



# Creating Shared Value

## Farnese Vini

### Case Study



# About 21 Invest

Founded by Alessandro Benetton in 1992, 21 Invest is a European investment company that has branches in Italy, France, and Poland with dedicated funds for each country managed by local offices, able to provide and guarantee a profound knowledge of the territory in which they operate.

21 Invest typically invests in middle market companies, providing them with the tools and expertise necessary to grow.

The purpose guiding all managerial decisions in all investment operations is long term growth, to be realized not only by supporting a company in its development but concurrently focusing on the socioeconomic ecosystem in which it operates.

In 2016, 21 Invest adhered to Shared Value Initiative, a project launched in 2012 by Michael Porter of the Harvard Business School with the intent of creating a global community of organizations that regard solving social issues as an essential direction for business development.

As a matter of fact, 21 Invest believes that social impact and business growth can and should proceed at the same speed, because answering society's needs is a competitive advantage for the company.

In more than twenty five years of activity, 21 Invest has supported dozens of companies by helping them flourish sustainably and persistently.

This social responsibility has gradually become a key component of 21 Invest's value creation process in investee companies, in that a growing business is indeed a well-run enterprise, able to lead its employees, make the right investments, find smart acquisitions of new industrial realities, appropriately position itself in its reference market, and nurture its relationships with suppliers and customers who often can be the true source of future innovation.

**“We have decided to partner with Michael Porter’s Shared Value Initiative because it completes and enriches our value creation strategy. In many cases, looking at an investment with a shared value perspective allows us to identify new ways to reroute companies and stimulate growth,,**

→ Alessandro Benetton,  
Founding Managing Partner of 21 Invest

# Farnese Vini

In this paper, 21 Invest gives a broad look at how one of its investments, Farnese Vini, a company acquired in 2013 and sold in 2016, under the stewardship of 21 Invest has created shared value both for investors and the cluster of smallholder grape suppliers.

## The company

Farnese Vini is based in Abruzzo and was founded in 1994 by Filippo Baccalaro, Valentino Sciotti and Camillo De Iuliis, three partners who believed they could create a flagship of Southern Italy wines without owning vineyards but with a highly innovative business model based on sourcing quality grapes and wines from Southern Italian smallholder farmers.

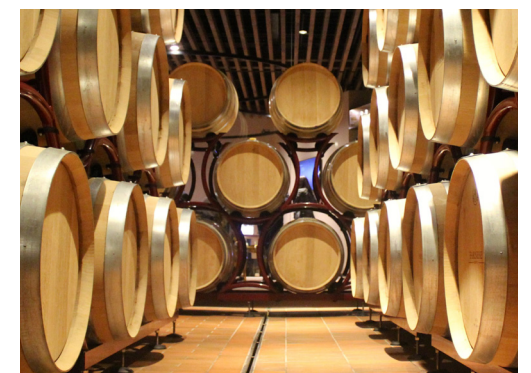
The decisive move forward happened in 2013 when 21 Invest acquired a majority stake in Farnese Vini recognizing its untapped growth potential.

## Market opportunity

Italy plays a dominant role in the global wine market, which is heavily dominated by four countries: Italy, France, Spain and United States. Italian wine benefits from a strong legacy in the consumer's mind and about 30% of total wine production is sold abroad, mainly in Germany, the UK and the US. However, only a limited number of winemakers, the oldest and largest that are typically located in Northern Italy, have the strength and capability to produce premium products addressing the evolving taste of international markets and therefore targeting the global arena. All other Italian winemakers, especially those from the South of Italy, adhere to a low margin traditional production and distribution model focused on the local market with very limited distribution abroad and generally limited to bulk wines.

Southern Italy has the perfect combination of soil, climate, sunlight, topography and water for wine grapes. These key geographic characteristics

**FARNESE**  
GROUP



make this area a clear undeveloped territory for wine production with the strong potential to satisfy the untapped global demand for Italian wine. In fact, in 2014, the total production of Southern Italy accounted for 1/3 of the national total but was responsible for only 8% of Italian wine exports. Also, most of Southern Italy grape production is in the hands of smallholder farmers, each cultivating less than 2 hectares dedicated primarily to the production of bulk wine.

21 Invest saw in Farnese the potential to become a market leader on account of its business model based on limited land ownership.



