Partnerships and innovations to support businesses

Agropolis International member research teams working on viticulture and wine have close partnership relationships with other public research teams, and with economic stakeholders. This platform functions on local, national and international levels.

Locally, the research teams are mainly involved with companies of the Qualiméditerranée competitive cluster and the Vinseo cluster. The partnerships often lead to innovation transfers which strengthen the competitiveness of the partner businesses. The teams are also involved in joint projects with chambers of agriculture, unions and interprofessional organizations. This investment with local stakeholders facilitates meeting their expectations, incorporating their practical knowledge, while better anticipating the challenges of the sector. The Languedoc wine region has a highly diverse range of wines, terroirs and projects, so the results are transferable to other wine regions.

Nationally, the scientific platform is integrated in national innovation strategies coordinated by INRA, IFV and IRSTEA. This enhances the distribution of work between geographical centres and setting up of trials on various technologies under different geographical and production conditions. The platform—because of the diversity of wine estates in the region and the Mediterranean climatic conditions—is a forerunner in climate change adaptation research.

Internationally, exchanges with other global public and private viticulture and wine research leaders enable the transfer of data, practices, staff and material, especially plants, to enhance local scientific research. The marked presence of Agropolis International member teams in OIV commissions and expert groups substantiates the relevance of their scientific position on the international stage.

The scope of the viticulture- and wine-oriented scientific platform and the excellent partnerships established have given rise to major innovation themes, through:

- the definition of ideotypes, which has led to the breeding of varieties that combine disease resistance and compliance with typicity
- the development of tools to control water supplies, or the use of new sources such as treated water
- the design and development of vineyard and winemaking equipment using tools that facilitate tasks ranging from defining concepts to their validation on a real scale in wine estates
- the development of wine yeasts that meet professional winemakers’ demand via innovative selection methods
- the use of new extraction methods to make effective use of coproducts or to create new inputs
- the support for strategic development of the sector through co-construction, prospective or corporate social responsibility approaches, but also via projects focused more on corporate strategies (feasibility studies, marketing geared towards new consumer targets, etc.)
- the transition to precision viticulture by making effective use of the many possibilities offered by the digital revolution: development of tools (probes, decision-support tools, etc.), provision of heterogeneous and multi-source data integration methods, use of spatiotemporal data and the development of methods for the analysis of high volumes of data collected in vineyards, wineries and distribution channels.

**Institutional partnership services**

**National Institute for Agricultural Research** (INRA/Montpellier SupAgro)
Contact: Gaspard Lépine, agrovalo@supagro.inra.fr
www.montpellier.inra.fr/Partenariats/Agrovalo-Mediterranee-valorisation-et-transfert
www.supagro.fr/web/pages/?id=19&page=316

**Université de Montpellier** (UM)
Contact: Gaétan Lan Sun Luk, iris-accueil@univ-montp2.fr
www.umontpellier.fr/universite/directions/direction-de-linnovation-et-des-partenariats/

**National Research Institute of Science and Technology for Environment and Agriculture** (IRSTEA)
Contact: Christophe Guizard, christophe.guizard@irstea.fr
www.irstea.fr

**French Institute for Vine and Wine** (IFV)
Contact: Éric Serrano, ifv-services@vignevin.com
www.vignevin.com/ifv-services/presentation-difv-services.html
Partnerships and innovations to support businesses

These innovations can be combined to come up with solutions to major socioeconomic issues, such as adaptation to climate change, development of sustainable viticulture or the quest for new opportunities.

To accelerate such transfers, all institutions of the Agropolis scientific community have a partnership service (see below). The aim of these services is to facilitate business access to research laboratories and they fulfil three main tasks: (1) negotiation, appraisal and management of partnership research contracts, (2) the development of service provision, and (3) company transfer of results to wine estates. Some teams have also developed a business start-up support service.

Partnership research contracts with other public or private institutions require joint preliminary definition of the objectives and methods necessary to obtain solutions to specific problems. The results can lead to various deliverables: patents, software, databases, varieties, secret know-how, dissemination of methods, etc. In addition, Montpellier SupAgro and INRA have set up an incubator to host project leaders and support them via the SYNERSUD network**. In 2015, seven projects on viticulture and wine were hosted by this incubator. IRSTEA also has an incubation site that can host businesses monitored by the regional incubator—Languedoc Roussillon Incubation (LRI)***.

Alongside the research, most experimental and technical platforms managed by research teams offer businesses and public organizations services based on completely controlled protocols (mini-vinification, fine chemical analysis of polyphenols, aromas, etc., standardized sensory analyses, ICT assessments, etc.). These services usually help to check specific aspects of processes (e.g. does a yeast enable high quality vinification?) or to measure a new data result, e.g. the quantity of polyphenols in a product, etc. They can also raise new research issues and open novel innovation perspectives.

* Competitive cluster devoted to sustainable agrotechnologies, www.qualimediterranee.fr
** Network of suppliers of the South of France wine sector: www.vinseo.com
*** Languedoc-Roussillon-based network devoted to supporting and creating innovative businesses: www.synersud.com
Strategic foresight – what viticulture and wines for tomorrow?

Can we predict the future? Certainly not! But can we foresee or contribute to its construction? Strategic foresight was introduced in the viticulture and wine sphere via an initiative of the École d’Agronomie de Montpellier in 1998 with the aim of assessing the major changes under way in the sector—technical, economic and social—and foreseeing the impacts, especially for research and education. A national foresight study was then carried out by INRA* (2003). Since then, FranceAgriMer has created a unit devoted to strategic foresight and a partnership was established which regularly associates its foresight experts with those of Montpellier for studies focused on the viticulture and wine sector.

Since 2004, these foresight research specialists have regularly called upon experts from the Montpellier platform to meet requests from various professional organizations (unions, interprofessional organizations, etc.), businesses (consortium of input suppliers, cooperatives, multinational corporations, etc.) and public authorities.

In 2011 and 2012, a study led by Montpellier SupAgro/IHEV and INRA at the request of the Regional Directorate for Agriculture, Agrifood and Forests (DRAAF) in Languedoc-Roussillon (FranceAgriMer funding), resulted in the building of regional scenarios on the future of viticulture in Languedoc region for 2025, in relation to territorial patterns (demographic, water supplies, etc.), while bringing together professional stakeholders in a pluralistic viticulture setting (see below).

Strategic foresight of Buzet winemakers

‘Scoping future opportunities and controlling our destiny through strategic foresight’. This could characterize the approach of the Vignerons de Buzet cooperative which has opted to build its strategy on the basis of an in-depth foresight study carried out by Montpellier SupAgro/IHEV in which all of its executive and administrative senior staff were involved over a 3-year period. This was followed by a strategic foresight initiative and drawing up of a strategic action plan (2011), which has since then given rise to periodic gap analysis seminars. This approach is fully in line with the cooperative’s early, shared, exemplary and unflinching commitment to sustainable development.

For further information: www.vigneronsbuzet-durable.fr/en