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# SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

## Setting goals and creating facts

Elena Walch appreciates nature, respects it and wants to pass it on to the next generation in perfection. Sustainable working is at the heart of the company's philosophy and was introduced more than ten years ago, whereby the path to sustainability does not happen overnight, but is understood as a process and a journey. The measures have been gradually implemented in all areas of the company, so that work is not based on a handful of strict rules, but rather everyone's awareness is trained in this new direction.

In 2024, Elena Walch was awarded the prestigious "VIVA" certificate by the Ministry of Environment and Energy Security. The prestigious "VIVA" certificate for sustainability in viticulture in Italy. This certification is a tangible recognition of the company's continuous efforts to maintain high sustainability standards, not only in the production of quality wines.

A carbon footprint, which will be drawn up in 2022 by an external, specialized eco-institute, gives us a detailed insight into the various areas of our winery. Overall, the result shows below-average CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per bottle compared to other wineries in Europe and compared to other wineries worldwide.

The goal is to be a "good" company that knows how to protect the environment in which Elena Walch operates for future generations. The environment is an important part of the company. The winery Elena Walch is convinced that it can do something good here, while the quality of the wine is uncompromising. The quality of the wine is uncompromisingly at the forefront of their considerations.

Here is a summary of our priorities:



# Sustainability in the *VINEYARD*

- Sowing legumes in vineyards maintains and promotes soil fertility, while increasing root space and allowing faster and deeper root growth. In addition, the roots provide the soil with nutrients, thus enriching insect biodiversity and intensifying the production of organic matter.
- A private compost in Castel Ringberg for the improvement of the humus content of the soil and the stimulation of the microbiological activity of the soil.
- Grassing to provide the vines with additional nutrition. The necessary minerals and the resulting nitrogen content ensure healthy growth of the vines.
- Rolling or alternate mowing of the rows to maintain the nitrogen content in the soil, which is essential for the fine minerality that characterizes the wines. The resulting “green carpet” has a positive effect on the water balance of the vineyard and provides an additional habitat for insects and small animals.
- No herbicides are used in the vineyard.
- The vineyards are regularly mulched in alternating rows to ensure long-term soil fertility.
- Use of exclusively water-saving drip irrigation systems. In combination with our weather stations with soil probes, irrigation can be used in a highly targeted manner only when the vines need it.
- Weather and infection monitoring systems monitor the health of the vineyard and adjust interventions, which become preventive rather than curative.
- Continuous analysis of the water requirements of the vines through several weather stations in the vineyards.
- Defoliation of the vines to increase aeration and thus reduce the risk of fungal diseases.
- Cultivation of two disease-resistant PIWI varieties: Bronner and Sauvignier Gris.
- Preservation of dry-stone walls and hedges as habitats for animals and to promote biodiversity.

- Hosting beehives in the vineyards for pollination of the surrounding trees.
- Gentle tree pruning according to the principles of "Simonit & Sirch": Due to the natural lignification of the tree, no large wounds are created during pruning and the lymphatic system is protected.
- All grapes are carefully harvested by hand.



## Sustainability in the *CELLAR*

- Coverage 60% of electricity consumption with a photovoltaic system (solar energy).
- Reduction of water consumption by almost 50% through the use of efficient technologies in the cellar
- “water recycling” system by reusing cooling water for watering the park and cleaning the cellar.
- Use of gravity to decant or move grapes and must.
- Energy savings in the cooling system due to the deep underground cellar, which is therefore mainly cooled naturally.
- Use of barrels and barriques from sustainable cultivations (FSC certified).
- With a view to a sustainable activity, we have started a project to select yeasts from our grapes. With the help of the Edmund Mach Foundation / San Michele all’Adige, we started two years ago to select yeast strains from our grapes, in particular from Sauvignon and Lagrein grapes, both from the Castel Ringberg vineyard, and from Gewürztraminer grapes from the Kastelaz vineyard in Tramin. During the isolation phase at the foundation, we collected about 100 different samples, morphologically distinct from each other. Individuals that did not belong to the species sought were eliminated. The pure strains were then stored in a special synthetic medium at -80°C. A series of physiological tests were performed, such as tolerance to high alcohol concentration, low pH, evaluation of the speed of fermentation start, etc. In this way we obtained yeast strains with excellent oenological aptitude, which can be isolated and propagated in the laboratory to be then used as autochthonous starters in our subsequent harvests. This has allowed us - in short - to obtain territorial and more authentic wines, reducing the use of selected industrial yeasts that are normally used for fermentation.



