

SLOVENSKÁ ŠTATISTIKA a DEMOGRAFIA

SLOVAK STATISTICS
and DEMOGRAPHY

1/2018

ročník/volume 28

Recenzovaný vedecký časopis so zameraním na prezentáciu moderných štatistických a demografických metód a postupov.

Scientific reviewed journal focusing on the presentation of modern statistical and demographic methods and procedures.

Článok/Article: 8

Typ článku/Type of article: informatívny článok/informative article

Strany/Pages: 57 – 65

Dátum vydania/Publication date: 15. január 2018/January 15, 2018



Informatívny článok/Informative article

A FEW WORDS ON WINE IN ITALY AND SLOVAKIA, TWO COUNTRIES WITH A LONG TRADITION IN THIS SECTOR

NIEKOĽKO SLOV O VÍNE V TALIANSKU A NA SLOVENSKU, DVE KRAJINY S DLHOU TRADÍCIOU V TOMTO SEKTORE

1. INTRODUCTION

The origin of wine is of such ancient origin that some people trace it until Adam and Eve, saying the forbidden fruit of Eden was the succulent grapes and not the apple. Even the Old Testament Jews who attributed to Noah the plantation of the first vineyards, considered the wine „one of the most precious goods of man“ and exalted the wine „cheers the heart of the mortal“ (Salms).

The history of wine dates back to the prehistoric era and it is so ancient to be confused with the same story as humanity. The first recorded archeological evidence of the presence of „vitis vinifera“ was found in some parts of today's China (7000 years BC), Georgia (6000 BC), Iran (5000 BC), Greece (4500 BC), as well as in Sicily (around 4000 BC). But the earliest evidence of serial vine vinification (wine making), was found in Armenia (about 4100 BC), with the discovery of the oldest conservation cell in existence.

In ancient Egypt, the practice of wine-making was consolidated so that the funeral equipment of the king Tutankhamun (1339 BC) included the amphora containing wine and showing the area of origin, vintage and the producer (something like actual DOC). From Egypt the practice of wine-making spread among the Jews, Arabs and Greeks who dedicated to the wine a deity: Dionysus, the god of conviviality.

In the Greek world, wine was considered a gift of gods and all the myths are attributed to Dionysus, the youngest immortal son of Zeus. Dionysus, the god of wine was worshipped not only by the Greeks, but also in Etruria, where he was identified with the Fufluns country goddess, and also in the Roman world, where he was known as Bacco and was associated with Liber, an ancient Latin God of fertility.

In the heart of the Mediterranean, the wine began its journey from Sicily to Europe, spreading first among the Sabines and later among the Etruscans who became skilled wine producers and spread the cultivation of grapes from Campania to the Po Valley. Among the ancient Romans, wine-making assumed considerable importance only after the conquest of Greece. The wine has contributed to the birth of the Roman Empire: the Romans were in fact aware of the bactericidal properties of wine and usually they referred to it in their campaigns as the drink of the legionnaires.

The birth of Christianity and the decline of the Roman Empire marks the beginning of a dark period for the wine, charged with bringing intoxication and ephemeral pleasure.

We must wait until the Renaissance to find a literature that evaluates the wine, its leading role in the Western culture. The seventeenth century honed the art of coopers, the less expensive bottles and the spread use of corks contributed to the preservation

and promotion of the wine trade. The nineteenth century saw the consolidation of the distinctive and extraordinary position of wine in the Western civilization and it becomes the object of scientific research. In 1866 L. Pasteur in his published work "Études sur le vin" wrote: "wine is the most healthful and hygienic of all beverages".

Recent medical studies have shown that among those who go travelling to countries where you are most likely to get food related infections, tourists who drink wine are less prone to bouts of diarrhea than those consuming bottled water. [1]

2. SHORT HISTORY OF WINE IN SLOVAKIA AND IN ITALY

2.1 Slovakia

The national wine sector is definitely one of the best in the Slovakian agro-food industry. Slovakia can pride itself on having high quality wines. The production of high quality wines accounts for 85% of the total national production: in 2015 for example, more than 51.000 quintals of grapes were harvested on an area of 15.000 hectares of land.

