



## Diam Bouchage inaugurates its first experimental cork oak plantation in France

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Diam Bouchage, the world leader in technological cork closures and largest buyer of cork in France, is strengthening its commitment to the industry.

On July 17, in the presence of Clara Thomas, Sub-Prefect of the Ceret district, and Hermeline Malherbe, President of the Pyrenees-Orientales, the company planted its first cork oak trees on the Mas Valette site in Passa (66). This experimental 8-hectare cork oak forest will be home to 3,600 trees intended for the manufacture of Diam closures.

This plantation, which is being run as a monoculture with light fertigation, will serve as a testing ground. It involves minimal water and nutrient input and is exploring the possibility of mixed cropping.

At the same time, Diam Bouchage is actively participating in cork harvesting campaigns in France, particularly in the Var, the Pyrenees-Orientales and Corsica.

This year, the company has financed, with ASL Suberaie Catalane and the support of the Institut Mediterraneen du Liege (IML), the harvesting of 50 tons of male cork, which is not suitable for the production of closures but is essential for the maintenance of cork oak forests.



### Innovating to preserve resources

The cork oak, a resilient species but vulnerable to climate change, is at the heart of Diam Bouchage's concerns.

The company consumes around 15% of the 190,000 tons of cork produced worldwide each year.

Diam Bouchage continues to **invest and innovate to protect cork oak forests for centuries to come** and secure its long-term supply.

In line with its innovative DNA, the leader in technological cork closures is working to revitalize forests through a **new operating model**.

The Passa plantation is part of this approach. It replaces wasteland with an optimized cork oak forest, through:

- Stakes and pruning techniques that promote high-quality cork that is easier to harvest.
- Reduced water and mineral input (8 times less than for fruit crops such as nectarines), 25% of which comes from rainwater collected during the winter
- Planting density designed to maximize harvests while respecting the trees' needs.
- Polyculture at the foot of the trees to make the most of the space and enhance agronomic and economic value.
- A clear objective: to accelerate tree growth and reduce the intervals between harvests, thereby improving agricultural profitability.

So this new plantation addresses several major challenges:

- A managed cork oak forest is better maintained, which facilitates intervention in the event of a fire.
- It increases the vegetation cover in Roussillon, mitigating excessive temperatures and the risk of fire.
- The cork oak, an endemic species, acts as a carbon sink: it stores CO<sub>2</sub> without ever releasing it, as it is not cut down.

- It allows us to offer local cork to wine estates in the Pyrenees-Orientales region, in line with a short supply chain approach.
- It is an educational tool for promoting cork oak cultivation near the company's headquarters.

## Diam Bouchage, committed to preserving French cork oak forests

Highly involved in supporting the Mediterranean cork industry as **the leading buyer of French cork**, Diam Bouchage participates every year in cork harvesting in France, particularly in the Var, Corsica, and Roussillon regions.

It has supply contracts with local producers, including ASL Suberaie Varoise, ASL Suberaie Catalane, and the Silvacoop cooperative.

In the Pyrenees-Orientales, after several difficult years, the 2025 harvest looks promising: 200 tons of cork are expected, a volume not seen over the past 10 years. Renaud Piazzetta, director of the Institut Méditerranéen du Liege, emphasizes:

*“After the drought of 2023 and the impossibility of planting in 2024 so as not to put even more stress on trees already affected by the lack of water, the 2025 season is off to a good start, with exciting projects underway with Diam Bouchage.”*

## A pioneering initiative for the industry

Diam Bouchage also financed the extraction of 50 tons of male cork, which cannot be used for closures but is crucial for the maintenance of cork oak forests.

This operation, which is unprecedented in the region, will enable the plots to be cleared and prepared for more abundant harvests in 10 to 15 years.

Eric Feunteun, Managing Director of Diam Bouchage, explains:

*“Removing this unattractive cork is an act of patronage for the industry. It is an investment in the future. By organizing this harvest, we are clearing the plots, which will help preserve the land and fight against the risk of fire.”*

### ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CORK OAK

A forest of cork oak trees is called a “*suberaie*” in French.

A champion of survival and regeneration, it is the only species capable of regenerating its bark after it has been harvested.

Adapted to hot climates and arid clay-siliceous soils, cork oak grows in the Mediterranean basin: Portugal, Spain, Morocco, Italy, France, etc.

In traditional cultivation, it takes about 40 years to harvest the bark that can be used to manufacture a technological cork closure.

Preserved carbon sink: cork oak trees are not cut down for harvesting. Only their bark is removed, allowing the captured CO<sub>2</sub> to remain sequestered for several centuries.

Diam Bouchage produces 2 billion closures every year, including 55 million made from French cork

Cork oak forests act as firebreaks because a managed forest is maintained, which helps reduce the risk of fire. In addition, in the event of a fire, cork oak forests have the ability to slow down the spread of fire and regenerate thanks to their thick, protective bark.

### About Diam Bouchage

Diam Bouchage, the closure division of the French group Oeneo, is the world leader in technological cork closures. Inventor of the “no-cork-taint” closure, the company has developed the Diamant® process that guarantees unparalleled organoleptic neutrality.

Diam Bouchage designs, manufactures, and markets closure solutions for still wines, sparkling wines, and spirits sold worldwide. Based in Ceret (France) and led by Eric Feunteun, the company has 653 employees at its three sites (France, Spain, Portugal) and produces 2 billion closures per year.

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