Today France can still be considered as the world leader for wine production:

- The whole vineyard represents about 2,25 millions acres (11% of the world acreage). As a comparison, the American vineyard represents today 1/3 of the French one.
- The wine production in France represents about 60 millions hl (20% of the world production).
- For the world exchange: France sells on foreign markets about 30% of the production that represented (in 1999) 4 800 millions USD.

From the Roman Empire the French wine production and more generally the Ancient World production has been regulated, for two different reasons.

A problem of supply regulation:

The vine is a durable plant, and it's very difficult to adapt the production to the variation of the demand. That creates two kinds of problems:

- **Competition between food producing land and vine.**

  For a long time, wine was perhaps the only production that was mostly sold and that permits producers to earn money. They were competition between cereals and vineyard, and the regulator problem was to maintain a sufficient acreage to feed the population even when the climatic conditions were such as the yield for cereals were very low.

- **The supply of wine is inelastic.**

  The wine demand is very sensible to social conditions and the wine history is characterized by strong crisis that small firms are unable to support. The wine crises can destabilize whole regions. An example: from 1980 to 1995, 1/3 of the vineyard of Languedoc Roussillon has been pulled up and the consequences for the small farms were very difficult to overcome.

A problem of health security and quality

Wine is the result of a complex process that must be controlled. Some grape varieties (as for example the Noah) and some practices (as the acidification with using H2SO4!) can be dangerous for the human health. The state control permits to forbid strictly this kind of grapes varieties and practices.

An other point: the characteristics of a wine are very dependent of the practices and of the geographic conditions. It is necessary to reinforce the consumer in his choice with providing a reliable information.

As it exists nowadays, the French regulation is the result of a long-term regulation history. It can be considered as the reference that founded the UE regulation