The Slovak traditions of viticulture and wine have a long a rich history since Roman times and even before. Some evidences confirm the existence of wine-growing already 2700 years ago: indeed near Smolenice, on the Molpir Mountain, seven vineyards knives and a wine bowl from the 7th and 6th century BC were discovered demonstrating the attitude of grape cultivation in Slovakia before the arrival of the Romans. Later the Great Moravian princes demonstrated their great love for wine and it has been preserved in the following three prayers: for the vineyards, the harvesting and the fermentation of must. Another demonstration of the culture of wine in ancient times dates to the King Svätopluk who, in 892, sent as gift for the Prince Bořivoj a barrel of wine. The princesses were also keen on wine. Princess Ludmila asked the King Svätopluk for grapevine seedling and founded a vineyard by Mélnik. [2]

The first written testimonies on vineyards could be found in the Nitra region, at the beginning of the 9th century. Others date back to the 11th century coming from the Tekov area. But in the 13th century with the arrival of Tatars, the vineyards were destroyed. Then, at the end of 13th century, the Hungarian King Ondrej III decided to help winegrowers by giving them the privilege of not paying taxes to the King. A subsequent flowering of vineyards in Slovakia took place in the 15th century when the feudalists began to cultivate them with their settlers, who paid to the feudal lord a portion of the product, 1/10 or 1/12 of the harvest. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the vineyards gained more importance, and the towns of their origin were becoming „free royal cities“. In the eighteenth century, during the reign of Maria Teresa and Joseph II, the wine cultivation reached its peak production and this period is sometimes known as „the golden age of wine“. In 1720, there were 57,000 hectares of vineyards in Slovakia, more than three times than today. In 1825, Bratislava became the first producer of sparkling wine outside of France, with one of the most famous Slovak wine brands J.E. Hubert. The production of grapes and wine was reduced starting from the mid-eighteenth century as a consequence of the Habsburgs' preference for Austrian wine. The increasing beer consumption also dramatically decreased the consumption of wine. The reduction of vineyards and the production of wine continued in the second half of the 19th century due to diseases such as downy, powdery mildew and phylloxera. These diseases came to Europe from America along with the American vineyards. In the early twentieth century, however, scientific research advanced and improved its quality. In 1924, a special research institute was founded in Bratislava and another institute in Malá Trná. In the 1930s the vineyards were blooming again. In

1936, the Cooperative of Pezinok was founded which became the center of wine cultivation in Slovakia. In 1948, the beginning of socialism put an end of the cultivation of wine by private individuals, therefore more cooperatives were formed, all together forming a single, large state cooperative (monopoly). In the 1970s, socialists increased the production at the expense of quality. In 1989, the restitution of land to private citizens, together with an increase of wine imports from Spain, France, Italy and Czech Republic resulted in a decrease of production still today.

It is interesting to note that Slovakia is also a producer of the Tokaj wine, famous not only because it was loved by the kings, popes and presidents but also by the first cosmonaut of the world, Yuri Gagarin. Finally, the 2001 Rizling Rýnsky (Riesling) from Chateau Béla became Slovakia's first wine entered in the world-renowned Wine Spectator [3].

2.2 Italy

Italy has always been famous, from the earliest times, for the cultivation and production of wine, so that the Greeks used to refer to Italy "Enotria Tellus", meaning the land of wine. Every Italian, at their birth became citizen of Enotria, and was a natural "friend of wine", and this is not a vice but is an art.

