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Wine bottle corks made from real cork

The appearance on the market of synthetic corks is not only a matter of low-cost policies versus quality considerations. It also poses a serious threat to cork-woods.

To date, cork has uniquely been the product of choice for sealing bottles containing wine and wine-products, due to its ideal physical properties. However, replacement synthetic products have recently come on the market, competing with the natural product by means of – technically non-founded – campaigns denigrating natural cork, while on the other hand seeking to imitate its characteristics in every way possible, and indeed even using the word ‘cork’ as part of the product’s name.

The importance of cork needs to be redefined from a wider perspective. The cork industry is an exemplary model of sustainable industrial activity: firstly, it is local, which means that it is not only a source of employment in areas dedicated to it, but also of great biodiversity, often native to the Mediterranean coast and in danger of extinction should desertification occur. Furthermore, cork contributes to the ecological maintenance of its habitats, given that the corkwoods’ economic usefulness protects the areas in question from deforestation. Last but not least, cork captures twice its own weight in CO₂.

Furthermore, cork is a quality product, and there are no reliable studies which demonstrate that the synthetic product improves on the performance of natural cork. In order to guarantee this quality, there is a Council of Europe resolution, ResAP (2004)² on the contact of cork with food products, making it the only type of bottle stopper which enjoys specific, industry-driven legislation.

- Does the Commission intend to take any legislative steps to protect the cork industry, with all the social and ecological benefits it embodies?
- Has the Commission thought of promoting labelling which will inform consumers as to the material used to seal bottles?
- Does any form of cooperation currently exist with the producer countries on the southern coast of the Mediterranean to boost development, or are there any plans to establish such cooperation?

Answer:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getAllAnswers.do?reference=E-2007-2089&language=EN>

