

## French vignerons already revolting over EU proposals

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You may remember that the full announcement of the [proposals](#) for dramatic reforms of European wine production was promised by the EU Agriculture Commissioner Mariann Fischer-Boel tomorrow.

Well the *Midi Libre*, one of the papers most read by Languedoc vignerons, publishes the proposals in full today, along with a report on a protest against them yesterday in Béziers, resulting in demands for import controls, minimum price guarantees (for Languedoc vignerons), and a march off to a local hypermarket to demand a round table discussion with its top brass.

French agriculture minister Christine Lagarde had already announced her opposition to the proposals at Vinexpo – particularly any restrictions on planting rights and any widescale grubbing up. (I wonder what she does propose instead.)

Here, for what it's worth, are the main proposals:

**Drain the wine lake** – otherwise Europe will be producing not just 10% more than it needs as now but 15% by 2010.

**Stop protectionist measures** such as compulsory distillation and adding sucrose.

**Vines to be pulled out** - but not the original 400,000 ha proposed but a mere 200,00 ha, six per cent of all European vineyard but not hillside vineyards and with some environmental factors in mind.

**No plantation rights after 2013** – the current restrictive controls on plantation rights are to be scrapped, meaning that from 2013, when it is to be hoped that all is sweetness and light in European viticulture, anyone will be able to plant anywhere, including all over those parts of northern Europe that are by then warm enough to ripen grapes reliably.

**Immediate financial incentives** that fall in value to zero over the five years following the reform announcement.

**120 million euros annual promotional budget** designed to promote EU wine abroad and to develop rural economies – not generic ads, *please*.

**More liberal labelling and winemaking laws** to allow grape varieties, for example, on labels of Vin de Table and winemaking techniques designed 'to adapt wines to consumer taste' (= oak chips presumably).