



SUSTAINABILITY FROM THE GROUND UP

## SUSTAINABILITY SOLUTIONS for the California Winegrowing Sector

### Software, services and certification – from ground to glass

In 2001, the Wine Institute and the California Association of Winegrape Growers formed the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance (CSWA) to design and implement the first of its kind, crop-specific, producer to processor, sustainability program called the Sustainable Winegrowing Program (SWP). The **SureHarvest Professional Services** team led a multi-stakeholder process that resulted in defining the mission, vision and values of the SWP. Next, SureHarvest facilitated a 50-member team to build the Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices, a self-assessment workbook covering 227 vineyard and winery practices in 14 chapters.

The Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices was transferred from a 3-ring binder to an online platform called the **SureHarvest Sustainability MIS**. This web-based system allows growers and winery processors to complete assessments online, file action plans and compliance documentation, access educational content, stay informed of industry events and submit performance reports electronically.

From 2002 – 2004, SureHarvest **Professional Services** coordinated seventy-two workshops with over 1000 participants from 800 vineyard enterprises and 125 winery facilities to complete the self-assessments. With data from the **Sustainability MIS**, SureHarvest prepared benchmark reports with aggregate results for the trade associations to analyze industry-wide progress. Confidential reports were provided to individual growers to compare performance among their peers. The 2004 identified areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

Armed with concrete data from the 2004 report, representing 23% of vineyard acres and 38% of winery case production, IPM adoption was identified as a target area to improve sustainability performance. SWP program managers utilized the **Sustainability MIS** to schedule, promote and track participation in grower outreach activities, including field days, trainings, assessment workshops and on-farm demonstrations of sustainable growing



practices. From 2004-2006, over 5000 vintners and growers attended 88 educational workshops.

In 2006, SWP participants re-assessed performance and compared results with initial benchmarks. The CSWA 2006 Progress report revealed that grower performance increased for 31 of the 38 pest management criteria measured and an 8% gain was marked for improvements across all criteria. The next Progress Report will be released in late 2009.

To date, more than 1300 wineries and vineyards participating in the California SWP use the **Sustainability MIS** to assess, benchmark and report their farming practices and sustainability performance. This level of participation represents 60% of the case volume of wine production in California.

Farming 'sustainably' means farming in ways that increase efficiencies, cut costs and conserve resources. To make optimal use of resources requires knowledge of everything happening on the ground at any given time. The **SureHarvest Farming MIS** gives growers access to their farming data to inform daily farming management decisions about how to best utilize their farming resources. With **Farming MIS**, growers can schedule, track, map, analyze and report all farming activities, including scouting, chemical-fertilizer applications, irrigation, yield forecasting, harvest and labor. With the robust reporting capabilities of **Farming MIS**, growers and wineries can easily access documentation to support food safety GAP audits or third-party certifications for sustainability or quality.

**SureHarvest Farming MIS** is employed by 6 of the top 12 U.S. Wine Companies. Over 50% of the premium winegrowing acres are managed by growers or vineyard managers using **Farming MIS**. The system is flexible enough to be used by growers of all sizes, from 40 acres to 15,000.

The SWP was built on the foundational work of the Lodi-Woodbridge Winegrape Commission, who created certification standards for winegrapes grown under the eco-label, *Lodi Rules for Sustainable Winegrowing*. Winegrape growers meeting the standards for Lodi Rules are audited by a third-party and certified by **Protected Harvest**, a nonprofit standards setting and certification program governed by a board of directors that includes leading environmental NGO's, agricultural scientists and practitioners. Lodi Rules uses **Protected Harvest** to audit and certify winegrape growers who align with Lodi Rules standards. Growers record their assessments using the **Sustainability MIS** platform, providing them the ease of electronic documentation and reporting to **Protected Harvest** auditors.

**SureHarvest** continues to support the innovation of the California wine industry on its path to long-term sustainability. **SureHarvest Professional Services** is beginning to develop quantitative environmental metric calculators to correlate farming practices with performance outcomes. For example, **SureHarvest** is currently developing a web-based greenhouse gas calculator within the **Sustainability MIS** platform for the wine industry to measure emissions from grape production to wine processing.

For more information, please contact **SureHarvest** at 831.477.7797 or [www.sureharvest.org](http://www.sureharvest.org).