



Alto Adige growers head for the hills

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By Janice Fuhrman

Growers in the Italian region of Alto Adige are turning to biodynamics and climbing to higher ground to avoid the potential effects of a warming climate.

At a San Francisco tasting of the wines of Italy's northernmost wine region, Count Michael Goëss-Enzenberg of Manincor, a 400 year-old biodynamic winery, said some growers are planting or considering planting at higher elevations due to global warming.

'Almost everybody would like to have highly-situated vineyards - from 1400 to 1800 feet and higher.'

Vineyards in Alto Adige range from 650 feet to 3,250 feet. Vintners say this gives it a wide diversity of microclimates.

Urs Vetter, of Alois Lageder, says the winery is using biodynamic methods as a strategy to deal with a warming climate.

'We're getting a much more even growing cycle of the grapevine, and are better able to achieve full physiological ripeness at lower sugar levels and higher acidity levels.'

Alois Lageder has not yet sought higher altitudes for replanting, but 20% of its fruit is already planted at 'very high altitude sites.'

'We're in the relatively early stages of learning how climate change affects us. It may well be if things get warmer we will replant sites that now have cool climate grapes with warm climate grapes,' said Vetter.

Goëss-Enzenberg says Manincor is even growing Tempranillo to use in its blends.

'It may sound very weird to use this grape in Alto Adige, but we're already using it for some blends because it's a warm climate grape.'