



California's Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices Fact Sheet

What it is

- California's Sustainable Winegrowing Program (SWP) is a ground-breaking program that encourages and enables growers and vintners to adopt the highest standards of sustainable practices. These growing and winemaking practices are sensitive to the environment (environmentally sound), responsive to the needs and interests of society-at-large (socially equitable), and economically feasible to implement and maintain (economically feasible).
- This educational and results-driven program engenders a "cycle of improvement" among growers and vintners, providing a framework of target setting, learning, evaluation and reporting which leads to the increased adoption of sustainable practices.
- The SWP offers an inspirational model for other crops and agriculture sectors in California, other states, and even abroad.

Why it Matters

- There is no doubt that consumers increasingly care about where and how their food is grown, who grows it, and its impact on the environment. The growth of the organic food movement, concerns about global warming, and the focus on "eating local" all indicate that the sustainability movement is here to stay.
- This increased consumer awareness is reflected in major sustainability initiatives throughout the food industry. As cited by SureHarvest, the leading U.S. retailers and foodservice companies such as Wal-Mart, SYSCO and Darden Restaurants all have active programs that increasingly include sustainability metrics in their product purchasing decisions. It is also reflected in the phenomenal growth of "socially responsible investing." (Over \$2 trillion were invested in "socially responsible" companies/assets in the U.S. in 2005.)

- It is important to wine consumers as well: a recent survey conducted by Wine Opinions of St. Helena, Calif., found that a significant majority (nearly 70%) of consumers felt that it was important that wine be “grown in a manner (that) protect(s) (the) environment and respect(s) workers.”
- The SWP encompasses environmental protection practices and more: it has led to environmentally sound growing and winemaking practices that are socially equitable, economically feasible, and that result in high quality wine grapes and wine. The SWP proves there are “win-win” solutions which address ecological, social, wine quality and economic goals.

California Wine Community Leading the Way

- The SWP started at the local level, where winegrowers and vintners began implementing sustainable practices at their farms and wineries. Based on the success of regional efforts, the idea quickly gained steam, with more and more growers and vintners together finding ways to create high quality wines using sustainable practices. Their efforts were formalized when the California Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices was created in 2002.
- The SWP represents the first time an entire agricultural sector has measured the level of sustainable practices among its members and reported the results publicly: anyone can see the progress of California winegrape growers with sustainability initiatives, practices and results by visiting www.sustainablewinegrowing.org.
- The California winegrowers have the only sustainable practices program that has published a benchmark report about its self-assessment results and a follow-up progress report that is readily available for public review.
- California winegrape growers are one of the leading U.S. commodity groups in the area of adopting and codifying sustainable growing practices.
- California winegrape growers are a model for other agricultural communities worldwide. Representatives of the SWP are frequently invited to make presentations to government entities, non-profit organizations and other agricultural and trade associations, including grape growing communities in Oregon, Australia, New York, Nebraska and Texas.

Fast Facts

- The Sustainable Winegrowing Program (SWP), established in 2002, is a partnership between the California Association of Winegrape Growers (CAWG) and Wine Institute.

- In 2003, CAWG and Wine Institute formed the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance (CSWA), a San Francisco-based 501c3 nonprofit organization to assist in the implementation of the SWP.
- The CSWA published a Sustainability Report in 2004 and a Progress Report in 2006. The next report will be published in 2009. These reports measure the level of sustainable practices adopted in the California wine community and are available online at www.sustainablewinegrowing.org.
- The CSWA works with 29 regional wine and grape growing associations, numerous government agencies, academic institutions and environmental and social equity groups. In addition to members of CAWG and the Wine Institute, CSWA's funders include American Farmland Trust, the California Department of Food and Agriculture, the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, Pacific Gas & Electric Company, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and other agencies and organizations.

How it Works

The SWP is supported by a 500+-page self assessment workbook, "The Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices," for growers and wineries.

- The workbook is organized into 14 chapters encompassing 227 criteria covering specific winegrowing and winemaking practices, from ground to bottle.
- Chapters include Viticulture, Soil Management, Vineyard Water Management, Pest Management, Wine Quality, Ecosystem Management, Energy Efficiency, Winery Water Conservation and Quality, Air Quality, Material Handling, Solid Waste Reduction and Management, Environmentally Preferred Purchasing, Human Resources, and Neighbors and Community.
- The program is supported by self-assessment workshops at which growers learn how to use the workbook and complete self-assessments, which are submitted to a third party for tabulation.
- This data is used to generate the statewide reports, as well as customized reports comparing the individual participant responses to regional and statewide data that can be used to help growers and vintners identify areas of strength and areas in need of improvement.
- The SWP program complements other programs such as Fish Friendly Farming, Central Coast Vineyard Team's Positive Points System, and Lodi Rules, but it covers a broader scope of practice areas (from pest management to air quality to neighbors and community, etc.) and is the only program that specifically addresses winemaking as well as growing. The other programs are more narrowly focused.

How Far We've Come

- 1,256 wineries and vineyards have gone through the self-assessment process since October 2002.
- Participants represent 329,000 vineyard acres (63% of the state total) and 141.5 million cases of wine production (59% of the state total).
- More than 5,500 growers and vintners all over the state have participated in targeted education events that have been held on subjects ranging from integrated pest management and biodiversity to water use efficiency and effective energy management.
- With the publication of the 2004 Sustainability Report and the 2006 Progress Report, CSWA identified regions and practice areas of excellence and opportunities for improvement. These areas were targeted with specific educational opportunities/events. Subsequent measurement indicates that grower performance improved significantly in response to this targeted education.

Awards

The SWP is a model for agricultural sectors and businesses, and has been recognized with the following awards:

- California Council for Environmental and Economic Balance, Governor Edmund G. "Pat" Brown Award (2005)
- Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, The Governor's Environmental and Economic Leadership Award (2004)
- California Environmental Protection Agency, Integrated Pest Management Innovator Award (2003)