calcium characteristics, which is very important for the ripening of the vines and the accumulation of sugars and organic substances in the grapes.

Bulgaria is traditionally perceived as a major producer of red wine, both on the world market and in the minds of the Bulgarian consumer. However, in recent years, sales of white and red wine on the local market have almost equalized, still with a slight predominance of red wine. (Slavova, 2018)

The first census of the vineyard areas was made in 1886 - then they were 636,710 decares, and only after about 10 years their area almost doubled to 1,148,230 decares. In the period 1929-1930, viticulture in Bulgaria provided a livelihood for more than 100,000 households or approximately



200,000 winegrowers, which by 1940 increased to 450,000. In 1939, the export of Bulgarian wines to Germany, the Czech Republic and Austria increased. After 1944, the land was nationalized, the industry was centralized according to the planned economy, the former owners became hired workers or were forcibly sent to work in industry. However, in the 1950s viticulture was regulated as a priority sector by a decree of the Council of Ministers. By the beginning of the 1960s, the area of vineyards had increased again and reached 1,950,000 decares, with new world-famous high-quality grape varieties being imported - Cabernet, Merlot, Muscat Ottonel, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Traminer, which began to replace local varieties. Between the 1960s and 1980s, viticulture was a structurally determining sub-sector of agriculture, and the vineyard area exceeded 2 million decares. During this period, Bulgaria was among the top 10 wine grape producing countries worldwide - in terms of vineyard area and wine exports, and in some years it was also a leader in the production of dessert grapes for direct consumption. In the 1970s, Bulgarian oenologists under state patronage began to exchange technological experience with California, to create quality Bulgarian wine and so our production gradually takes better positions in many European countries, the USA and Canada.

With its 212 million bottles produced in 1978, Bulgaria ranks fourth in production and second in exports (after France) of wine worldwide. After 1989, the gradual reduction of the area occupied by vineyards began, as well as a decline in wine production, the reasons being mostly related to the change in land ownership and the transition from a planned to a market economy.

Over the past two decades, a number of changes have been observed in the parameters of the regional structure of viticulture. Regional variations in the sector are mainly related to the size of the areas occupied by vine plantations with the corresponding varietal structure, and the volume of grapes produced (Aleksiev 2015).

The main natural and geographical factors for the development of viticulture and winemaking in the Plovdiv region are: climate, soils, and waters.

Climate - the territory of the region entirely falls into the transitional continental climate subregion. The predominant air mass transfer is from the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. A distinct Mediterranean influence is felt. It is characterized by relatively mild winters, but with instability of winter temperatures. Summer is hot, autumn is warm and long, and spring is cool, with frequent frosts. The average annual temperature is 12.2° C, and the average annual amplitude is 23.4° C degrees.

Precipitation - the annual amount of precipitation is about 514 mm. The maximum precipitation is in spring (May), and the minimum - in late summer and early autumn (October). The snow cover in the non-mountainous regions is unstable and lasts up to 15 - 20 days. Northwestern winds prevail, with the appearance of the Föhn wind characteristic of the Plovdiv-Pazardzhik plain. The local wind "Belomorets" blows along the valleys of the Maritsa River.

Soils – in the Plovdiv region, the main soil types are chernozem-tar soils - the northern part of the Plovdiv field and on the right side of the Maritsa River. The most widespread are leached (weak to medium) chernozem tar soils. Meadow chernozem-tar soils are less common. Cinnamon forests are widespread in parts of the municipalities of Parvomay, Hisarya, Asenovgrad, Sadovo, Rakovski, Brezovo. Diluvial meadows are characteristic of the Karlovsko field, while alluvial meadows predominate mainly along the Stryama and Byala rivers.

The Plovdiv region is rich in rivers and dams. All rivers flowing through the region originate from Sredna Gora and the Rhodope Mountains and flow into the Maritsa River, which is the only one that originates from Rila. Because the snow cover in Sredna Gora and the Rhodope Mountains does

not last year-round, their water supply is uneven and their drainage regime depends mainly on the rainfall. The region is rich in dams - Krichim, Vacha, Pyasachnik, Ezerovo, etc. The influence of water bodies on temperature and humidity of the air are of great importance for the development of viticulture in the region.

Territorial structure of grape production in Plovdiv region.

