The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Orthodox Church Launches Own Winery

August 10, 2016



Grutka / Pixabay

Russia's Orthodox Church is to start producing its own wine in the country's southern region of Krasnodar, the RBC news agency reported Wednesday. ⊠⊠The church's vineyards, built by subsidiary company Mezyb, stretch over 70 hectares of land on the Black Sea coast — just next to summer residence of church leader Patriarch Kirill.

The winery is expected to produce its first bottles of wine next year. Mezyb was registered as a company by the Russian Orthodox Church last year, and is to handle the entire wine-making process from grape cultivation to retailing.

The Church has significantly expanded its territories in Krasnodar since the construction of the Patriarch's summer residence began in 2005. From the 12,7 hectares of land granted to the church by the Krasnodar Region administration nine years ago, church assets in the area have grown to some 83 hectares divided into 170 plots, according to the Unified State Register of Rights.

Some 70 hectares were given to the Church by private companies or individuals, RBC reported.▣▣A former plot owner told RBC that buyers had "made an offer that [he] couldn't refuse," telling him that the land would be handed over to the Church as an act of charity.

"With such an area [the winery] will be able to produce more than 500,000 bottles a year," Vadim Drobiz, director of the Research Center for Federal and Regional Alcohol Markets, told RBC.

"It's long been known that the Church was planning to sell wine. This is a long-term project," said Pavel Titov, chairman of the board for local winemakers Abrau-Durso winemakers. "It will take at least four of five years before the vineyards give the first competitive crop."

Church spokesman Alexander Volkov said that major monasteries currently needed to purchase wine from Russian, Ukrainian and Moldavian factories. "Wine is used in every rite, in every liturgy," he said. ▣▣

Churches use about half a bottle of wine per every 100 parishioners during routine services, said rector of St. Sergius of Radonezh Church, Father Sergius.

If Mezyb plans to sell its production, it will need to obtain a proper trading license, Drobiz said. The church's label on the bottle is unlikely to draw much attention from customers, he said.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2016/08/10/sacramental-wine-russian-orthodox-church-launches-its-own-winery-a54930