

Reviving the Cradle of Wine: Youth, Heritage, and Innovation in Georgian Viticulture

Research project in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture
Organization (FAO).

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Italy
Business & Hospitality
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Hungary
European Studies

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From UNDIFF to Viticulture

Capstone Proposal by FAO

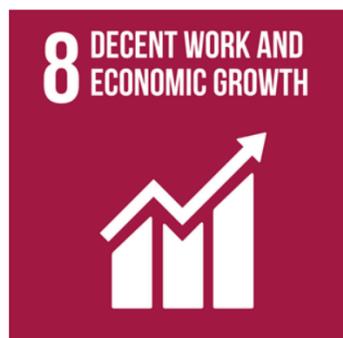
FAO REU Program Countries

Support Family Farming

Promote smallholder farmers, recognizing their role in food security, poverty reduction, and sustainable agriculture.

Pillar 2: Focus on Youth

Find innovative ways to engage youth in family farming and ensure generational sustainability.



From UNDIFF to Viticulture

Capstone Proposal by FAO

Focus given by the team

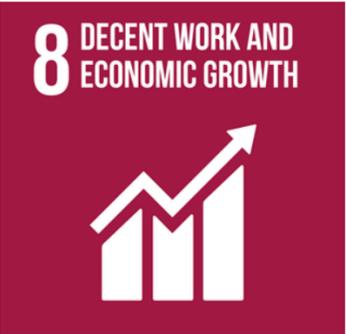
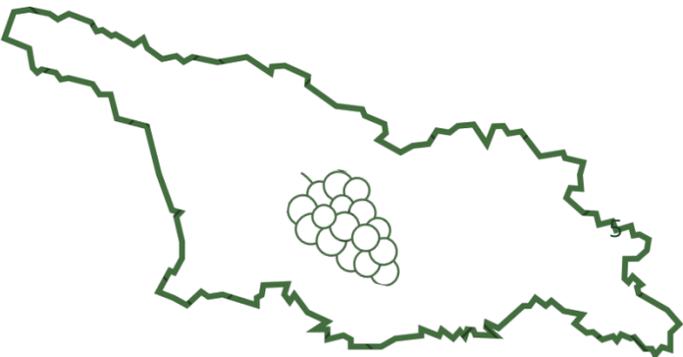
Support Family Farming

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Georgia and viticulture





Georgia: The Cradle of Wine

8000
year-old winemaking tradition¹

14th
largest exporter of wine worldwide²

40%
of population works in agriculture³

21%
of youth works in agriculture⁴

Unproductive Agriculture

Agriculture only makes up 7% of GDP. Mostly small-scale farms for self-consumption.⁵

High Youth Unemployment

24% of youth are not in employment, education, or training (NEET).⁶

High Barriers of Entry

Limited access to land, financial resources, and knowledge.⁴

Research Gap

Regional Gap

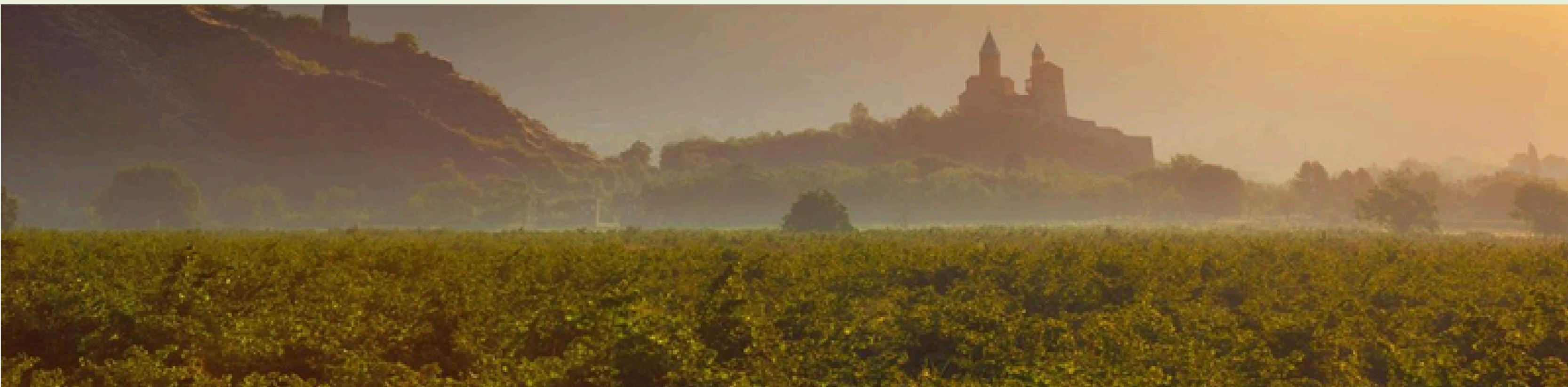
Missing research on youth engagement in agriculture and viticulture specific to Georgia.

