Labelling of low-alcohol wines

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EU simplifies labelling and production rules for marketing of low-alcohol wines

Regulation (EU) 2026/471 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 February 2026 amending Regulations (EU) No 1308/2013, (EU) No 251/2014 and (EU) 2021/2115 as regards certain market rules and sectoral support measures in the wine sector and for aromatised wine products and Regulation (EU) 2024/1143 as regards certain labelling rules for spirit drinks

Update

To support the development of low-alcohol wines, the European Commission has simplified common rules on labelling these wines, and on the production of sparkling wines. It has also aligned the rules on aromatised (flavoured) wines with those on non-aromatised wines.

Impacted products

Wine

What is changing?

Labelling

Reduced-alcohol wines

Under the new rules (amending Regulation 1308/2013, Art. 119), reduced-alcohol wines can be labelled as follows:

- “alcohol-free” if the actual alcoholic strength of the product (percentage of alcohol present) does not exceed 0.5% by volume
- “0.0%” if the actual alcoholic strength of the product does not exceed 0.05% by volume
- “reduced alcohol” if the actual alcoholic strength of the product is above 0.5% by volume and at least 30% less than the minimum strength of its category before de-alcoholisation.

Electronic labelling

The new Regulation also allows the European Commission to develop new rules on the electronic labelling of ingredients and nutritional information for wine and aromatised wine.

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Production

Low-alcohol aromatised wines

Aromatised wines are obtained from wine products that have been flavoured. Aromatised wine was previously defined as requiring an actual alcoholic strength by volume between 14.5 and 22%, and a total alcoholic strength (actual and potential alcohol from residual sugar) by volume of not less than 17.5% (Regulation 251/2014, Art. 3).

The new rules now permit the production of low-alcohol aromatised wines that have undergone de-alcoholisation treatment (revised Art. 3(5)). These low-alcohol aromatised wines can be produced from totally or partially de-alcoholised wines. The same labelling rules apply to low-alcohol aromatised wines as for reduced-alcohol wines.

Categories of sparkling wines

Regulation 1308/2013 (Annex VII, Part II) defines categories of grapevine products including wine, liquor wine, and sparkling wine.

The new Regulation allows sparkling wine to be produced from second fermentation of still wine, or by adding carbon dioxide to still wine produced from (partially) de-alcoholised still wine.

Why?

There is increasing consumer demand for low-alcohol wines, but the previous rules on how to describe alcohol content were different across EU Member States, restricting the development of the sector. The new rules harmonise the terminology, giving greater clarity to consumers.

Previous rules also placed technological limitations on the production of low-alcohol sparkling wines, which have now been removed. De-alcoholised wines previously needed to meet the characteristics and minimum alcoholic strength of their alcoholic counterparts before they could undergo the de-alcoholisation process, a process that removes the carbon dioxide (CO_2) needed for sparkling wine.

Timeline

The Regulation applies from **18 March 2026**.

The new labelling requirements for reduced-alcohol (aromatised) wines apply from **19 September 2027**.

Wines (including aromatised and sparkling wines) that have undergone a de-alcoholisation treatment and have been labelled in accordance with previous rules before 19 September 2027 can still be placed on the EU market after that date until stocks are exhausted.

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Background

The EU is the global leader in wine production, consumption, and exports. Changing consumption patterns (lower consumption of traditional wines; increased demand for aromatised and low-alcohol or alcohol-free wines) require the current rules on wine production and labelling to be adapted to meet consumer demand and to better inform consumers about these products.

Resources

Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 establishing a common organisation of the markets in agricultural products

Regulation (EU) No 251/2014 on the definition, description, presentation, labelling and the protection of geographical indications of aromatised wine products

Sources

Regulation (EU) 2026/471 as regards certain market rules and sectoral support measures in the wine sector and for aromatised wine products and as regards certain labelling rules for spirit drinks

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