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OIV RECOGNISES ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS OF CORK

The International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV) has officially recognised the role of natural cork closures in reducing greenhouse gases.

At its recent General Assembly meeting in Montpellier, the OIV passed a resolution (OIV-CST 431-2011) defining the general principles of an international greenhouse gas accounting protocol for the vine and wine sector.

Significantly, the organisation said the calculation of greenhouse gas emissions relating to natural cork closures should take a holistic approach — meaning the carbon sink of cork oak forests and the carbon stored by cork closures should be taken into account.

The role cork oak forests play in the fight against global warming through carbon sequestration is an attribute that distinguishes natural cork from all other types of wine closures.

The OIV resolution notes the positive impact of cork stoppers in the calculation of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and states that:

“Cork closures represent a specificity of the wine sector and its use has an important impact in the sustainable conservation of forest. Because of this important role, carbon balance of corks may be taken into account when applying the EP (Enterprise Protocol).”

“When accounting the GHG emissions related to natural cork closures, the cork production system should be considered from a holistic approach. The final figures of the GHG emissions due to the cork production should consider the managed forest it comes from and its carbon sink effect.”

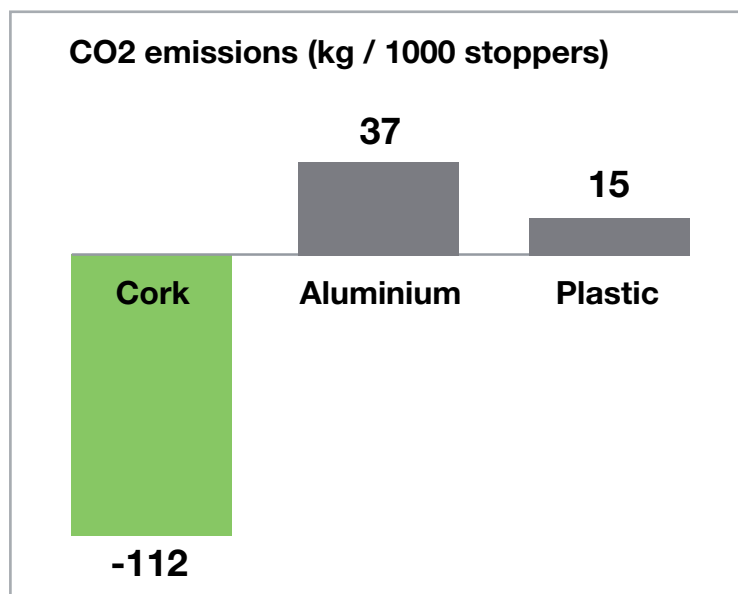
Amorim chairman and CEO António Amorim said the OIV resolution reaffirmed the added value a cork closure brings to a wine and highlighted the positive role that natural cork plays in helping the wine industry to meet environmental challenges.

“Within the wine industry there is increasing recognition of cork’s environmental attributes and acknowledgement of the added value a quality natural cork closure brings to a wine,” he said.

The 2008 PricewaterhouseCoopers life cycle analysis of wine closures shows the quantifiable benefit that using cork closures has on the environment and when the sequestration of cork forests is taken into account, as suggested by the OIV, the differences in the environmental performance of natural and artificial closures is striking.

The study found that greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the life cycle of a screwcap are 24 times higher than those from a natural cork stopper, while a plastic stopper is responsible for 10 times more CO₂ than a natural cork. The CO₂ emissions of 1000 cork stoppers amounted to 1533g of CO₂e, while the figure for plastic stoppers was 14,833g and for screwcaps 37,172g.¹

However, these figures do not consider carbon sequestration. When carbon sequestration is taken into account cork produces a negative emissions figure of -112,000g of CO₂e. This is best illustrated by the diagram below:



The PricewaterhouseCoopers report and a summary presentation are available at www.corkfacts.com and www.amorim.com

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NOTE 1: The calculation of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) in this instance refers to CO₂ emissions during the life cycle (production, transport, associated packaging and end of life) of 1000 stoppers over 100 years.