Integration Gap

Factors shaping the sector are analyzed as separate analytical topics with limited understanding of their interactions.

Comparative Gap

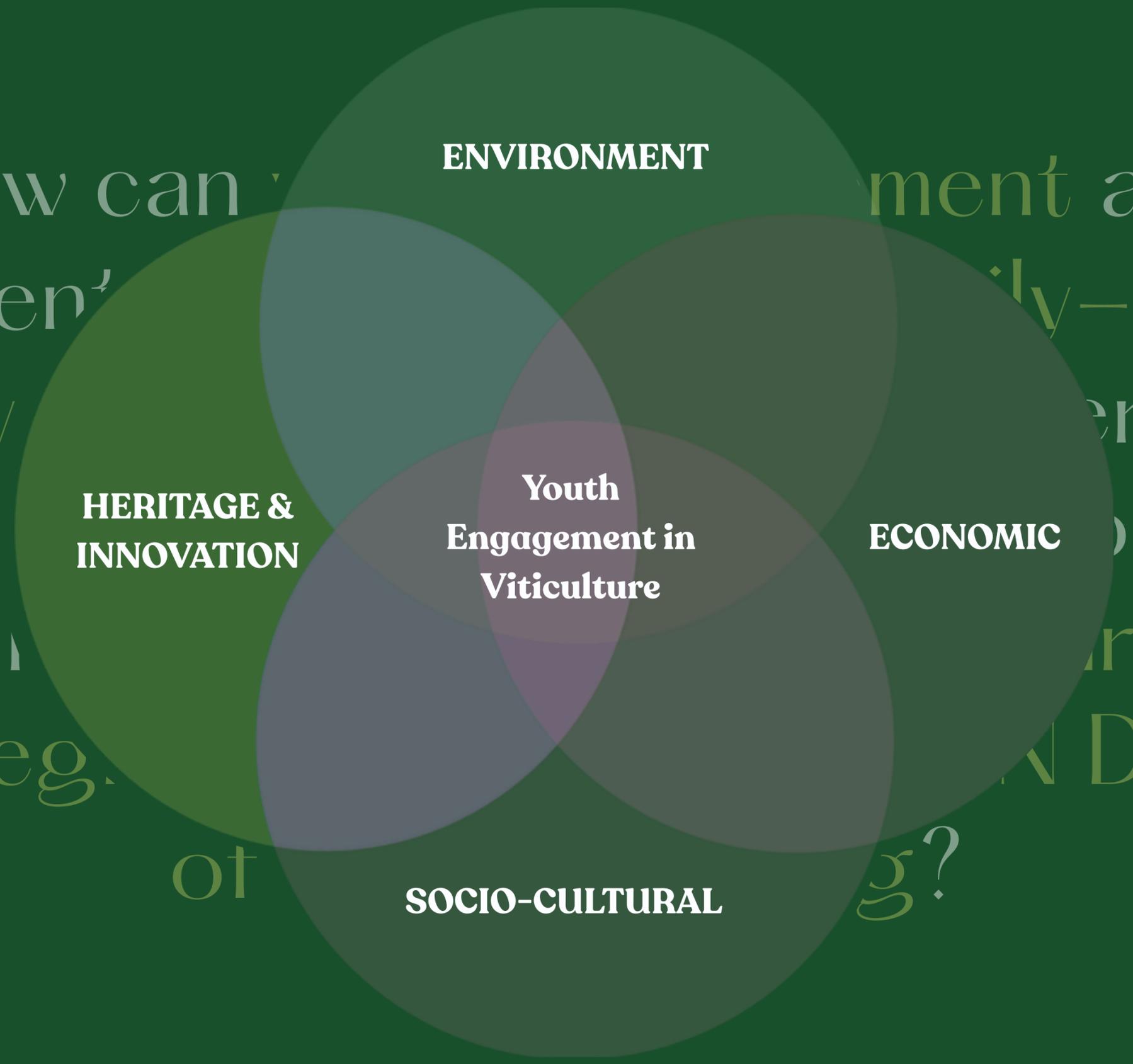
Georgia is rarely examined within a European context, making it hard to identify transferable best practices.



