



BOARD JOINS FORCES TO GET BETTER RECOGNITION

Alliance forged by major wine regions

AUSTRALIA'S three largest wine regions have signed an agreement to form the Inland Wine Regions Alliance. The Riverland SA, Murray-Darling/Swan Hill NSW-VIC and Riverina NSW, which collectively are responsible for around 70 per cent of Australia's winegrape production, will act together on matters of mutual interest and concern.

"These regions have much in common. As well as being the backbone of the Australian wine industry they also generate the majority of export earnings from the sale of wine around the world. About 80 per cent of wine exports are made from grapes produced in the three regions," Murray Valley Winegrowers Executive Officer Mike Stone said.

A Memorandum of Understanding between Riverland Wine Grape Growers Association, Murray Valley Winegrowers and Riverina Wine Grapes Marketing Board underpins the role and activities of the alliance. Combined grower membership exceeds 1,600.

Alliance advocacy

The Inland Wine Regions Alliance will present a single voice on agreed matters of common concern and interest, and expects to be influential at regional, state and federal levels. It also aims to share information, initiatives and resources for the benefit of its members.

Mike Stone says the alliance will operate across a core area of activity that will include consultation with Wine Australia, Australian Vignerons, Winemakers Federation, Plant Health Australia and state and federal governments when required.

"We particularly want to see a vast improvement in the industry data that growers receive. There are shortcomings in vineyard statistics and in the data that growers need to understand the outlook for supply/demand," he said.

"We also expect to become active in the promotion of the Australian Wine Industry Code of Conduct, with the aim of achieving greater sign-up to the voluntary code."

Former long-serving chair of CCW Co-operative and board member of the Grape and Wine Research and Development Corporation (now Wine Australia), Jim Caddy, has been active in establishing the alliance. He will perform the key role of coordinator and spokesperson. He says the alliance will be a strong voice for independent winegrape growers.

"I want to see the growers of the inland regions receive fair reward for their product, which is the mainstay of Australian wine production and export success. The headlines focus mainly on the growing export success of the super-premium category, but we mustn't lose sight of the value of the much larger segment that's occupied by the wines of the inland regions," he said.

GRANT DELVES WINS 2017 GROWER AWARD



Grant Delves and Robert Bellato (pictured right) at the Riverina Wine Awards dinner. Grant Delves received the award for Grower Excellence for his Durif winegrapes that are made into wine at McWilliam's Hanwood.

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BOARD ACTIVITIES REPORT



Hanwood Grape Growers Assoc.

The Board recently agreed to provide \$1,500 in funding to the association for the services that they provide to members in the region.

Growers in and around Hanwood can attend these meetings and notifications of these are generally sent out via SMS. If you want to join

the conversation about the industry at a Hanwood or even the Yenda association meetings please contact the Board office and we will work to ensure that you are informed of these meetings.

Review of the Board

A thank you to the many growers that took the time to write a submission into the review of the Board that was being conducted by NSW DPI. The Board did an extensive submission to the review and it proposed a few changes to the operations of the Board in light of ongoing problems in the industry. The main concern is terms and conditions of payment. In South Australia these are legislated but in NSW there are no regulations stipulating when a winery has to pay and contracts tend to nominate dates which can be altered by the purchaser quite easily as the Board has seen with little recourse by the grower other than legal action which is counterproductive to developing a good working relationship.

It is hoped that the NSW DPI will take the concerns of the Board and growers into account when it makes its recommendations about the role of the Board in the region. Wineries are selling wine and growing markets and yet many growers are required to wait for payments to be made or suffer the indignity of having to constantly ask for the payment to be made.

The Board has first hand experience of this when trying to collect fees and charges that wineries have already deducted from grower payments only to withhold them from the Board.

NSW Cabinet visit to Griffith

The CEO was invited to participate in a community cabinet gathering recently held in Griffith. The time was used to talk to NSW Cabinet members about the need for better payment regulation in this region to align ourselves with the other major regions.

Regional Workshops success

Under Wine Australia's regional program funding a number of workshops were held recently in the region. While the same topics were discussed at each venue the use of grower sheds was a good change from a formal venue.

Industry experts discussed the latest research and information on powdery mildew, sour rot, spray application and mealybug.

Attendances were high and the Board would like to thank all growers and wineries that attended and supported the Regional Program.

