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COVID-19 and Global Beverage Markets: Impacts on Australian Wine Industry

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COVID-19 and Global Beverage Markets: Impacts on Australian Wine Industry

Policy responses to the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic in the first half of 2020 have caused a global economic recession, the severity of which has not been seen since the 1930s. How is that affecting the world's beverage markets, and what does it mean for the Australian wine industry this and next year?

Of course no-one can answer this question with any precision, because it depends on many factors that remain very uncertain. Nonetheless, on 23 April this year, the Director-General of the Paris-based International Organization of Vine and Wine warned that "In Europe, the shutdown of this important channel of distribution [on-premise wine sales] might bring a reduction of 35% in volume and a reduction of almost 50% in sales." He was referring to closures of restaurants, bars, cafes and clubs in response to COVID-19. Overall, his report concurred with the European Commission (2020) that the EU's wine consumption volume would be 8% lower in 2020 than the previous five years' average, bearing in mind that the 70% of sales that are off-premise are expected to be a little above average this year as many people self-isolate at home.

How will that compare with EU production? What about in other parts of the world? How different will those impacts for wine be from those affecting beer and spirits? With the help of a global model of particular product markets it is possible to specify hypothetical shocks and estimate their effects on various nations' production, consumption, trade and prices. This article draws on a new model of global beverage markets (Wittwer and Anderson 2019) and the latest global macroeconomic projections from the IMF (2020) to simulate the market impacts of (i) a downturn in incomes in 2020 on beverage demand and the response of suppliers and (ii) an optimistically assumed reversal as early as 2021. In what follows we explain the nature of the exercise, present global results (including their sensitivity to alternative consumer responses in China), highlight caveats and stress that these are not forecasts but simply projections based on explicit assumptions about a very uncertain environment, and draw out implications for Australian wine exports.

Basic Economics of the Global Market Shock

Every sector of most national economies has been affected by COVID-19, most of them adversely because of falling product demand. As well, production has been curtailed to varying extents across sectors because of social distancing and self-isolation measures. Where the national decline in supply (production plus change in seller stocks) is less [or more] than the decline in demand, the difference spills over into amplified percentage changes in the volume of net exports [or net imports]. Globally, if the increase in net exports exceeds [is less than] the increase in net imports of a product, its international price falls [rises].

In the case of beverages, sales to consumers are affected not only by the decline in incomes but also by the social distancing measures that have led to closure of restaurants, bars, cafes and clubs plus the decline in travel and tourism and hence also in duty-free sales, consumption on airlines and cruise ships, and visits to cellar doors.

Certainly there has been some offsetting off-premise sales and, for small producers, direct e-commerce sales; and there have been some increases in consumer stocks in anticipation of a period of self-isolation at home. Off-premise beverage sales typically tend to be of lower quality than on-premise purchases though. During the global financial crisis of 2008-09, the decline in both quantity and quality of sparkling wine sales was especially marked – and the subsequent rate of growth from the lower 2009 base was slower than it had been in preceding years, notwithstanding the Prosecco boom of the past decade (OIV 2020).

Wine production has been affected relatively little by COVID-19, even in the Southern Hemisphere where this year's vintage timing coincided with when the coronavirus struck but exemptions were made to allow the industry to complete its crush. Unlike wine, beer and spirits production is not dependent on a perishable crop, and its production has not been seriously affected by social distancing measures, so its adjustment to changed market signals can be expected to be as per usual when demand patterns change.

Modelling Beverage Markets

Analysis of markets for the three main alcoholic beverage groups (wine, beer and spirits) requires a global economic model of national markets connected through international trade, in which the interactions between each nation's producers and consumers of these three beverages are explicitly recognized. Wittwer and Anderson (2019) provide such a model. It is calibrated to 2016-18 data, but for present purposes it is updated to 2019 and then projected to 2020 and then 2021 using IMF macroeconomic growth rate projections which take into

account COVID-19 impacts on GDP in those two years. Results for COVID-affected 2020 are reported relative to the 2019 base, and those for 2021 are reported relative to the COVID-affected 2020 levels.

