

**SUSTAINABILITY AND WINE “VALUE CHAIN”:
CRITICAL POINTS, OPPORTUNITIES, NEW QUALITY FORMS
(FIRST CONSIDERATIONS FROM A RESEARCH IN PROGRESS)**

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In the last period the attention to the topic is noticeably grown up. The climate changes and the driving role held recently by leader countries are just general reason, although important.

In addition, the most recent EU-CAP and OIV guidelines that aroused an in depth-analysis of the topic from the point of view of general directions and the regulations to propose and suggest; on the other hand, the proactive spirit of the most innovative operators that leads to an enlargement of the “Corporate Social Responsibility” idea.

Finally, the growing perception that this subject has not to be quickly placed in the “rules” area (felt only as “restrictions”) but also in the one of “opportunities”, urges part of the Firms and Stakeholders of the scenario to invest on the subject (at least in “knowledge”).

A working team (coordinated by Prof. Attilio Scienza, Milano University-Crop Production Dept., experts from Rosselli Foundation, Torino and the writer - supported by MPS Bank) is carrying on a research focused on those innovative process which target is directed – with different scientific approaches, cultural models and technologies – to raise the “environment-friendly level” in production processes internal to wine-growing firms and the “sustainable level” in interaction and exchanges relationships between the wine-growing firms and the surrounding environment.

The target is the individuation, on the base of real experiences and entrepreneurial innovative approaches, of an illustrative taxonomy of innovation on these topics and the evaluation of the consequently involvements on different levels (firms, territory, wine global system); not only considering the scientific-technologically side but also – although in outline – some organizational, distribution and marketing involvements. To sum up, the favoured approach aim to enlarge the global “view” company/environment. This involve that “intangible” but decisive thing called “*corporate culture*”, its trends, its diffusion level, its consequences. Let’s take into consideration just the effort in finding consistent solutions (economical, environmental, social) between logics and interests traditionally far from each other during a long time, and the crucial aspect of related and required professionalism. Professionalism – and specific skills – to be built-up also with creative educational/training processes on the point of view of methods and “tools”

The research is actually an intermediate step: nearly at the end the meetings with firms carried on for a long time in a very open mind situation; first comments starting. It is clear that none anticipations can be given thoughtlessness. However, it is possible to propose “first impressions” on some very general aspects that seem to emerge on the prevailing attitude of the met firms.

In outline and as introductory remarks the following points are underlined.

- Several initiatives are in progress or in planning, new processes are being activated, some relevant results are obtained; nevertheless a kind of “activism” seems to predominate on a more strategic approach; *it seems still common a “punctiform” approach, instead of a more organic and organized strategy*. Overall approaches applied to advanced contests are “studied” just by few big operator but they seem to remain on direct experience borders.
- It is common, as mentioned, the impression of the topic importance for the next years but sometimes *come out a chased trend to think that it is enough to take just few short cuts, few simple technical*

works (maybe to gain a rapid visibility); this attitude may have opposite effects to the wished ones, also because the topic is, at this point, in the spotlights.

- An important aspect stood out is a certain difficulty to “see” this kind of innovations extended also downstream of the two principal areas of the “value chain” (vicultural and oenological stage). If it is true that there are the major technical engagements and their related investments, it is also true *that to fully exploit the potential of the innovations upstream it is necessary to care the “ecologic footprint” also in downstream steps*: distribution, marketing, communication and related services.

It might be tough how much “content” more or less “sustainable” can be given (or removed!) to packaging, to bottles (dimension, thickness, energy content); or to the image, maybe through a too bright communication for a slight work done or –on the contrary- an inadequate communication for an important innovation. It is necessary to pay attention to all steps in which the “value-chain” is composed *avoiding to lose, on the downstream way, the value laboriously built upstream*.

- Finally, another raising up aspect is the distance between some more advanced firms in “planning the new” and the “Institutions feedbacks” regarding economical support, organization of meeting and comparisons with producers and other stakeholders involved or might be involved. Here, the work to do to reduce relationship and communication gaps between the different actors is not so little. But the point is very important because an authoritative answer on a long-term period on this crucial subject *cannot be given just from firms side, but a global effort is required which involved other stakeholders and spur them on a growing interaction* (first condition for possible partnerships). This is particularly referred to the local Institutions and to their role on thorough management and on improving of territorial resources and in details to their defence and management of the resources “critical” everywhere now: the water resources, the land/soil resource (and the strong underneath battle in order to their usability).

The other essential component is obviously the world of “scientific production”, technical innovation, experimentation, extension, especially its part more interested in dialogue and effective interaction with the other actors, knowing that to produce real innovation is essential to trigger off efficient transferring know-how processes and quick circuit for the so called “knowledge economy”.

These variable attitudes (foreseen in this phase) can be maybe explained in a common deep motivation: the opinion not yet very widespread in facts that ***sustainability will be in the next years a “critical factor of success” of primary importance on global competition***; and the consequently consciousness that first of all it is crucial to acquire on top and on the whole firm a *larger “vision”* of the matter and formulate *few shared driving “values”* (to be later implemented into projects, experimentations, test, technologies as well as financial resources and their targeted planning).

A critical element on this point to speed up this way to a more generalized consciousness is given to the *“Sustainability Demand”* (sometimes uncertain, faint, and often poor organized but increasing) that comes from citizens, from the huge and versatile world of products consumers or users of services linked to wine system (not to speak of other important sectors).

The related trends, established by recent researches clearly speak out: everything linked with the “green” dimension of the consumption (in all different ways) is more and more object of attention and particular approval (sometimes just in the “declared intentions”, but often on real “purchase acts”). The crisis do not seems to call into question these trends, but it underlines more the approaching of consumers to those “actors”, firms, “Brands” in general that are considered more reliable, credible (and for this reason authoritative) on the point of view of how much substantially they do in the “green marketing” area, or larger, in the so called “green economy”.

Is this a very important point because it can speed up or – if disregarded – slow down the global integration process of “sustainability dimension” in corporate culture and in its value system giving further meaning and thickness to the “Global Quality” concept.