

Organic viticulture continues to grow in France

The number of French wine businesses classified as organic increased by nearly 7% between 2005 and 2006, according to France's Agence Bio 2006 report. (Agence Bio is an official organisation which encourages and promotes organic agriculture in France; you can download the [full report](#), in French and covering all aspects of organic agriculture, from their website.)

The total surface area of the French organic vineyard has increased by 40% since 2001 and by 400% in the last 10 years. In 2006 it was just under 19,000 ha (47,000 acres) - admittedly still only a tiny proportion of the French area under vine - including 4,600 ha under conversion. It's the percentage under conversion that distinguishes the wine sector from other sectors of agriculture in France. In Burgundy alone, the area under conversion was up 27% on 2005.

Top of the list for total area of organic vineyards is Languedoc-Roussillon (5,290 ha, an increase of just 2% compared with 2005), then comes Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (4,322 ha; up 12%) and third Aquitaine (2,806 ha; up 20%). The increase in Aquitaine, which of course includes the Bordeaux region, is surprising given the damper conditions there - organic viticulture is easier in warm dry climates where the threat of diseases such as mildew and rot are lower. Aquitaine, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur and Rhône-Alpes together account for 45% of the total certified area in France.

It takes four years for a winegrower to convert his or her vineyard to organic status and then only after official agreement. More than 100 growers set out on this path last year. Remember that organic certification is currently for grape-growing and not for winemaking so the legal terminology is 'wine made from organically grown grapes' or *vin issu de raisins biologiques* and not 'organic wine'.