The extent of the macroeconomic shock to aggregate household expenditure in 2020 and its subsequent recovery in 2021, based on forecasts by the IMF (2020), is shown in the Appendix Table for 51 countries or residual country groups. The global average assumed change in aggregate household expenditure is -5.0% in 2020 and +4.7% in 2021. For Australia those changes are -6.7% and 6.1%.

There is of course a huge amount of uncertainty around these 'best guesses' by the IMF. In a much-lengthier global macro modelling article, McKibbin and Fernando (2020) examine seven COVID scenarios in which the aggregate household expenditure shock for Australia in 2020 ranges from 0% to -9%, for example. The IMF numbers appear to be close to national forecasts of major economies for 2020. What is more uncertain is how rapidly economies will recover post-2020. The IMF projections for 2021 imply a prompt and almost perfect V pathway, but it is also possible the recovery might be a reverse-J shape (less than full recovery in 2021 due to, for example, older stood-down workers not being reemployable), U-shaped (a longer delay before recovery begins) or even involve a more gradual return to 2019 income levels over several subsequent years (due to, for example, consumers being slow to return to crowded places even after restrictions are lifted). If the recovery traces a U-shape with no income growth in 2021 and the upturn delayed to 2022, then 2021 volumes and prices would be unchanged from those we project for 2020 and our 2021 results would be more like what would be anticipated in 2022.

The only other modelling change made in this scenario is that wine demand moves to lower-priced items in 2020, as a consequence of the closure of restaurants, cafes, pubs and clubs for several months. Specifically, we assume there is a temporary 3% taste swing away from sparkling and super-premium still wines and a 3% swing in favour of non-premium and commercial still wines during 2020. In the light of a recent report of interviews with Chinese experts by Wine Intelligence (2020), we also show how much those results change if for

¹ The removal of government-imposed restrictions may not be enough for consumers to return to previous economic and social activities. Maloney and Taskin (2020) find for the U.S. that much of the decrease in mobility is voluntary and driven by the number of COVID-19 cases (greater awareness of risk). They find closing non-essential business, sheltering in place and school closures are effective, but their total contribution is dwarfed by the voluntary. This suggests that much social distancing may continue even after restrictions are lifted. Their results are consistent across countries and income groups except for the poorest in low-income countries who could not afford to abandon their sources of livelihood. That is, removing restrictions may not yield a V-shaped recovery if consumers are unconvinced that the COVID risk has fallen.

China we instead assume a 30% taste swing away from wine. This is based on those experts' suggestion that China's expenditure on wine in 2020 could be 30-40% below 2019 spending as consumers rely more on their traditional beverages of beer and spirits for drinking at home in the lockdown.

In the GLOBAL-BEV model, wine markets have been disaggregated into four types, namely non-premium (including bulk), commercial-premium, and super-premium still wines, plus sparkling wine. Commercial-premium still wines are defined to be those between US\$2.50 and \$7.50 per litre pre-tax at a country's border or wholesale. Beer and spirits are not split into regular and craft categories, because the latter still have small market shares in volume terms and are minor in international trade. The world is divided into 44 individual nations with all other countries being captured in seven composite residual regions. The primary sources of data for constructing the GLOBAL-BEV model's baseline database for 2016-18 are Anderson and Pinilla (2020) plus Anderson (2020) for taxes on beverage consumption and imports, Holmes and Anderson (2017) for wine, beer and spirits average consumer expenditure data, and United Nations (2019) for volume and value of international trade in beverages.

This GLOBAL-BEV model has income- and price-responsive demand equations, price-responsive supply equations and hence quantities and prices for each of the grape and wine products and for beer and spirits, plus for a single composite of all other products in each country such that it has elements of an economywide model. Grapes are assumed to be not traded internationally, but other products are both exported and imported. All prices are expressed in real (2017) US dollar terms.

