



## First Indo-French Wine Summit

India and France have now discovered a mutually beneficial area of collaboration and cooperation – the wine sector. A recent meeting which was the first Indo-French Wine Summit took place in Paris in October 2008 and which was a big success with nearly 35 Indian and nearly the same number of French companies participating in this unique event.



**F**rom October 1st to 3rd, the cities of Paris and Bordeaux received a unique Indian business delegation, which travelled to France for the creation of a platform for better awareness of the wine sector in both the countries.

Several institutions and companies came together to mount this event. The summit was organised by FINSB or Franco Indian Network for Sustainable Business, in collaboration with the Nashik Valley Wine Producers Association, Media India, – the leading European media company which publishes INDIA & You, INDES and Destino La India magazines and promotes India as a business and tourism destination across 45 countries. Other key partners for the event included the Embassy of India in France, key ministries in India and France and leading Indian players like Grover Wines, Sula Wines, Vinsura, Air India, Bordeaux Wine Association, wine institutes in France.

France is historically one of the biggest quality producers of wine and India is experiencing a major boom in this sector as the Indian market for wine is growing at 25-30 per cent per year. Even though it may still be a small market, its potential is attracting an increasing number of overseas producers. India is in effect a giant market with over a billion inhabitants, even if it is a small player on the global wine map. The national consumption of wine is

estimated at 5 million litres a year, with one million litre imported wine. The per capita consumption is less than 5 ml, but most expect this to double in a few years. The demand is increasing mainly because of the changed perception of wine in India and also due to changing lifestyles. While a few years ago, wine was rare to find in India, now it is widely available and has almost become part of lifestyle of some sections of the urban population.

Another reason behind the growth is the policy of the Indian government that is now actively promoting wine, instead of restricting as it used to be. Easier import-export, lower customs duty and also lower taxes and a positive opinion of the government have all contributed to the growth in this sector. Another factor that could boost wine is the promotion of wine tourism as an increasing number of vineyards start to open their gates to tourists seeking overnight stay amidst the vineyards. As the wine is becoming more popular in the Indian market, the Indian producers have started to increase their production and the imports are also growing at a healthy rate. It has become a necessity, almost an obligation, for the foreign producers to be present in India and to grow their network here. The majority of imports originate in Europe but other countries are also coming up, notably the United States, Australia, South Africa,



Chile etc. The competition is becoming more and more severe and the leaders have to struggle to retain their position. But India is not an interesting market only for selling the French wines, but also for their technology, know-how and skills in developing the Indian wine industry. On the one hand, the Indian wine is getting better known around the world, with its major brands, Grover, Sula and Indage, which have really opened the doors and given an identity and a brand image for Indian wine across the globe.

“For the Indian wine industry, too, collaboration with the French is multifaceted and has multiple benefits. They can take advantage of the French know-how to develop the best quality wines



## Business



and they can also sell in the European markets as has been done by Grover, Sula and Indage,” says Rajendra Shende, Vice-President of FINSB. “Besides, we are at the turning point from where we can develop collaboration in organic wines for sustainable business”, he added.

It is hence surprising that no organisation focused on bringing India and France together in the wine sector and no major B2B meet has really been organised to promote business exchange between India and France. FINSB, has as its objective to plug this gap of information and to create a platform to bring together in a B2B network all major players from both countries in all segments of the wine industry – producers, distributors, suppliers, equipment manufacturers,



consultants, experts, researchers, students and all other players in the wine sector.

Yogen Gupta, President of FINSB, says that looking at the importance of the sector, FINSB has decided to set up a dedicated cell for the wine industry – FINE or Franco-Indian Network of Enologists. “FINE will have a wide scope of activities covering the entire gamut of the wine industry – from farm to flute/grapes to glass. It will organise regular events to promote interaction and exchange between the enologists from India and France, but also serve as a platform for anyone seeking information/technical assistance or technology transfer in this domain”.

The conference took place at the prestigious Grande Arche de la Défense and allowed the French industry to better understand the development of the Indian wine industry and more importantly its current requirements. With speeches by key players like Khandagale, CEO of Vinsura and Rajeev Samant, CEO of Sula Wines with the help of a projection of the scenario for the Indian wine industry in 2013 and the enormous opportunities of this rapidly growing market. Dr Jadeep K. Kale, technical coordinator, who was recently given an award by the Maharashtra government in recognition of his in depth research of the Indian market, made a comprehensive presentation about the area around Nashik, the capital of Indian wine industry.

On the French side, Gilles Dupuy vice president of the Wine Division of ADEPTA, a French association for food processing industry, as well as representatives from Bordeaux, the région of Hérault, institutes and the India Network of the French Agricultural Ministry spoke of the potential collaboration between France and India in the domains of technical know-how, commercial expertise as well as training for the personnel in this industry.

“France and India have a lot of opportunities for mutual collaboration in this booming sector and our idea is to provide a platform for fruitful and dynamic exchanges between businesses from India and France. This will lead to a strong growth in the wine trade between India and France,” said Pradeep Panchpatil, President of the Nashik Valley Wine Producers’ Association and Vice President of Sula Wines.

After the discussions and the B2B session (with over 200 B2B meetings) at Arche de la Defense, the Indian team headed towards Bordeaux for a visit of the vineyards in the French city. Notably the Château Smith Haut Lafitte, the Vignobles Fabris, Vignobles Grégoire, Chateau Quercy. On the agenda were visit to distilleries, laboratories, processing areas as well as wine tasting sessions with the principal actors of the Bordeaux wine industry.

The summit was the first event in a series of meetings and exchanges that bring together the Indian and French wine industries. The next summit will take place in India in Maharashtra, and then will be held every six months, alternating between India and France. The success of the event and its subsequent actions has led to a creation of a dynamic platform to promote bilateral relations in this vital domain.

