

RIVERINA WINEGRAPE GROWERS

Vine Chat



March - April 2019

REGIONAL HARVEST UPDATE

The 2019 vintage is almost complete at time of writing. The latest figures courtesy of the Riverina Winemakers Association show that as at 25th March 2019 we are only 7% down on the 2018 tonnages for the region.

Please note that there are still more winegrapes left out that need to be accounted for in the final tonnage figures.

The most notable reductions were in white varieties with Chardonnay being almost 8,000 tonnes below its prior year intake figure and Semillon 6,000 tonnes down from 2018.

Interestingly Sauvignon Blanc increased showing good resilience to the hard season of long spells of heat.

With the heat impacts on the season it was generally expected that red winegrape varieties would decline yet across the board yet they have fared relatively well and better than white winegrape varieties in terms of yield.

Market Forces now very active

Resulting from a lower yielding harvest there are now wineries seeking to secure growers for the 2020 vintage. Growers need to be mindful of the market conditions and terms and conditions of payment.

If you wish to discuss your options please do not hesitate to contact our office. We have received calls from a number of wineries seeking to take on extra growers in the forthcoming year.

The price of water will also come into play in 2019-20 as the continued dry conditions may see a rise in water prices.

As at 25th March 2019 (2018 totals)

Variety	2018	2019	% Diff
Chardonnay	72,318.59	64,149.14	-12.74%
Colombard	9,321.71	7,836.13	-18.96%
White Frontignac	13,123.68	11,341.64	-15.71%
Muscat Gordo Blanco	5,759.99	5,835.82	1.30%
Pinot Grigio	22,889.19	19,721.67	-16.06%
Riesling	2,682.90	2,376.71	-12.88%
Sauvignon Blanc	14,012.73	16,111.41	13.03%
Semillon	26,338.14	23,945.51	-9.99%
Traminer	8,451.05	7,136.14	-18.43%
Verdelho	3,271.75	3,033.35	-7.86%
Viognier	1,684.88	1,518.33	-10.97%
Other White	6,734.68	8,405.71	19.88%
Total White	186,589.29	171,411.55	-8.85%
Cabernet Sauvignon	27,020.63	19,403.28	-39.26%
Durif	7,146.75	7,584.86	5.78%
Merlot	23,077.31	22,902.98	-0.76%
Red Frontignac	558.28	320.09	-74.41%
Petite Verdot	3,006.48	1,841.57	-63.26%
Pinot Noir	5,040.69	4,930.16	-2.24%
Ruby Cabernet	6,875.94	5,878.63	-16.97%
Shiraz	64,039.74	65,879.81	2.79%
Tempranillo	525.29	392.85	-33.71%
Other Red	5,916.02	7,690.31	23.07%
Total Red	143,207.13	136,824.54	-4.66%
Total	329,796.42	308,236.09	-6.99%

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BOARD ACTIVITIES REPORT



Board adopts new name

The Board is now in the process of changing its corporate name to *Riverina Winegrape Growers* to better reflect who we represent as an organisation.

This decision was made at the Annual General Meeting held in 27th June 2018 by growers in attendance. With regard to this new name we have advised the Department of Primary Industries of the name change and will look to incorporate this into our new legislation following the Review of the organisation by the NSW Government.

Review into operations ongoing

With the recent State Election occurring and the NSW Government going into caretaker mode prior to the election and the ongoing ACCC inquiry/investigation into the wine industry the outcome of the review of this organisation has been delayed.

We are expecting a response from the NSW Government into the terms of reference around May but recently have been advised that the ACCC report has been delayed so this will have flow on effects to the review.

Riverina Winegrape Growers is not sure how resignation of Niall Blair MLC from the portfolio of Minister for Primary Industries will effect the outcome but we were advised prior that it should be minimal.

