

## TALK OF A GLUT DOES NOT SEEM REALISTIC

A recent media report by the Riverina Winemakers Association is at odds with the market in other inland regions in suggesting that the "glut" is still plaguing the industry. Price and yield recovery has occurred in those regions but in the Riverina our market is very different in terms of whom the major buyers are and their influence on the prices being offered.

On one side there are wineries that seem prepared to pay growers a reasonable price to ensure that they remain sustainable compared to the wineries that will use every opportunity to talk the market down and offer returns that are not sustainable and not negotiable.

This vintage the Board publicly recommended that growers needed to communicate their price concerns with their buyers. The Board applauds those that were able to do this. Sadly in many instances growers concerns are not being heard by all wineries, but that is no reason to stop talking with them.

Does this region have an effective and functioning market? The answer appears to be NO. This is what is called market failure and was the basis of the Board's position to the NSW Upper House Inquiry conducted in December 2010 - of which none of the positive recommendations were accepted by the Government.

If you look at our current market activity at the commencement of the season the Wine Grapes Marketing Board held details of approximately 15,000 tonnes of grapes that were not required by existing wineries. This changed dramatically with the commencement of operations at Wickham Hill Holdings, offering contracts with reasonable prices to fill bottled wine supply contracts and then moving onto bulk wine at lower price points.

At the tail end of the season wineries were contacting our office seeking fruit for concentrate. It is surprising that grapes in oversupply would require a search for extra product. Did the price shift? No.

When the market was more or less in balance why were the prices still wavering at levels many growers reported to the Board as unsustainable? When more fruit was required why didn't the prices all lift? Are regional wineries of the belief that to address of their market problems they need to starve their grower base? Such

tactics are short sighted and could have long term ramifications to their own business in terms of available supply and product quality. If growers are unable to tend to their vines adequately, yields will continue to fall and vine health could become a problem. When we recall all the young vine decline and disease problems that have been appearing in vineyards is it not possible that these are related?

### Colour Continues to Confound Growers

This season as in the past an increasing number of wineries are making pricing decisions for red winegrapes based on the colour that can be extracted from the grape.

Wineries use vineyard samples which are but a minute fraction of the entire harvest and undertake a wet chemistry analysis referred to as the Patrick Illand method. It should be noted that this method has an error factor that is actually acknowledge in the method. Using a system that does not provide an accurate figure that is truly representative is why the Board has continued to push for this to be removed as a pricing tool. The legislation is clear that unless the systems and instruments can be audited by the regulatory body responsible they should not be used.

### WHAT'S INSIDE

### Page

Vacant Position on the Board	2
Board Activities Report	2
Grant for Training Available	2
Payment Terms of 2013	3
Bulk Exports Decline - a Sign of Easing Pressure	3
AWRI Media Release	4
Roads and Maritime Services Focus on Freight Industry	4
WET Rebate - Why it is so Popular	5
2013 Figures - provided by the Riverina Winemakers	6
Grapevine Trunk Disease	7
HACCP Reminder for Growers	8
2012 Final Figures Released	8
Riverina Field Days	8
Important Date for your diary	8

## VACANT POSITION ON THE BOARD

Following on from the poor timing of the recent elections to the Board there exists a vacant position. Growers may have noticed the recent notice in the paper calling for interested persons to put their name forward to the Board for possible selection.

If any grower is interested in becoming a representative of growers the Board would welcome hearing from you. The Board will be discussing applicants in the coming weeks and may look to interview persons that are interested.

### **Why should I be part of the Board?**

The answer is quite simple without the Board many issues that it deals with will not get done. Issues

relating to dealings with wineries and regulatory bodies. Local, State and National bodies.

The Wine Grapes Marketing Board has a proud history in the region and it needs your assistance and representation.

The following persons were elected to the Board unopposed: Bruno Brombal, Robert Bellato, Lou Dal Nevo, Tony Baggio. They re-join existing appointed Members, Eric Berton and Bruno Altin.