Producer price and consumer volume effects

The expected drop in incomes in 2020 is projected to lower real producer prices of wine by an average of 6% in Australia. This is less than the average drop in some other countries, despite the price falls being similar across countries for each of the four different types of wines (Table 1). The average price drops in New Zealand and North America by nearly twice as much as in Australia, because their production is more specialized in higher-priced wines whose demand has fallen most.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

The assumed near-reversal of incomes in 2021 generates a near-reversal of these price changes, suggesting that a recovery that rapidly could contain the damage to profits to just

one trading year. The sooner lockdowns are lifted, and the fewer second-wave infections, the more confined that loss will be to the middle half of 2020.

The projected changes in volumes of beverages consumed are reported in Table 2. Australia is projected to have a 3% fall in overall wine consumption as compared with 4% for beer and spirits in 2020. But within the wine group, domestic sales of the more-profitable fine wines drop by twice as much as the average while lower-priced wine consumption falls very little. The only region where wine consumption does not fall is Asia. There, income growth is expected to be lower than normal but not negative, and their trend growth in consumption in recent years has been much stronger for wine than for beer and spirits. The projected fall in wine consumption is similar in Europe to that of Australia. It is less than half the decline forecast by the European Commission (2020) and OIV (2020). The reason for the difference may be that the EU and OIV have not built into their analyses the positive impact on sales of the global decline in wine prices.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

Sales growth is projected to occur in 2021, but that makes up only about two-thirds of the wine sales volume losses incurred in 2020 except in Asia (compare Tables 2(a) and 2(b)). The reasons for less-than-full recovery are that real incomes do not fully recover in 2021, yet average prices almost fully return to pre-COVID levels after restaurants, pubs, etc. re-open and consumers go up-market again in terms of quality.

The values of consumption alter considerably more than their volumes, because prices also fall and then rise over the two years and they alter more for fine wines than for commercial ones. For the world as a whole, the volume of all wine consumption falls 2% in 2020 and rises 1% in 2021, whereas real expenditure on wine falls 7.5% in 2020 and rises 6.5% in 2021. For sparkling wine globally, the differences are even starker: the volume falls 6% in 2020 and rises 5% in 2021, whereas real expenditure on sparkling wine falls 12% in 2020 and rises 11% in 2021.

Effects on international trade

The volume of world trade in the various categories of wine alters by percentages similar in size to those for the volume of global consumption, but their values alter by much larger percentages because of the changes in relative prices of those wines. In particular, the value of fine wine exports falls by almost three times as much as their volume in 2020. However, that value is projected to almost fully recover in 2021 as restaurants, etc. re-open. For example, the value of Australia's exports of super-premium still wine is projected to be 10%

less in 2020 than 2019 because of COVID-19, but to rebound by 11% in 2021 (Tables 3 and 4).

[Insert Tables 3 and 4 about here]

World imports change to the same extent as world exports of course. Table 5 shows that wine imports in 2020 are projected to decline in Western Europe and the United States by 2% by volume but by around 10% by value. Again this is because a relatively high share of their imports are fine wines and their price has risen by much more than that of commercial wines. Note, however that Asia's wine import volumes are projected to continue to grow in 2020, albeit at a slower pace than in recent years. This is due to a temporary change in the composition of those imports away from fine wines and toward commercial wines. The switch is partly because of a change in the relative price of fine wines but also because of our assumed temporary taste change away from fine wines (a proxy for the switch from on-premise to off-premise consumption because of restaurant closures in 2020). A reversal of that taste change in 2021 causes Asia's volume of wine imports to change very little compared with its value.

[Insert Table 5 about here]

Impact on the direction and prices of Australia's wine exports

The consequences for Australia's exports to its key markets are reported in Tables 6 and 7. During 2020 the value of its sales of fine wine (sparkling plus super-premium still wine) is projected to decline in all markets abroad, by an average of 10%. This is mainly because the average prices of exports drops in all markets. Commercial wine exports also decline to all markets other than China's. There the price of fine wine imports from Australia falls in price so much that the volume of their fine wine imports rises such that (i) China's value declines by only 2% and (ii) the total volume of Australia's fine wine exports does not fall. The projection for 2021 reverse those changes in terms of total sales, but the reversal is not even across partner countries. In particular, Sales to China overshadow the partial recovery of sales to the US, UK and continental Europe.

