



Press release

**COMITÉ CHAMPAGNE PRESENTS ACTION PLAN FOR
"ENSEMBLE POUR LES VENDANGES EN CHAMPAGNE »
(TOGETHER FOR THE CHAMPAGNE HARVEST)**

Épernay, June 20, 2024 – Today, Maxime Toubart and David Chatillon, co-Presidents of the Comité Champagne, presented an action plan, "Ensemble pour les vendanges en Champagne" (Together for the Champagne harvest), detailing employment conditions for seasonal workers. The plan features both short-term and long-term initiatives and is being rolled out this year.

The aim of the plan is to consolidate and help structure the Champagne industry's standards, regarding the employment conditions of seasonal workers. It also aims to supervise and coordinate harvest progress across all parties involved.

Guided by three keywords - prepare, secure and react - the Champagne industry reaffirms its commitment and call to action to enhance safety procedures during the harvest, and make this key event a collective success.

A call to action that resounds across the industry.

To respond to the legitimate needs of seasonal workers, Comité Champagne set up an inter-professional working group in October 2023, bringing together winegrowers and houses. Under the aegis of the Prefect of the Marne, supported by the sub-prefects of Reims and Épernay, this group worked closely with all stakeholders, including: government services, labour inspection services, the MSA (Mutualité Sociale Agricole), France Travail, education institutions, service providers, employee unions, and prevention organisations.

The Comité Champagne has worked hard to ensure that each winegrower, house and service provider employers are committed to following both the current regulations and industry's advice.

Over 100 meetings have taken place since last autumn to discuss four priority areas: health and safety conditions in the workplace, accommodation, recruitment and service provision, with a particular focus on establishing a strong relationship between the employer and the service provider.

Clear industry guidelines accessible to all.

Committed to the preparation for the harvest each year, Comité Champagne has redefined the standards that apply to all Champagne industry professionals.



Aimed to guide, help structure and disseminate regulations, all stakeholders are involved, and new standards are being introduced this year.

Priority is given to the health and safety conditions of seasonal workers via four axes.

1. Guides and tools are available to help prepare for the harvest.
 - A number of guides dedicated to the provision of services, collective accommodation and health and safety procedures, have been made accessible to all employers with rules to follow and practical advice on how best to prepare and carry out the harvest. These guides are published every year and have been adapted for the entire industry. This year, a welcome booklet for grape-pickers has also been added. Its purpose is to inform them of their rights, and includes the safety rules to follow.
2. Introduction of a best practice reference guide.
 - Specifically addressed to all employers and presented in the form of a self-assessment tool, this reference guide recalls the main regulations to follow, and features a full guide of good practices with additional commitments that go beyond the legal and regulatory requirements.
3. This year, the Comité Champagne, the Syndicat Général des Vignerons (growers' union) and the Union des Maisons de Champagne (houses) signed a collective partnership agreement with the local Fire Department and Rescue Services as well as the Fire Brigade Union.
 - This agreement offers training courses for grape-pickers' supervisors, both direct employers and their employees, as well as service providers.
4. The Comité Champagne relies on its local network to exercise vigilance via a territorial watch.
 - Local intermediaries, including the mayors who play a major role in the municipalities concerned, are invited to report any challenges that seasonal workers may encounter, particularly in terms of accommodation.

Supervision of the provision of services.

Service provision plays an important role during harvest time. The Champagne industry and its stakeholders have set up tools to strengthen the relationship between these service providers and the employers.

1. Creation of the VitiArgos platform
 - This platform enables service providers to register and carry out an online self-diagnosis of their practices. It enables employers to check their service providers' registration and their commitment before signing a contract. This self-diagnosis, which is appended to the contract, is enforceable and secures the relationship between the two parties.



2. The Comité Champagne has encouraged and supported the formation of service providers into a union, brought together within the newly created "Champagne" section of the Fédération Nationale des Entrepreneurs des territoires (National federation of businesses) from the Marne district.

Strategic steps are being taken to attract seasonal workers.

The Champagne sector is an exceptional one, requiring a large volume of labour (around 100,000 grape-pickers) over a short period of time.

In order to boost the recruitment of local labour, the Champagne sector is exploring new measures this year, alongside local players, which will allow for feedback after the 2024 harvest.

1. A partnership has been signed with the University of Reims Champagne-Ardenne (URCA) to encourage student recruitment during the harvest, and synergies with Neoma Business School have been implemented to communicate job offers to students.
2. The partnership with France Travail has been strengthened. A scheme is also being trialled to encourage the recruitment of people who are unemployed, in particular those receiving RSA (solidarity income) benefits.

From 2024, Comité Champagne is committed to strengthening local supervision during the harvest

While the emphasis is on preparing, advising and providing a clear structure ahead of the harvest, the industry will also support the Champenois during the picking period, with the main inspection bodies.

1. A working group has been set up and will meet daily during the harvest. This space which is aimed at sharing and coordinating with the prefecture, the police, the fire brigade and the Comité Champagne, can also be activated in a matter of hours if a situation so requires. This new body will enable everyone involved to have the same information, to communicate alerts. Hence it will enable the employers to adapt and react if necessary.
2. The Comité Champagne is making a "weather portal" accessible to all winegrowers. This portal provides information on the weather and raises alerts in the event of bad weather (frost, hail). A new alert has been added this year, in the event of extreme heat, to help implement the necessary measures.
3. The Champagne sector has called for stronger supervision and control during the harvest, to prevent any recurrence incidents. The prefecture has given their reassurance that they would provide the necessary resources.



Harvesting: a collective success

The Co-Presidents of the Comité Champagne are committed to progress in the Champagne sector, so that the industry can continue to adapt to the challenges of working in the vineyards, the presses and wineries during the harvest.

The success of the harvest relies on the responsibility of the industry, the individual commitment of each professional, as well as enhanced support from government bodies.

"All of the measures presented today are the result of the work carried out since October 2023 to develop this unprecedented and necessary action plan. We would like to pay tribute to the involvement of the government in our work, with the support of the French Minister of Labour, Health and Solidarity, Catherine Vautrin. The Comité Champagne has assumed its collective responsibilities by putting in place concrete tools. We are now counting on everyone's support to ensure that individual practices match the excellence of our appellation", say Maxime Toubart and David Chatillon, co-presidents of the Comité Champagne.

All tools are all available on : <https://www.champagne.fr/fr/informations-complementaires/media/communique-presse-champagne/ensemble-pour-les-vendanges-en>

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About Comité Champagne

The Comité Champagne is the trade association that represents the interests of Champagne growers and houses. Its mandate is to protect and defend the Champagne protected denomination of origin across the world, conduct research about quality and sustainable development, assist and advise Champagne professionals and promote the vines and wines of Champagne through a broad remit that includes: economic, technical and environmental development; continuous quality improvement; sector management; and communications.