Pinot Gris Grapevine Virus

Information was recently circulated to members with the NSW DPI Grapevine Management Guide 2017-18 regarding this virus that has been detected in Australia. The location of the virus detections are not being made public but growers are advised to report to the Board any suspicious symptoms found in vines.

Vine Health Australia is asking that growers call the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881

As more information becomes available we will ensure that growers are kept informed.

The Today Show comes to Griffith

The Board agreed to provide \$5,000 in sponsorship to the Today Show in Griffith that promises to showcase the region. On Wednesday 27th September 2017 the show was broadcasted from Griffith Memorial Park. The Board has provided the show with HD video imagery of the regions winegrape production.



Attendees at the recent workshops

THIS YEAR'S EXTREME WEATHER WILL HAVE SERIOUS EFFECTS

This Year's Extreme Weather Will Have a Serious Effect on Global Wine

A Napa heat wave hit 117 degrees, seriously damaging grapes. Plus, forest fires, frost, and hail around the northern hemisphere will mean smaller production this year and varying quality of the wines you love.



By Elin McCoy, www.bloomberg.com Sep 21, 2017

Earlier this summer, the Napa Valley was on track to be one of the world's luckiest wine regions this year, having escaped everything from hail to fires to grape-gobbling wild boar.

Then a scorching, record-breaking heat wave with temperatures up to 117 (!) degrees Fahrenheit swept in and stuck around over Labor Day weekend, upending vintners' expectations. In its wake, winemakers were left with plenty of shriveled grapes and worries about both quality and quantity, despite a cool spell this week that's now slowing the harvest.

Welcome to wine's new normal: extreme weather events. They influenced this year's harvest everywhere from Germany and France to Italy and Chile last spring and, at the last minute, Napa and Sonoma. "I've never seen a vintage like this," admitted Cathy Corison of Corison Winery in Napa, who is now on her 43rd season.

The Outlook in Napa

In Napa and Sonoma, the excessive heat didn't affect grapes for sparkling wines or whites harvested earlier in August. But cabernet is in the crosshairs. Vineyard

consultant Steve Matthiasson, who also makes wines under his eponymous label, admitted, "The heat wave screwed us up."

While you need warmth to ripen cabernet, you don't want too much, and this summer Napa had more than two dozen days with temperatures over 100 degrees. Before the grapes were completely ripe, an extreme heat wave on Labor Day weekend, which didn't cool down at night, caused grape dehydration. As juice evaporated, some of the unripe grapes shriveled into raisins. These tasted both cooked and green at the same time, which is how wines made from them would taste, too (that's bad), along with being high in alcohol.

"Wherever the bunches were exposed to the sun, grapes were affected," says Aaron Pott, whose vineyard on Mount Veeder saw lows of 85 degrees at night, 110 during the day. Some winemakers, like Newton Vineyard winemaker Rob Mann, stretched long shade cloths against one side of each vine row to ward off the sun's rays in the hottest stretches of the afternoon.

Cathy Corison, like many vintners, picked at night last week, when it was cooler. She'd sleep for three hours before heading out at 12:30 am to the vineyards with a headlamp, then work through the night with a team of pickers.

Making good wine this year will depend on picking out the shriveled grapes that have what's called "saggy berry syndrome." Some wineries, such as Newton, have pricey optical sorters. "How much fruit vintners will have to throw away is going to be very site-and-grape specific," Tim Mondavi of Continuum explained. He'll have to discard much of his petit verdot, for example, although his cabernet franc and sauvignon survived very well. He predicts wineries on the valley floor will lose more than his, which is located high on the slopes of Pritchard Hill.

As a result of all this, the crop will be smaller than expected, down anywhere from 5 percent to as much as 35 percent for some individual blocks of vines. And, as in Europe, that will certainly mean higher prices for already expensive cabernets.

Here's the outlook for the rest of the winemaking world that harvests this season on the following page:

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The U.S. West Coast

Elsewhere in America, wildfires threatened grapes in California's Mendocino, Lake, and Santa Barbara counties, coming within 50 feet of the famous Bien Nacido vineyard, and left a smoky pall over vines in parts of Washington State and Oregon, where the harvest started last week. Oregon is expecting a fairly large crop (warmer temperatures help them), but the concern in both states is possible smoke taint on the grapes, which imparts a harsh, ashy taste to wine.

