

*the* AGRICULTURE  
*of* SEQUERCIANI



SEQUERCIANI

CREATIVITÀ . TERRA . OSPITALITÀ

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Before we describe, as concisely as possible, the concept and activities of Sequerciani's agricultural world, it is necessary to lay out a series of general premises to focus attention on the importance and relevance of the Sequerciani approach.

## **General premises:**

Modern agriculture faces a series of extremely difficult challenges:

- A growing need for food at affordable prices for a population of 7 billion people.
- Climate change with increasingly higher temperatures.
- Soil degradation.
- Hydrogeological disruption with the drying up and contamination of groundwater.

Paradoxically, solving one of these problems often worsens the others. This leads us to the dramatic conclusion that agriculture is one of the main causes of desertification, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and the depletion of water resources.

In fact, modern agriculture (conventionally defined as the agriculture that arose in the first half of the last century through the use of the immense chemical and



biochemical industry born out of the First World War), in its pursuit of maximizing yields and productivity, has ultimately brought us to today's problems — including, not least, the decreasing healthiness of food.

A striking, though not isolated, example is the massive global use of glyphosate, a herbicidal desiccant originally created to eliminate weeds, now widely used as a pre-harvest drying agent for cereals to shorten ripening and harvesting times.



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## **Specific premises:**

- Tuscan agriculture has always been tied to certain typical, geographically defined activities:

Viticulture and olive growing in the Florence area and parts of Siena; livestock farming in the Arezzo area; fruit and vegetable cultivation in the coastal area of Livorno; cereal cultivation in the rest of Siena province. This type of agriculture has always been well-known and highly profitable.

- At the same time, agriculture in the Maremma region has traditionally been linked to large-scale production with little or no authenticity, with crops destined for “storage” policies, i.e. delivered to national collection agencies. The immediate consequences were low profitability (supplemented by EU subsidies), a lack of entrepreneurial culture in farm management, and the depopulation of rural areas by young people.

- “Second-level” consequences of this depopulation included the abandonment of even minimal land stewardship activities (maintenance, cleaning), and the loss of historical, social, and productive elements such as the cultivation of local products and the use of unconventional but more sustainable farming techniques.



### **All this considered:**

SEQUERCIANI has taken on the role of a pioneer in the region in the rediscovery of traditional crops (which can increase profit margins and thus the profitability of agriculture) cultivated using agronomic techniques that reduce the common problems typically attributed to agriculture, as mentioned above:

- Enhancing soil fertility
- Minimizing water usage
- Strongly limiting deep soil tillage, which causes CO<sub>2</sub> emissions
- Careful and constant biochemical monitoring that allows the minimization—and in many cases the elimination—of synthetic chemical products (fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, etc.)

The core ingredients of this “business approach” to an old-new style of agriculture are:

- **The biodynamic philosophy** (caring for the soil as the main actor in a rich – thus profitable –, healthy – thus edible –, and long-lasting – thus sustainable – agricultural process), and

- The belief that the combination of human sensi-

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tivity and capability must be reinforced and enhanced by science and technology.

In short, at Sequerciani, **agriculture is the “culture” of the soil**, because everything we put in our mouths comes from the soil! The soil is the center of attention, and agriculture is seen as a **set of good practices**, united with scientific research and the application of technology.

This approach has earned Sequerciani the prestigious recognition by Legambiente as a Legambiente Ambassador in the region.

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## **VITICULTURE**

### **Planting of ancient native varieties:**

Varieties that were once widespread in the area have significantly higher resilience to geo-climatic events and pests compared to non-native ones.

Modern technology can compensate for the shortcomings that historically pushed these varieties to the margins of Tuscan viticulture.



In this context, the Region of Tuscany granted Sequerciani the title of **Custodian Grower**: Sequerciani is one of the farms entrusted by the Regional Germplasm Institute with programs to rediscover and enhance ancient Tuscan varieties at risk of extinction.

This program is conducted in a **vitarium**, a trial vineyard containing 14 ancient Tuscan varieties; harvesting and vinifying these varieties will allow us to identify grapevines that – we hope – will complement those we already vinify (Pugnitello, Fogliatonda, Cilieggiolo, Vermentino). These are the so-called “minor natives”.