The history of Italian wine-making dates back to around 1000 BC, when the Greeks conquered the Mediterranean basin: during their colonization campaigns they introduced the cultivation of vines in the country, first in Sicily and Calabria where the first Greek commercial bases were built, spreading gradually north. The Greeks therefore play an essential role in the history of wine in Italy, especially the southern part, which shows that many of the grapes today vinified have been introduced in the era of Greek colonization dated around the 7th century BC. Thus the Greeks began not only to develop viticulture and wine-making in their territories, but also contributed to its spread in other areas, planting seeds whose fruits will be harvested by the Romans and spread throughout Europe for a product that will become immediately a principal product for all peoples of Europe. Indeed, during the Roman Empire the cultivation of vines spread across the Alps in northern Italy and in the territory over the Alps. In Roman times, wine was diluted with water because it was believed to be very strong in alcohol because of the late harvest and vinification. In this ritual there was a figure of the magister bibendi or rex convivii, chosen by other commensals who established the proportion between water and wine (usually with the 65% of water) and the number of toasts. Throughout the Empire, wine was drunk not only among the nobility, but even among middle and lower classes which was considered a novelty. With the Barbarian Invasions, viticulture had a rapid decline and flourished again many years later in the thirteenth century and especially during the Renaissance. After this very flourishing period for the world of wine (during which the famous vineyards existing even today were found), viticulture in the sixteenth century again experienced a meltdown in coincidence with the decline of the Medici dynasty when Italy fell under the Spanish-Habsburg domination.

The political upheavals of the nineteenth century allowed its rebirth but only until the second half of 1800s, when the phylloxera broke out. This dramatic situation culminated after the two world wars that brought about a real destruction of vineyards. The Italian wine gave the first signs of recovery only around 1970. Over the last thirty years, the wine and the Italian viticulture have undergone more radical changes than in the three previous centuries. The combination of cultivating, vines together with olive

and fruit trees have disappeared, and there were a lot of changes also in the basement of which particularly important is the introduction of the temperature control during fermentation, which opened new horizons for the Italian quality wines. The modernization of viticulture and wine-making has led to a qualitative improvement starting from Tuscany in the late 1960s, spreading first in Friuli and Piedmont then touching all regions of the peninsula [4].

3. FEATURES OF WINES

3.1 Slovak wines

Slovak wines can be divided into three quality categories: wine, wine with protected geographical indication, wine with protected designation of origin.

Wine (*vino*, *stolove vino*) – also known as table wine without geographical indication. This is the lowest category of wine. It is produced from grapes with a minimum sugar content. Protected Geographical Indication or PGI (CHZO) - this is a mid-level category of wines which includes local, specific wines, as well as regional wines. *Burčiak* belongs to this category. Protected Designation of Origin or PDO (CHOP) – indicates the highest quality of wines in the European Union. These wines are entered into the E-Bacchus database which is an electronic register of the protected designation of origin and the protected geographical indication of wines. The protected Slovak geographical indications are the following: *Malokarpatská*, *Južnoslovenská*, *Stredoslovenská*, *Východoslovenská* and wine-growing region *Tokaj*.

Malokarpatská (Little Carpathian) 5,359.2 ha: these wines are produced in the southwestern part of Slovakia, the oldest and the most famous wine-growing region, bearing the ancient heritage of the Celts and the Romans, as well as the Germans and, of course, the Slovaks. The region „*Malokarpatská*“ stretches from the confluence of the Danube and *Morava* rivers, from the rolling hills near *Hlohovec*, up to *Skalica* in the *Záhorie* region. Local vineyards have produced clearly-defined varieties of wines like *Grüner Veltliner*, *Welshriesling*, *Silvánske Zelené*, the regal *Blaufrankish* and the traditional *Blauer Portugieser* which, in Middle Ages were used to be valued against gold.

Južnoslovenská (South Slovakia) 5,345.6 ha: the region, situated north of the Danube river, is a corner of the Slovak wine-making wealth, and produces marvellous *Welsh Riesling*, as well as the first Slovak *Riesling*, included in *Robert Parker's Wine Spectator*. This winegrowing region also prides itself in its beautiful *Chardonnay* and *Sauvignon*, the white, gray and blue variants of *Pinot*, as well as the unique Central European version of the *Cabernet Sauvignon* and *Dunaj*, Slovakia's newest jewel.

