

Controversial Cancer Pamphlet Angers French Wine Industry

French winemakers and grapegrowers are furious about a pamphlet published by the country's Health Ministry that directly links wine consumption to cancer. They have organized a campaign calling on the government to withdraw the publication.

In February, the Institut National du Cancer (INCa) published Nutrition and the Prevention of Cancers, a document highlighting the dangers of drinking alcohol. Some 70,000 copies of the lengthy pamphlet have been printed for distribution to medical practitioners throughout France. It claims that drinking alcohol increases the risk of cancer by 9 percent to 168 percent, depending on the amount

of consumption. It also says that wine offers no health benefits against cancer.

Researchers in France and elsewhere have been quick to point out that the publication's recommendations lack balance. An association of vintners from Languedoc, called For the Honor of Wine, has appealed to Health Minister Roselyne Bachelot. "The chapter about the risks linked to drinking wine completely ignores the many studies indicating that moderate wine consumption offers health benefits," said Jean-Charles Tastavay, a vigneron and president of the group.

—Diana Macle

A BATTLE OVER ALCOHOL

THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT

- The National Cancer Institute published a pamphlet, based on 500 scientific studies, that argues that drinking increases the risk of cancer by 9 percent to 168 percent.

VIGNERONS' RESPONSE

- Winemakers and several scientists say the booklet fails to look at differences between alcoholic beverages.
- They also allege the timing is political. It was distributed just as the National Assembly was debating tighter drinking laws.