How can *youth engagement and retention in Georgia's family-run vineyards* be fostered by preserving heritage, encouraging innovation, and adapting best practices from *European wine regions* in line with the *UN Decade of Family Farming*?

How can we
retain
viney
herita
adapti
wine reg.
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ily-run
erving
on, and
European
Decade



ENVIRONMENT

**HERITAGE &
INNOVATION**

ECONOMIC

SOCIO-CULTURAL

**Youth
Engagement in
Viticulture**

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Methodology

Secondary data collection

Primary data collection

Mixed methods data analysis



Methodology

Secondary data collection

Primary data collection

Mixed methods data analysis

Secondary Data Collection

Academic literature

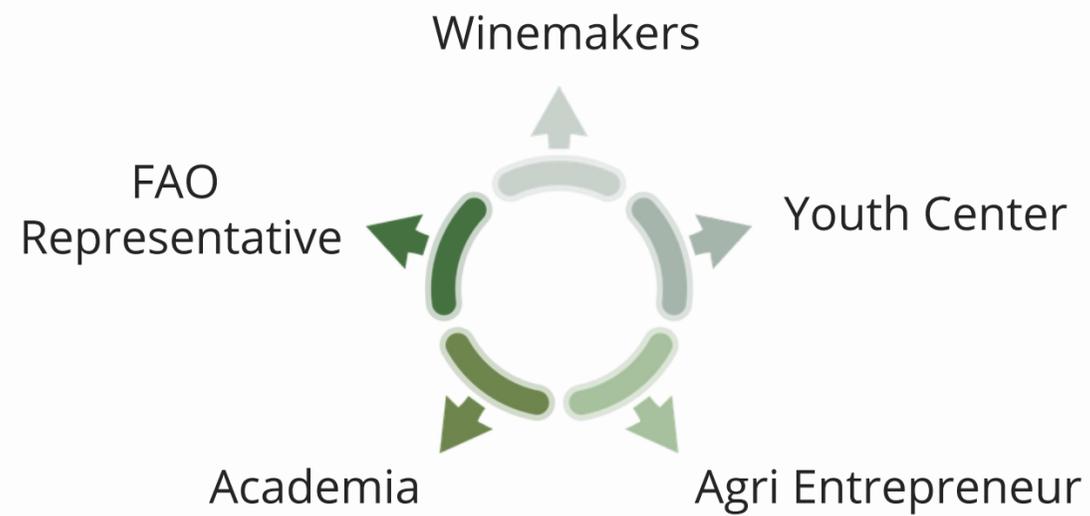
Policies and UN reports

Weather & temperature data



Methodology

Primary Data Collection



Qualitative Thematic Analysis

12
Semi-structured
Interviews

182
Global Youth
Survey answers

3
Field
Observations

Methodology

Primary Data Collection

Target group: youth aged 18–35

4

Demographic questions

8

Research-specific questions

6

Georgians

Quantitative Statistical Analysis

12

Semi-structured Interviews

182

Global Youth Survey answers

3

Field Observations

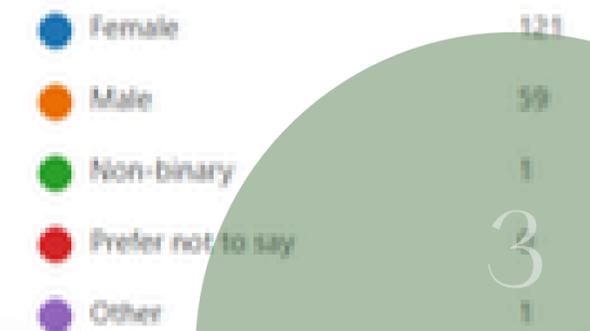
Youth Engagement in Agriculture & V

182 Responses 08:10 Average time to complete

1. What is your age group?



2. What is your gender?



Methodology

Primary Data Collection

3

Wineries

1

Viticulture festival

Observations

of winemaking practices
of rural lived experiences
of community events

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Environmental risks

Climate volatility threatens yields, infrastructure, and long-term income stability.⁷

High Entry Costs

Access to land, financial capital and technology remains restricted for newcomers.⁸

