VINEYARDS IN LUXEMBOURG ARE SAFE WITH DRONE PILOT PROJECT

News / Business aviation



I guess a lot of you have heard about helicopters coming to help to protect vineyards against cold. As we live in a very interesting time of drone development, here it comes a new solution - drones applied in viticulture. Two partners came together for a drone pilot project for vineyards in Luxembourg: Luxaviation Group and Domaine L&R Kox of Remich.

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The project was initialized by Corinne Kox, young winemaker with a passion for new technologies applied in viticulture and is run by Luxaviation Drones S.A., part of Luxaviation Group. This new initiative provides proof of the operator's commitment expressed last year, to enter the drone market and develop it as an additional business line. During the second week of July 2019, instructor pilots experienced in aerial spraying, successfully flew equipment tests, followed by effective spraying with organic phytosanitary products in vineyards of the Domaine L&R Kox.

Drones are part of a larger trend of data-driven agri- and viticulture and a movement towards higher efficiency and accuracy, reduced erosion, preserving the environment, reducing the noise pollution to neighbourhood and potentially enhancing the quality of the final product.
Corinne Kox, Domaine L&R Kox says: "The many tests undertaken in research centres on using drones in vineyard treatments show the relevance of the unmanned aircraft as a promising tool in terms of input reduction, accuracy and protection of the soil and the environment. Smarter and more sustainable viticulture will be facilitated as a result of greater flexibility of spraying equipment used and adaptability in treatment schedules."



Similar to maintaining highest certification standards in the manned fixed and rotary wing business, Luxaviation is engaged in the process to validate operator's procedures and standards to the Light Unmanned Aircraft operator Certificate (LUC) published on 24 May 2019 by the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) on the rules and procedures for the operation of

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unmanned aircraft and aims to be the first operator to obtain the certificate.
Luxaviation Group CEO, Patrick Hansen, says: “Drones can support giving winegrowers a clearer picture of the cultivation and are easier to organize and more affordable than helicopters. Since the pilots can fly the drones closer to the ground, we are able to provide winemakers with greater scheduling flexibility, accuracy and a reduction of noise for the surrounding neighbourhood. By some estimates, winegrowers may be able to reduce spraying, which equates to reduced costs and a lesser environmental impact.”

Since the appearance of devastating fungi on vine varieties at the end of the 19th century, particularly powdery mildew and mildew, winegrowers have had to fight cryptogamic diseases. Curative treatments to prevent the development of the cryptogamic diseases are currently not available. Winegrowers, therefore, are obliged to preventively protect the vines at regular time intervals. The reduction of inputs is a strategic challenge for the entire wine sector in terms of ecology and respect for the environment, brand image and financial costs. Contributions to the reduction of inputs in vine cultivation are made at several levels: the search for varieties more resistant to cryptogamic diseases (e.g. Cabernet Blanc, Pinotin etc), as well as the quantity and quality of spraying by influencing the choice of spraying equipment used, the preparation of dilutions or the application conditions.
Subject to additional successful operations over the next weeks, Luxaviation Group is expecting to commercially launch vineyard spraying services globally later in 2019.

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