

# VAN ZELLERS & Co

SINCE 1620

THE OLDEST  
PORT WINE FAMILY

## SUSTAINABILITY



In recent decades, the concept of sustainability, particularly due to the impact of climate change, has become of paramount importance and has influenced the way of acting in various activities such as industry and agriculture.

Regarding agriculture, specifically when referring to wines from the Douro region, the great technological development of the last 50 years has brought countless economic advantages to the sector, namely increased productivity, due to the possibility of mechanizing vineyards, increasing the quality of wines, new vinification techniques.

However, during this process, care for the environment and ecosystems was not duly respected. This has led to major environmental imbalances that became a real threat to environmental sustainability and to the companies themselves.

We mean erosion, alteration of the chemical, physical and biological characteristics of the soil, reduction of the water retention capacity of the soil leading to reduced fertility and productivity. Another serious imbalance results from the massive use of agrochemicals (herbicides, fungicides and insecticides, among others). These products are also responsible for the reduction of biodiversity, causing the disappearance of a large part of native vegetation in the region.

The number and variety of insects has decreased thus diminishing the food chain of birds and other animals. A good example for this are the partridges, once abundant and now almost extinct in the region. The disappearance of insects that help the balanced development of the plants will contribute to pest increase.

Van Zeller & Co. is a company that operates around 15 hectares of old vineyards in the Douro region, some of which are around 80 years that produce grapes for high quality wines.

Van Zeller & Co is aware of its responsibility towards the environment and believes that the only path to the production of high-quality wines are environmentally friendly practices that guarantee its sustainability.

As a main fundamental objective is the improvement of soils in its physical, chemical, and biological aspects. The use of ancestral practices in the light of modern knowledge such as horses that turn around the soil to get rid of weeds, do organic corrections of the soil and allow that the soil uses a higher percentage of the natural water for the plants.

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Herbicides and insecticides are not applied except when there are no efficient and viable alternatives to fight pests or when legally required. The vineyard slopes and the terrain in between the lines of vines is covered with beneficial plant varieties such as autochthonous herbaceous and shrubby varieties to get them back to the ecosystem destroyed by continuous use of herbicides.

When there is an excessive growth of herbs and shrubs between the vines and on the slopes, they are cut and thinned with chainsaws or by other mechanical means (tractors, etc.) These natural coatings, in addition to preventing erosion, contribute to improving the infiltration of water and air into the soil, serve as a nest for insects, some of which are helpful in pest control. These coatings are also essential for protecting animals from predators. All the products we use in pest control are residue-free and respect the nutritional balance of the vines and are approved for organic farming. Algae and vegetable extracts (horsetail herb, nettle) are regularly used and show very good results. Bacilli and other microorganisms sometimes help to resolve some pathologies. We believe to be on the right path, but aware that it is a process of relearning practices lost in time and discovering new processes.

For more information, please contact:

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