Garden Waste Mulching project not supported

Recently Riverina Winegrape Growers was approached by a company seeking to import sorted garden waste material from a known Phylloxera Infested Zone. The material was to be transported and mulched in our region which is currently a Phylloxera Exclusion Zone and is free of Phylloxera.

After due consideration of the proposal Riverina Winegrape Growers declined to provide any support believing that the associated risks to industry were too high.

The implications of Phylloxera in this region when 75% of all plantings are on their own roots would be devastation.

Annual Report for 2018

The Annual Report was approved for publication by the Board and the financials approved by the NSW Audit Office.

Future Leaders course opportunity

No growers came forward to apply for the Future Leaders course. Unfortunately the timing of the application is at the most busiest time for growers but we hope in future that there is interest out there by growers to participate in this program.

Promotional Material Update

The name change will mean that flyers and flags will be upgraded and Riverina Winegrape Growers are doing this in time of the Riverina Field Day.

Riverina Field Day

Members should pop their head into the Riverina Field Day and say hello and go into the running to win one of 2 \$100 wine vouchers to be used at participating local restaurants (conditions apply). Call us for details or drop in and see us at the RFD.

Baume concerns

Our office has fielded calls from many concerned growers in relation to baume testing this season. Many reported that their delivery baume reading was dramatically higher than their booking sample.

Riverina Winegrape Growers is taking this matter to the Inland Wine Regions Alliance. Baume testing in the Australian Wine Industry is not verified by the Federal Government and this needs to occur so that growers can have confidence in the systems and equipment that is being used.

Colour discussions continue

The matter of equipment and process is going to be discussed at the Inland Wine Regions Alliance after Riverina Winegrape Growers received advice that the matter needs to get industry support and federal Department of Industry support before systems can be verified.

Growers need to have confidence that the systems of testing undertaken by winery staff are reproducible and reliable.

AUSTRALIA STRUGGLES TO GO PREMIUM

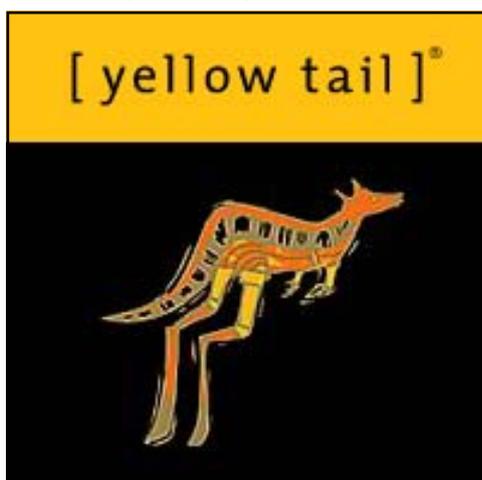
Can the Lucky Country shake off its reputation for cheap and cheerful wines?

By James Lawrence | Posted Sunday, 24-Feb-2019

It's a familiar tale. Industry giants unleash a highly successful brand onto the world, subsequently forging a monolithic and overarching identity for an entire country. In Australia's case it was Yellow Tail, a cheap-and-cheerful brand launched by the Sicilian immigrant Filippo Casella and his son John. The massive success of Yellow Tail led to a surge of imitation brands, all of which helped to reinforce the image of Australia as the maker of sunshine-in-a-bottle wines.

And so like their counterparts in Penedès, Australia's quality-conscious firmament have spent the last 15 years attempting to overturn this gross misrepresentation. "Australia, like many countries, has a domestic wine industry that is more diverse and interesting than the one that it is globally recognized for," agrees Nicholas Crampton, winemaker at Woods Crampton. "We are extremely proud and passionate about our Tasmanian sparkling, our Riesling, our Chardonnay, rosé and Pinot Noir."