### **Regenerative and conservative agronomic techniques:**

- **Cover cropping and mulching between rows**  
(Cover crops and mulch protect against drought and soil overheating)

- **No deep tillage** (In addition to reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, shallow tillage supports the soil’s microfauna – humus – and therefore soil fertility)

- **Installation of moisture probes** to measure soil humidity (to avoid irrigation unless absolutely necessary)





and “traps” to monitor pest presence (to avoid unnecessary pesticide use)

**- Fertilization exclusively with green manure**

(sowing between the rows of plants with strong biochemical profiles like nitrogen or potassium to enrich the soil) and with animal manure

**Natural winemaking:**

No synthetic chemical products, and no interventions that alter or standardize the original taste or that can cause intolerances and digestive issues (such as selected yeasts, sulfites, softeners, clarifiers, etc.).

Spontaneous fermentation, aging in amphora, use of maceration to highlight the characteristics of each grape, and also the use of temperature to support flavor extraction: Whether for **young and fresh wines**, or **full-bodied and structured ones**, still or sparkling – **this is our enology!**

**Distillation:**

Our grape pomace is distilled into **grappa** – both white and aged – completing our range of spirits.

**Organic grappa** from selected grape varieties, the kind that’s truly hard to find on the market.

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## **OLIVE GROWING**

- **Climate change** has led to an increased presence of pests (olive fruit fly) throughout national olive farming. We use **natural methods** like traps made with vinegar and sugar mixtures, which attract and distract the parasites.

- **Systematic diversification of cultivars**, aimed not only at improving quality levels, but also at compensating for poor harvests in some varieties with better results in others — this stabilizes and enhances profitability. In particular, we focus on producing oil from **local cultivars** (such as Lazzero pratigiano), which embody the flavor and strength of the region.

- **A farm-owned olive mill** is in development, to optimize the milling process, reduce early oxidation of the fruit, and improve oil extraction — thus enhancing the quality and health benefits of Sequerciani's extra virgin olive oils.





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## **CEREAL FARMING**

Alongside viticulture, this is the sector where research and selection efforts are most intense. Modern cereal farming focuses on conventional durum and soft wheat varieties, with low plant height and high productivity, but which require **fertilizers, herbicides, fungicides, and pesticides**.

The **alternative** – now widely spread in Italy – is so-called ancient grains: These varieties (Senatore Cappelli – the best-known –, Timilia, Gentil Rosso, Verna, Khorasan), which were common before the chemical and biogenetic revolution of the last century, have **very low levels of starch and gluten**, and are therefore **much healthier, more digestible, and tastier**. Additionally, both soil and final product are completely free from additives and chemicals.

Unfortunately, these grains suffer from **very low productivity**, reducing profitability and – due to higher retail prices – restricting sales to small niche markets.

Sequerciani is part of a project promoted by the **University of Florence** to develop “**populations**”, i.e. mixed ancient grain varieties adapted to the microclimate



and soil through selective seeding and field + supply chain testing. This improves yields, boosts farm economics, and lowers consumer prices, making these products more accessible to average consumers.

The project includes **Tuscan farms, stone mills, artisanal pasta makers**, as well as **seed companies** (which turn research into commercial seed) and **distribution firms** of ancient grain products.

Our cereal products include:  
**Flours** (spelt, soft wheat for bread and pizza, durum wheat for pasta), and a **variety of short and long pastas**.



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## **HORTICULTURE**

The **organic garden** – cultivated using organic and biodynamic techniques to avoid all chemical use – is a **soon-to-be-achieved** goal at Sequerciani.

For now, we maintain a sort of **nursery-garden**, a **laboratory** to recover and develop local vegetable and herb varieties using **permaculture techniques** (narrow-ribbed tomatoes, Maremman onions, wrinkled chickpeas, aromatic herbs, etc.). We also maintain a **main garden**, where, alongside more traditional vegetables and fruits, we grow selections from the nursery.

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## **BEEKEEPING**

The biodynamic agriculture surrounding our **beehives**, protected also by woodland and Mediterranean scrub, offers the **ideal habitat for bees** and ensures the **quality of the honey** they produce. **Wildflower, heather, acacia, chestnut...** these are the types of flowers our bees encounter depending on the season — and, consequently, the types of honey we produce.





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