Limited Financing

Lack of tailored funding schemes and credits for youth in Georgia.⁹

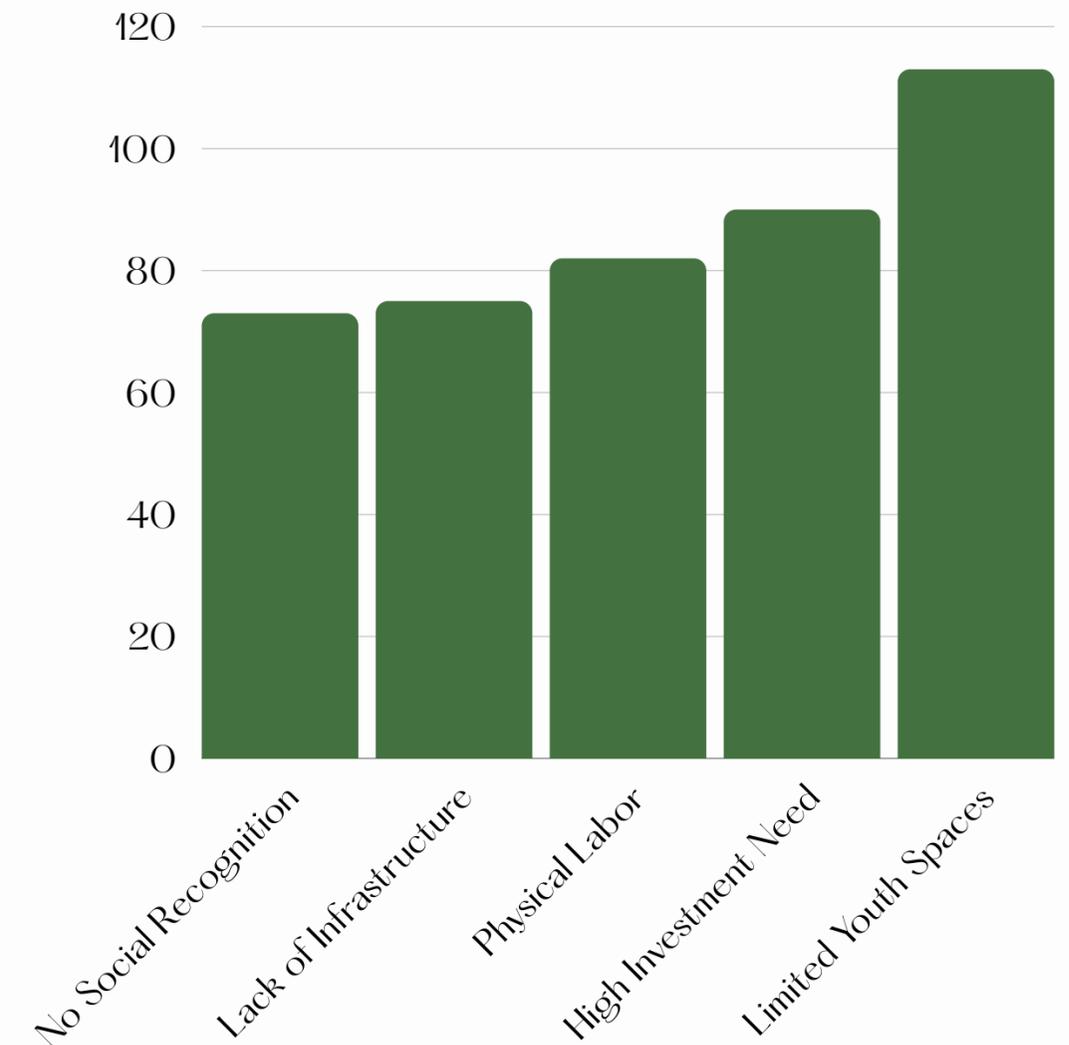
Rural infrastructure

Limited rural infrastructure and lack of connectivity constrain modernization and lead to outmigration.¹⁰



Structural Barriers

Top barriers in global youth survey



Culture vs Prestige

From the global youth survey, the following findings emerged:

60%

Respondents find viticulture appealing as consumers.

14%

Respondents are interested in a career in viticulture.