Stredoslovenská (Central Slovakia) 2,502 ha: this region is situated in the southern part of Central Slovakia, produces five notable wines: *Welsh-Riesling*, *Grüner Veltliner*, *Müller – Thurgau*, *Gewürztraminer* and *Pinot blanc*. The red wines also deserve to be praised for their pure varietal profile: *Blaufrankish* made history at the 2002 international viniculture congress, *Saint Laurent* and *Blauer Portugieser* carry the torch of the Slovak tradition, while *Cabernet Sauvignon* serves as evidence of the unique viticulture area.

Východoslovenská (East Slovakia) 1,074.1 ha: its wine have soaked up traces of the conditions affecting the continental climate of the Russian and Ukrainian plains and the composition of the volcanic soils by *Tibava* and *Sobrance*. *Pinot blanc*, *Chardonnay*, *Silvánske zelené*, *Dievčie Hrozno* and *Müller-Thurgau* are sufficiently spicy wines. The blue varieties are represented by bright ruby-colored *Blaufränkisch* and the *Pinot noir*.

Tokaj region 908 ha: the only wine in Europe that can compete with the Italian Chianti or the French Bordeaux. The wine is grown on both sides of an area demarcating the border between Slovakia and Hungary, is timeless, majestic and unlike any other. The conditions of this territory of the southeastern slopes of Zemplín hills enable grapes to become “nobly rotten”, producing a small, not annually guaranteed, raisin miracle of nature. The time-tested varieties of Tokaj wines Furmint, Lipovina a Muškát žltý, coupled with the slow oxidation technology in wooden barrels gave birth to a mythical wine that continues to enchant wine lovers. [5]

Table 1: The total area under vines (hectares)

Year	Vineyards together	Vineyards in production	Vineyards not in production
2004	15.831	12.248	3.583
2005	16.772	13.429	3.343
2006	16.262	12.145	4.118
2007	15.903	11.844	4.059
2008	15.722	9.980	5.742
2009	14.876	9.594	5.282
2010	14.475	9.225	5.249
2011	13.954	10.226	3.727
2012	12.616	10.612	2.003
2013	11.773	10.341	1.432
2014	11.074	8.939	2.135

Source: Ministerstvo pôdohospodárstva a rozvoja vidieka Slovenskej Republiky, „Vinič hroznorodý, hroznové víno“, 31.07.2015

Development of the size of the total vineyard area have already maintained a downward trend for nine consecutive years. In 2014, the area was reduced by 6.99 ha (-5.9%).

Table 2: Consumption of wine per capita in the Slovak Republic

Indicator	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Wine grape	12,2	11,5	11,4	12,7	13,2	13,3	12,8	13,0	17,8

Source: Národné Poľnohospodárske a Potravinárske Centrum, Výskumný ústav ekonomiky poľnohospodárstva a potravinárstva.

In 2014, wine consumption per capita increased by 4.8 liters (+36.9%). This is the highest since 1990 (since the data were available at SOSR) [6].

3.2 Italian wines

Italian wines can also be divided into 3 categories wine, wine with protected geographical indication and those with protected designation of origin.

Wine (Common wine): these are essentially wines that do not have a specific link with the territory and are similar to the former table wines.

IGP (Protected Geographical Indication): it means the geographical name of a region used to describe the product resulting therefrom and possessing quality, reputation or characteristics attributable to that area (Tuscany, Latium).

DOP (Protected Designation of Origin): it means the geographical name of a wine growing region used to describe a renowned quality product, whose characteristics are due essentially or exclusively to the natural environment and the human factor. The

DOCG and DOC are the traditional specific terms used to describe the wine sector from Italy DOP, as regulated by the European Union.

