



### GROWERS ENCOURAGED TO CHECK VINES

Riverina growers are encouraged to check their vineyards for disease as weather events look to cause problems this season. November rainfall recorded below tells an interesting story.

Station	Days	Total
Beelbangera	17	86.0mm
Hanwood	13	94.1mm
Kooba	11	90.8mm
Lake Wyangan	13	113.4mm
Leeton	15	159.6mm
Nericon	15	106.4mm
Stanbridge	15	149.6mm
Tharbogang	14	105.6mm
Willbriggie	12	107.4mm
Yenda	15	142.2mm

Powdery and Downy Mildew is being detected in local vineyards and growers need to be mindful of the costs of applying chemicals this season.

Comparing the table with the mean rainfall for Griffith which is 28.5mm for the Month of November means that the impact on winegrape production will be high as input costs increase.

Growers can check the location and details of the weather stations in the region or place a bookmark to the website on the home screen of your smartphone. It will assist you in completing your spray diary records with temperature, wind speed and direction.

Simply go to <https://nswdpi.greenbrain.ag/>

Users will see a list of the available listed weather stations that are hosted by the NSW DPI but are owned by industry for the Mudgee, Riverina, Southern Highlands, Tumbarumba, Canberra, Hilltops.

Information on Downy Mildew from the AWRI can be found at this website [https://www.awri.com.au/industry\\_support/viticulture/pests-and-diseases/downy-mildew/](https://www.awri.com.au/industry_support/viticulture/pests-and-diseases/downy-mildew/)

Powdery Mildew information: [https://www.awri.com.au/wp-content/uploads/powdery\\_mildew\\_manage.pdf](https://www.awri.com.au/wp-content/uploads/powdery_mildew_manage.pdf)

### HAVE YOU MET WITH YOUR WINERY?

Growers are asked if they have held any meetings this season with their buyers. It is important that the conversation with your buyer starts sooner rather than later as there is a constant amount of discussion and rumour about what grape prices may be.

At this time of year many wineries are aware of what they are looking to pay for winegrapes in 2022 and growers now need to start having the conversation directly with them, do not leave it too late.

The Board is also waiting to see what transpires when the regions 2 Wine Industry Code signatories come out with prices for their growers mid December as these are likely to form the basis of further discussion regionally.

The Riverland has been impacted with hail storms but at this stage the full details of the impacts are unknown and may only reduce the crop in that mregion by 10-15 thousand tonnes.

The regular rain events have the potential to negatively impact on growers returns this year.

If wineries come out with ridiculously low winegrape pricing in 2022 growers will need to negotiate or look to other buyers to sell to. Please don't settle for a poor price. The industry doesn't need to be rocked by grape price swings that are not necessary.

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## BOARD ACTIVITIES REPORT



### Outstanding Fees

This season there were a number of wineries that delayed the forwarding to the Board of the statutory levy deducted from growers funds. These wineries had signed written agreements to pay these on or before 30 June 2021 but delays went out into October 2021.

It is a reminder for growers that the Board and growers can experience payment issues. Growers that are concerned about receiving payments should in the first instance contact the winery that purchased your fruit and consult your contract. In the second instance let the Board know and we can discuss legal steps if required.

### Board Election Update

As there were no further nominations from grower members for the 5 positions on the Board other than from those members that are already on the Board there will be no election.

The Board is now able to advise that the positions will continue to be held by Bruno Brombal, Robert Bellato, Tony Baggio, Frank Alampi and Bruno Altin for the next 3 years.

### Young Growers Group to be formed

Chairman Bruno Brombal announced at the Budget and Strategic Planning meeting his desire for the Board to form a development committee of young growers. He stated that we need to encourage the next generation of members to participate more in the industry and stand for the Board.

### Farewell Note from CEO Brian Simpson

Firstly I would like to offer my thanks to all growers and the Board for the opportunity to represent you. It has been a challenge and privilege at the same time.

I believe that the Riverina is an excellent producer of fine winegrapes and wines but it still retains a poor image within the Australian wine industry that over time will change. While I am not going to suggest that I know where this reputation comes from but it is present at the state and federal level within the industry. Perhaps it is time for a rebranding and renewal of the name.

During my time in the industry we saw the introduction of SEA Wines, South Eastern Australia. While it has worked well for consumers in terms of minimising seasonal wine variation I believe it hasn't helped this region become recognized.