If you are interested and you want to know more details about what it involves please contact the Board office or simply speak to one of the Board members that you may know. Applications close end of April 2013.

## BOARD ACTIVITIES REPORT



**NSWDPI Changes to Extension:** The Board has been assisting the NSWDPI in conducting surveys to determine what the newly created Extension positions within the State will do. In 2012 members of the the NSWIA executive approached the Minister to raise their concerns that Extension in Viticulture was not being

performed properly and could be delivered in a better format. This provided the NSW Government with the opportunity to review and has now worked to cut existing staff positions. It will now move to a contract based outsourced system of up to three staff across the entire state. This cut back will allow them to focus on Extension and not undertake Research activities directly.

On behalf of growers the Board expressed its disappointment with the approach with the NSWIA, NSWDPI Senior Staff and the Minister.

**Updated Map Images:** In December 2012 the entire region was re-imaged using satellite technology. The office is currently in the process of updating farm maps for grower members.

**Board Elections:** Poor timing and general apparent lack of interest meant that the Board did not need to hold an election for this term in office. All members retained their position unopposed. The existing vacant position on the Board remains vacant with the Board placing a notice in the local newspaper seeking interested persons to join.

**Meeting with the Minister:** The Board wrote to the NSW Minister for Primary Industries in September 2012

seeking a meeting prior to Vintage. Unfortunately the Minister to too busy for this to occur and was only able to attend the region early March 2013 (six months later). The Board due to the pressures of vintage had to postpone this opportunity to a yet to be confirmed date.

**Laboratory Work:** This season showed that sampling and testing of winegrapes can vary from sample and laboratory. The Board was approached by numerous growers with concern that the colour results varied between our laboratory and the winery. Staff appreciated the feedback and used to review techniques to more closely mimic what wineries are doing. *Editors Note: another reason why it should not be used as a pricing tool.*

**Debt Collection Procedures:** The Board is still pursuing individuals for outstanding fees and charges from the 2012 vintage. Legal action is currently being taken.

**Board 80th Anniversary:** The Board agreed to hold a social function for growers at a suitable venue to celebrate its 80th year of representing growers.

**Agency Agreements for 2013:** The office has sent 103 letters to licencees in the region and interstate that purchase winegrapes from this region. The letters contained Agency Agreements wherein the Board sought the winery's agreement to deduct the statutory fees and charges from the payments to growers and forward these to the Board.

**Riverina Wine Show:** The Board agreed to continue with its sponsorship of a trophy at the local Riverina Wine Show to be held late August 2013.

## GRANTS FOR TRAINING AVAILABLE

The WGMB is keen to hear from anyone within the wine industry interested in completing training. There are State and Federal sponsored programs which will cover 50% to 70% of the cost of training. There are two options for improving your skill levels. The first option is the national Workforce Development Fund which is offering skill sets or full qualifications to people who have existing Certificate III or higher qualifications.

The second option is the strategic skills program whereby government funding is available to provide continual improvement in an area that the industry sees as a strategic need.

The training in each funding option need not be wine industry specific and could include; Financial management, Understanding cash flow, Risk management, Book keeping, Succession planning, Negotiation skills, Understanding hard wired behaviour and working in a small team within a family business, Industry exit strategies, specific work safety issue. The options are broad and this program is intended to responsive to the needs of the industry.

For more information please contact Kristy Bartrop Industry Development Officer at the Wine Grapes Marketing Board on 6962 3944.

## PAYMENT TERMS FOR 2013

The WGMB wants to ensure a stable system of payments for this season. The Board along with other representative bodies in South Australia and Victoria are currently in the process of liaising with political representatives to get this into the federal sphere for discussion and resolution.

A national system of payment terms is required in the industry. Growers should not have to be forced into the many varied payment terms that are in place in the region as it makes management of their finances more difficult. It is a real sad indictment on the wineries of this area that they feel they need to delay these.