France

Because of devastating spring frosts, hailstorms, and heat waves, France overall will harvest its smallest crop since World War II, which translates into less wine and, naturally, higher prices. Specific regions such as the Loire Valley and certain appellations of Bordeaux, such as the Médoc, escaped with minor damage. (Graves, Saint-Émilion, and others weren't so lucky—those Bordeaux mini-regions lost many grapes, but what remained were of high quality.) So far, Burgundy appears to be a solid success, with a good size crop of high-quality grapes, as winemakers rushed to finish picking before predicted rain. This is a big relief after a string of bad harvests. Spring frost reduced quantity for some premiers crus in Chablis.

Italy

Italy, too, will have one of the smallest wine harvests in 60 years, with regions down 10 percent to as much as 40 percent, though quality is good. Prosecco was so hard hit by the Lucifer heat wave, frost, and hail that glera grapes planted outside the official geographical appellation will be allowed by the Veneto and Friuli-Venezia regional governments to be incorporated into blends to prevent a rise in prices. (It's not clear if quality will suffer—the Prosecco consortium insists not.)

Germany

Grapes ripened two weeks earlier than usual thanks to a summer of warm, sunny days and cool nights. Growers are already picking riesling, which typically isn't ready until October. So far it looks like an exciting vintage that will make fresh, fruity, complex wines. But spring frost took its toll on quantity.



Austria

Severe hailstorms and extreme heat and drought conditions didn't do significant damage to the vintage, according to the Austrian Viticultural Association. Last year massive frost reduced the crop; in 2017 it will be average, with very ripe grapes and wines with slightly higher alcohol.

Spain

The same conditions hammered Spain, which is harvesting 20 percent to 30 percent fewer grapes, and some regions were particularly devastated, such as Ribera del Duero, which is down 60 percent, even though the quality looks good. Whites from usually cool spots, such as Rias Baixas, may be less crisp this year because of hot temperatures.

Australia 2017 production update

The crush increased by 5% nationally to 1.93 million tonnes of winegrapes harvested. The value of the crush also increased by 13% to \$1.22 billion.

The average purchase price nationally was the highest since 2008 with red varieties increasing in production by 12% while white varieties fell by 2% overall.

In the inland regions the crush grew by 3% (10% was the recorded increase in the Riverina) while the average price increased by 10% to \$345 per tonne while the other regions increased by 3% to \$1,232 per tonne.

Nationally the inland regions share of the national crush was down slightly from previous years to 69%. While the Riverina and Riverland increased their production the Murray Darling-Swan Hill region declined in production. It is believed that many growers are moving to more profitable production areas such as table grapes in recent years. (*Information from Wine Australia vintage report 2017*)

WINE AUSTRALIA NEWS SEPT 2017**Message from the CEO Andreas Clarke**

The Export and Regional Wine Support Package was officially launched in late August by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, the Hon Barnaby Joyce. This transformational package will see a significant, four-year investment to grow exports and international tourism.

The activities are already underway, with a successful Australia Wine Week delivered in San Francisco and New York earlier this month. Australian wines were showcased in a week-long series of trade, consumer and media engagements.

There are three grant programs under the package, and the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources is currently seeking feedback on the draft grant guidelines. You have until 18 October 2017 to provide feedback directly to the Department.

If you'd like to stay across developments, please sign up to our dedicated newsletter, and if you have any questions, please contact grants@wineaustralia.com.

Congratulations to Martin Gransden, a viticulturist with Cumulus Vineyards near Orange who has been announced as a 2018 Nuffield Scholar and the recipient of a scholarship supported by Wine Australia. Martin will research alternative wine grape varieties suited to the Australian environment and consumer.

Excitement is building for the 2017 Australian Women in Wine Awards in London on 26 September that will celebrate women's role in wine. The Awards Ceremony, trade tasting, seminar and consumer tasting is shaping up as the largest gathering of Australian women winemakers and winery owners in the world. I expect that the sheer energy, talent and enthusiasm of our female winemakers and winery owners is going to take London by storm and I wish all the participants a successful event.

WET Rebate Regional Seminars - Save the date!

Plan to claim the WET Rebate? What you need to know.

