



Western SARE

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WINEGRAPE IPM IN SONOMA CO.

Situation

The Sonoma County Grape Growers Association initiated in 2000 an integrated pest management program that facilitated grower-to-grower education. The program proved effective in changing

Farmer/Rancher Grant

Title: Integrated Pest Management and Sustainable Grape Production in Sonoma County

Project Number: FW03-007

Principal Investigator

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SARE Grant: \$13,000

grower practices. Continuing the program, it was thought, could broaden IPM perspectives and help growers reduce the use of pesticides being reviewed under the Food Quality Protection Act.

Further, the program could facilitate the association's initiative to promote the Sustainable Winegrowing Program sponsored by the Wine Institute and the California Association of Winegrape Growers, which, in turn, will encourage growers to self-assess the sustainability of their farming practices and develop improvement plans.

Objectives

- Decrease unnecessary pesticide use whenever possible
- Increase use of reduced-risk or organic pesticides when treatments are



needed

- Reassure the non-farming community that grape growers are committed to safe, sustainable grape production

Actions

Venues for grower-to-grower meetings were four demonstration vineyards established in Sonoma County, one for each major American Viticulture Area (AVA), or wine appellation, in the county: Alexander Valley, Dry Creek Valley, Russian River Valley, and Sonoma Valley. Producer

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Nick Frey, right, consults with John Clendenen of Clendenen Vineyard Management, center, and Keith Horn of Clos du Bois Wines.



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<http://wsare.usu.edu>

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WINEGRAPE IPM IN SONOMA CO.

cooperators from each were:

Alexander Valley

Keith Horn, Vineyard Manager, Clos du Bois Wines, Geyserville

Russian River Valley

Dennis Devitt, Vineyard Manager, Gallo Vineyards Inc. Healdsburg

Dry Creek Valley

John Clendenen, Vineyard Manager, Clendenen Vineyard Management LLC, Healdsburg

Diane Kenworthy, Vineyard Manager, Barricia Vineyards, Sonoma

Monthly grower meetings were held April through July to facilitate IPM education. An annual field day was held in August to review pest monitoring data and pest management decisions for each demonstration vineyard.

Results

Two-thirds of those surveyed for the IPM grower appellation meetings said they changed their management practices as a result of the meetings. Changes included:

- Minimized use of pesticides and fungicides
- Exhibited greater tolerance toward wildlife
- Started managing nymph counts with monitoring sheets from the IPM book
- Showed a greater tolerance for pests
- Experimented with using mulch, owl boxes, and new pesticides
- Conducted more monitoring before spraying
- Edged toward the use of 'softer sprays'

The project had hoped to draw at least 90 producers to monthly meetings, at least 125 to the annual IPM Field Day, and at least 25 non-farming community members to the IPM Field Day. Average



Grape growers listen as a vineyard manager discusses his IPM and organic practices.

— Photo by Judy Tuhtan

grower attendance at monthly meetings was 93 in 2003 and 99 in 2004. Field day attendance exceeded 150 both years, and 25 from the community attended in 2003 and 30 in 2004.

The project team also hoped to implement the Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Program with at least 75 growers. As a result of the program:

- More than 370 growers and wineries attended a code workshop in Sonoma County
- 200 vineyard owners and managers, who farm 15,000 acres (25% of Sonoma County's wine acreage), have completed and submitted self-assessments to be used for county and state summaries



Judy Tuhtan, right, IPM Coordinator for the Sonoma County Grape Growers Association, chats with Kristi DeOrme of the Sonoma County Farm Bureau during a gathering of Sonoma County wine producers.

Potential Benefits

The greatest impacts from the IPM program are that growers are:

- Increasing their use of pest monitoring results
- Showing an increased tolerance for uneconomic levels of pests, including weeds, insects, and mites
- Increasing their use of reduced-risk pesticides

The monthly growers meetings are attended by 10% of Sonoma County's 963 grape growers.

The program has also increased awareness of reduced-risk alternatives, particularly to pesticides under Food Quality Protection Act review.

The IPM program may not increase yields, but it does contribute to sustainable production and improved quality. As an indicator of quality, Sonoma County grape prices were \$1,947 a ton in 2003 compared with a California statewide average of \$471 a ton, as reported in the CA Grape Crush Report.

"The continuity of using the four demonstration vineyards as working examples of grape growing for five consecutive years and having those cutting edge vineyard managers share their knowledge of grape growing imparts example over word." said Principal Investigator Nick Frey in the project's final report