



# SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

Setting goals and creating precedents. Viva certified.

Elena Walch values nature, respects it, and wants to pass it on in perfection to the next generation. Sustainable work is at the heart of the company's philosophy and was introduced more than ten years ago. The path to sustainability is not an overnight change, but is perceived as a process and an apprenticeship. The measures have been gradually enforced in all areas of the company so that the work is not based on a handful of strict rules, but rather the awareness of everyone is trained in this new direction.

In 2024, Elena Walch was awarded the prestigious 'VIVA' Certification: sustainability in wine growing in Italy by the Ministry of the Environment and Energy Security. This certification is a tangible recognition of the company's ongoing efforts to achieve high standards of sustainability, not only in the production of high-quality wines.

A CO<sub>2</sub> balance (carbon footprint) made in 2022 by an external specialized ecological institute allows us a detailed insight into the different areas of our winery. Overall, the result points to a below-average CO<sub>2</sub> emission per bottle in European and worldwide comparison with other wineries. But especially the CO<sub>2</sub> analysis serves a further improvement and the constant search for new accents to further reduce our CO<sub>2</sub> footprint.

The goal is to be a „good“ company that knows how to protect the environment in which Elena Walch operates, also for the next generations. The environment is an important part of the work: the Elena Walch winery is convinced that it can do something good here, with the quality of the wine uncompromisingly at the forefront of our thoughts.

*Here, in a compact form, are the first new accents:*



- The sowing of legumes in the vineyards maintains and promotes soil fertility, at the same time increasing the root space and thus allowing faster and deeper root growth. These provide the soil with natural nutrients, thus enriching insect diversity and intensifying humus production. Thanks to the greening, the vines themselves are also supplied with more nutrients. The necessary minerals and the nitrogen content created ensure healthy development of the vines.
- Own composting plant in Castel Ringberg for improved humus content in the soil and stimulation of biological soil activity.
- Alternate rolling or mowing of the vine rows to maintain the nitrogen content in the soil; this is crucial for the fine minerality of the wines. The resulting „green carpet“ has a positive effect on the vineyard’s water balance and provides an additional habitat for insects and small animals.
- No herbicides in the vineyard
- Vineyards are regularly mulched on an alternating basis to allow for long-term soil fertility.
- Use of exclusively water-saving drip systems for irrigation. In conjunction with our weather station in the vineyard, irrigation can be highly targeted to be used only when the vine needs it.
- Weather and infection monitoring systems for monitoring the health of the vineyard, as well as adjusting interventions.
- Ongoing analysis of the vines’ water needs through several weather stations in the vineyards.
- Defoliation of the vines for more airflow, thus reducing the risk of diseases.
- Cultivation of the disease resistant PIWI white wine variety „Bronner“ and Sauvignier Gris.
- Preservation of dry set-in walls and hedges as habitat for micro animals and to promote biodiversity.

- Hosting of beehives in the vineyards for pollination of the surrounding trees.
- Gentle pruning according to the principles of „Siminot & Sirch“: respecting the natural lignification, pruning does not inflict large wounds and care is taken to maintain the continuity of the sap ducts.
- All grapes are carefully harvested by hand.



- Coverage of 60% of electricity consumption by a photovoltaic system (solar energy).
- Reduction of water consumption by almost 50% through a system of „water recycling“, the reuse of cooling water for park irrigation and cellar cleaning.
- Use of gravity instead of frequent pumping of the wine thanks to the slope of the cellar.
- Saving energy on the cooling system thanks to the deep, underground wine cellar which is mainly naturally cooled.
- Use of barrique barrels from sustainable cultivation (FSC certified).
- With regard to a sustainable business, we have started a project to select our own yeasts from our grapes. With the help of the Edmund Mach / St. Michael Foundation, two years ago we started selecting yeast strains from our grapes, in particular from Sauvignon and Lagrein grapes, both from the Castel Ringberg winery, and from Gewürztraminer grapes from the Kastelaz winery in Tramin. During the isolation phase at the Foundation, we collected about 100 different samples that were morphologically distinct from each other. Individuals that did not belong to the species we were looking for were then eliminated. Then, the pure strains were stored in a special synthetic medium at -80°C. A series of physiological tests followed, such as tolerance to high alcohol content, low pH, evaluation of fermentation start rate, etc. In this way, we obtained yeast strains with excellent oenological suitability, which can be isolated and propagated in the laboratory to be used later as native starters in our subsequent harvests. This, in short, has allowed us to obtain more authentic „terroir“ wines
- and to reduce the use of yeasts purchased on the market, which are normally used for fermentation.





