

Chêne Bleu is a family-owned winery in the Ventoux region of the Southern Rhône of France. The award-winning wines are critically acclaimed around the world but also renowned for eschewing the use of chemicals and the winery has embedded sustainability throughout its business. Today it is being awarded today Butterfly Mark certification, the only French winery to hold this certification currently.

To interview Positive Luxury Co-Founder, Diana Verde Nieto or Nicole Rolet, Co-Founder & Principal of Chêne Bleu, on sustainability, the Butterfly Mark certification, and transparency, [get in touch](#).

## FAMILY-OWNED WINERMAKER CHÊNE BLEU ACHIEVES BUTTERFLY MARK CERTIFICATION

**10<sup>th</sup> May 2023:** Chêne Bleu's winery is located in the Ventoux region of the Southern Rhône of France and has always endeavored to make wines which are better tasting, but also better for our health and for that of the planet.

Having worked on their certification over the last year, Chêne Bleu doubled its score in that time by embedding measurable, sustainability practices across its business operations and to be awarded Butterfly Mark certification.

To achieve the Butterfly Mark, companies must achieve a minimum of 50% in each area of assessment: Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG). Chêne Bleu achieved 61% in Environment, 55% in Social and 65% in Governance, and excelled in the following areas:

**PESTICIDES:** Nicole and Xavier Rolet KBE and their team have pioneered regenerative viticulture and sustainable practices from the get-go 25 years ago, when they purchased the abandoned medieval priory and its vineyard. They immediately stopped using pesticides and chemical fertilisers in the vineyards, resorting instead to natural methods and fertilisation by sheep dung, and inviting a young shepherd to graze his flock on the property. All vigneron working at Chêne Bleu are trained to take a holistic approach to viticulture, even temporary harvesters, as all grapes are hand-picked. The environmental stewardship of the land is reinforced by rigorous worker health and safety policies and procedures. This chemical-free approach has allowed the estate to develop its SustainaBEElity programme, growing its apiary through a crowdfunding program to study ways of using more bees to have healthier vines and make better wine-- for example, netting certain rows of vines helps assess pollinator impact on indigenous yeasts; the role of bee propolis is being trialled as a natural antiseptic in the vineyard; cross-plant cereals such as rye and sorghum increase organic matter in the soil, which brings with it nutrients, ventilation and humidity ahead of new plantings, to avoid fertilisers and significant irrigation; chamomile and other herbal infusions are sprayed on the vines to reduce transpiration of the vine leaves in the heat, allowing to better retain water.

**BIODIVERSITY:** Chêne Bleu is situated in the UNESCO-protected biosphere reserve of the Mt Ventoux (also a Regional Park), which shelters 1400 species just of butterflies. 77% of the Domaine's 135 hectares are preserved for biodiversity. The team actively protects the fauna and flora, working to harness that complex ecosystem while supporting the vineyard's needs. Their (PEFC-certified) forest is managed actively in conjunction with the National Forest Protection Agency, while their commitment to biodiversity has led to other certifications such as Bee Friendly, Ecocert,(organic) and HVE(3). In 2021 they were awarded the Global 'Environment & Energy Leader' Award. They have also started to engage with partners to minimise biodiversity impacts in the supply chain.

The estate's medieval vegetable garden, olive grove, orchards and grounds are also managed using organic, biodynamic and sustainable practices, focussing on native plants and flowers. A 'wild boar spa', in a protected recess with mud, water and shade, keeps large animals out of the vineyard by meeting

their needs elsewhere. Chêne Bleu conducts studies of its animal population with infrared cameras and safe animal traps, in association with Biosphere scientists and the local University. Dozens of bird species have returned, alongside other animals, and this complexity is reflected in off-the-charts diversity of microorganisms and rhizome networks in the soils.

**DIVERSITY, EQUALITY & INCLUSION:** Chêne Bleu’s policy on diversity, equality, and inclusion (D, E & I) goes beyond the established set of comprehensive legal requirements in France. Through the years, employees have been recruited from all major ethnic groups, religions, persuasions, and genders, with a culture of supportiveness and openness which is spelled out clearly and nurtured. With stringent approaches to address harassment and grievances, other social impact areas such as recruitment, employee performance reviews, and training programmes also prioritise inclusivity and transparency. For instance, all employees recently had a D, E & I workshop on communication and conflict resolution.