Yet the ghost of Yellow Tail lingers on even today – the perception of Australian wine as a fruit-bomb caricature, at a time when sommeliers have really soured on this genre, has arguably been a major stumbling block for their fine wine industry. "The reality is that 'premium' isn't just about quality, it's about image too, and Australia simply hasn't created a strong image around its super-premium wines," says Christine Parkinson, Group Head of Wine for the Hakkasan Group. "Consumers are aware of Supertuscans, and Napa cabs, but if you asked them about premium wines from Australia they probably wouldn't have a clue."



Or would they? The latest data from Wine Australia suggests that Monty Python's "a wine for laying down and avoiding" cliché is perhaps being put to death. What is particularly eye catching is the rise of global exports (in 2018) by 10 percent in value, with overall sales growing in several key markets, including Northeast Asia, Europe and Southeast Asia. Significant gains in value were seen in China, Canada and New Zealand, although Australia continues to struggle in the US.

"These figures demonstrate strong international demand and they highlight how Australian wine exporters have worked diligently to develop and maintain international markets," said Andreas Clark, CEO of Wine Australia. "This demand translated into growth in almost all price segments."



It's hard to argue against this assertion – the figures do not lie. However, that doesn't mean they entirely tell the truth. Exports of Australian wine priced at over \$200 actually fell by 7 percent in 2018, while a great deal of Australia's growth is dependent on the current Chinese love affair with antipodean wine. And that suggests something basic, uncomplicated and simple. Australia is hedging its bets on newer markets like China, while failing to convince enough consumers in the west that expensive Shiraz and Cab is worth a punt.

"I haven't really seen any evidence that would support these figures," says Parkinson. "I sense that there is growing appreciation of the newer styles of fine Australian wine, but on a very, very small scale. Our Shanghai Hakkasan has increased its listing of these wines, however, and I think it could be China that is responsible for the value growth Australia is experiencing."

Of course, politics also plays its part.

"The growth in Australian exports to China is largely due to the 15 percent tariff increase on US wines going to China that was instigated in April 2018," argues Hong Kong-based sommelier John Chan.

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"The demand for American wines then slightly dropped; in return the demand for alternatives was stimulated. Other than the Chinese market, top Aussie wines are always sought after in many Asian countries. However, in Hong Kong, (unaffected by the tariff increases), I think the growth of American wines has been more noticeable. I still believe 'easygoing wines' account for the majority of Australian exports."



Wine buyer Peter Mitchell MW expands upon the theme. "With the premium Australian brands that we work with, demand remains patchy," he says. "I don't think Australia has 'overturned its image'... I still believe that much needs to be done in terms of getting consumers to appreciate how brilliantly these top wines age (in many cases better than their European counterparts), but a lack of availability of mature stock severely hampers this."

But that's not right, says Cedric Nicaise, wine director at the Eleven Madison Park hotel, New York. He argues that there is a cultural shift in wines from Australia that consumers are taking note of. "Producers are hitting the market with some really great terroir-driven wines that are changing, or at least starting to change perceptions," he observes.

"I would add that at least in New York Syrah is having a serious moment and there could be some trickle down with that."

So what is right? Is expensive Australia resurgent in traditional markets, or is it a case of lies, damned lies and statistics? The truth is we don't know – who has the resources to question every consumer in the market for Australian wine? However, if we discount the luxurious (\$200 plus, for sake of argument) segment for one second, there is real evidence that the ghost of Yellow Tail is being laid to rest.

An analysis of Wine Australia's latest figures show that exports of Pinot Noir and Viognier/Roussanne rose

sharply, offering encouraging signs that the diversity message is disseminating into consumer mindsets – at least those in the market for quality wine.

Nicholas Crampton argues that as a greater number of wineries shift their focus to "affordable luxury," so too will Australia's cheap-and-cheerful image further wane. "I think increasingly we recognize our future is not as a low-cost player but that we can deliver outstanding consistency, quality and value in the mainstream premium segment [\$15-30 in Australia]," says Crampton.

He cites Mourvèdre as just one example of a variety that now thrives in South Australia – Bandol's newest competitor?

