

WESA grant program for Moldovan wine exporters is launched with the support of Ukraine-Moldova American Enterprise Fund

July 15, 2024, Chisinau, Moldova - The Moldovan wine and wine exporters, joined together under the umbrella of the country's wine brand, will expand their presence and strengthen their reputation on the international markets. Thanks to the WESA grant program, which will be implemented over the next 12 months, the sales of value-added wines will be increased on non-traditional markets, such as Romania, Poland, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Denmark, South Korea, Japan, Canada, and other.

This initiative is financed by the Ukraine-Moldova American Enterprise Fund (UMAEF), and it will be implemented by the National Inbound and Domestic Tourism Association of Moldova (ANTRIM) in partnership with the National Office of Vine and Wine (ONVV) and the USAID-funded Rural Competitiveness and Resilience Activity (RCRA).

With a total budget of 8,000,000 Lei, the program will support at least 15 wine companies from various regions of the Republic of Moldova, providing them with financial support and expertise to expand their exports by 15-20% and increase their marketing budgets by 60%.

Dennis Johnson, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Ukraine-Moldova American Enterprise Fund (UMAEF) said: "The initiative provides direct support aimed at empowering the entrepreneurs who are innovative, eager to conquer and diversify the markets, and are committed to the adaptation and growth. The program aligns perfectly with the resilient and visionary spirit of the Moldovan wineries, which faced difficult times but showed immense courage and talent. We aim to enhance your marketing strategies to help you diversify your position in value-added markets, including the European Union, North America, and Japan. Moldova has a great product, and now it is about marketing – about selling it efficiently, reaching the global consumers and the best markets. The grant program "Wine Export Support Activity (WESA)" is designed to support these objectives by increasing sales and profit."

Small producers, new-generation wineries, and champion exporters will have the opportunity to receive non-reimbursable financial support ranging between 300,000 and 800,000 Lei, with a contribution rate depending on their category.

In 2023, the wine product exports to foreign markets reached 123 million liters, totaling 192 million US dollars. This achievement confirms the country's position as the 16th largest wine exporter in the world, with a significant presence in around 70 countries.

Vladimir Bolea, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Agriculture and Food Industry, noted: "Over the past years, there has been a revolution in the wine production process. Today, we have quality wines, the quality of which has been confirmed by thousands of medals, which reflect the work of the Moldovan farmers. I welcome projects meant to support the Moldovan farmers, allowing them to promote their products. I firmly believe that, through such programs, most farmers and wine producers may benefit from grants and support, enabling them to access the European market and other non-traditional markets because people worldwide should have the opportunity to discover our wines."

The wine sector continues to be an example of excellence, and the strategic initiatives implemented with the support of the foreign partners prove the industry's commitment to adopt innovation and to pursue sustainable development.

Sergiu Pîslaru, winemaker, chairman of the ONVV Coordination Board said: "This program represents a huge step towards supporting the wine exporters who are now in the vanguard of the Moldovan value-added exports. Wine is the only agri-food product having such an export success and visibility whose entire value chain is located in Moldova and which brings revenue to every tenth Moldovan and reputation and pride – to all of us. I would like to mention that the marketing budget of our wineries is very small, tens and even hundreds of times smaller than that of other largely promoted wine regions in the world. "Wine of Moldova" - Moldova's country brand - aims to tell the story of Moldovan wine to millions of consumers, making it as well-known as possible. This generates trade markup that further supports companies' investments and progress."

The UMAEF-funded WESA program is strategically aligned with the technical assistance and grant programs funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

Diana Lazăr, Director for Wine Industry within the USAID-funded Rural Competitiveness and Resilience Activity (RCRA) mentioned: "The investments in strategic marketing, synergistic with the objectives of "Wine of Moldova", are essential. This new wave of the WESA Program, with a value of 8 million Lei, will enhance the presence of our wines on store shelves in HORECA and online trade. The amplification of marketing activities through PR and communication campaigns, digital marketing, B2B events, shelf branding will translate into increased sales and diversification of markets."

Implemented by ANTRIM, the WESA Grants Program reflects the commitment to the sustainable development of rural communities, developing the wine industry competitiveness, and attracting foreign tourists searching for authentic experiences in Moldova.

Elena Stepanov, Executive Director, National Inbound and Domestic Tourism Association of Moldova (ANTRIM) said: "The objectives of the WESA grant program are to increase the sales of quality bottled wine; to develop solid partnerships and expand the distribution network; to enhance the international notoriety of the Moldovan wine. The activities to be funded shall be motivated through a marketing plan and supported through impact targets. Wineries that have benefited from a USAID-funded WESA grant over the past 12 months, that are not in the State Wine Registry, along with State companies and promotional activities on the CIS and China markets, will not be eligible to apply to this program."

The documents and the WESA grant call can be accessed [online here](#). The application submission period is **July 12 — August 5, 2024**. The sets of documents shall be sent to the email address: WESA@antrim.md.