In Plovdiv region, the largest area of areas with wine varieties is 35,985 thousand decares, with harvested areas being 34,284 thousand decares. The average grape yield for the region is 6,376 kg/ha. Grape production for the last year is 21,858 tons. Plovdiv region is distinguished by the best balanced structure by varieties - 86% of red wine varieties are divided between 3 varieties: Mavrud (35%), Merlot (27%), Pamid (24%). Based on the climatic and soil conditions of the country and the biological characteristics of the regionalized varieties, as well as on the results of growing the varieties in the experimental fields of scientific institutes and in production by Decree No. 162 of the Council of Ministers, four wine-growing regions were established: North Bulgarian, East Bulgarian or Black Sea, South Bulgarian and South-Western. Since the regions cover large territorial areas with quite different climatic and soil conditions, and in order to achieve greater differentiation within them, each region is subdivided into three subregions, each of which has closer indicators of natural conditions and outlines a more specific production direction.

The studied Plovdiv region extends into the South Bulgarian region, which is divided into three subregions:

- The first subregion - this subregion includes the lowland part of the region and the low hills in it. The climatic conditions of the subregion are favorable for the cultivation of dessert grape varieties, for high-quality red table and dessert wines. The sub-region is characterized by the production of high-quality and ordinary red table wines with the following varietal composition: Mavrud, Pamid, Dimyat and Cherven Misket.
- The second subregion is characterized by the hilly foothills of the Plovdiv region. For the production of high-quality white table wines and champagne wine materials are typical on the northern slopes of the Rhodope Mountains, in the area of the lands of Asenovgrad, Perushtitsa, Krichim.
- The third subregion is characteristic of the valley and low mountainous northern part of the Plovdiv region, where the direction of viticulture and winemaking is aimed at satisfying the needs of the cooperators with table wines and grapes for direct consumption, in view of which the following varietal composition is recommended: Mavrud, Dimyat, Rubin, Pamid, Red Misket.

Main microdistricts

On the territory of Plovdiv region, three microdistricts can be distinguished: Karlovo-Hissarski, Asenovgradsko-Parvomayski and Plovdivsko-Perushtenski. These three microdistricts are of extremely important importance for the development of the viticulture and wine agribusiness in the region.

Karlovo - Hissar microdistrict - covers the northern part of the district. Its territorial scope includes the lands of the town of Karlovo and to the east the town of Kalofer, to the south the town of Hissar and to the southwest the village of Starosel. The relief is predominantly medium and low-mountainous, and on the small elevations (Sarnena Sredna Gora) - hilly. The relief is flat along the Stryama River and Karlovsko Pole. The soils are brown and cinnamon forest, with good permeability - a wonderful environment for vineyards. This is the birthplace of the Red Muscat - a local Bulgarian

variety, also known as Karlovy Vary Muscat, which is at its best here. The region is known primarily for its white wines (Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay and Muscat Ottonel). The region is also favorable for the reds Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir.

Asenovgrad - Parvomay microdistrict - it covers the southeastern part of the district, including the lands of the town of Asenovgrad and the town of Parvomay to the east. The region has a complex and diverse indented relief - flat, hilly and semi-mountainous. The soils are mainly black earth and brown forest soils, which are fertile and suitable for growing the main wine variety Mavrud. Other common varieties are Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Rubin, and Syrah. The microdistrict is suitable for the production of high-quality red wines.

Plovdiv - Perushtitsa microdistrict - covers the central and western part of the district and includes the lands of the city of Plovdiv and the town of Perushtitsa and the villages of Brestovitsa and Parvenets (to the west).

The region has a diverse relief - flat, hilly and semi-mountainous terrains. The soils in the microdistrict are saturated alluvial, humus-carbonate and sandy-stony, contributing to the development of winemaking in the region. The area around the village of Brestovitsa is also known for aromatic dessert varieties, such as the Brestovitsa variety of the same name, Black and the seedless Flame Seedless. The production is focused on high-quality red wines from the varieties Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and the famous local variety Mavrud, Rubin.

Processing facilities (enterprises) – geographical organization

In the studied area there are several new and modern wineries that have specialized in the production of sparkling wines and champagnes, white, rosé, red, dessert and sparkling wines.

Villa Justina – located at the foot of the Rhodope Mountains, in the village of Ustina – just 26 km from Plovdiv – Villa Justina was established in 2006 with a clear mission: to become one of the leading wineries developing wine tourism in the region. Its vineyards cover over 500 acres and are located just 5 km from the winery, in the “Villa Justina” vineyard park. Varieties typical of the region such as Mavrud, Rubin and Dimyat are grown there, as well as various international varieties: Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Aligote, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Pinot Noir.