The Wine Equalisation Tax (WET) legislation changes were agreed by the Australian Parliament on 17 August 2017 and are now law, known as the Treasury Laws Amendment (2017 Measure No.4) Act 2017. Winemakers who currently access the rebate, or sell grapes to a wine producer who receives the rebate, will need to understand the implications of the changes.

Winemakers' Federation of Australia (WFA) is working with the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) to develop guidance on the key changes before the next vintage. WFA and State Wine Association's will be hosting a series of seminars with the ATO and Wine Australia as guest speakers, free of charge:

Griffith: Wednesday 22nd Nov. 3pm - 6pm

The ATO will provide guidance on key issues arising from the legislative changes, including:

Demonstrating proof of grape ownership

To be eligible to claim the WET rebate, ownership of the grapes will mean that some form of contract must be in place at the weighbridge (prior to crushing). This may take the form of an exchange of letters, but a more formal contract is likely to provide more surety.

Required record-keeping

The ATO will require record keeping to demonstrate ownership of the grapes from the crusher through to the final product.

Implications for contractual arrangements

Retention of title clauses may mean that ownership does not pass to the grape purchaser at the weighbridge. Therefore, such clauses may not satisfy WET eligibility requirements.

Distributor model implications

Some distribution models will require different payment forms. For example, if a producer sells to a distributor, they can quote, but if that distributor on-sells to a further distributor, no rebate will be available, but WET will be payable.

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Trademark requirements

Although the intention in the legislation is for 'parent' trademarks to cover all the associated trademarks for the eligibility provisions, this needs to be clarified in the ATO guidance.

Transitional arrangements

The transitional provisions are complex and require clear guidance on the treatment of existing bottled product and that in barrels, as well as the differences applying to table and fortified products.

In addition, Wine Australia has agreed to provide an information briefing on the grant components of the \$50 million Export and Regional Wine Support Package (the Package) and the \$10 million Wine Tourism and Cellar Door Grant program.

There are three grants under the Package:

- **Program 2: Wine Export Grants** are offered to small and medium wine exporters for specific export promotion activities aimed at increasing wine exports to China and the US. Applicants will be eligible for grants of up to \$50,000 under this program.
- **Program 3a: Capturing Growth in International Tourism State Grants** provide state wine industry associations with access to funding to support a collaborative, strategic approach towards attracting and maximizing international wine tourism.
- **Program 3b: Capturing Growth in International Wine Tourism Competitive Grants** provide a range of stakeholders across Australia with the opportunity to apply for funding, on a competitive basis, towards initiatives that will grow international tourism in wine areas.

For more information on the Package see:

<https://www.wineaustralia.com/whats-happening/export-and-regional-wine-support-package>

All of these issues have very important implications and attendance is a must for all businesses.

The WET Reform Seminars are free of charge.

Save the date and register your interest with Ali Laslett, Manager Communications & Public Relations at alison@wfa.org.au. Venue details will be announced when this information becomes available.

Register here for the local seminar:

<https://wet-seminar-griffith.eventbrite.com.au>

FOOD & BEVERAGE INDUSTRY NEWS

<https://foodmag.com.au/aussie-wine-week-makes-its-mark-in-the-us/> 25 September 2017

The inaugural 'Aussie Wine Week' headed to the US this month, with sixteen winemakers travelling to New York and San Francisco to showcase their wines at a series of trade, media and consumer events.

The week-long event kicked off a suite of early activities in the US and China delivered under the Australian Government's Export and Regional Wine Support Package (the Package) – a one-off allocation of \$50 million aimed at driving demand for our wine exports and showcasing Australian wine tourism.

Wine Australia CEO Andreas Clark said the early activities are part of a broader program of sector-led events, designed to capture the growing enthusiasm for Australian wine in our largest and growing export markets.

"Our fine wines are gaining attention in the US, with exports growing by three per cent last year due to a rise in the average value of bottled wine exports. We're maintaining this momentum by partnering with Australian wineries and exporters to deliver a series of early activities that showcase our diverse and quality styles of wine," said Clark.

Speaking about Aussie Wine Week, the General Manager of Marketing at Wine Australia Stuart Barclay said, "The event was a terrific opportunity to kick start our program of activities for the US and China markets."

Following the official launch of the Package in August, a three-year strategy is being developed by Wine Australia, the Winemakers' Federation of Australia and Australian Vignerons to guide the broader program of sector-led wine export and tourism activities.