KEY  
FIGURES  
AT EXIT

**Headquarters**  
Chieti, Abruzzo

**Italian regions presence**  
**5**  
→ Sicily, Abruzzo, Puglia, Campania, Basilicata

**Employees at exit in 2016**  
**82**

**Sales at exit in 2016**  
**56 €M**

**Export sales**  
**95%**

**Wine labels**  
**100+**

Farnese found its market space not in the world of well known Northern Italy wines such as Chianti and Barolo, but rather in new Southern Italian wine territories outside of the dominance of the most established wine producers.

- Farnese saw a clear social need to make Southern Italian grape producers more efficient, productive and appealing for the next generation of grape growers.
- In parallel, Farnese saw the business opportunity to expand its wine production and product range while maintaining a business model of very limited land ownership and developing a long term procurement program with smallholder farmers.
- To expand the opportunity and meet the social need, Farnese decided to provide smallholder farmers the necessary support and knowhow in irrigation, fertilizers, and farming practices to make their farming business profitable and sustainable in the long term.

“A specific long term program was created to educate grape producers in the supply chain to run their vineyard in a profitable way. Thanks to the success of the procurement program Farnese can offer a much larger product range compared to its competitors,,

→ Valentino Sciotti,  
CEO of Farnese





The strategy

21 Invest saw enormous potential in Farnese on account of its innovative business model based on limited land ownership and full control over the wine production process using grapes procured from Southern Italian smallholder farmers.

21 Invest, in its role as majority shareholder of Farnese, ensured that the company had a sound structural foundation on which to build, and led the value creation growth process. In its role, 21 Invest ensured that clear growth objectives were set in terms of where the company wanted to go, and target actions were planned in order to reach these objectives. In addition 21 Invest ensured that all angles for growth acceleration were explored and that the company was efficient enough to reach its growth objectives working towards excellence in the most relevant internal areas.

The initiative relied on Farnese leveraging its existing assets with a shared value approach. On its hands the company had two key assets to leverage:

- A deep knowledge of Southern Italian smallholder farmers and the set of environmental factors that affect the quality and the nature of grapes.
- A team of agronomists and enologists able to educate local farmers to produce top quality grapes and to supervise all steps of the production process (planting, pruning, irrigation, fertilization and harvesting). Vineyard layout and management have a large influence on the quality and quantity produced as well as on production costs.

To reach its ambitious goals, under the stewardship of 21 Invest, Farnese relied on the following dimensions:

- **Reconceiving products and markets** by establishing strong sales & marketing capabilities and customer intimacy. Farnese progressively created a team of representatives who travel the world to meet commercial agents and distributors who have local market insights in order to understand new consumer wine preferences and trends.
- **Defining procurement** by accessing a wide range of grapes and enabling local cluster development by allowing Southern Italian smallholder farmers to flourish. In the traditional business model, Italian winemakers generally have a product portfolio limited to the type of wine produced in their local vineyards. This characteristic creates a limitation both in terms of quality (a bad harvest of the vineyard will hamper the business) and quantity as it makes it difficult to scale the traditional business model. Under the stewardship of 21 Partners, Farnese implemented a traceability program to identify all grape suppliers in its supply chain, their specific needs and the solution to make the difference in the evolution of their vineyard.
- **Innovating the production process** and investing to revamp the facilities and to introduce new modern and industrial bottling plants.
- **Enlarging the management team** and defining clear roles and responsibilities to drive company growth and efficiency.



Results

Farnese today is a leading Italian wine group active in the production, sale and marketing of central and southern Italian wines, which exports to over 80 countries with about 80 employees.

Despite operating with very limited land ownership, Farnese has been able to secure a reliable supply of quality grapes from small farmers located in a vast area in the South of Italy. This innovative business model gave Farnese access to a wide variety of grapes in terms of flavor and quantity and allowed the company to develop a wide and scalable portfolio of nearly 100 labels which vary according to the grape type, the vintage and the land that is essential to be successful internationally.

In September 2016, 21 Invest sold Farnese to NB Renaissance Partners, an international Private Equity house, generating an annual internal rate of return above 20% for its investors. This return for 21 Invest investors represents the increase in the value of the company during 21 Invest holding period. This growth in value was almost entirely generated by the solid growth in revenues and margins driven by actions implemented, which allowed the transition from a company run by the two founding entrepreneurs to a corporate business with a solid management team, thereby enabling the company to reach its full growth potential and becoming the indisputable leader in Southern Italian wines.

The procurement program created an extra profit of about Euro 2 million per year, which remains entirely in the hands of suppliers to further expand their business.