"In conjunction with Hatch Mansfield, our UK distributor, Robert Oatley Vineyards have seen consistent, solid growth year on year for the last few years," enthuses Katie MacAulay, UK business development manager at Robert Oatley Vineyards.

"This growth is reflected in all sectors of our wine range including Pennant, our flagship duo of wines [\$40-50], which are now being snapped up by the Fine Wine sector. However there is still a lot of work to be done on getting the message across to every sector of the market that Australia is making world class wine."

Her counterparts in the off-trade largely concur. "Premium sales of Australian wine are a small part of our sales, but knowledge and education are both increasing. Famous top-end wines like Grange, Grace and Klonakilla have always had a niche, but the small-production boutique wineries of quality are definitely an area of growth," says John Chapman, operations director at the Oxford Wine Company.

Nevertheless, while the trade are encouraged by responses to what they term "mainstream premium" Aussie wine, few would deny that expensive labels struggle to get traction in the premium on-trade. This will be the core challenge for producers and buyers over the next five years, to convince greater swathes of consumers that pricey Australian wine justifies its price tag – a problem of course facing many New and Old World categories today.

Mitchell MW argues that as many of Australia's iconic Shiraz and Cabernet wines take at least 20 years to reveal their true quality, a dearth of mature stock on the market has sullied their reputation. "Few consumers

have ever tried the wines fully mature – It is only by comparing them with their international rivals when they are ready to drink that more understanding of their qualities will be appreciated," he says.

"My advice is to get more influencers (sommeliers/journalists etc.) to taste the wines fully mature."

Meanwhile Parkinson believes that greater industry classification is required, and that a complete lack of formal hierarchy has done super-premium Australia no favors. "I have always thought the Langton's classification could be better used – after all, classification has been a great tool in Bordeaux," she says. "I also think that perhaps varietal labelling, which has been so powerful at entry level, could take a back-seat for some premium and super-premium wines. Maybe it's time for the regions to take the spotlight for some of the top-end wines?"

Ultimately though, it is clear that in the short to medium term at least, Australia's firmament of icon wines are likely to remain a niche part of the upmarket dining and

retail scene – at least in Europe and the US. But growth in mid-range Australian wine imports is a welcome slice of good news – following well-publicized difficulties, brand Australia seems to be clawing back consumer good will and interest. Much will depend, of course, on whether the trade is prepared to work harder with producers in promoting these excellent, characterful wines, but independents at least seem up for the challenge.

"In the end, it's all about getting consumers to taste the wines. For example, we recently held a very successful tasting with Wirra Wirra, featuring some very premium wines, and sales were strong," says John Chapman.

So where are we on this? Can Australia continue to make up for lost ground? Changing entrenched views and perceptions is surely a thankless and never-ending task.

I think Churchill said it best: "This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. but it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."

NEW MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE WELCOMED

Riverina Winegrape Growers would like to announce the appointment of Adam Marshall MP to the Agriculture portfolio. On behalf of our growers we look forward to briefing the Minister at the earliest opportunity to let him know of the regions vibrancy and character.

In a recent media article in the Armidale Express dated 1st April 2019 it stated.

Seven years ago Adam Marshall was the 27-year-old mayor of Gunnedah who sometimes visited the Northern Tablelands electorate as chair of the NSW Country Mayors Association, or as senior vice president of the Shires Association of NSW, positions he held from 2010 until 2012.

His career in local government and onto state politics, began early. Born on September 4, 1984, Adam was educated at Gunnedah South Public School and later at Farrer Memorial Agricultural High School.

He was 19 when elected as a Gunnedah Shire

Councillor in 2004, became deputy mayor in 2007 and was mayor of Gunnedah from 2008-12. His community presence was always extensive from a young age.

He was a director of Gunnedah Services and Bowling Club (2006-11), a member on the Country Cricket NSW Umpire Panel (2007-12), a member of Gunnedah Lions Club (2007-12), and chair of the Northern Inland Academy of Sport.