Wineries should compete in the retail market on the quality of their product and not for when they pay for their base input.

For 2013 Riverina wineries are adopting payment structures without consultation with growers. The Board advises that any grower that has not received their payment as and when it falls due should contact our office.

The Board can still act on behalf of growers in this area. It is important that the Board is made aware of any payment problems so that it can relay these to the government and take action as required.

## BULK EXPORTS DECLINE - A SIGN OF EASING PRESSURE

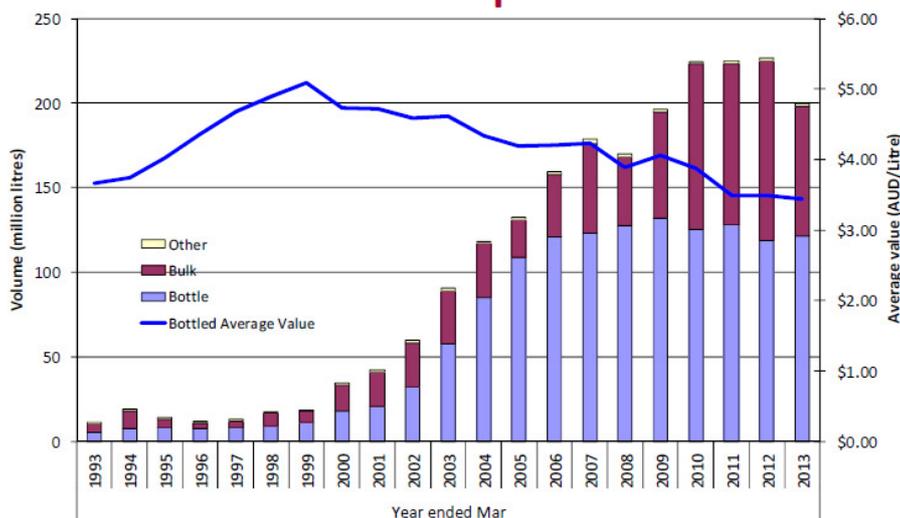
A noticeable decline in bulk wine exports over the past 12 months is an indication that stock levels are being drawn down which signals positive change in the industry. Over the previous three years, 2010 - 2012 bulk wine exports made up a large percentage of all exports as wineries shifted excess product offshore and/or shipped wine to off shore bottling facilities in an attempt to reduce costs locally.

Some industry commentary suggests that much of this was sold into China where purchasers would label this product as their own. Such action reduced the risk of diluting the brand value message that underpins Australian wine sales.

The reduction of bulk sales will continue if national crop figures stay moderate and more importantly stronger markets are developed for bottled products.

Growers should look closely at the blue line in the graph (*Source: Wine Australia NSW WEAR*), value per litre which has steadily declined since 1999 as exports have grown from this State. Value per litre exports are the lowest they have been in over 20 years and need to improve so the industry can become profitable.

### All NSW exporters



## AWRI MEDIA RELEASE

### Grant ensures grape and wine producers will be climate change ready.

The Australian Wine Research Institute (AWRI) was successful in securing a prestigious grant announced by Senator Joe Ludwig, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, as part of the first assessment phase of the Carbon Farming Futures Extension and Outreach Program.

The AWRI's Managing Director, Dr Dan Johnson, said, "This is a significant win for grapegrowers and winemakers in Australia. The securing of this grant enables the latest relevant research undertaken by a vast range of agencies on climate adaptability to be packaged and fast-tracked to grape and wine producers, nationally."

Dr Mardi Longbottom, AWRI Viticulturist and the person responsible for driving the grant application said, "With this grant, the AWRI is able to deliver a targeted program of climate adaptability information to grape and wine producers in Australia. This highly competitive grant was awarded to the AWRI based on its organisational capacity and proven capability in this area."

"The grant will enable dissemination of current technical information about greenhouse gas emissions, carbon storage and the Carbon Farming Initiative to stakeholders of the Australian grape and wine sectors and support them to achieve best management practice," Dr Longbottom said.

