

## **IRRIGATION IN THE DOURO ON SAINT JOHN'S DAY PORT WINE AND THE "DECREE OF SAINT JOHN, THE BAPTIST"**

**Decree-Law 48/2023 - "The Baptist Decree" - amended the Statute of the Douro Demarcated Region - DDR. Douro Demarcated Region- DDR.**

Beautiful region, enchanted valley, the first demarcated region in the world, since the 10th of September 1756, with a strict discipline of production and trade, control and certification. Denomination of Origin "PORTO" and later "DOURO".

Some people still say that this wine was first called Vinho de Lamego, but the name of "PORTO" wine appears, in its individualization, already in 1619 - curiously during the reign of "los Felipes". In 1699 - already after the Restoration of National Independence, and in full swing of the Braganza's dynasty - the designation "PORT WINE" was already used.

The Alto Douro Wine Region has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since December 14, 2001, and the DDR is a producer of exceptional wines, not only stilled but also fortified. "Generoso" wine, "Port", "Moscatel do Douro"..

However, the region has been hard suffering with exceptionally hot summers, preceded by autumns and winters of severe or even extreme drought

Heroic vines, part of them century, resist to hydric stress, but they have limits. As a result, there has been not only less quantitative production but also lower quality of the grapes due to the interruption of the vines' vegetative cycle.

Vineyards' irrigation is a controversial issue among oenologists and winegrowers. The more conservatives resist, considering that quality should prevail over quantity, and rightly so! Others, big grape growers, have to produce a lot, in weight, in the name of profitability, and irrigation helps! And a third group, more progressive or innovative - depending on who calls them conservative or innovative, respectively - defends irrigation as a one-off instrument for managing hydric stress, as a way to avoid the closure of the vine's stomata and subsequent interruption of the grape maturation process.

**This one seems to have been the understanding that has now taken hold in the Douro, with the entry into force on June 24, the day of St. John (the Baptist), Decree-Law 48/2023.**

Prior to the entry into force of this decree, the regime was that vineyard irrigation could only be carried out in extreme situations of water deficit, as such recognized by the IVDP - Instituto dos Vinhos do Douro e do Porto, I.P.

Now, with the entry into force of the "Baptista Decree", **irrigation is allowed in situations of water deficit that may cause imbalances in the composition and quality of the grape and jeopardize normal physiological development and the winegrower must inform the IVDP in its reserved area on the Portal.**

It seems almost the same, but legislatively it is not. First: the water deficit situation has no longer to become "extreme". It is enough that it does exist. Second: the legislator recognizes that water deficit can cause imbalances in composition and quality of the grape; and, not least, it is no longer necessary to have the "official recognition" of the IVDP as to the existence of a situation of extreme water deficit. It is enough that the producer informs the IVDP through the Portal.

In addition, this Decree-Law also harmonizes the rules for the delimitation of vineyard plots and their criteria, in line with the provisions of the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2016/1150 além disto, este Decreto-Lei vem também harmonizar as regras de delimitação das parcelas de vinha e os seus critérios de delimitação, em consonância com o disposto no Regulamento de Execução (EU) 2016/1150 da Comissão.

Published on June 23, the Decree entered into force the day after its publication, i.e. June 24, the day of Saint John (the Baptist). The Forerunner who "watered" us with the baptism in water, the Baptist, is also St. John, Patron Saint of the "Undeafated, Always Loyal and Very Noble City of O'Porto. O'Porto, in turn, baptized this magnificent nectar as "Port Wine". Hence the audacity to call this Decree-Law the "Baptist Decree".  
The vines will appreciate, and so will do the consumers.

**Thank you, Saint John!**



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