NEWS LESSON

A Hot Summer and a Small Harvest



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Is wine important in your country? What is produced where you live?
2. What weather do farmers near you worry about most?
3. Has the weather where you grew up changed?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**harvest**	☐	A	plants or fruit that a farmer grows and picks
2	**ministry**	☐	B	a person or company that makes something to sell
3	**hectolitres**	☐	C	a part of the government, for example for farming or health
4	**average**	☐	D	people whose job is to grow plants or fruit
5	**regions**	☐	E	big parts of a country
6	**crop**	☐	F	a way to measure liquid: one is 100 litres
7	**producer**	☐	G	the time when farmers pick the plants or fruit they have grown
8	**growers**	☐	H	the usual amount, found by looking at several years or numbers

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

After a summer of heatwaves, France expects to make less wine than last year. But some regions did better, not worse.

1 A grape harvest is a kind of report card on the weather. In France, the report card for 2026 has just arrived, and it is a difficult one. After a summer of heatwaves, the agriculture ministry estimates that the country will produce about 35 million hectolitres of wine. That would be 2% less than last year, and 14% below the average of the five years before it.

2 Last year was already poor. According to the International Organisation of Vine and Wine, which collects figures on wine around the world, France produced less in 2025 than in any year since 1957.

3 Heat is the main reason, though not the only one. Rain later in the season helped a little. French growers have also reduced the amount of land they use for vines by about 1.9% in the past year, so there are simply fewer plants to pick from.

4 What is unusual this year is how different the regions are. Champagne had a very hard season. The heat made the grapes build up sugar quickly, so growers had to pick much earlier than normal. The harvest there finished in September for the first time, and production is around half of last year's. Burgundy and Beaujolais are expected to be about 30% below their five-year average.

5 In Bordeaux, however, production is expected to rise by 10% compared with last year. In the south-west, it is up by around 12%.

6 Why would some areas do better in a hot summer? Southern growers have lived through hot years before, and they have changed how they work. Many now leave more leaves on the vine so that the leaves shade the grapes. Rain in May helped as well.

7 The man who chairs a national wine advisory board said he had never seen so much variation between regions in his career.

8 There is some good news too. The ministry and the industry say the grapes are in excellent health, with none of the fungus that wet weather can bring. One Champagne producer picked only three-quarters of a normal crop, but said that for him the quality this year was exceptional.

9 These are still estimates. The final figures come later, and one hot summer is one year rather than a whole story.

Sources: The Guardian, French wine industry facing historic low harvest after extreme summer heat. Picture: .

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. France expects to make less wine this year than last year. T F NG
2. Every French wine region produced less this year. T F NG
3. Champagne growers picked their grapes earlier than usual. T F NG
4. French wine will be more expensive this year. T F NG
5. Bordeaux expects to produce 12% more wine than last year. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

estimates **heatwaves** **quality** **reduced** **season** **shade** **vineyard**

1. Several _____ in July and August made the summer very hard for growers.
2. Early numbers are only _____ until the farmers finish counting.
3. Some farmers have _____ the area of land they use for vines.
4. Big trees can _____ small plants, so the sun does not burn them.
5. Quantity is how much wine there is; _____ is how good it is.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. In 2025, France _____ less wine than in any year since 1957. (PRODUCE)
2. The extreme heat _____ the grapes build up sugar very quickly. (MAKE)
3. Growers _____ to pick the grapes much earlier than normal. (HAVE)
4. Southern growers _____ many hot summers, so they know how to protect their vines. (SEE)
5. The Champagne harvest _____ in September for the first time. (FINISH)

7 Language focus: phrasal verbs

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. A phrasal verb is a verb plus a small word such as up or down. The small word changes the meaning, so learn the two words together.

along **down** **on** **out** **over** **through** **up**

1. In hot weather, sugar can build _____ in the grapes very quickly.
2. Farmers who have lived _____ many hot summers know how to protect their vines.
3. One very hot week can wipe _____ half of a small farm's crop.
4. Growers sometimes cut _____ the number of grapes on each vine.
5. Even in a heatwave, many growers carry _____ working in the early morning.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. Bordeaux did better than Champagne this year. Why might that be?
2. Should food and drink cost more when the harvest is small?
3. What could a farmer do to prepare for hotter summers?

9 Role-play: a price rise for house wine

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the restaurant owner

Your wine supplier says the price of your house wine will go up by 10%. You don't want to pass the cost on to customers. Ask why the price is rising and ask for a better deal.

Student B · the wine supplier

Hot summers have made wine harvests smaller, so your costs are higher. Explain why the price must rise. You can offer a small discount if the restaurant orders more.

Useful phrases

Why is the price going up?

I'm afraid the harvest was smaller than usual.

We can't pass that cost on to our customers.

Could you give us a discount if we order more?

I'd be happy to meet you halfway.

That's the best price I can offer.

Afterwards, tell the class: did you agree a price, and was it fair for both sides?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 G · 2 C · 3 F · 4 H · 5 E · 6 A · 7 B · 8 D

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 T · 4 NG · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 heatwaves · 2 estimates · 3 reduced · 4 shade · 5 quality

6 Verb forms

1 produced · 2 made · 3 had · 4 have seen · 5 finished

7 Language focus

1 up · 2 through · 3 out · 4 down · 5 on

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