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Wineries Suffering Winter Woes

By The Moscow Times

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Up to 50 percent of Russia's grape crop could be lost due to the extreme cold, spokesmen for several wineries told Vedomosti.

First tests on grapevines in Krasnodar's Taman region are showing a 30 percent loss, said Fanagoria chief agronomist Pavel Kurilo.

Southern Wine Company general director Andrei Kulko sees losses hitting 50 percent, due to minus-20-degree-Celsius weather and strong winds over the last month — the likes of which he has never seen in his 25 years in the business.

Kulko said the current situation gives cause for concern not just for the 2012 harvest, but also for the wineries overall. Rebuilding the business could take years. But he says it's too early to panic, and other experts say vines get damaged by a mix of extreme cold and high humidity — which hasn't happened yet.

A bad harvest will lead to greater counterfeiting and increases in imported wines, said Vadim

Drobiz, director of the Center for Research into Federal and Regional Alcohol Markets.

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