From 2012 to 2015, during 21 Invest holding period, Farnese:

- expanded its winemaking in the Southern Italian regions of Abruzzo, Puglia, Sicily, Basilicata and Campania
- progressively secured a long-term cluster of reliable grapes and raw wine suppliers while addressing gaps in the local market
- became the leader of Southern Italy in wine production, and its premium wines achieved a quality and a consistency on par with other renowned Northern Italian and French wines, according to wine experts
- increased sales at a CAGR of 16%, exceeding €M 50 in 2015. In the same period the entire Italian wine market has grown at a CAGR of 4%
- maintained a high rate of exports and in 2015, 96% of sales were generated abroad, much higher than the average of other Italian producers
- profit (EBITDA) grew at a CAGR of 15%, reaching €M 9.4 in 2015, which represents a margin on sales of 19%, while the Italian wine industry averaged around 5%invested more than €M 10 in continuous improvements and innovation, expanding bottling plants and revamping production plants while maintaining substantially unchanged its net debt.

Social value created for local territory and lesson learned

The main difficulty was guiding the company in implementing an innovative and mould-shattering business model in a very traditional and consolidated sector. To unlock success the company needed to create a cluster of quality suppliers ready to embrace a change to their traditional production method.

To realize this ambitious goal and create the necessary trust, Farnese worked very closely with local farmers.

Under the strategic vision of 21 Invest, Farnese provided smallholder farmers the necessary knowhow and farming practices to make the farmer’s business profitable and sustainable in the long term.

The combined effects of the above factors have increased revenues of local grape growers while maintaining substantially identical operating costs.

Recently, for the first time, Farnese measured the amount of revenues the local cluster of grape growers and raw wine suppliers (about 100 very small companies) have generated on aggregate following their activity within Farnese’s program and compared it to the revenues the cluster would have made outside the program.

In 2015, this extra social value created for the local cluster amounts to €2 million and Farnese believes that similar additional value was created in recent past years. This value translates into additional annual profits for local suppliers which they can re-invest to improve their operating efficiency or to expand their land. In the end, all of this translates into more wealth for people working in the cluster or in companies related to the cluster.

Going forward Farnese wants to capitalize on its success and the best practices it has put in place to continue welcoming more suppliers to its quality program, which guarantees the highest standards in terms of raw materials sourcing and increases the scalability of the business.

GRAPE GROWERS RESULTS

Over the 2012-2015 period, grape growers working for Farnese on average:

- expanded the hectares under management from 1.8 to 2.9 hectares
- increased their production per hectare from 5,000 to about 7,000 kilograms
- reached a high control on the quality of their grape production
- more than doubled their revenues per kilogram sold. In fact, to secure the long-term continuity of its business model, Farnese pays its small suppliers a price per kilogram that is significantly higher than the market price to ensure the sustainability of these very small companies that are essential to guaranteeing the quality of Farnese wines.





**The support of an experienced business partner to create shared value**

Farnese is just one example of the type of growth 21 Invest fosters. 21 Invesy looks for portfolio companies that can grow more than the economy and supports them in increasing their competitive advantage and expanding their local know-how in larger markets.

In the last 10 years, 21 Invest has invested about € 900 million in backing 39 mid-market companies. Portfolio companies held in the last 10 years increased their revenues by 38% and their employees by 3,500 units during their tenure with 21 Partners.

21 Invest enhances the capability of portfolio companies to grow through organic growth, build-ups, international expansion or scouting new societal needs. This allows them to attract quality people, to develop new strategic relationships, to expand the scope of their activity and to invest in improvement and innovation. In turn, this creates a healthy ecosystem, a flourishing environment and a positive social impact from which portfolio company employees, supplier employees and their respective families can benefit, expand their wealth and flourish. indisputable leader in Southern Italian wines.

**Endnotes**  
Source market data: OIV "World Wine Production" press release October 2015, "Il Corriere Vinicolo", "Unione Italiana Vini", "Vino in Cifre 2016"  
Farnese financial data: Farnese accounts approved by the Board of Directors  
Farnese social value created and data on suppliers: provided by the portfolio company CFO  
21 Invest data: "21 Partners Annual Sustainability Report 2016", Funds under management "Quarterly Report to Investors"

**"The results achieved by Farnese alongside 21 Invest demonstrates how creativity, passion and skill make companies to be leaders in their industry while combining growth, social commitment and development of the local community. We have been able to establish a clear discontinuity in the history of Farnese, leading it into a new growing season,,**

→ Alessandro Benetton,  
Founding Managing Partner of 21 Invest