Under the first assessment phase of the Australian

Government's Carbon Farming Futures Extension and Outreach Program, the Government will invest in 24 projects valued at \$21.3 million. The funding awarded to the AWRI was \$750,484 (ex GST).

"We are delighted that the Australian government has recognised the AWRI's long standing ability to effectively extend information to grapegrowers and winemakers around this country," Dr Johnson said "and significantly, with this grant, that grape and wine producers will be in a better position to adapt to climate adaptability issues now and in the future."

For further information contact Rae Blair, AWRI Communication Manager on 0417 810 737 or email: [rae.blair@awri.com.au](mailto:rae.blair@awri.com.au)



## ROADS AND MARITIME SERVICES FOCUS ON FREIGHT INDUSTRY



**Transport**  
Roads & Maritime  
Services

The Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) have continued to review winery intake records with reports that DeBortoli Wines have been asked to provide 3 years of data for analysis. The same audit happened to Casella Wines in 2012 and a number of growers reported receiving notices from the RMS for further information.

The Board also understands that one freight operator received heavy fines for breaches of their vehicles mass limits.

The Board has been seeking a consistent response by wineries in how to deal with the Chain of Responsibility legislation and believes that this may now start to occur.

While the Board does not endorse fining growers for overloading it will continue to raise concerns with the RMS that the application of penalties and gifting money to charities in the region are not in the best interests of changing culture. The Board is concerned that if a winery profits from the wine sales from winegrapes that they have taken through a penalty process then they are in breach of the Chain of Responsibility legislation - in that they are not able to profit from their interpretation of the legislation. The Board will continue to liaise with the RMS on these issues.

## WET REBATE - WHY IT IS SO POPULAR

The Board has been receiving numerous enquiries in relation to the WET Rebate and how it works and even more contact complaining about the WET Rebate. For those that are interested the Board compiled a Fact Sheet on this and it can be found on our website.

Upon further investigation into the WET Rebate in this region it is not surprising there has been a proliferation of persons and business applying to the NSW Office of Liquor and Gaming to obtain a Producers Wholesalers Licence. So popular is this that the Board is now aware of close to 100 business that have this class of licence.

While this number has grown steadily our regional holders of the Producer Wholesale Licence still represents only 5% of the entire State.

Postcode	2680	2681	2705	2707
Licences	70	20	7	1

The licence which is obtained through application to the State Government Department, the Office of Liquor Gaming and Racing.

Applying is so simple in fact that the Board is aware of persons/business that hold a licence that do not own a vineyard nor do they have direct or associated links with wineries. As the licence was not developed for such persons the Board has reported this matter to the NSW Small Business Commissioners Office to determine how these applications were approved and it to work out the appropriate steps to remedy the situation.

The Board is also aware that approximately 75% of the licences in this region are held by persons that do not have a direct interest or ownership in a winery. This means that they are required to send their winegrapes to a cooperating winery to have it processed into wine. Once this is achieved they can sell this wine directly to any other business, wholesaler, retailer etc.

### What is the WET Rebate?

WET stands for Wine Equalisation Tax.

The WET Act provides a rebate of wine tax for producers of rebatable wine that are registered or required to be registered for GST in Australia. From 1 October 2004 to 30 June 2006, the maximum amount of rebate that an Australian producer (or group of associated producers) could claim in a full financial year was A\$290,000, effectively offsetting wine tax on A\$1 million (wholesale value) of eligible sales and applications to own use per annum.

From 1 July 2006, the maximum amount of rebate an

Australian producer (or group of associated producers) can claim in a full financial year is A\$500,000, which equates to approximately A\$1.7 million (wholesale value) of eligible sales and applications to own use per annum.

The amount of the producer rebate is:

- (a) for wholesale sales, 29% of the price for which the wine is sold (excluding wine tax and GST).
- (b) for retail sales and applications for own use (AOUs) 29% of the notional wholesale selling price of the wine.

