Changing varietal distinctiveness of the world’s wine regions: Evidence from a new global database, 2000 and 2010

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Large commercial wineries, particularly in the New World, blend wines across varieties and geographic regions, so as to be able to reproduce year after year a consistent style for each major label. As they seek to improve wine quality and respond to climate changes, however, will they exploit more the regional differences in terroir and make more geographically distinct wines? This paper examines the extent to which the choice of winegrape varieties in wine regions has altered over the first decade of this century in both the Old World and New World. In doing so the study reports the varietal intensity index and the index of similarity of varietal mix between regions, first defined in the author’s December 2010 JWE paper. The study is based on a new database of vine bearing areas for over 1400 DNA-distinct winegrape varieties spanning more than 500 regions in 40 countries that together account for 98 percent of the world’s wine production.