Dragomir Winery – located just 5 km from Plovdiv, on a beautiful hill near the village of Brestnik, Dragomir Winery stands out with its impressive architecture, but its true beauty lies inside - in the wine and the team. In its own vineyard of 24 hectares, created in 2017 in the village of Svirko, South Sakar, the varieties Rubin, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Syrah, Merlot and Petit Verdot are planted. The focus of the winery is on the local and emblematic Bulgarian varieties for the Thracian Lowland region - Mavrud and Rubin, and Dimyat is the white local representative.

Chateau Kopsa - is one of the first boutique wineries in Bulgaria. It is located in the village of Moskovets, in the very heart of the Rose Valley, near the town of Sopot. In 2008, the Chateau Kopsa castle opened its doors, built in the spirit of medieval architecture. In its stone foundations is the wine cellar, where the cellar's selections are aged in French, American and Bulgarian oak barrels, as well as in bottles. Chateau Kopsa's own vineyards are located at the foot of the Stara Planina Mountains, between Karlovo and Sredna Gora - a region famous for Rosa Damascena and deep-rooted Thracian wine traditions.

Zagrei Winery – is located in the fertile Upper Thracian Lowland, near the town of Parvomay, in 1998. The winery's first harvest was in 2004, and today its vineyards cover 1,300 acres, planted with Mavrud, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Dimyat and Rkatsiteli. Since 2010, the plantations have

been grown entirely according to European standards for organic farming, and the 600 acres with Mavrud represent the largest organic massif with the variety in Bulgaria. The modern equipment of Zagrey Winery supports the creation of high-quality organic wines.

Jinvira Winery - is located at the foot of the Rhodope Mountains, near the village of Brestovitsa - famous for its vineyards and local wine and dessert varieties. The winery produces small batches of wines - nine types from eight grape varieties, including Mavrud, Rubin, Alexandrian Misket, Cabernet Franc and Merlot.

Topolovo Winery – is located at the foot of the Rhodope Mountains, in the village of Topolovo, located in a picturesque area with clean air, fertile soils and a mild climate, is the small Topolovo Winery. It was established in 2018 and today they process about 30 tons of grapes. The winery works with the local varieties Mavrud, Rubin, Pamid and Dimyat, etc. They also produce excellent wines from the international Riesling, Rkatsiteli and Merlot, but what the winery stands out for is Cabernet Sauvignon from 50-year-old vineyards.

Bendida Winery - is a family winery in the village of Brestovitsa, only about 15 km south of Plovdiv. It relies on local varieties typical of the Thracian Lowlands - Mavrud and Rubin, Vrachanski Misket, Dimyat. The red wines are not filtered to preserve their authenticity. The best of them are aged in French and American barrels. Emblematic of "Bendida" is the Ritual wine of the Rubin variety, for which the grapes are hand-picked at sunrise and full moon.

The wineries in the Plovdiv region have their own vineyards and a diverse varietal structure that is suitable for the terroir of the region (Table 1).

Table 1. Annual production and varietal structure of the wineries in the Plovdiv region.

Cellar name	Annual production	Own vineyards	Varietal structure
Villa Justina	150,000 bottles	42 hectares	Mavrud, Rubin, Dimyat, Merlot, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon, Colombard, Aligote
Dragomir Cellar	90,000 bottles	24 hectares	Rubin, Mavrud, Dimyat, Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay
Chateau Kopsa	180,000 bottles	50 hectares	Red Misquet, Muscat Ottonel, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc
Zagrej Winery	1200 tons of grapes per year	120 hectares	Mavrud, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot
Jinvira	70,000 bottles	14 hectares	Mavrud, Rubin, Alexandrian Muscat, Cabernet Franc and Merlot
Bendida	30,000 bottles	80 hectares	Rubin, Mavrud, Dimyat, Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay
Topalovo	30,000 bottles	17 hectares	Pamid, Mavrud, Rubin, Pamid and Dimyat

Source: Executive Agency for Vine and Wine, 2024.

Grape and Wine Market

Wine production is an indisputable part of the centuries-old Bulgarian identity. For years, Bulgaria has been among the largest exporters of wine in the world. Since 1961, the country has been among the top 15 exporting countries by this indicator, and in 1975 it even took fourth place in the



world ranking. Unfortunately, the trend has reversed sharply over the last 20 years and since 2007 Bulgaria has been losing its position in this prestigious market every year. Bulgarian wine exports under the customs tariff heading continue to decline.

A decline in sales of Bulgarian wine on the foreign market. For the last 3 years, exports have been down by about 10 percent, according to data from the Executive Agency for Vine and Wine. In 2024, the areas in the region where wine grape varieties are grown are also decreasing. This reduces the harvest and the wine produced. Against this background, there is also good news - the purchase price of grapes is increasing. Producers from the region report fewer grapes harvested and less wine produced after the extremely hot 2024. Against this background, there is an increase only in the average purchase price of grapes last year, which increased from 0.85 leva per kilogram in 2023 to 0.95 leva per kilogram for the 2024 harvest.

