

Italian prices plummet, Minister unconcerned

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In a recent interview with Winenews, the newly appointed Italian minister of Agriculture Giancarlo Galan (pictured) went on a collision course with wine producers when he commented about the current situation of falling grape prices in Italy that, while he doesn't deny there are problems, 'we should not exaggerate'. According to Galan, if there is a sector of Italian agriculture that has seen continuous growth over the last couple of years in international markets, it is the wine sector. He then added the warning note that he had no plans to offer financial support to those who can no longer make a living out of grape and/or wine production. He literally said that producers should stop complaining before this year's harvest has been brought in.

This very clear message comes at a time when news has emerged that the price of Barbera and Dolcetto has fallen to an all-time low of 20-30 cents a litre, forcing some producers not to harvest this year at all, as the current price is lower than the cost of production. Several producer associations have been considering asking the government for financial support but this avenue seems to have been firmly blocked by Galan, at least for the time being.

Lucio Mastrobernardino, President of the Unione Italiana Vini, reacted by saying that the problems are real and should not be underestimated. According to him an agenda for concrete action is urgently needed, specifically measures to address overproduction. Lamberto Gancia, president of Federvini, backed him up, pointing out that Italian wine producers are having to cope with an extremely tough economic climate which demands swift responses. He cited not just the financial downturn but the recent introduction of the OCM as major factors, and pointed out that the 2010 vintage will merely inherit the unresolved problems of the previous one.

Riccardi Ricci Curbastro, president of Federdoc, maintains that overproduction, combined with the economic situation, is the real cause for the situation. According to him, drastic measures such as grubbing up or abandoning viticulture in several wine-producing areas, tragic as they would be, are unavoidable. According to him, the current situation is so serious that it should 'provoke' the government's undivided attention.

See Walter Speller in search of Sangiovese, in Romagna, tomorrow.