MAKING SENSE OF WHAT SENSORS CAN OFFER



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture
and Water Resources

This project is supported by funding from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources as part of its Rural R&D for Profit program.

Modern sensors backed by ever-increasing computing power have great potential in the vineyard – so much potential, in fact, that it's almost hard to know where to start.

Two complementary projects under way at the CSIRO – supported with funding from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources as part of its Rural R&D for Profit program and Wine Australia – are designed to get a better handle on what's possible, what's feasible in terms of time, cost and effort, and how we can best match the technical side with the reality of what grapegrowers actually want.

The first, run by Dr Everard Edwards, is focusing on vine canopy, including size, composition and management. The second, run by Dr Mark Thomas, is interested in issues around the fruit, including composition, disease and yield estimation.

The common theme is access to expertise from different areas of CSIRO – primarily Data 61, Australia's largest data innovation group, which is supporting the Australian Government's Cyber Security Strategy, but with input also from the Manufacturing and Energy business units.

'We are very much looking at technologies in which the CSIRO already has expertise and how it can be adapted rather than trying to build a capability base from nothing or emulating work others have been doing', Dr Edwards said.

There will be external collaborations, however, notably with Germany's Fraunhofer Institute, which is providing access to its machine learning technologies for analysis of hyperspectral data and aerial hyperspectral hardware. This collects images of a scene with over 400 narrow spectral bands for each pixel, rather than the three that are in a normal colour image.

But the focus is not all on the high end of high-tech. The researchers will look at what can be achieved by working differently with, for example, conventional cameras or sensors such as LiDAR, which are

beginning to find a place in the wine sector. Dr Edwards is working with wineries in the Coonawarra to see if LiDAR can be used to measure the porosity of the canopy in conjunction with its size to assist in canopy thinning activities.

Before things got started the CSIRO team held a sector workshop to ask where people thought digital tools would be most useful and what their most pressing needs were. Top of the list was yield estimation, closely followed by canopy management and condition and fruit composition.

Dr Edwards wasn't surprised. 'One of the things that's interesting with the wine sector is the emphasis on the composition of the fruit', he said. 'There's no other agricultural industry where the composition drives such a massive diversity in the value of the crop.'

The research will be wide ranging. There are things growers do now that they'd like to be able to do better, more efficiently or on a bigger scale, and the researchers have a fair idea about how sensors could be applied. But at another level there are things they can potentially pick up with the sensors that they can then apply in completely new ways that hadn't been thought of before.

The bottom line (or at least one of them) is practicality. There is no point in developing a piece of equipment, no matter how well it works, if the purchase cost is higher than the value to the purchaser. Sensors worth a few hundred dollars you can strap onto a tractor have much more immediate appeal.

At the same time, it's important to know what is possible down the track. 'The cost of everything to do with sensors and computing is coming down quickly, so in a few years what was once \$100,000 may only be \$20,000', Dr Edwards said.

New and developing technologies have the potential to monitor all aspects of vineyard activity.

A future vineyard may possess automated imaging capabilities that generate a 3D model of the vine canopy, highlighting the differences from the desired structure and how to improve fruit composition through canopy management. The same imaging may provide whole of vineyard data on vine nutrition or early warning of mildew infection, allowing proactive management on a rapid timescale.

WINE GRAPES MARKETING BOARD

FARM MAP UPDATES

This season the Board updated the aerial images for the region. The office is slowly going through these and recreating the map images and adjusting the block details to ensure that the data we hold on is accurate. Once this is completed we will have a better understanding of the changes in production that have occurred in the region.

The Board asks that you bear with us during this time if you are chasing updated data. There are 770+ vineyards in the region and at time of writing approximately 300 have been updated. We understand that wineries are chasing the updated information and these should be finished in the coming months.

TODAY SHOW HIGHLIGHTS GRIFFITH AND REGION

The Today Show on 27th September took over Memorial Park Griffith to highlight the food and produce that is grown in the local region. Pride and place was the wine bar showcasing the local wines of the region.

Hosts Richard Wilkens and Karl Stefanovic took on Roy Spagnolo and Andrew Calabria in grape crushing that saw Richard Wilkens use his big feet to produce the most juice from the available table grapes.



Carrah Lymer from the Riverina Winemakers Association tirelessly promoting the Riverina

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