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Global Change and Baltic Coastal Zones

Chapter 14: Adaptation to Climate Change: Viniculture and Tourism at the Baltic Coast

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Abstract

In 2000, the European Union acknowledged Denmark as an official wine growing country. Recently Rattey and Burg Stargard (near the German Baltic Sea coast) received its official recognition as the northernmost German wine-growing area. These are just exemplary cases, which reflect the ongoing northwards extension of vineyards and the ongoing re-introduction of viniculture around the Baltic Sea. It is already a clear indicator of a recently warmer climate. Grapes favour warm and sunny summers, with average temperatures of at least 13–15°C during the growing season (April–October), sufficient precipitation and mild, dry autumns. For wine growing the average annual temperatures should be between 9–13°C and the annual accumulated sunshine hours should at least reach 1,100 hours. Along the southern Baltic Sea coast these conditions are already met, suitable grape varieties like Helios or Solaris exist and allow a commercial wine production.

These new grape varieties, possess a high degree of resistance towards fungal diseases, considerably reduce plant protection measures and thus allow an environmental friendly viniculture. Viniculture in marginal regions, like at the Baltic Sea coast, is more laborious, bears more risks, and the crop yields will be lower compared to the traditional wine regions. On the other side, tourists, collectors, and the increasing wine interested audience are willing to pay much more per bottle than for a comparative product from a traditional German wine region. However, viniculture at the Baltic Sea coast has to be regarded as an attraction and can hardly become a large-scale agricultural product.

Large amounts of tourists visit the southern Baltic Sea coast during summer-month. In future, warmer summers and higher water temperatures will allow an increase in tourism and an extension of the summer season. However, the rural coastal hinterland does not benefit much from these tourists, because attractions are lacking. The growing interest in wine as cultural element and increasing wine-tourism indicate that vineries could serve as attractions and support the sustainable rural development. Further, viniculture is labour-intensive, would create jobs in rural areas and could contribute to a revitalization of the countryside.