In 2000 the Riverina was second to the Barossa Valley in region labeled wine exports. Now we are almost at the bottom of the list. Yes we have grown from 165KT to over 300KT and doubled our production area we are still not producing the volumes of winegrapes that will let our growers compete economically with the other inland regions.

When I joined the Board there were 650 growers now we have less than 300. It is a different industry, no more hand picking and pruning and sadly no more growers associations. Growers are less engaged in the industry now than they were 20 years ago.

Please take the time to participate in your industry and read the material, attend the workshops and meetings and ask questions and direct the Board to do what you want and need. It is important for its future.

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## BUDGET AND STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING REPORT

On Wednesday 27th October 2021 30 growers and partners and guests attended the Budget and Strategic Planning dinner meeting held by the Board.

The meeting which was open to all growers in the region is held to discuss and approve the 5 year Strategic Plan of the Board and the set the statutory fees and charges for funding of the Board.

Why growers more growers don't attend is concerning but those in attendance get to have their say on how

the levy funds are spent and what the rate charged on all growers for the forthcoming vintage.

The rate for 2022 will be \$3.90 per tonne fresh weight.

Growers approved a comprehensive expenditure budget for 2022 and discussion around the reserves of the Board was held with growers comfortable that the Board will maintain a solid financial approach and return excess funds in the future if and as required.

## REGIONAL FLY OVER TO OCCUR DECEMBER 2021

Updating of the ground imagery will occur this December across the MIA region including Hillston. It will provide the Board an opportunity to confirm the data it holds on the regional planting statistics. The last aerial imagery was taken in January 2017 and the Board is aware of many farm changes since that time.

Bringing forward the flyover date has been specifically done to enable the Board and NSW DPI to review vine vigor as the timing (around grape inflorescence) will enable a view of vines that may be under stress and allow the NSW DPI to review these areas in a bid to confirm that any stress is not caused by Phylloxera.

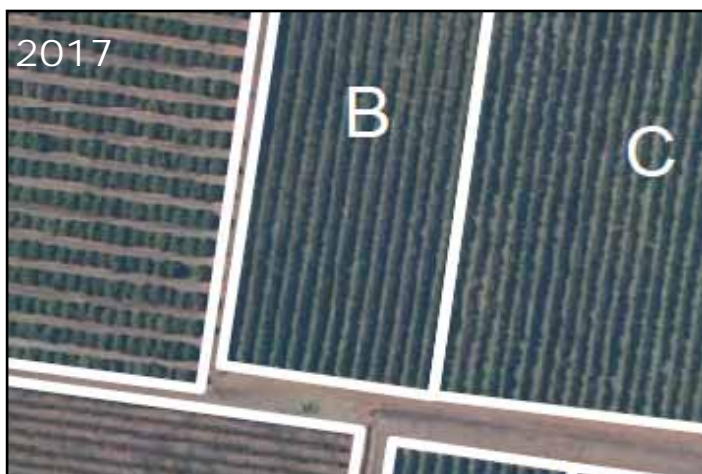
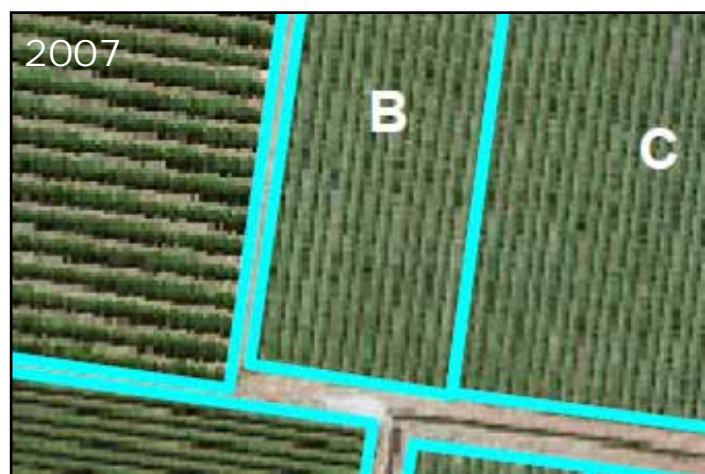
Growers are kindly reminded to let the office know of your vineyard updates. It is important for industry

analysis and planning that this data is collected and collated.

New plantings on virgin ground are particularly important to map. The region did at its peak have 22,000 hectares of winegrapes planted, it is now just above 20,000 hectares.