In its recruitment and employment policies and processes, the Domaine incorporates D, E & I considerations in contracts, flexible working hours, and working locations. Recruitment partnerships with universities, schools, and private recruitment agencies also have a strong basis in promoting D, E & I via multiple media channels. Job postings are readily accessible for any interested applicant. Employees not only share a sense of belonging at the Domaine, but they also draw on the same D, E & I principles when engaging with external stakeholders. The company’s motto, visible on the labels, is *Non Mihi Non Tibi Sed Nobis*-- Not Mine, Not Yours, But Ours.

Positive Luxury’s four-part methodology is uniquely tailored for the luxury industry, and the only certification that focuses on innovation and future sustainability risks. The Butterfly Mark is an independent certification that verifies for consumers and other stakeholders that a luxury business is operating in line with the highest standards of sustainability across the entire value chain.

“Positive Luxury is proud to award Chene Blue the Butterfly Mark – verification that it is a pioneer of regenerative viticulture, championing and setting higher standards for sustainable practices within the wine industry, and takes positive action to preserve the natural surroundings in a collaborative manner. Chene Blue truly embodies its company motto *Non Mihi Non Tibi Sed Nobis – Not Mine, Not Yours, But Ours.*” **Amy Nelson-Bennett, Co-CEO of Positive Luxury**

“My husband Xavier was passionate about environmental conservation for most of his life, well before Sustainability and Regenerative Agriculture were fashionable hashtags. But when we wanted to assess our work and apply for certification, we discovered that there was no road map, no guidance, and most of the existing checklists were not well adapted to viticulture and winemaking. Our experience with Positive Luxury has been the opposite: the process is tailored-made to understand our ethos and our operations. Our advisors have been able to share best practices and save us lots of time, effort and mistakes. Also, on a human level, we have found them to be such a class act. Diana Verde Nieto is a truly inspirational human being, a thought leader on the global Climate stage, and is surrounded by a terrific team of passionate people. This has made the process very worthwhile”. **Nicole Rolet, Co-Founder & Principal of Chêne Bleu**

Other luxury brands that have been awarded the Butterfly Mark include Monica Vinader, Tom Ford Beauty, Dior Couture, MCM, IWC Schaffhausen, Belvedere, The Macallan, Anya Hindmarch and more. By continuing as part of the Positive Luxury brand community, The Other House commits to exceeding standards set for social and environmental frameworks.

Learn more about Chêne Bleu [here](#) and their assessment breakdown via the Connected Butterfly Mark [here](#).

**ABOUT POSITIVE LUXURY**

Since 2011, Positive Luxury has been accelerating organisations' adaptation to the new climate economy. Our ESG+ products and services enable companies to manage risk, embed innovation and credibly foster consumer trust. Organisations that we certify receive the Butterfly Mark, a globally respected trust mark – independently verified evidence that they meet the highest standard of sustainability best practices across all four pillars of our framework.

### **ESG+ ASSESSMENT**

Our proprietary ESG+ (Environmental, Social, Governance, and Innovation) assessment framework and diagnostic tool is the only one designed for the specific social, environmental and material risks of the luxury industry helping organisation determine their ESG risk profile, through gap analysis and material ESG issue forecasting.

### **THE BUTTERFLY MARK**

The Butterfly Mark certification is an independent trust mark awarded to luxury brands, retailers, and suppliers that evidence tangible action to making a positive impact on nature and society. It has been created in consultation with the Positive Luxury Sustainability Council of over 22 leading global organisations and is rigorous, independent, and in line with the latest international standards and best practices.

### **ABOUT CHENE BLEU**

Chêne Bleu is a family-owned winery in the Ventoux region of the Southern Rhône of France. The award-winning wines are critically acclaimed around the world but also renowned for eschewing the use of chemicals, proving that it is not necessary to resort to any artifice to achieve the highest standards of quality. The medieval priory, La Verrière, operates as a guest house recognised for both luxury and environmental sustainability.