

feel that it is necessary to send you the following.

As some of you will easily understand, I have never liked to describe our work as “organic” or “biodynamic.” If I am asked, I can only reply with the truth, and that is that our farming operation does have organic and biodynamic certification. But only if I am asked pointedly and insistently.

I always prefer to talk instead about agriculture, about what we are doing, about terroir and about the artisanal approach.

When I talk about organics and biodynamics, I am always referring to an agricultural method and not to anything about wine itself. Wine is wine, and a good wine is good wine, no matter what practices have been utilised in its production. Only afterwards will I decide whether or not to purchase a good wine, basing my choice on the moral or ethical rules that I have made my own.

**Increasingly, I find myself in rather embarrassing situations;** I find in informal tastings—but in formal tastings as well, with winemakers, sommeliers, restaurateurs, wineshop owners, and journalists—that biodynamic farming is confused with organic farming, and, **equally alarming, wineries that are neither organic nor biodynamic are in fact labelled as such.**

**So, where is it that we professionals—we producers and all of you—are making a mistake?**

I have colleague-friends who have been practicing biodynamic or organic farming for years now, seriously and successfully, who have no desire to apply for legal certification. Nor do they describe themselves as biodynamic or organic producers.

When a producer represents himself as biodynamic or organic that means that in addition to being proud of that fact and desirous of communicating it, he wants to gain some business advantage from it, which is wholly understandable.

But what if this producer does not have the required certifications?

**And what if, without the required certifications, this producer does not even practice organic or biodynamic agriculture?**

**And what if this producer, although not possessing the certifications and although not claiming to be an organic or biodynamic producer, is nevertheless described by his sales representatives as organic?**

I have personally heard producers describe themselves as biodynamic solely because they practice cover-crop mulching in the vineyard. Only that.

**And what if wine professionals—sommeliers, restaurateurs, wineshop owners, journalists—present, promote, and sell the wines of that producer who describes himself as an organic or biodynamic producer but without certification and without even practicing in any way organic or biodynamic viticulture?**

I repeat: increasingly often I find myself in rather embarrassing situations, informal tastings, but in formal tastings as well, with winemakers, sommeliers, restaurateurs, wine shop owners, and journalists, where biodynamic farming is confused with organic farming, and, equally alarming, wineries that are neither organic nor biodynamic are in fact labelled as such.

**So, how can we professionals—we producers and all of you—rectify these embarrassing situations?**

The responsibility of a producer, but also of journalist—and of a restaurateur, a sommelier, and in effect of all wine professionals—is enormous with respect to those who, by their purchasing, grant us their trust, emotions, time, and, in particular, the possibility of doing what we do.

We decided to be certified rather late in the process, even though we have been practicing organic and biodynamic agriculture for years. Late, because it was, and still is, my belief that no third party should be needed to guarantee my words, to guarantee what I do through compiling forms and record books. An outside entity certifies you on paper without ever having practiced agriculture and in many cases without even having an adequate idea of common agricultural practices.

However, in a world where presumptuous chicanery embraces the most banal dishonesty, we farmers who practice organic or biodynamic agriculture with all our strength, and have in all likelihood consciously made a life decision in that regard, have a very real responsibility to give a concrete guarantee.

**And yes, that responsibility of ours is more important than the ethical and moral decision to not seek certification.**

Is it fairly clear that the certification process in no way fully guarantees that the organic or biodynamic method is being applied with total quality results. But right now, today and here, one doesn't have to speak about quality. Not yet. But here and now, one must begin to speak, and emphatically, of guarantees, of guaranteeing, that is, that organic or biodynamic practices are being in fact performed.

Many, in fact too many, criticise the certification systems, but criticisms from outside really matter very little, whereas criticisms from inside, from those who have already won certification are truly constructive criticisms that can improve the certification systems, procedures, the quality of the certification itself, and consequently of the certified farming operations.

I have dear friends who are producers, whom I can describe as free spirits, anarchists, who through their respect for this marvellous world and for those who live in it have acquiesced to certify their farms and thus their work.

I do hope that an increasing number of my colleagues accept certification and that an increasing number of those who deal with wine will learn to discern the true and the correct, referring to things with the correct terms.

I extend my warm regards and thank you very much for your consideration.

Alessandro Dettori

P.S. Lists of certified organic and biodynamic producers are available to the public, and on the web to boot.

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