He is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, a Life member of the Gunnedah Jockey Club and an honorary member of the Gunnedah Rotary Club.

Adam Marshall entered the NSW Legislative Assembly on May 25, 2013 at a byelection with 63.3 per cent of the primary vote for the National Party.

At the sate election on March 23, Mr Marshall's primary vote in Northern Tablelands increased to 74 per cent, which was the highest vote for an MP at the election.



WINE AUSTRALIA AND NATIONAL WINE AND GRAPE INDUSTRY CENTRE

CSU Research: Measuring bunch rot impact on wine quality

- NWGIC research funded by Wine Australia aims to determine thresholds for bunch rot contamination
- Bunch rot causes economic losses to the wine industry worldwide
- The research will provide important information for growers and winemakers

While the winegrape harvest accelerates across Australia, research at the National Wine and Grape Industry Centre (NWGIC) is arming grapegrowers and winemakers with increased knowledge about how bunch rot can impact a final wine – and how much is too much.

Led by Charles Sturt University (CSU) Professor Chris Steel, the research – funded by Wine Australia – aims to determine thresholds for bunch rot contamination, building on an earlier project that examined Botrytis or grey mould contamination of Chardonnay grapes in 2016.

“Bunch rot, or fungal rot of wine grapes, is a worldwide problem, particularly when rain falls close to harvest,” said Professor Steel.

“Bunch rots reduce yield and can impact on wine quality by producing off flavours and taints. Growers have to decide when and if they harvest impacted fruit, and at the winery it can lead to the downgrading or possible rejection of fruit.

“This project will determine the thresholds for bunch rot contamination that can be tasted in wine, and provide grapegrowers and winemakers with tools to handle fruit when these thresholds are exceeded.”

For this vintage, the new research will be extended to include Cabernet Sauvignon grapes.

“Aside from continuing to evaluate ergosterol as a measure of fungal contamination, we will also look at other techniques including measuring gluconic acid and loop-mediated isothermal amplification (LAMP), a molecular biology based technique for detecting Botrytis in grapes,” Professor Steel said.

Wine Australia General Manager of Research, Development and Extension Dr Liz Waters said, “Bunch

rots can be a significant cost impact on grapegrowers and winemakers. This project is exciting because it will help us determine how much bunch rot is too much, so that an objective measure can be set to assist growers and winemakers in their decisions at harvest.”

The NWGIC is an alliance between CSU, the NSW Department of Primary Industries and the NSW Wine Industry Association.



Media note: Professor Chris Steel (pictured above) is based at the National Wine and Grape Industry Centre at CSU in Wagga Wagga, to arrange interviews contact NWGIC communications officer Emily Malone 0439 552 385 or emalone@csu.edu.au

Read more about the recently completed project ‘Determination of thresholds for bunch rot contamination of grapes and techniques to ameliorate associated fungal taints’ in Wine Australia’s R,D&E News here <https://www.wineaustralia.com/au/news/articles/fungal-rot-under-the-microscope>

Information on Wine Australia’s research program can be obtained from Hannah Bentley (hannah.bentley@wineaustralia.com or 0428 930 865).

About Wine Australia

Wine Australia supports a competitive wine sector by investing in research, development and extension (RD&E), growing domestic and international markets, protecting the reputation of Australian wine and administering the Export and Regional Wine Support Package.

Wine Australia is an Australian Commonwealth Government statutory authority, established under the *Wine Australia Act 2013*, and funded by grape growers and winemakers through levies and user-pays charges and the Australian Government, which provides matching funding for RD&E investments.