Growers wanting information about plantings in the region can contact the office. Recently all growers were sent the regional plantings analysis and yield information for 2021. It is hoped this report continues.

The images below show our images have gotten better over time and this will continue with the imagery expected to show 30cm as 1 pixel in size on a screen.



## PHYLLOXERA SURVEY FOR THE RIVERINA PLANNED FOR 2022

NSW DPI will be conducting Phylloxera surveillance in the Riverina post vintage 2022. The aim of this surveillance is to protect the continuity of vineyard and wine businesses, by ensuring that the region maintains its PEZ (Phylloxera Exclusion Zone) status.

NSW DPI will liaise with the Riverina Wine Grape Marketing Board regarding contacting growers as well as providing some resources and support to the region.

The project will focus on surveillance being conducted by industry, with coordination by NSW DPI. Surveillance will be based on targeting high risk areas identified through the engagement process and using imagery to identify suspect weak vines.

The aim is for industry to undertake self-surveillance and this is to decrease biosecurity risks to properties and assist with early detection and reporting.

The DNA probe method will be used due to its high sensitivity to detection and so that testing can be done at times that suit growers and wineries. NSW DPI will liaise with the Riverina Wine Grape Marketing Board regarding contacting growers about surveillance to ensure minimal disruptions to everyday business.

If your vineyard is selected as part of this surveillance program, as identified by imagery you will be contacted regarding Phylloxera surveillance on your vineyard.

If you have any further questions, please contact:

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## CHINA UPDATE

Source: ABC Rural 29/11/2021, By Cassandra Hough

### China's tariffs are squeezing the life out of the Australian wine industry's most lucrative market

South Australian Wine Industry Association chief executive Brian Smedley agrees the changing trading conditions as well as difficulties with shipping, the pandemic and the weather means there are significant headwinds heading into the 2022 vintage.

"For China we know that the market has basically collapsed. So, for bottled wine it means that for the last year it's been progressively ending and for many producers they are looking for alternative varieties," Mr Smedley said. "We know for grape growers there are contracts that have been made that are now being unmade in the sense that supply intakes are being looked at ahead of vintage 2022.

"We also know that the pricing has come off for red grapes in particular, given that China was a red-grape market. We're looking at alternative markets, but those alternative markets will take a long time to come on and won't necessarily replace the value or the volume of China."

The World Trade Organization will form a panel to investigate the dumping allegations, but it will be some time before it will make any findings.

### China also importing less wine

Prior to the imposition of tariffs, Australia was exporting the greatest volume of wine to China, accounting for 25 per cent of the imported wine market.

However, Wine Australia figures showed wine and other alcoholic beverage consumption was already on a downward trend.

Wine imports from Australia declined by 88 million litres in the 12 months to September, with only 55 million litres picked up through increased imports from other countries.

"I think that could be attributed to the fact that people are actually drinking more Chinese wine; they do have a significant amount of vineyards in China," Ms Triggs said.

The main countries to capitalise on Australia's gap in the market are Chile and Spain, whose wine imports come at a much lower average price.

## WHY DON'T YOU TEST THE COLOUR AND MATURITY OF YOUR GRAPES

The Board funds and operates a laboratory service during the vintage that allows growers free of charge to test the maturity and colour of winegrapes.

The pH and Titratable Acid (TA) of the grapes are recorded and reported along with the variety and baume. Results are generally the same day and can be sent to you directly to your phone.

Growers could look to develop a yearly portfolio of their winegrapes are capable of in terms of the vineyard qualities that would assist you in any future negotiations with buyers.

Growers for example that constantly achieve a high colour score can test it via our laboratory and file the information away for further reference.



## RIVERINA REGIONAL PROGRAM UPDATE

*Prepared by Katie Dunne NSW DPI*

Once again COVID19 changed the plans for workshops for the region. Due to the logistics involved, some of these have been postponed to next year, including a spray application workshop now scheduled for October 2022. However, COVID19 did not prevent some of these activities being started, such as field trials, installing agriculture-specific technology, sampling and planning for future events.

### AgTech at NSW DPI Griffith Research Station

This project is designed to trial commercially available soil moisture monitoring equipment and other agriculture specific technology for irrigation scheduling. So far, we have installed soil moisture probes and software platform (from CropX), soil probes (EnviroPro®), watermark sensors, pressure sensors and data loggers and software platform (from Green Brain) and a dendrometer, soil sensors and software platform (from Supplant).