Italy is the fourth largest area of vineyards

According to data from the 2014 survey, there were:

- 341.070 ha of vineyard DOP
- 123.066 ha of vineyard IGP
- 177.606 ha of vineyard for common wine

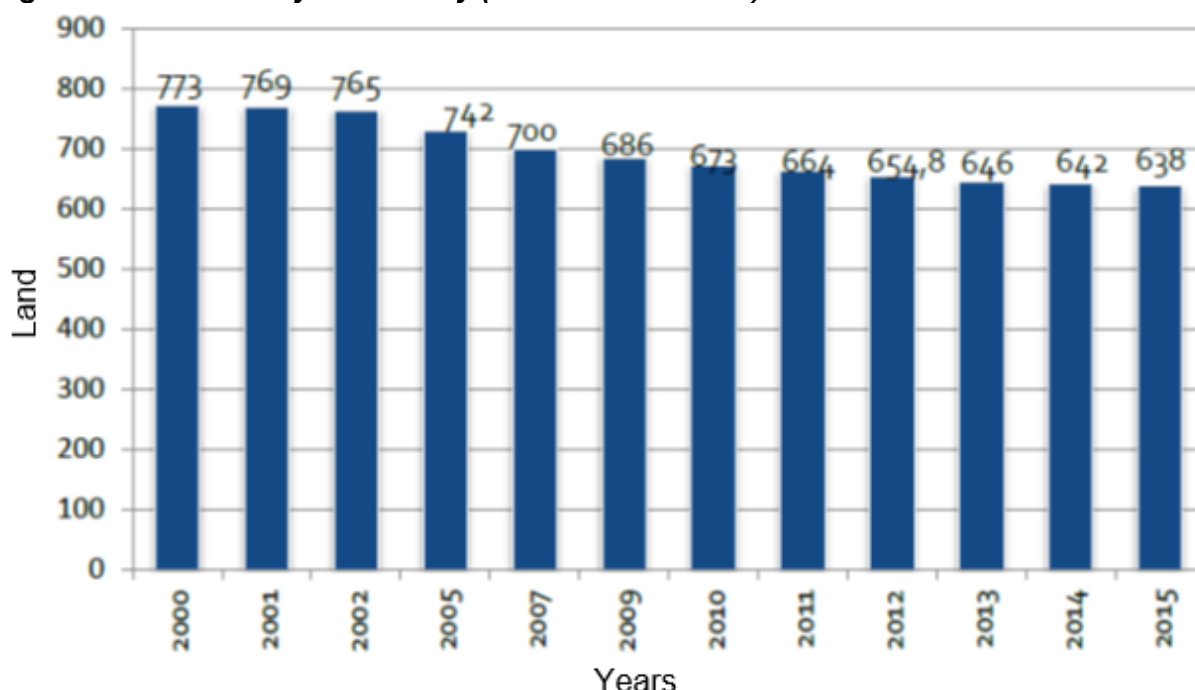
Table 3: The main grape varieties in Italy

Sangiovese:	53.000 ha
Trebbiano:	37.000 ha
Montepulciano:	27.000 ha
Glera:	27.000 ha
Pinot Grigio:	25.000 ha
Merlot:	24.000 ha
Catarratto	22.000 ha
Chardonnay:	20.000 ha

Source: I numeri del vino, "Statistiche produttive 2016"