RIVERINA REGIONAL PROGRAM AND DPI SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

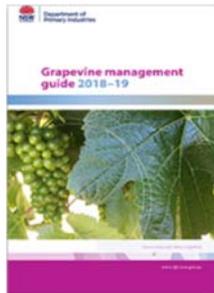
DPI Skills Development Program

The DPI is pleased to announce the extension of the Viticulture Skills Development Program for a further five years (2019–24). The Skills Development Program is an internally funded DPI initiative with key outcomes for NSW viticulturists including:

NSW DPI VineWatch – a fortnightly (during the growing season) newsletter, covering pest and disease alerts, viticulture research resources, industry news and event information from 11 NSW viticulture regions

Spring Vine Health Field Days (SVHFD) – the DPI SVHFD roadshow will return to Griffith in mid-August 2019 including presentations from SDP and Riverina Regional Program activities, updates and further information will be available in *VineWatch*

Grapevine management guide (pictured) – an annual publication of viticulture research and development outcomes, available on the DPI Grapes website (www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/horticulture/grapes)



- ◆ **development activities** – including the weather stations network and anti-transpirant demonstration in the Riverina
- ◆ **tours and workshops** – opportunities for Riverina producers, DPI has previously led tours to the Mornington Peninsula and Yarra Valley to study Pinot Noir and sparkling wine viticulture and winemaking.

Riverina Regional Program

Two separate vineyard and winery electricity management workshops will be held at the Griffith Research Station on 4 June. Workshop discussions will include Riverina vineyard case studies and funding opportunities to maximise your energy use efficiency.

Further details will be made available shortly via *VineWatch*.

Concepts for the 2019–20 Riverina Regional program, recently submitted to Wine Australia include:

- ◆ addressing vine health – including virus identification and management
- ◆ demonstrating practical applications for dendrometers and normalised difference vegetation index (NDVI) at the Griffith Research Station
- ◆ software tools for irrigation and nutrient budgeting
- ◆ further demonstration of disease resistant cultivars at the Griffith Research Station – red varieties resistant to powdery mildew and downy mildew (includes alternative trellis systems)
- ◆ drip irrigation management workshop (2018 workshop attendees pictured).

If you have any questions, ideas or areas of interest you would like to see the DPI investigate through the Skills Development Program 2019–24 or Regional Program please contact:

DPI Development Officer Adrian Englefield

P: 0428 324 099

E: adrian.englefield@dpi.nsw.gov.au



NSW DPI VineWatch

Subscribe to VineWatch for the latest Skills Development Program 2019–24 and Riverina Regional Program developments at the DPI Grapes website (www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/horticulture/grapes/vw/vinewatch).



RIVERINA WINGRAPE GROWERS



GROWER WORKSHOP - 8th MAY 2019
The Australian Wine
Research Institute

The AWRI will again be holding a Viticulture Seminar in Griffith in 2019.

Date: Wednesday 8th May 2019

Time: 2:30pm until 4:00pm

Location: 28 Smeeth Road Lake Wyangan

Light refreshments & drinks will follow the seminar, this will give you the opportunity to speak to the presenter and catchup with fellow growers.

The list below are the six topics chosen by Riverina Winegrape Growers that will be short listed to four that will be presented at the Seminar.

The six topics are as follows:

1. Breeding and evaluation of new disease-resistant selections

2. Understanding and manipulating grape berry development/ripening
3. Be alert: is fungicide resistance coming to your vineyard?
4. Breeding next generation rootstocks with durable resistance to phylloxera and root knot nematode
5. Can weeds be controlled without synthetic chemicals?
6. Understand powdery mildew and discover strategies to help control the disease.

Our office will notify growers by sending in the mail a copy of the agenda.

If you would like to attend the Seminar please ring the Board office on 69623944 or Brian Bortolin Extension Officer on 0401567449.

RSVP by 6th May.



Wine Grapes Marketing Board 182 Yambil Street Griffith NSW 2680 Phone: (02) 6962 3944 Fax: (02) 6962 6103
Email: board@wgmb.net.au Web: www.wgmb.net.au Office Hours: 8:30am - 5:00pm Mon - Fri

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