”

“We need to shift perceptions - agricultural careers require high knowledge and skills.”- Italian Winemaker

“Winemaking is our history, it’s deeply rooted in our DNA” - Georgian FAO Representative

Cultural Connection

Viticulture in Georgia is strongly intertwined with cultural heritage and national identity.¹¹

Low Career Prestige

Agricultural careers lack social prestige and are associated with manual labor and simplicity.



The Gender Dimension

"It's really difficult to lead the family and winery in a patriarchal society"

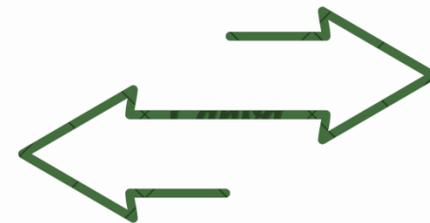
70%

of total agricultural holdings are operated by men.¹⁶

1 vs 4.8

difference in agriculture earnings, women vs men.¹⁶

*"It was a **revolutionary period** when many women appeared in the small niche of natural and organic wines"* - Georgian Winemaker



VOGUE

Meet the Women Winemakers Making Waves in Georgia, One of the World's Oldest Wine-Producing Countries

BY JESSICA JUNGBAUER

BUSINESS > FOOD & DRINK

Meet The 25-Year-Old Georgian Winemaker Named To Forbes' 2019 30 Under 30 Europe List

Restricted Access & Leadership

Gender norms translate into tangible disadvantages in access to land, finance, and decision-making power.¹²

Surge in Women Winemakers

Women pioneers are reshaping the Georgian wine landscape from a small-scale, experimental, sustainable, and quality-driven perspective.¹¹

Drivers for Youth

to enhance rural livability, income stability, and the social appeal of viticulture.

Amongst respondent of the global survey...

63%

would prioritize more networking and community building

52%

would prioritize better education and training.

Heritage-based Innovation

Trends such as natural and sustainable wines align with traditional qvevri method.¹³

Business Diversification

Wine tourism can diversify income streams and reduce economic risk for wineries.

Education & Early Exposure

To improve career perception and match vocational training with market needs.¹⁴

Network & Community

Relevance of networking, synergy creation, and community building for social capital.

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Policy Basket

Best Practices

- Analyzed **9** policy instruments
- Best practices from **Georgia** and other **EU countries**
- Reflection on **transferability** to Georgia

Policy Recommendations

1. Next Gen Policy Package

Objective: Empowering the next generation of farmers by reducing entry barriers

- Start-up support for newcomers
- Investment support for farm successors

2. National Wine Policy

Objective: Securing the sustainable future of Georgian viticulture through

- Inclusive growth
- Climate resilience
- Increased rural employment

Policy Brief

Background:

Builds on the Findings and Policy Recommendations

Target audience:

Addresses the Government of Georgia

Objective:

Provides a clear call to action by bringing light to the main challenges facing youth engagement and generational renewal in agriculture and viticulture

Structure:

- Evidence-based background and problem statement
- Policy gap identification
- Policy recommendations

POLICY BRIEF

PROMOTING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN VITICULTURE FOR SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN GEORGIA

BACKGROUND & PROBLEM

AGRICULTURE Agriculture is a socially and economically significant sector in Georgia. Its rural economy and livelihoods remain strongly dependent on agriculture, which employs around 40% of the population and 21% of youth, yet contributes only 8–10% of GDP. This productivity gap reflects structural constraints, including fragmented farm structures, limited mechanization, underdeveloped rural infrastructure, and weak market orientation of smallholder farms (Kharashvili, 2018; FAO, 2022; Geostat, 2025).

VITICULTURE Viticulture and winemaking are a strategic pillar of the agri-food economy, with wine accounting for 21% of agricultural export value. The sector is dominated by family farms relying on intergenerational land, labor, and knowledge. While rich terroir, indigenous grapes, and traditional *qvsvri* winemaking give Georgian wine a strong global identity, the sector faces rising risks from aging producers, rural youth out-migration, limited innovation uptake, and environmental pressures. (Anderson, 2013; Bouby et al., 2020; Seturidze et al., 2022).

