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The roads of the developmental Viticulture in Greece

Dear guests

Ladies and gentlemen

On behalf of the Scientific Committee I have the pleasure to welcome you in the 3rd International Symposium, Ampelos 2013 and to express my best feelings for your presence and participation.

I also thank Mrs Stavroula Kourakoy – Dragona, the great lady of the Greek viti-viniculture sector, for her presence and her acceptance to be the honored guest of the Ampelos 2013.

The advances in the developmental viticulture within the context of climate change, the progress and innovative changes in winemaking, the new strategies for promoting wine products in the new economic conditions formed globally, the institutional changes and the new trends shaping the implementation of good viticulture and winemaking practices are the main objects of the 3rd International Symposium Ampelos 2013.

It is a given fact that the accumulation of knowledge in the recent years has doubled and the production rate of new knowledge from the huge number of research papers currently ongoing globally is exponential to such an extent that the time needed in order to evaluate and check the accuracy of these papers is significantly limited and so is the exploitation of this knowledge in viti-viniculture practices.

Professor Nelson Shaulis has emphasized with his ingenious way the risk of this fact, in his speech at the American Society of Enology and Viticulture meetings where he was honored as Merit Award winner. In typical fashion for him, he challenged the audience with a slide showing two paths a scientist might take and asked which the greater hindrance to progress in viticultural understanding was. The two paths were alternatively labeled a)

Unanswered Questions and b) Unquestioned Answers

His view was that the latter was most often the greater hindrance.

This question (dilemma) still exists and the answer probably gives the status of the Science of Viticulture in any given country. In countries where the Unanswered Questions are more, it shows that maybe there are problems in the effectiveness of the viti-viniculture research whereas in countries where the Unquestioned Answers are over of a critical point, it reveals absence of methodology and principles in viticultural research.

I am afraid to say that in Greek viti-viniculture, in the recent years, the Unquestioned Answers have increased dangerously. And for this situation we are all responsible.

I shall present and comment on the results of a project of one of the most important viticultural federation of Greece. Thinking about this reminded me of the presentation of Nelson Shaulis, the father of Geneva Double Curtain (GDC). These are typical examples of Unquestioned Answers.

The first example concerns the important aromatic Greek grape cultivar, Moschofilero (or Mavrofilero) which is included, in the above official paper, among the 4 most famous Greek cultivars, together with Assyrtico, Agiorgitiko, Xinomavro and is characterized as white wine grape cultivar. This constitutes a typical example of an Unquestioned Answer since Moschofilero is a red-black variety. So neither the author of the proposal nor the group of specialists verifying and approving the proposal saw this absolute false statement.

The second example concerns the Greek grape cultivar Mavroudi (means black, due to the color of berries).

In the above mentioned study the cv Mavroudi is included in the emerging varieties-ambassadors of the Greek vineyard. But under the general name Mavroudi, more than thirty Greek varieties are included, varieties which are usually followed by an adjective equivalent to an ampelographic character of berry or a name of geographical origin, for example M. chondro, M. psilo, M. Arachovis, M. Kritis etc. This family of Mavroudia consists of different cultivars, as the research of Laboratory of Viticulture of Agricultural University of Athens showed with ampelographic, biochemical and molecular methods. The problem arises since the most important grape cultivar Agiorgitiko was known as Mavroudi Nemeas till the end of 1980 and still today, the synonym Mavroudi (Nemeas) is often used.

It is obvious that with the name Mavroudi there is not one distinct Greek grape cultivar and so the use of the term Mavroudi without an additional indication is a serious mistake and puts in danger the famous wines of V.Q.P.R.D. Nemea and this constitutes another example of Unquestioned Answer.

I am not in position to predict where and how these Unquestioned Answers will cause problems in the identification of Greek grape cultivars in coordination with the absence of clear national viti-vinicultural policy especially in the polyclonal synthesis of Greek varieties.

What I know, after 35 years of my involvement in the Greek viticulture, is that it is time to establish a national program for Greek viticulture in scientific research and in a productive level in order to avoid more mistakes and especially to exploit in a good sense the new Greek scientists of the viti-viniculture sector.

So this opening speech does not intend to give solutions or specialized answers to the important issues of productive viticulture. It aims to show and prioritize these issues, to ask specific questions to which either no convincing answers have been given or they still remain unanswered with the emphasis both to the varietal potential of the Greek vineyard and the specialization of the viticultural practice. It aims to pose certain methodological proposals, maybe of a new philosophy, both scientific and research, adapted to the new situations and developments of viticulture in a global scale.

The basic steps towards this new direction would be:

1. The planning and prioritization of the problems concerning the Greek grapevine varieties such as: the solution of the problem of synonyms through the identification using ampelographic and molecular methods, the transition from the viticulture of cultivated grapevine varieties to the viticulture of clones through the legislation (finally) of clonal selection.
2. The planning and solution of problems referring to the production of genuine, healthy and virus-free (in reality of known viral load) grapevine propagation material, of problems which nurseries face in the production of grapevine material through targeted actions, such as the annual seminars-symposia with specialized subjects, published in time so that in these seminars solutions can be discussed and presented (and not problems that are repeated).

3. The planning and prioritization for the solution of problems of developmental viticulture centered around the new trends in the ecophysiology of the vine and the viticultural practices (pruning, water stress etc.)
4. The establishment of annual scientific meetings and seminars with specialized subjects for the discussion of the results in the viticultural practice so that the number of unanswered questions can be diminished and the unquestioned answers can be reduced.

Thank you