This project is ongoing and discussions are underway for trialing other agriculture-specific technology both on-site and on other properties, including using up to date satellite imagery as a tool to aid vineyard management. As part of the Climate Smart Pilot project, there will also be a drone based at the research station.

A field day demonstrating the new equipment is planned for next year at the NSW DPI Griffith Research Station. Notification of the event will be promoted closer to the event.

The project is also focusing on irrigation scheduling with a workshop hosted by Robert Hoogers from NSW DPI planned in the region. As part of the irrigation project, several soil pits were dug on local sites, i.e. Griffith Research Station, Nericon and Whitton/Leeton. This has provided very useful information, especially for the



*Figure 1 (above): Robert Hoogers from NSW DPI installing one of many probes at the Griffith Research Station.*

Griffith Research Station and it highlighted the importance of understanding how soil type, structure and chemistry effects the size of the root zone and irrigation practices adopted.

### Investigating infection pathways for botrytis

This trial is being conducted in collaboration with De Bortoli Wines, in consultation with Jeremy Cass. The trial is focusing on infection pathways and the effect of spray timing using methods that have been adopted from previous work in other regions using precision viticulture tools. Commercial spray equipment will be used to apply treatments to whole rows with vines randomly selected for assessing botrytis later in the season. Samples will be taken to measure the incidence of botrytis after the spray at pre-bunch closure. Severity



## RIVERINA REGIONAL PROGRAM UPDATE - continued

and incidence will be assessed leading up to harvest over several weeks. Other vineyard characteristics will also be measured throughout the season.

### Sampling for grapevine trunk disease and viruses

This activity will provide resources for surveying and testing grapevines samples for grapevine trunk diseases and viruses. Samples suspected of grapevine trunk disease are being sent to NSW DPI's Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute (EMAI) laboratory while samples suspected of viruses are being sent interstate to the AWRI and Agriculture Victoria due to their expertise in grapevine viruses.

Results so far have found species that cause *Botryosphaeria* dieback, Esca/Petri disease and other fungal pathogens. The survey is ongoing, and all costs are covered by the Riverina Regional Program. Testing



for grapevine trunk diseases takes time, as some of the pathogens are very slow growing. Delays are also affected by other biosecurity issues and COVID19 testing using molecular techniques.

Grapevine trunk disease is becoming a key issue for the industry as vineyards continue to age and yields decline. The information collected as part of this project will help to shape future projects and provide growers with tools to manage and minimise the effects of the disease. Be vigilant for vines with stunted shoots, less vigorous growth or bare cordons.

### Pre-vintage workshop

Riverina Winegrape Growers, Riverina Winemakers Association, the AWRI and NSW DPI are currently planning some pre-vintage workshops. These will likely be held early next year in January 2022. Topics will include how to undertake accurate vineyard sampling, pest and disease assessments, grape supply agreements, sampling at the weighbridge, MOG (matter other than grapes) assessment and other analytical methods. The workshop will also cover grower and winemaker relationships and managing expectations. Presenters will be from NSW DPI, the AWRI and Australian Grape & Wine. It is likely the workshops will be conducted over several days and will involve some practical presentations.

### Disease management

This season has been challenging for many given the almost constant rain we have been having, and this has resulted in higher disease pressure than we all would like. There have been numerous downy mildew and powdery mildew outbreaks. Riverina's local agronomists have been collecting samples that will be sent to SARDI for fungicide resistance testing as part of their larger project, which has been going for several years. I have collected samples from different blocks where we have found resistance and helped growers manage it in their vineyards. Last season, results from *Botrytis cinerea* samples collected revealed some resistance to Group 9 and 17 fungicides and further testing will take place this year.

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## RIVERINA REGIONAL PROGRAM UPDATE - continued

As vintage rapidly approaches, it is a timely reminder that the current weather conditions are favourable for latent *Botrytis* infections. These do not just occur at flowering but can continue to occur during berry development. You might not see it, but it might be there. We have noticed that there is quite a bit of flowering debris being trapped in bunches and aborted berries. The fungus is a necrotroph, meaning it colonises dead and dying tissue or scars (e.g. scar from where the flowering cap has lifted). The cooler weather has also favoured light brown apple moth, which is a vector for the disease. Damaged berries due to hail, wind, birds

and insects will also be more susceptible to infection.