# Sustainability in *PACKAGING*

- Use of unbleached and uncolored corks.
- Use of 100% recyclable capsules.
- Use of a 21% lighter glass bottle for “Selezione” wines (395 g) to reduce carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere.
- Boxes made mostly of recycled paper with a natural interior (Havannah).
- Traceability of each bottle back to its origin in the vineyard thanks to the batch number on the bottle.

# MORE *APPLICATIONS*

- The preservation of natural green spaces is important to us: The winery owns over 7 hectares of forest and pays attention to the diversity of tree species in its own vineyard.
- Use of two hybrid cars.
- Smoking is prohibited in the interior and exterior areas of the winery, for employees and guests.
- In our garden bistro and the Castel Ringberg estate tavern, attention is paid to regional food. Certain specialties from outside are also offered, such as French cheese.
- Preservation and development of the cultural landscape: in addition to the Castel Ringberg castle and the historic “Ansitz Walch”, other listed buildings also belong to our winery. They are all maintained and communicated on social media to preserve this important part of South Tyrolean culture for the future.
- Development of a code of ethics.
- Team building to promote company loyalty.

*Further steps will follow  
...we will keep you informed!*

only excellent  
vineyards produce  
*first-class wines*



## ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY

**Karoline and Julia, Elena Walch's two daughters, are now the fifth generation to run the family winery. The tradition of sustainability is particularly close to their hearts. Why?**

**Karoline:** Sustainability is at the heart of everything we do. It is the foundation of everything we do. Sustainability is not something that happens overnight, but rather a long-term concept and a constant learning process. The same goes for wine production. Years go by from the vineyard to the bottle. A glass of wine tells the story of the winemaker's year, the soil conditions, the microclimate, and the cultivation of the vines. The uniqueness and authenticity of our wines can be traced back to their vineyards. For us, working the vines as carefully as possible and promoting the balance of nature is a prerequisite for great wines.

**Is this long-term, development-oriented approach a particular focus for family businesses?**



**Julia:** Absolutely. My sister and I were passed on this way of thinking and acting from home. I am happy to be the fifth generation to take over such excellent vineyards and I want to pass this valuable estate on to future generations in at least as good a condition. What I get out of the vineyard, I must also give back to it. Our aim is to intervene as little as possible, to let nature do as much as possible itself. To create a cycle that is as autonomous as possible.

## What does this gentle cultivation of the vineyard look like?

**Karoline:** We increase biodiversity in all areas. Carefully preserved dry stone walls, hedges and cypress trees provide a habitat for small animals such as snakes, lizards and birds and offer protection in their niches. The same applies to the grass between the rows of vines, which is alternately rolled and not cut. It protects the soil from drought and creates a warm, moist microclimate underneath. We also cover the rows with legumes, a type of legume.



Their roots loosen the soil, giving the vines more oxygen and nitrogen. And, of course, we don't use herbicides. Instead, we remove weeds around the base of the vine mechanically. We also put a lot of effort into making our own compost to increase the humus content of the soil. Biological soil activity is stimulated so that it can produce the necessary minerals for healthy vine growth.

## What do you hope to achieve with this work?

**Julia:** We want our vineyards to be as resistant as possible and to be able to develop their own defenses. For this reason, we follow the "gentle pruning" method developed by Simonit & Sirch: we respect the natural lignification of the vines, we do not make large wounds during pruning, and we pay attention to the continuity of the sap channels. This allows the vine to live a healthy life. The healthy development of the vineyard is reflected in the long-term quality of the wines. And that is our highest.