



<https://cricova.md>

CRICOVA - The biggest wine cellar from the Republic of Moldova



Republic of Moldova,
Street, Cricova City, Chişinău Municipality



Challenge-based solution:

- Sustainable infrastructure and resource management
- Anti-pollution and waste management
- Technology transfer and innovations

Type of innovation:

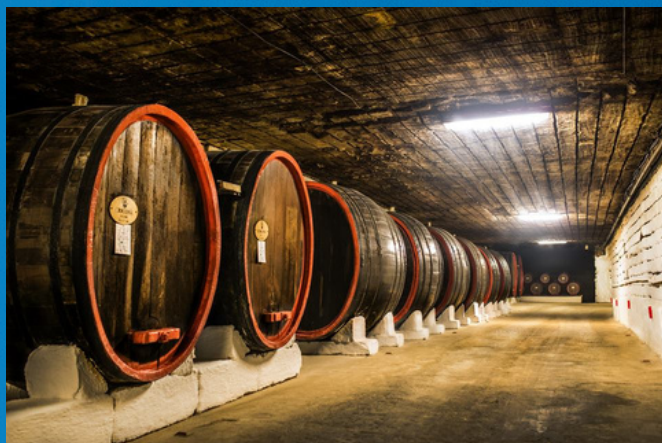
- Product Innovation
- Process Innovation
- Marketing Innovation

Source of innovation :

- Applied research
- Practice

Summary

Cricova, established in 1952, is Moldova's most iconic winery and home to the world's largest underground wine complex. Located 60 meters below ground, its 120 km of limestone tunnels create ideal conditions for aging fine wines. Blending tradition with innovation, Cricova is a symbol of Moldova's rich winemaking heritage and a leader in quality production. Its vineyards span over 1,000 hectares across central and southern Moldova, including Cricova, Criuleni, Găvănoasa, and Luceşti. With a climate of mild winters, abundant sun, and fertile soils, the region offers perfect conditions for viticulture. More than a winery, Cricova is a national treasure and major tourist destination, attracting over 90,000 visitors annually with its immersive underground tours and tastings. Situated near the Codrii Nature Reserve and Orheiul Vechi, Cricova offers a unique experience where history, culture, and exceptional wines converge.



CRICOVA

Description of the Challenge

Cricova Winery, one of Moldova's most prestigious wine tourism destinations, faces several sustainability and operational challenges while striving to balance heritage preservation, environmental responsibility, and economic growth. The key challenges include overdevelopment pressures threatening the integrity of its 120 km historical limestone cellars, increasing pollution and waste from large-scale wine production and tourism activities, and managing seasonality with fluctuating visitor numbers. Additionally, while Cricova has pioneered green practices in Moldova's wine industry, the limited absorption of advanced innovations, particularly in smart agriculture and energy-efficient production, remains a barrier to maximizing its environmental and economic performance.

Description of the Innovation

Cricova Winery stands out as a pioneer of sustainable innovation in Moldova's wine industry, successfully combining centuries-old winemaking traditions with modern eco-friendly practices. The winery's innovation strategy focuses on reducing its environmental footprint, improving resource efficiency, and offering visitors a unique and responsible tourism experience.

One of the key innovative practices implemented by Cricova is the use of renewable energy through photovoltaic systems, which has significantly reduced carbon emissions and energy consumption. The winery has also replaced traditional PVC capsules on wine bottles with biodegradable paraffin, demonstrating its commitment to reducing non-recyclable waste and promoting environmentally friendly packaging solutions.

Moreover, Cricova has introduced new waste management practices, optimized its wine production processes, and developed recycling initiatives aimed at minimizing pollution and conserving resources. These actions have led to measurable environmental benefits, such as saving 127.4 tons of CO₂ emissions and preserving over 17,500 trees.

To overcome challenges related to seasonality in tourism, Cricova has diversified its offers by creating year-round experiences. These include indoor wine tastings, thematic tours, and cultural events designed to attract visitors beyond the traditional peak seasons. This strategic approach not only ensures business continuity but also improves visitor experience and operational efficiency.

Cricova's continuous investment in innovation strengthens its position as an industry leader in sustainable wine tourism. By integrating modern technologies, promoting responsible practices, and preserving its historical heritage, Cricova sets an example of how tradition and innovation can successfully coexist to create long-term value for both the environment and the economy.

Description of the business model

Cricova Winery has developed a dynamic and sustainable business model that successfully integrates wine production, tourism services, and environmental responsibility. Its strategy is based on preserving the authenticity of Moldovan winemaking traditions while simultaneously adopting innovative solutions to improve operational efficiency and reduce environmental impact.

At the core of Cricova's business model is the synergy between premium wine production and the development of unique tourist experiences. The winery's underground cellars, stretching over 120 kilometers, not only serve as ideal conditions for wine aging but also represent a distinctive attraction that generates significant tourism revenues. The winery attracts over 90,000 visitors annually, primarily from European Union countries such as Romania, Germany, Poland, Austria, Italy, Czech Republic, and Slovenia.

The main stakeholders involved in Cricova's activity include the winery management, local authorities, tourism agencies, environmental NGOs, and international partners interested in sustainable tourism and viticulture. The visitors themselves represent a crucial part of this ecosystem, as their experiences and satisfaction directly influence the winery's reputation and future growth.

The financing of Cricova's business model is ensured through diversified revenue streams: sales of premium wines (both locally and for export), wine tourism services (guided tours, tastings, and events), and investment projects focused on sustainability and innovation. The integration of renewable energy sources, particularly photovoltaic systems, and the replacement of PVC capsules with biodegradable paraffin illustrate Cricova's commitment to environmental investments that, in the long term, contribute to cost reduction and ecological benefits.

The economic viability of the business model relies on the balanced management of resources, diversification of tourism offers throughout the year, and continuous innovation in production and environmental practices. Cricova has already achieved remarkable results, saving 127.4 tons of CO₂ emissions and preserving 17,500 trees through its eco-friendly actions. However, further efforts are needed to address risks such as overdevelopment, infrastructure degradation, waste management challenges, and seasonal fluctuations in visitor numbers.

Critical success factors include Cricova's strong brand identity, recognized both nationally and internationally, its capacity to blend tradition with innovation, and its proactive approach to sustainability. These elements ensure customer loyalty, attract new market segments, and strengthen the winery's competitive position.

The main risks associated with the business model refer to environmental pressures from increased tourism, potential saturation of infrastructure, and the limited absorption of advanced technologies in Moldova's winemaking sector. Seasonality remains another challenge, requiring strategic planning to optimize resources during off-peak periods.

The target groups of Cricova's business model are diverse and include wine lovers, eco-conscious tourists, corporate partners, and local communities. The primary beneficiaries of Cricova's innovative practices are the environment, the local economy, and tourists seeking authentic, sustainable experiences.

Future opportunities for collaboration and investment lie in expanding green technologies, developing smart agriculture solutions, improving waste management processes, and enhancing tourism infrastructure. Partnerships with international organizations, universities, and investors focused on sustainable development could further strengthen Cricova's role as a model of responsible business and ecological innovation in Eastern Europe.

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