From 1 July 2005, access to the producer rebate was extended to eligible New Zealand wine producers that have their wine exported to Australia. The operation of the producer rebate for New Zealand participants is described in Wine Equalisation Tax Ruling WETR 2006/1 *Wine equalisation tax: the operation of the producer rebate for producers of wine in New Zealand*.

### Is it good or bad?

Some commentary on the WET Rebate is that without its existence many small wineries would not financially exist. Others suggest that its existence is continuing the oversupply of wine in the market and devaluing brands.

One thing that many persons within Australia agree with is that it should not be applied to New Zealand wines sold in Australia.

Persons conducting a business of processing excess winegrapes into wine and then off-loading this into a crowded market impact on all participants profitability. It is simple economics.

If the WET Rebate is removed will it fix the problem that the industry is facing? It is too hard to tell, many small wineries that rely on it would cease to exist and excess grapes may no longer be processed and left on the vines to rot. This could ultimately reduce stock levels and create demand.

Another important issue is that regional wineries that process the winegrapes on behalf of the holders of the Producer Wholesale licence make use of processing capacity, storage and a modest profit, without needing to tend to grapes or make payments to growers. If there was no place to have these grapes processed perhaps this would not be an issue for many.

Source: *Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing*;

<http://law.ato.gov.au/atolaw/view.htm?locid='WTR/WT20092/NAT/ATO/fp8#fp8>

# WINE GRAPES MARKETING BOARD

## 2013 FIGURES - PROVIDED BY THE RIVERINA WINEMAKERS ASSOC.

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013 Estimate	2013 Actual	% of estimate
<b>WHITE VARIETIES</b>								
Chardonnay	72,198	75,719	60,597	71,876	62,571	57,882	54,381	94%
Chenin Blanc	1,062	983	739	657	545	636	634	100%
Colombard	15,689	12,998	8,553	10,358	6,204	11,162	10,599	95%
Muscat Blanc (Frontignac)	np	3,950	4,323	8,456	9,455	10,778	10,177	94%
Muscat Gordo Blanco	5,634	4,378	3,759	4,607	4,787	6,811	5,094	75%
Pinot Gris	5,989	11,567	10,902	13,939	19,016	14,395	14,473	101%
Riesling	3,768	4,192	3,506	3,772	4,095	3,307	3,662	111%
Sauvignon Blanc	4,935	5,329	5,793	9,085	9,565	11,597	11,777	102%
Semillon	44,038	35,872	32,740	33,815	31,919	33,966	34,621	102%
Traminer	5,454	5,469	5,112	6,637	5,758	6,148	6,168	100%
Verdelho	6,263	5,951	5,479	5,224	3,700	4,173	4,366	105%
Viognier	2,700	3,554	3,377	2,828	1,370	3,901	4,065	104%
Other White	6,592	304	555	1,579	1,462	2,683	3,129	117%
<b>TOTAL WHITE</b>	<b>174,322</b>	<b>172,959</b>	<b>146,702</b>	<b>172,840</b>	<b>160,446</b>	<b>167,439</b>	<b>163,147</b>	<b>97%</b>
<b>RED</b>								
Cabernet Sauvignon	22,442	24,309	17,341	22,111	14,352	20,523	21,717	106%
Durif	3,867	3,532	3,561	3,238	2,909	4,296	4,448	104%
Merlot	17,432	19,463	16,321	19,445	20,400	22,291	20,922	94%
Muscat Brown (Red Front)	np	680	528	701	479	714	605	85%
Petit Verdot	3,090	2,003	2,408	2,151	1,344	3,091	2,487	80%
Pinot Noir	2,296	2,919	3,304	2,775	3,119	3,936	3,306	84%
Ruby Cabernet	9,794	8,260	6,472	6,825	5,431	8,976	7,402	82%
Sangiovese	np	555	549	426	291	276	445	161%
Shiraz	61,530	68,624	59,842	53,406	43,490	67,952	70,773	104%
Tempranillo	np	993	1,941	435	681	922	753	82%
Other RED	5,856	2,958	3,346	2,840	2,103	3,627	3,575	99%
<b>TOTAL RED</b>	<b>126,307</b>	<b>134,568</b>	<b>115,765</b>	<b>114,353</b>	<b>94,599</b>	<b>136,605</b>	<b>136,432</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>TOTAL GRAPES</b>	<b>300,629</b>	<b>307,528</b>	<b>262,467</b>	<b>287,187</b>	<b>255,045</b>	<b>304,044</b>	<b>299,579</b>	<b>99%</b>