Of great importance for the sale of production in the region are the wine exchanges in the villages of Parvenets and Plodovitovo, etc., where, during the active harvest season, various grape varieties with good overall quality, ripeness and high sugar content are offered.

An important role in purchasing the production is played by the existing wineries, as well as the newly established wineries located in the region in recent years. They are of utmost importance for the production and sale of high-quality wine and brandy on the domestic and international markets.

Service of the viticulture and wine agribusiness in the studied territory.

In the studied territory, the Regional Chamber of Viticulture and Wine (RLVK) "Trakia", which is headquartered in Plovdiv, with its legal status is called upon to work for the development and competitiveness of viticulture and winemaking in the region. For the first time, the state is granting part of its powers to the non-governmental sector. The RLVK "Trakia" maintains a register of grape and wine producers in the Plovdiv region. The Viticulture and Winemaking Chamber issues certificates of origin for quality wine and authenticity of grape brandy and brandy and forms tasting committees to carry out mandatory organoleptic analysis. The Regional Chamber of Viticulture and Winemaking prepares a strategy for the development of viticulture and winemaking and implements the policy of this sector.

Plant protection products - the main purpose of plant protection products is to protect agricultural production from diseases, pests and weeds and to increase the yields of winegrowers. Plant protection products are used to maintain the healthy growth of the vine and preserve its fertility. There are several companies, such as Diakor Ltd. and "Flora 62" which have 30 years of experience in protecting this crop from diseases and enemies. Provides a wide range of preparations from leading world companies in the pesticide industry. Protection of vineyards from: common mildew, botrytis, grape scab, esca, grape scale, etc.

The role of policies for the development of the viticulture and wine agribusiness.

The importance of viticulture for the country's economy is also reflected in the state's policy. The state control body in the viticulture and wine sector of the Republic of Bulgaria is the Executive Agency for Vine and Wine (EAVW) under the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Forestry. The Agency controls compliance with the requirements of the Wine and Spirits Act with regard to vine plantations, grapes intended for wine production, grape must, grape and wine products, fruit wines and vinegar.

The National Strategy for the Development of Viticulture and Wine Production 2005-2025 is a fundamental document that defines the framework for the development and support of the sector.



The main problems in the spatial organization, management and development of the viticulture agribusiness in the studied territory are: fragmentation of the vineyard massifs, numerous small grape producers; lack of a policy for land consolidation - everything is on a market basis; abandoned and uncultivated plantations; destroyed irrigation systems, despite good water resources; deteriorated age and variety structure of vineyards, especially of unique local varieties at the expense of imported ones; insufficient technological support of local producers due to lack of finances; low qualification of the workforce.

CONCLUSION

Finally, it can be summarized that in the production structure of the viticulture agribusiness in the Plovdiv region there are favorable prerequisites for the development of the viticulture agribusiness in the region. With the development of viticulture and winemaking in the region, the traditions in agriculture and, in particular, the vineyard massifs would be preserved, and funds for development and investment in rural areas would be provided.

The viticulture agribusiness in the Plovdiv region needs land consolidation, the planting of new and high-quality varieties of vines, as well as regulated binding of grape producers. The poor condition of the vines is due, on the one hand, to their deteriorated age structure and, on the other hand, to the inconsistent and untimely implementation of the necessary agrotechnical measures for them. Grape varieties are a determining factor in the development of viticulture. The key to improving the competitiveness and development of the viticulture agribusiness in the region is the production of more quality and bottled wines and diversification of production. In this regard, the state's agrarian policy should focus on encouraging the production of bottled wine.

Based on the analysis of the state of the wine agribusiness and the current development of potential competitors, the achievement of the vision should be realized in the following main directions:

- Establishing an authentic image of Bulgarian wine from the region on the national and international market;
- Development of wine tourism;
- Capitalizing on the opportunities of wine tourism, stimulating it to improve the profitability of wineries;
- Joint advertising campaign with tour operator companies to promote wine tourism, supported by appropriate infrastructure and skilfully organized complexes for tasting and recreation.

Winemaking has great traditions and is sufficiently developed in the area to be a basic prerequisite for the development of wine tourism. Additional prerequisites for the development of wine tourism are a modern and specialized infrastructure in line with the most modern requirements, relatively good transport accessibility to the wineries, and developed accommodation facilities near the traditional winemaking destinations.

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