[Insert Tables 6 and 7 about here]

Alternative assumption about taste swings in China

What if we instead we assume for China a 30% taste swing away from wine, as suggested by Chinese interviewees in a report by Wine Intelligence (2020)? This is a rather extreme alternative assumption, but one based on the fact that wine is a relatively new beverage for

Chinese consumers and is mostly consumed in social settings away from home – which social distancing has precluded during the recent COVID-inspired lockdown. In that alternative sceanario, Australia's average producer price of wine would fall 11% instead of 6% in 2020 compared with 2019, its wine export volume would still decline just 1% but its export value would fall 14% instead of 4%. Because of China's dominance in the region, Asia's total wine imports would be one-fifth lower in 2020, and Asian expenditure on wine would be almost one-quarter lower.

Qualifications

This example of an alternative assumption about Chinese wine spending is a reminder that the above results depend especially heavily on numerous assumptions. As mentioned at the outset, results are particularly sensitive to what is assumed about the extent to which economies go into recession in 2020 and the extent and speed of recovery in the years to follow. The V-shaped projection by the IMF (2020), implying a near-return to 2019 incomes by 2021, is more optimistic than many commentators suggest. The trajectory could be more U-shaped, delaying the return to growth by one or more years. Or it could involve gradual but sluggish growth after this year, in which case the above projected increases in 2021 should instead be interpreted as being spread over several years.

The immediate impact also depends on the 2020 winegrape crush and wine production projections. Australia's 2020 crush is as yet unknown but may be as much as 20% below the 'normal' volume we have assumed. And given the current excess supply of wine in the US and EU, much of Europe's 2020 vintage may be diverted to distillation by the end of this year. This would lessen the downward pressure on wine prices this and next year, but would mean low returns to grapegrowers this year.

The projected impact of COVID next year also depends on our assumed return to premiumization on the part of consumers (a reversal of our assumed taste swing away from fine wine for 2020), which is based on the assumption that consumers will return fully to eating out, pubbing, clubbing and cellar-door visiting in 2021. Again that may be too optimistic, at least in terms of speed if not also on the eventual extent of recovery.

For a more-detailed analysis of domestic effects of the pandemic on various wine regions, in future research we can use a multi-regional model of the Australian economy (TERM-Wine) which explicitly identifies wine regions, includes wine tourism activities, and separately identifies on-premise and off-premise wine consumption by type.

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Table 1: Real^a beverage producer price changes, 2019 to 2020 (%)

	AUS	NZL	WEur	US&Can	SthAmer	S Africa	WORLD
All wine	-6	-11	-8	-11	-6	-8	-8
NPWine	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2
CPWine	-2	-3	-4	-4	-3	-10	-3
SPWine	-13	-12	-13	-15	-11	-4	-13
Sparkling	-10	-10	-10	-11	-9	-12	-10
Beer	-7	-6	-6	-8	-7	-7	-5
Spirits	-4	-5	-3	-5	-5	-3	-2

Note: In this and subsequent tables, NP is non-premium, CP is commercial premium and SP is super premium still wine.

Source: Authors' model results.

Table 2: Changes in volume of domestic consumption of beverages, 2019 to 2021 (%)