Ensuring you have good coverage and spray penetration is key to reducing your risk. Discuss with your contracting winery and agronomists as to options for controlling the disease. Remember that Pre Bunch Closure is the last chance to ensure spray penetration and coverage of bunch zone.

If you have any questions or would like your vineyard sampled for grapevine trunk disease, please feel free to contact Katie Dunne on 0429 361 563.

## CHARLES STURT UNIVERSITY ESTABLISHES NEW INSTITUTE

### Charles Sturt establishes Agriculture, Water and Environment Institute to drive impactful research.

The AWE Institute will be opened by January 2022 and will drive research outcomes that optimise farming systems and enhance the health of freshwater ecosystems.

**The Institute will employ more than 20 new, research-only positions and build on almost \$40 million realised this year for Charles Sturt-led research and partnerships in AWE**

Charles Sturt University has today announced it will establish the Agriculture, Water and Environment (AWE) Institute.

Along with rural health, cyber security and data science, Charles Sturt's research in AWE has been targeted for strategic investment, with the University committed to research which has impact across Australia and globally.

The AWE Institute will be opened by January 2022 and is a key plank of this investment which will drive research outcomes that optimise farming systems and enhance the health of freshwater ecosystems.

The AWE Institute will employ more than 20 new, research-only positions and invest in dedicated business development support to enhance the

University's ability to secure funding for research projects.

Charles Sturt University Vice-Chancellor, Professor Renée Leon, said research remains one of the University's highest strategic priorities.

"Research is, and will always be, a vital part of what Charles Sturt University does," she said.

*"We will deliver our research goals - in agriculture, water and the environment, as well as rural health, cyber security and data science - under a bold new strategic vision to be carried out on our regional campuses and in our regional communities."*

"Establishing the AWE Institute is an important milestone for Charles Sturt University, one which will prove a cornerstone of the collaboration with our partners on research with impact."

Charles Sturt University Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), Professor Michael Friend (pictured), said the AWE Institute will integrate important research projects in the University's footprint across the Murray-Darling Basin.

"The AWE Institute will build on Charles Sturt University's existing research strengths in agriculture, water and the environment to generate outcomes which

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## CHARLES STURT UNIVERSITY ESTABLISHES NEW INSTITUTE

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enhance farming systems and freshwater ecosystems in the decades to come," he said.

*"The AWE Institute will centralise not only existing research but also the funding opportunities for future projects so that Charles Sturt University and its partners can produce more impactful research which benefits regional Australia."*

The AWE Institute announcement comes in the wake of another in September that researchers from Charles Sturt will lead the \$3.6 million Next Generation Water Engineering and River Management Hub.

The Albury-Wodonga-based Water Hub will support eight new, regionally based positions within the University and will develop solutions to the problems threatening inland Australia's waterways, including poor water quality and diminishing fish stocks.

That project is the latest in almost \$40 million realised this year for Charles Sturt-led research and partnerships in AWE, including:

The Southern NSW Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub at Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga.

The Global Digital Farm - Australia's first 'hands-free' farm - built in collaboration with Food Agility Co-operative Research Centre. The planned expansion of the AgriSciences Research and Business Park (AgriPark)

The University's research partnerships with the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI), NSW Wine Industry Association and others will continue within the AWE Institute.

DPI Director General, Mr Scott Hansen, said the DPI

has worked closely with Charles Sturt over the years on important and innovative research projects that have supported the wine and grape, grain and red meat sectors.

"Our collaboration over many years in the various centres has delivered many benefits for primary industries in NSW, including new disease-resistant grapevine selections in cool and warm wine regions, reducing the impact of herbicide resistance, and a range of research on red meat to support producers to gain greater value from their product," he said.

*"The new AWE Institute will see us collaborate to work on some of the most challenging issues for the agriculture sector, such as adapting to changes in climate and focusing on the increasing biosecurity threats we face."*

"These challenges are multisectoral and are across all regions, and we have world-class facilities and researchers whose contribution will be key to the success of the new Institute."

The AWE Institute will operate with a hub-and-spoke model centred at Wagga Wagga, with ongoing and future research projects to be based there and at Albury-Wodonga.

The University's three research centres presently undertaking AWE research - the Institute for Land, Water and Society (ILWS), the National Wine and Grape Industry Centre (NWGIC) and the Graham Centre for Agricultural Innovation (Graham Centre) - will continue to operate until their accreditation ends on 31 December, 2021.

All funded research will continue to be supported from 2022, either within the AWE Institute or elsewhere at the University.

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