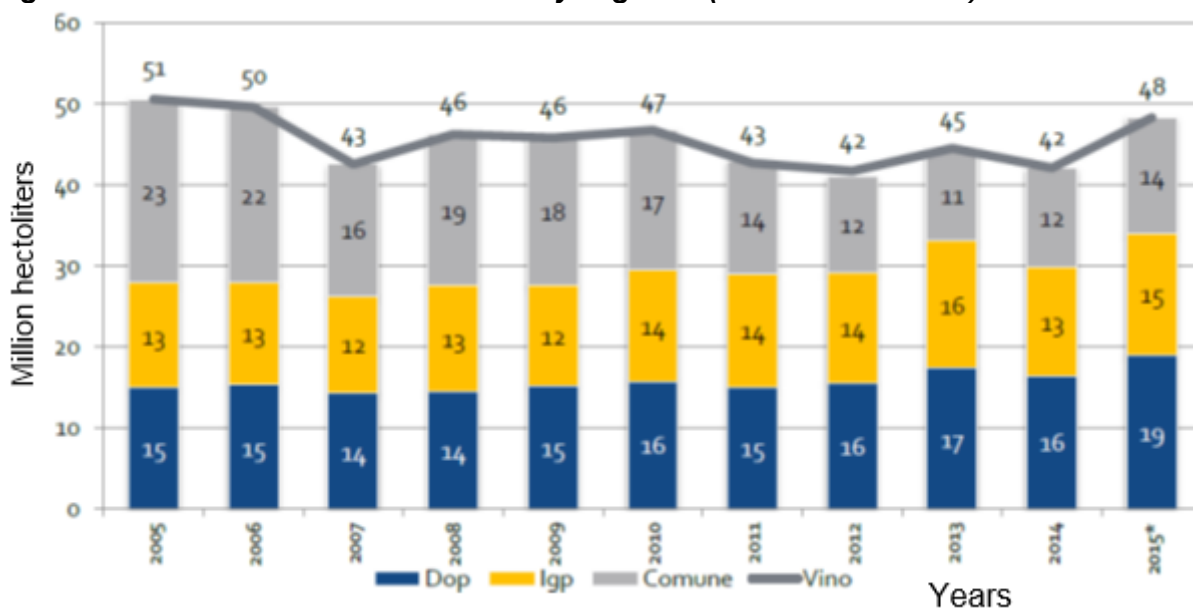
There is a rich variety of wines across different regions. The latest census data mention about 90 varieties covering 77% of the total surface. There are 8 varieties in the group of 20.000 ha, and also 8 in the group 10.000 -20.000 ha group. These 16 varieties, on the whole, represent approximately 53% of the total area under vines.

Figure 1: Area of vineyards in Italy (thousand hectares)



Source: I numeri del vino, "statistiche produttive 2016".

Figure 2: Production of wine and must by segment (million hectoliters)

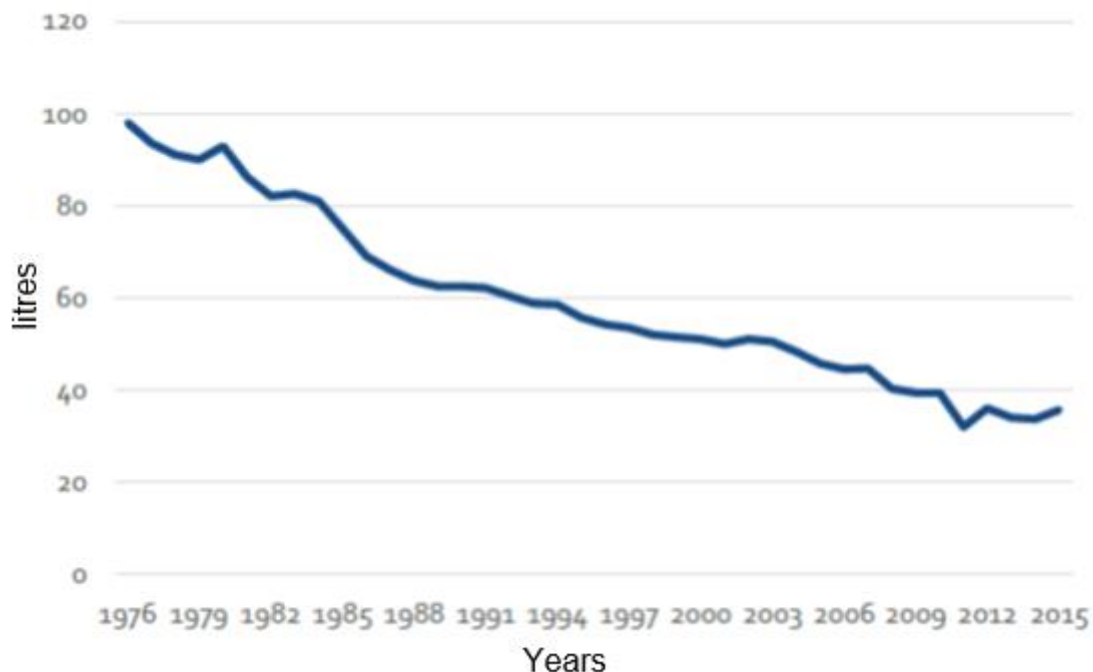


Source: *Il mercato del vino italiano, analisi ISMEA gennaio 2016.*

3.2.1 The wine consumption in Italy: a slow and steady decline

In recent decades, wine has substantially changed its use and function from energetic product consumed mainly in agricultural regions, to gradually becoming a product for occasional consumption at special events or cultural consumption for connoisseurs. It has resulted in a slow and steady decline in wine consumption. In the last thirty years, the per capita consumption is more than halved, and in 2009 it fell for the first time below the threshold of 40 liters, and remained firmly below this threshold.