(a) 2019	to 2020								
	AUS	NZL	WEur	UK	EEur	US&Can	SthAmer	Asia	WORLD
All wine	-3	-4	-3	-3	-1	-3	-3	3	-2
NPWine	0	-1	-1	0	0	0	-2	3	-1
CPWine	-2	-2	-3	-2	-1	-1	-2	4	-1
SPWine	-5	-6	-6	-5	-5	-5	-6	1	-5
Sparkling	-6	-6	-7	-6	-5	-5	-7	-1	-6
Beer	-4	-4	-5	-4	-3	-3	-3	0	-2
Spirits	-4	-4	-5	-5	-3	-4	-3	0	0
(b) 2020	to 2021								
	AUS	NZL	WEur	UK	EEur	US&Can	SthAmer	Asia	WORLD
All wine	2	4	1	1	0	2	1	3	1
NPWine	0	0	-1	-1	-1	-1	1	1	0
CPWine	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	2	1
SPWine	5	7	4	3	4	4	5	4	4
SparkWine	6	7	5	4	4	5	6	6	5
Beer	3	4	3	2	2	2	2	3	2
Spirits	3	4	3	3	2	2	2	3	2

^a Expressed in US dollars but in these simulations currency exchange rates are assumed not to change so these are the same as national currency changes.

Table 3: Changes in volume of wine exports, 2019 to 2021 (%)

(a)	-20	19 tc	520	Y2(1)

(4) =017 00 =0							
	AUS	NZL	WEur	US&Can	SthAmer	S Africa	WORLD
All wine	-1	-1	-1	0	-3	-2	-1
NPWine	-1	0	0	-1	-1	-1	0
CPWine	-1	-1	1	2	-2	0	0
SPWine	2	-2	-3	-2	-15	-4	-4
Sparkling	-4	-4	-5	-4	-11	-9	-6
(b) 2020 to 20	021						
	AUS	NZL	WEur	US&Can	SthAmer	S Africa	WORLD
All wine	0	1	1	0	2	2	1
NPWine	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
CPWine	-1	0	0	-1	1	0	0
SPWine	-2	1	3	1	14	2	4
Sparkling	3	0	5	6	9	2	6

Source: Authors' model results.

Table 4: Changes in real^a value of wine exports, 2019 to 2021 (%)

ι)	2019	to!	2020)
i)	2019	' to	202	Ľ

All wine NPWine CPWine	AUS -4 -3	NZL -12 -2 -3	WEur -10 -2 -3	US&Can -7 -2	SthAmer -9 -3	S Africa -6 -4	WORLD -11 -3
SPWine Sparkling	-2 -10 -12	-13 -12	-14 -15	-12 -8	-4 -22 -18	-4 -15 -18	-3 -14 -15
(b) 2020 to 20	021 AUS	NZL	WEur	US&Can	SthAmer	S Africa	WORLD
All wine NPWine	4	11	9	6	7	4	8
CPWine	3	2	3	2	3	3	3
SPWine Sparkling	11 14	12 10	14 14	11 12	23 17	15	14 14

^a Expressed in US dollars but in these simulations both exchange rates and overall national CPIs are assumed not to change so these are the same as nominal national currency changes.

Table 5: Changes in volume and real^a value of wine imports, 2019 to 2021 (%)

				Re	al ^a value				
(a) 2019 to	2020								
	WE	US	Asia	World		WE	US	Asia	World
All wine	-2	-2	5	-1	All wine	-9	-10	0	-6
NPWine	-1	-1	4	0	NPWine	-5	-4	2	-4
CPWine	-2	-1	7	0	CPWine	-3	-2	9	1
SPWine	-5	-3	0	-3	SPWine	-13	-13	-6	-11
Sparkling	-7	-5	2	-5	Sparkling	-15	-13	-6	-12
(b) 2020 to	2021								
	WE	US	Asia	World		WE	US	Asia	World
All wine	1	1	4	1	All wine	8	10	10	8
NPWine	0	1	1	0	NPWine	0	2	2	1
CPWine	0	-1	4	0	CPWine	2	2	5	3
SPWine	4	2	5	3	SPWine	15	14	15	14
Sparkling	5	6	9	6	Sparkling	14	14	15	14

^a Expressed in US dollars but in these simulations both exchange rates and overall national CPIs are assumed not to change so these are the same as nominal national currency changes.

