

## SUSTAINABILITY

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In recent years we have focused more and more on cultivating our vineyards in line with ecological standards. Now we have formally expanded our initiatives and achieved certification under the “Sustainable Austria” standard.

As of the 2018 vintage, our wines carry the “Sustainable Austria” quality seal developed by the Austrian Winegrowers Association. Certification to this standard confirms our longstanding efforts to consciously practise ecological principles—and has simultaneously recognised almost 35% of the Wachau’s vineyards as sustainably cultivated.

“Sustainability” is a very broad term, often used incorrectly. The main idea is to strike a balance between ecological, social and economic goals and to avoid conflicts among them. Our long-term aim is to ensure balanced and stable operations that continue to grow over time. While this approach may and should include the principles of organic viticulture, it means even more. It is about developing an eye for the whole instead of sticking dogmatically to isolated actions. An essential part of the approach is to continuously record and document all of the actions taken, including periodic audits by third parties. In the end, it boils down to upholding the traditional farming mindset, which includes a sense of responsibility spanning generations, while additionally taking a modern, strategic approach.

Ecology is a key concern in vineyard work. Here we focus specifically on engendering and maintaining a diversity of plants, animals and insects, as well as economic use of available water resources, while employing machinery less and more efficiently so as to minimise soil compaction. We completely renounce glyphosate and use pheromone traps to combat the European Grapevine Moth, the only moth species that threatens vines. This method allows us to avoid all use of insecticides.

Each year in spring, we grow in our vineyards a special cover crop. The wide variety of blossoming plants adds to the biodiversity and improves the soil structure and ecosystem through deep roots, while adding humus and enhancing water holding capacity and nutrient availability. And above all: cover crop helps reduce soil erosion.

Many of our vineyards are situated on extremely steep slopes and difficult to access with machinery. Therefore, a major portion of our vineyard work and the whole harvest is done by hand. Avoiding machinery use, and thus CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, is also a key aspect of sustainability. Extensive manual labour and loads of work are involved in building and maintaining the roughly two million square metres of dry-stone walls found throughout the Wachau region. The walls have become a habitat for many species, hosting a wide variety of insects, microorganisms and plants. This unique ecosystem pervades outwards to the adjacent dry grassland areas and the mixed forests above the vineyards.

In our winery, we have rebuilt our 300-year-old Baroque cellar at a depth of ten metres, allowing us to vinify our grapes under favourable, energy-efficient conditions while requiring only limited additional temperature control. Years ago, we installed a large photovoltaic system that feeds sustainable electricity into the power grid. In taking these steps, our goal is to improve the CO<sub>2</sub> balance, consciously pursue a path towards climate neutrality and ensure a healthy, sound environment for us and our vines. Other factors also play a key role, such as the wide-scale use of light glass bottles. To sum it up, it is about strategic planning for packaged measures as opposed to taking isolated actions.

The vintner families and our employees receive continued support through education and training, enabling them to observe ecological principles when carrying out all the necessary steps in their vineyards. International experts lecture on subjects such as organic viticulture, proper cover crop and soil health.

Key to the approaches described above is to ensure that the vineyards are able to operate profitably in the long term within the regional and international economic environment. In the end, all sustainability measures need to be integrated in a strategy that appropriately considers our employees and the labour-intensive conditions under which our vintners families work. This needs to be emphasised from a regional perspective, especially considering to what great extent we are responsible for conserving the landscape of the Wachau as a cultural region.



# { DOMÄNE WACHAU } NERD NOTES



DOMÄNE  
WACHAU

Alongside a strong international focus with extended export business we see a substantial need in regional activities, which helps us to promote the Wachau Valley as a high-quality tourism region. We are marketing the Wachau as a wine region, through wine tourism and wine events. Our well-educated staff welcomes guests from all over the world all year long in our wine shop in Dürnstein, to give them an overview of local wines. For all our effort, we were awarded as No. 1 in Europe and No. 3 worldwide of the "TOP 50 World's Best Vineyards" in 2020.

The criteria for sustainability are met only by reconciling the needs and striking a balance in all these areas—from the vineyards to the cellar and including the happiness of our vintner families and our employees as well as business success.

Or to put it in the words of our winemaker Heinz Frischengruber: "Good wines and a conscientious relationship to the environment are both sides of one coin. We can only improve if our soils and our vines are in balance, if we make good business decisions and take care of our vintner families and employees, in short, where every part engages with the others to work smoothly."



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