### NOTES and COMMENTARY

- At almost 300KT the 2013 intake is the third highest on record, and a whisker away from being the second highest
- It is 17.5% higher than the rain-affected 2012 vintage (which contained almost 6,000t of fruit processed for concentrate).
- Intake of most major varieties exceeded expectations. Chardonnay was the standout being 3,500t less than anticipated.
- Red grape intake of 136KT was a record.
- The impact of the floods in 2012 can be judged from the comparative figures.
- Wineries received 99% of their estimated intake.
- While there remains a few tonnes of grape unpicked the figures above include estimates of this. This represents less than 500t.

Figures compiled by the Riverina Winemakers Association Inc 5 April 2013 ph: 02 6964 3504

### Editors Note

The drop in Chardonnay production since 2008 is in line with winery pricing declining and the introduction of yield capping across the region. The region has 4,400 hectares of this variety. The yield calculated is 12.34 tonnes per hectare, i.e. 5 tonnes per acre.

Cabernet Sauvignon is yielding fractionally higher than Chardonnay when reviewing the area planted in the region. Whereas Shiraz yielded 14.5 tonnes per hectare, i.e. approximately 6 tonnes per acre.

Following numerous discussions with growers this season regarding poor yield crops it is hard to believe that the average yield is so high. That said pricing that returned below \$2,000 per acre was not uncommon this season and will surely place further pressure on growers to exit the industry.

## GRAPEVINE TRUNK DISEASES

### Symptoms, Management and Prevention of Grapevine Trunk Diseases

**Research by:** Wayne Pitt, Yu Qiu, Sandra Savocchia, and Nicola Wunderlich, NWGIC

**Background:** Grapevine trunk diseases are caused by fungal pathogens that grow primarily in mature wood. These can infect either:

1. propagation material and affect growth of newly planted vines; or
2. established vines through wounds (primarily pruning wounds) causing a loss of productivity, often as grapevines reach elite stage of maturity. Grapevine trunk diseases affect vineyard productivity through:

- increased production cost;
- yield loss and reduced quality; and
- decreased vineyard longevity.

The most prevalent grapevine trunk diseases in Australia are botryosphaeria dieback (formerly known as bot canker) and eutypa dieback.

Botryosphaeria dieback is caused by a number of species within the Botryosphaeriaceae family. These fungi infect a wide range of hosts but are most commonly associated with diseases of woody plants such as acacia and eucalyptus. Several Botryosphaeriaceae species are found in most grape growing regions of Australia.

Eutypa dieback is caused by the fungus *Eutypa lata*. *E. lata* was first described on apricot, and has since become an important pathogen of grapevines in Australia.

**Symptoms:** The two diseases are often mistaken for each other because some of the symptoms are identical. Fungi enter the vine via pruning wounds or other exposed areas causing dieback of the grapevine often described as *dead arm*. Damage to the vascular system results in the loss of spur positions along the cordon and may progress to the trunk.

Wedge-shaped cankers in the trunks and cordons of declining grapevines visible upon cross sectioning are characteristic of both diseases.

Other symptoms may include:

- stunted shoots;
- delayed bud burst;
- bleached canes;
- bud necrosis; and
- bunch rots.