Table 6: Changes in volume, value and unit value of Australia's wine exports, a 2019 to 2020 (%)

(a) Value ^a								
	US	UK	Eur	China	OAsia	NZ	ROW	WORLD
All wine	-6	-7	-5	3	-9	-7	-7	-4
Commercial wine	-6	-6	-5	4	-3	-6	-5	-2
Fine wine	-19	-16	-8	-2	-12	-20	-12	-10
(b) Volume								
All wine	-3	-4	-1	7	0	-3	-2	-1
Commercial wine	-3	-4	-1	6	0	-2	-2	-1
Fine wine	-11	-8	2	12	0	-12	-3	0
(c) Unit value ^a (a	verage pric	e)						
All wine	-3	-3	-4	-4	-9	-4	-5	-3
Commercialwine	-3	-3	-3	-3	-2	-3	-2	-1
Fine wine	-9	-8	-10	-14	-12	-8	-10	-10

Note: Commercial = NP + CP wines; Fine = Super-Premium still + Sparkling wines

Source: Authors' model results.

Table 7: Changes in volume, value and unit value of Australia's wine exports, a 2020 to 2021 (%)

(a) Value								
	US	UK	Eur	China	OAsia	NZ	ROW	WORLD
All wine	1	2	0	6	8	5	4	4
Commercial wine	1	2	-1	5	0	4	0	3
Fine wine	15	10	2	14	11	19	10	11
(b) Volume								
All wine	-1	1	-3	3	-2	1	-2	0
Commercial wine	-2	1	-3	3	-2	1	-2	0
Fine wine	5	1	-7	4	-1	8	-2	0
(c) Unit value ^a (a	verage pric	e)						
All wine	2	1	2	4	10	4	6	4
Commercialwine	2	1	2	3	2	3	2	3
Fine wine	10	9	9	10	12	10	12	11

Note: Commercial = NP + CP wines; Fine = Super-Premium still + Sparkling wines

^a Expressed in US dollars but in these simulations both exchange rates and overall national CPIs are assumed not to change so these are the same as nominal national currency changes.

^a Expressed in US dollars but in these simulations both exchange rates and overall national CPIs are assumed not to change so these are the same as nominal national currency changes.

Appendix Table 1: Aggregate Consumption Expenditure Growth Rates, 2020 and 2021 (%)

	2020	2021		2020	2021
France	-7.2	4.5	New Zealand	-7.0	7.0
Italy	-9.1	4.8	Canada	-6.2	4.2
Portugal	-8.0	5.0	United States	-5.9	4.7
Spain	-8.0	4.3	Argentina	-10.0	8.0
Austria	-7.0	4.5	Brazil	-5.3	2.9
Belgium	-6.9	4.6	Chile	-4.5	5.3
Denmark	-6.5	6.0	Mexico	-6.6	3.0
Finland	-6.0	3.1	Uruguay	-3.0	5.0
Germany	-7.0	5.2	Other L. Am	-5.0	4.0
Greece	-10.0	5.1	South Africa	-5.8	4.0
Ireland	-6.8	6.3	Turkey	-5.0	5.0
Netherlands	-7.5	3.0	North Africa	-2.8	4.0
Sweden	-6.8	5.2	Other Africa	-3.4	2.4
Switzerland	-6.0	3.8	Middle East	-4.0	3.0
UK	-6.5	4.0	China	1.2	9.2
Other W.E.	-7.0	5.0	Hong Kong	-4.8	3.9
Bulgaria	-4.0	6.0	India	1.9	7.4
Croatia	-9.0	4.9	Japan	-5.2	3.0
Georgia	-4.0	3.0	Korea	-1.2	3.4
Hungary	-3.1	4.2	Malaysia	-1.7	9.0
Moldova	-3.0	4.1	Philippines	0.6	7.6
Romania	-5.0	3.9	Singapore	-3.5	3.0
Russia	-5.5	3.5	Taiwan	-4.0	3.5
Ukraine	-7.7	3.6	Thailand	-6.7	6.1
Other E.E.	-5.0	4.0	Other Asia	0.5	4.0
Australia	-6.7	6.1	WORLD	-5.0	4.7

Source: Authors' compilation based on GDP projections by IMF (2020).