Figure 3: Wine consumption per capita in Italy (litres)

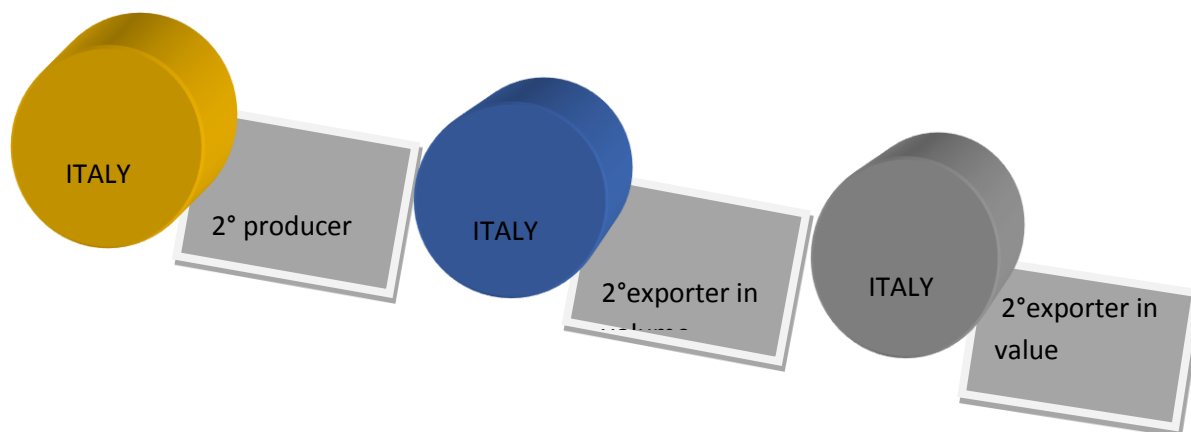


Source: *I numeri del vino, statistiche produttive 2016*

3.2.2 Italy in the international context

In 2014, the leadership of world exports of wine has been taken over by Spain that, thanks to the extreme price competitiveness, has exported 22.6 million hectoliters compared with 18.5 million hectoliters in 2013. In 2015, was Spain also exported 24 million hectoliters compared to the 20 million of Italy.

Figure 4: Italian wine in the world



Source: ISMEA Mercati, “Vino, il ruolo dell’Italia nello scenario internazionale” 02.07.2016

CONCLUSION

Italy and Slovakia are definitely countries with an old tradition of wine-making: as already mentioned, the first indication of the existence of a winegrowing dates around 10 and 7 centuries BC. However, over the years, the situation concerning production and consumption of wine has changed in the two countries.

Taking into account only the most recent years, different trends can be observed: in Slovakia the total area under vines decreased by approximately 5.000 ha, year- year from 2004 to 2014. In the same time, wine consumption per capita increased by more than 5 liters: there is an increase from 12 liters in 2004, to 17.8 liters in 2014 (per capita).

The collected data refer to a different situation in Italy: the wine consumption per capita shows a steady decline from around 50 liters in 2006 to less than 40 liters in 2014 and 2015. The area under vines, conversely, after a slight decrease from 2000 to 2015, has shown an increase by around 4.000 hectares (not yet official data), in 2016.

To sum up, we can say that wine, apart from special fluctuations in consumption and production in individual countries, is present in today’s culture, in its most extensive representations, from art, to fashion, through the music and movies. The wine makes us feel united and connected with the culture of belonging, but at the same time, it gives us this a great feeling of individuality, freedom, expression and identification with the rest of the world, and it’ is a tool for renewing the ancestral relationship with the nature.

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