Eutypa dieback is distinguished from botryosphaeria dieback by the presence of foliar symptoms, but these are not always present. The foliar symptoms are caused by toxins produced by the fungus, resulting in:

- stunted, yellowing shoots;
- shortened internodes; and
- small cupped leaves with necrotic margins, most obvious in spring.

Additionally, grape bunches may not initiate, and may drop off after flowering or shrivel. Smaller bunch size and uneven berry ripening may also occur. Fungal fruiting bodies on dead wood infected with eutypa dieback have a charcoal appearance.

**Management:** Botryosphaeria dieback and eutypa dieback can only be managed by removing infected wood. Where cordons are affected, remove dead wood as well as 10 cm of healthy tissue and retrain new canes to regain vigour and productivity.

Where the disease has progressed into the crown or further into the trunk, extensive reworking may be required. Remove dead wood as well as 10 cm of healthy tissue and train up water shoots to replace missing grapevines thereby regaining vigour and productivity.

It is important to *remove all infected plant material from the vineyard* to reduce the risk of re-occurrence.

**Prevention:** Avoid pruning during and following wet weather as spores are released after rain for up to:

- 2 hours for Botryosphaeriaceae; species and
- 36 hours for *E. lata*.

Prune early in winter when spore production is low or late in the season when wounds are less susceptible and heal more rapidly with the onset of higher temperatures. Apply a paint and/or fungicide to all large cuts.

**For further information see the full version of this factsheet online at <http://www.csu.edu.au/nwgic/knowledge/publications>**



## HACCP REMINDER FOR GROWERS

It is nearing the time of year again where all growers that are part of the Wine Grapes Marketing Board HACCP program need to get their paperwork together and arrange a suitable appointment time for their annual audit.

The paperwork that growers need to have ready for the audit includes

- the spray diary or diaries that were used for the vineyard throughout the season.
- the Delivery Books or records for all loads taken to the winery

- the HACCP program folder
- and the completed HACCP forms

Growers should use the time prior to the audit to locate this paperwork and ensure that it is complete to enable a timely audit process.

This year Kristy Bartrop and James Codemo will be conducting the Audits.

If you have any questions about the Wine Grapes Marketing Board HACCP system or would like to arrange your appointment, please contact the office on 6962 3944.

## LAST YEARS NATIONAL TONNAGE FIGURES RELEASED

The official crush statistics are finally in and the country's wineries crushed 1.62 million tonnes of wine grapes – up 1% on the year prior.

However, actual wine production increased by a much greater rate of 10% to 1.23 million litres as the extraction rate returned to more normal levels following the disease affected 2011 harvest. The 2012 vintage saw much more favourable weather conditions which resulted in fewer wine grapes being used for concentration.

As a result of greater production, inventories edged up 2% to 1.7 million litres. The increase in inventories was much lower than the increase in wine production meaning an additional 76 million litres of Australian wine was sold in 2011-12.

In 2011-12, the stocks to sales ratio climbed 0.05 to 1.45, the level is much lower than the 1.9 recorded mid last decade.

The wholesale value of domestic sales of Australian wine increased by 7% to a record A\$2.5 billion. Bottled red wine sales and bulk wine sales to packaging companies other than wineries drove the growth.

## RIVERINA FIELD DAYS

The Riverina Wine Grapes Marketing Board is the Major sponsor for the Riverina Field Days to be held on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2013. This event provides the Riverina with an excellent opportunity to experience the range of products and services available to the agricultural sector, as well as a range of general stores providing interest for the whole family.

The WGMB has sent growers two passes each to enter the field days. Free parking is available via the Walla Avenue entrance.

We look forward to seeing you there.



## IMPORTANT DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Riverina Field Day

Fri 10<sup>th</sup> & Sat 11<sup>th</sup> May 2013 Griffith Show Ground

WINE GRAPES MARKETING BOARD - proudly serving winegrape producers since 1933  
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