STRUCTURAL BARRIERS FOR YOUTH, WOMEN AND NEWCOMERS

1. **Limited Access to Land:** Youth, and particularly young women, often face complex inheritance and registration procedures blocking farm renewal and ownership.
2. **Weak autonomy and entrepreneurial capacity:** Young members of family farms often lack legal control, capital, and decision-making power.
3. **Restricted access to financial services and capital:** Financial service providers are reluctant to provide their services, including credit, savings, and insurance, often due to the lack of collateral.
4. **High investment costs and risk exposure:** Entry requires substantial and ongoing investment, particularly for newcomers, while climate and environmental risks threaten yields and income stability.
5. **Inadequate Skills:** Agricultural training is poorly aligned with labor market needs and provides few pathways into innovative or commercially viable farming. (Kharashvili, 2017; Kajala et al., 2023)

RURAL YOUTH – KEY FACTS

- 37% of Georgian rural youth were NEET* in 2022
- 27% of Georgian urban youth were NEET in 2022
- 12% of average EU youth are NEET

Farms headed by men aged 25–39: 8%
Farms headed by women aged 25–39: 3%
(FAO, 2025)



*NEET: Not in Employment, Education or Training

January 2026, Addressed to: Government of Georgia, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth

POLICY LANDSCAPE & GAP

Georgia has introduced various agricultural and rural support policy instruments, but they remain **fragmented and insufficiently tailored to young people**, including new entrants and family farm successors.

While programmes such as the *United Agro Project* improve access to finance, income stability, and risk management, they **do not adequately address entry barriers** such as access to land, start-up capital, skills development, and advisory support during farm establishment or succession transition. In viticulture, government support has primarily focused on short-term income stabilization and export promotion through grape harvest subsidies and market expansion schemes. Although this is important in supporting rural incomes, it provides limited incentives for generational renewal, climate resilience, balanced territorial development, or innovation within family wineries (Deisadze & Gelashvili, 2020; National Wine Agency, 2024; Rural Development Agency, n.d.).

At the strategic level, Georgia's National Youth Policy Concept (2020–2030) and SME Development Strategy (2021–2025) recognize youth economic empowerment and entrepreneurship as national priorities (ILO, 2021). However, **stronger alignment is needed between these frameworks and agricultural and viticulture-specific policies to ensure that young women and men are effectively supported to enter, remain, and thrive in the sector. These gaps call for an integrated, youth-responsive policy approach that creates sustainable livelihoods and fosters succession in family farms and wineries.**

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

PROMOTING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN AGRICULTURE AND VITICULTURE POST 2025

1. **NEXT GEN POLICY PACKAGE**

Objective: Empowering the next generation of farmers by reducing entry barriers, supporting farm succession, and enhancing the viability of family farms.

 - START-UP SUPPORT FOR NEWCOMERS**
 - Start-up grants and microcredits that support initial farm establishment
 - Land-leasing schemes
 - Early-stage income support
 - Training, free advisory services, mentorship and peer learning
 - Targeted support for women entrepreneurs
 - SUPPORT FOR YOUNG FARMERS AND FARM SUCCESSORS**
 - Farm modernization and climate-smart investment grants
 - Preferential agrocredit, agroinsurance
 - Succession planning and advisory support
 - Formal recognition of women as farmers
 - Up-skilling (technical, environmental, business & finance)
2. **NATIONAL WINE POLICY**

Objective: Securing the future of Georgian viticulture by promoting inclusive growth, climate resilience, and increased rural employment, while safeguarding cultural heritage.

 - PRIMARY TARGET: SMALL-SCALE VINE GROWERS AND FAMILY-BASED WINERIES**
 - Investment grants linked to sustainability, innovation and climate adaptation
 - Training programmes, skills development, intergenerational knowledge transfer
 - Income diversification through wine tourism
 - Targeted grants for women-led vineyards and wineries
 - Integration with *Next Gen Policy Package* for generational renewal

January 2026, Addressed to: Government of Georgia, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth

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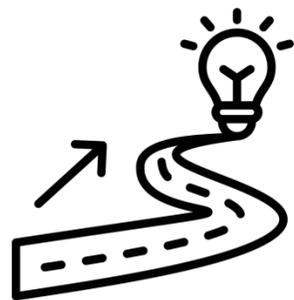
Mapping **opportunities, connections, and learning material** for the next generation of Georgian winemakers.



Information on grants, training options, job opportunities, etc. is dispersed across multiple channels in Georgia.