- Use of unbleached and uncolored and corks.
- Use recyclable capsules.
- Use of a 10% lighter glass bottle for the „Selezione“ wines (440g) for a better CO2 balance.
- Wine cartons mostly made of recycled paper and natural inside (natural brown).
- Traceability of each bottle to the origin in the vineyard thanks to the lot number on the bottle



- The preservation of natural green areas is important to us: the winery owns over 7 hectares of woodland and also pays attention to tree species diversity in its own vineyard.
- Use of two hybrid cars.
- Smoking ban in the indoor and outdoor areas of the entire winery, for employees and guests .
- In our Garden Bistrot in Tramin and the “Ostaria Castel Ringberg” we focus on regional food. In addition, certain specialties are also offered from outside, such as French cheese.
- Preservation and development of the cultural landscape: in addition to the Castel Ringberg castle and the historic „Ansitz Walch“, other listed buildings also belong to our estate. They are all maintained and part of our social media communication in order to preserve this important part of South Tyrolean culture for the future.
- Preparation of a code of ethics.
- Teambuilding and joint activities to make the employees feel part of the family.

*Further steps will follow...  
...and we will keep you informed!*

# DUTY NOW *for the Future*



## *About sustainability*

**Karoline and Julia, Elena Walch's daughters, are now running the family estate in the fifth generation. The tradition of the sustainability of the family estate is very important to you. Why?**

**Karoline:** Sustainability is central to our family estate. The basis of our actions. Sustainability is not something that happens overnight, but rather a long-term concept and a constant learning process. The same applies to the wine production. From the vineyard to the bottle of wine pass year. A glass of wine tells of the winemaker's year, the soil conditions, the small climatic conditions and the work in the vineyards. A work that is as gentle as possible in the vineyard, which promotes the balance of nature, is a prerequisite for us for great wines.



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# ELENA WALCH

**Is this long-term, this constant development in family businesses like yours in particular focus?**

**Julia:** Absolutely. My sister and I have been giving this thought and action from the very beginning. I am happy about the excellent vineyards I am allowed to take over in the fifth generation, I want to pass on this valuable land in at least as good condition to future generations. What I take of the vineyard, I have to give back again. Our goal is to intervene as little as possible itself. To create an autonomous cycle.

**What does this gentle cultivation of the vineyard look like?**

**Karoline:** We promote biodiversity in all areas. Intricately preserved dry stone walls, hedgerows and cypresses provide a habitat for small animals such as snakes, lizards or birds, and provide protection in their



niches. The same applies to the grass between the vine rows, which is rolled alternately and not cut. It protects the soil from dryness and forms a warm, moist microclimate. In addition we use our own compost at great expense to increase the humus content of the soil. The biological soil activity is stimulated so that it can produce the necessary minerals for a healthy vine development.

**What do you want to achieve through this work?**

**Julia:** Our vineyards should be as resistant as possible and be able to develop their own defenses. For this reason, we also follow „gentle pruning“, according to Simonith & Sirch: respecting the natural woodiness, no large wounds are added during the cut and attention paid to the continuity of the vascular flow. This enables the vine to live a healthy life. A healthy development of the vineyard is reflected in the long-term quality of the wines. And this is our highest credo.