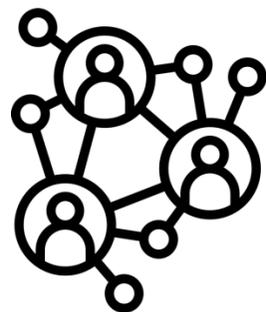
Explore

Interactive Map



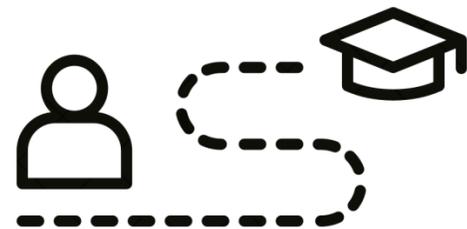
Connect

Mentor Match

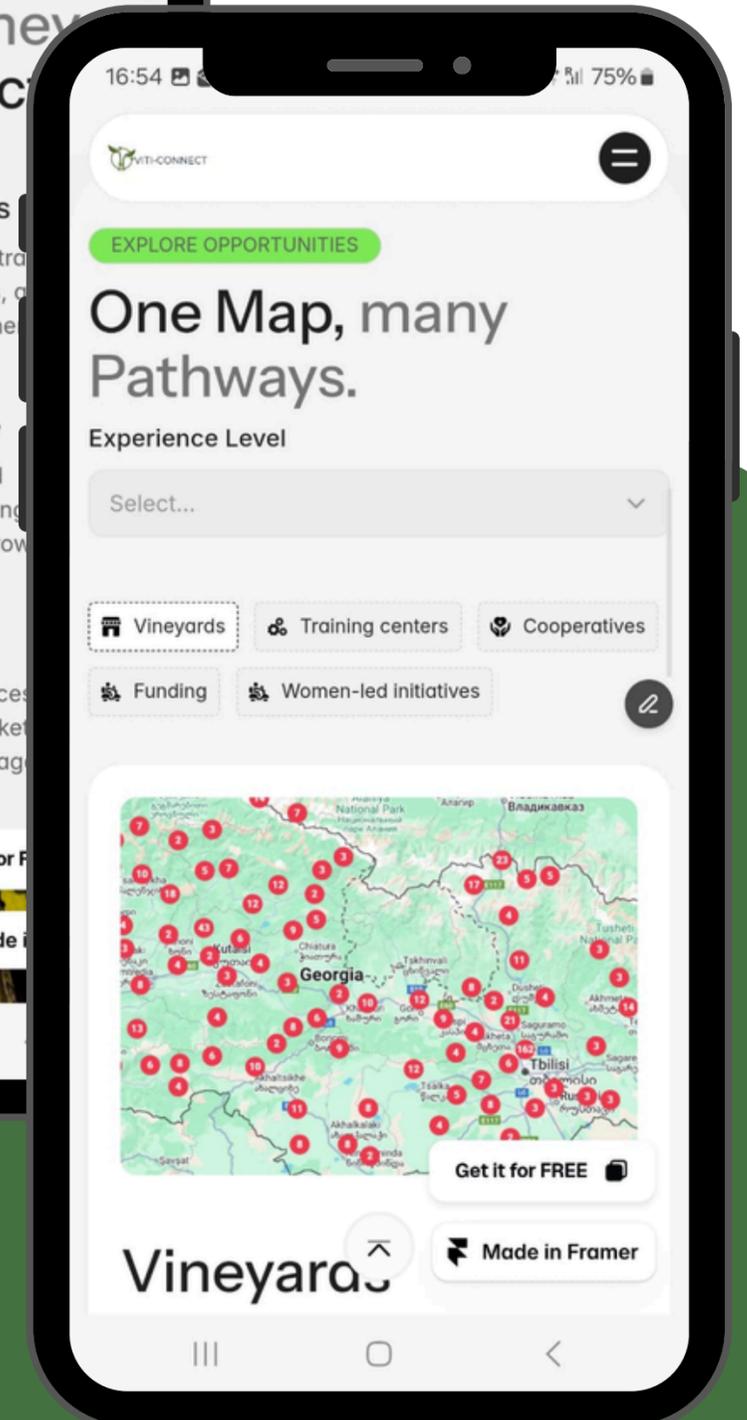
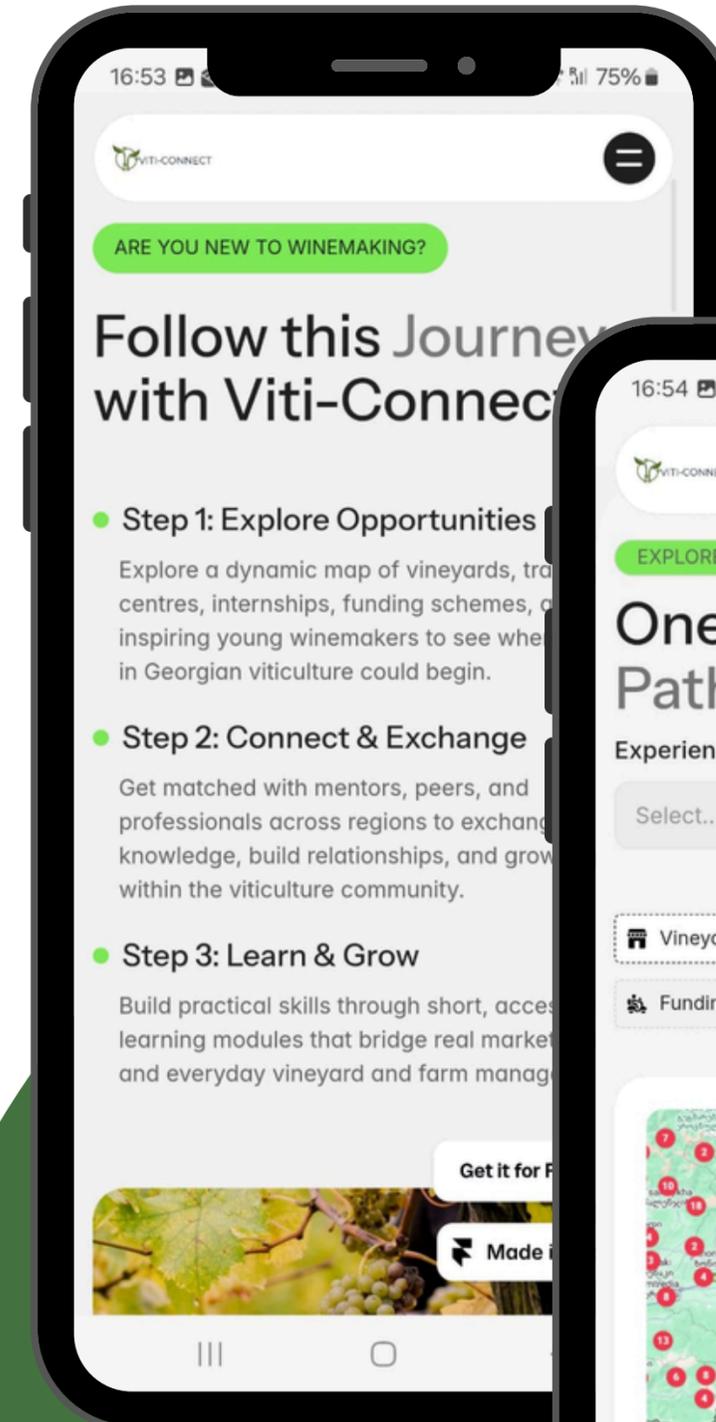


Learn

Learning Modules



Making the viticulture sector more accessible, transparent, and attractive for young Georgians.



User Journey Persona

A snapshot of a newcomer persona with limited sector knowledge and no network.



“How do I start
a career in
viticulture in
Georgia?”



Tina

Young woman,
based in Tbilisi

25 y.o



Welcome to Viti-Connect!

A one-stop platform mapping opportunities, mentorship, and practical learning for the next generation of Georgian winemakers.

[Sign Up](#)

Disclaimer

This website is a prototype for a university project.

All names and profiles used are fictional and for illustrative purposes only.

[Get it for FREE](#)[Made in Framer](#)

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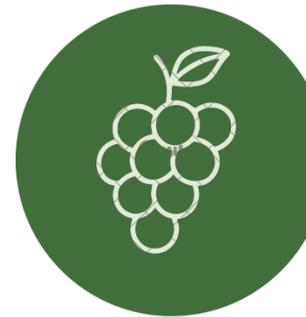
Reducing Entry Barriers

Centralizing access to knowledge, networks, and learning pathways.



Enhancing attractiveness of viticulture

Linking heritage with innovation and profitability.



Empowering Youth Capacity & Networks

Enhancing knowledge transfer and sectoral participation.



Shaping policy frameworks

Informing inclusive policies that support generational renewal.



Impact Pathways

Charm-EU
ELTE

Thank you for listening

We are available for any questions.

Feel free to explore
Viti-Connect!



[Or click here!](#)

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