



## Highlight of the Month: Developing an Action Plan

A plan of action can help solidify thinking as to what sustainable winegrowing methods are suitable for your business, as well as what can be accomplished within your budget and work schedule.

There are many compelling reasons to adopt more sustainable winegrowing practices, such as increasing performance, saving costs or preventing environmental or safety problems. To identify one's own business priorities, begin with an assessment of vineyard and winery operations with the Sustainable Winegrowing Practices (SWP) workbook.

This newsletter presents steps in developing an action plan and highlights how Wine Institute vintners

prioritized their efforts to improve business practices and create their own action plans.

### Steps in developing your action plan:

1. Upon completing your assessment, determine whether the potential concerns can be addressed, or if the situation can be managed in a better way.
2. If the concerns can be addressed, decide *which* concerns are most important to you, *what* actions can be taken to improve the

situation, and *when* you can act.

3. For each concern, answer the following questions to help determine their importance:

- Will safety be improved?
- Does the current situation meet all regulations?
- Will any surface water or ground water be affected?
- Will fish or wildlife be harmed?
- Can the situation be improved easily or with difficulty?
- How much will it cost to

make the improvement?

- How long will it take?
  - How will it affect yield and wine quality?
  - How will it affect other farm operations if this situation is changed?
4. Write down your action plans for the issues you have decided that you can address. Using a worksheet from the SWP workbook, write down the workbook chapter and specific criteria number where the area of concern appears. Determine an appropriate plan of action and timetable.

ACTION PLAN				
Workbook Chapter	Criteria Number	Criteria and Area of Concern	Plan of Action	Timetable for Action
Pest Management	Criteria 6-1 Page 6-11	<u>Vineyard Monitoring for Insect and Mite Pests</u>  Category 1: My vineyard is rarely if ever monitored	Monitor every two weeks	Next growing season
Pest Management	Criteria 6-37 Page 6-68	<u>Pesticide Emergency Response Plan</u>  Category 1: I maintain minimum legal requirements or less for a pesticide emergency response plan	Contact Ag Commissioner's office for information on what a typical emergency response plan looks like; figure out how to make it work on my ranch; train both tractor drivers; post plan by the sprayer fill-up.	Immediately

1. Decide what issues you can address.

2. Specify the issue and your area of concern

3. Determine an appropriate plan of action.

4. Create a realistic timetable for carrying out the action.

(Excerpted from the Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices Self-Assessment workbook.)

## 1980s Sales Growth Initiated Trinchero Sustainable Efforts

Skyrocketing sales growth of the Sutter Home brand in the 1980s was a major motivation for the Trinchero family to adopt more sustainable winegrowing practices. With shipments jumping 50 percent nearly every year that decade, one of the first things to be outgrown was the process water system. Engineering new leach fields for the septic system was impractical because it required too much land for what is now a 10-million case production. The family immediately enacted winery water conservation programs to reduce the flow of water to the system. Today, one gallon of water is used for

trimming costs, it naturally led to other conservation measures. The following outlines some highlights at the winery facility:

### Winery Water Conservation (SWP Workbook Chapter 10)

Trinchero diverts from disposal an estimated 50 million gallons of process water annually. Saving water requires performing a series of simple things, such as using high-pressure, low-flow nozzles with shut-off valves on hoses, and sweeping floors instead of rinsing. Staff uses a set amount of water for cleaning tanks, barrels and bottles, and water meter data is monitored for any unusual patterns in water

requires a design to handle the industry average of water used per gallon of wine. To prove that Trinchero uses less water than average, Torres says meters were installed on all water sources to measure use. With at least two years of flow data history, the winery convinced the county to allow the building of a smaller system on fewer acres. Flow meter manufacturer directory: [www.liquid-flow-meters.com/index.html](http://www.liquid-flow-meters.com/index.html).

### Recycling (SWP Chapter 12)

Growth also led to recycling activities to reduce landfill disposal costs. This includes the composting of pomace, diatomaceous earth and grass, and mulching shrubbery. The winery recycles corrugated material, paper, glass, plastic shrink wrap, scrap metal and electronic equipment. Old working equipment is donated to charity. The winery purchases bulk glass and tries to select other environmentally preferred supplies. For three years in a row, Trinchero has won an award from California's Waste Reduction Awards Program (WRAP). For waste prevention ideas, visit: [www.ciwmb.ca.gov](http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov).

### Energy Conservation (SWP Chapter 9)

Saving power became a priority when the electric bill doubled during the 2001 energy crisis. Trinchero made night harvesting standard to cut energy costs

by operating equipment at off-peak hours. Less power is also needed to refrigerate the crush, as grapes arriving at night are 20 degrees cooler in temperature. Most importantly, the acids and chemistry of clusters picked at night are better in achieving higher quality wine. Other savings resulted from insulating a new warehouse and adding roof fans to pull in cool night air instead of installing air conditioning. The winery has saved nearly \$700,000 or 16 percent annually on its electric bill. For ideas, see: [www.energy.ca.gov/efficiency](http://www.energy.ca.gov/efficiency).

### Lighting Upgrades (SWP Chapters 9-6 to 9-8)

Trinchero replaced their lighting system with an energy saving fluorescent system, which doubled the light output and lowered power usage by about 40 percent. Their investment was paid back from savings in one-half year. Torres monitors power use with spreadsheets and has PG&E review their energy use regularly. For cash rebates on lighting installations and saving energy tips, visit: [www.pge.com](http://www.pge.com).

As a member of the Wine Institute and CAWG Joint Committee for the Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices, Torres says the winery is committed to expanding environmental stewardship. "The Code workbook suggests new techniques and has given us a broader perspective on why and how we do things at the winery. It is a tool to help keep our industry headed in the right direction."

Photo courtesy of Trinchero Family Estates



Night harvesting has become standard in many areas of California to reduce energy bills and raise wine quality. Above, a machine harvester picks grapes at Trinchero Family Estates.

every gallon of wine, far below the industry average.

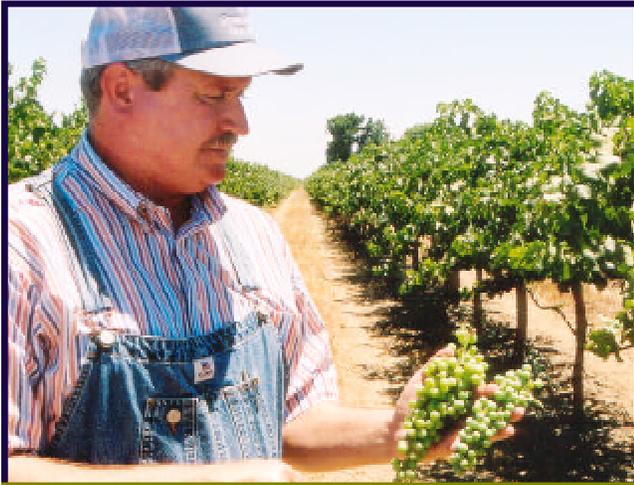
"Conservation just made business sense because it was efficient, sustainable and improved the bottom line," says Bob Torres, vice president of operations for Trinchero Family Estates.

With water-saving efforts so successful in

use. For ideas, visit: [www.epa.gov/owm/water-efficiency/index.htm](http://www.epa.gov/owm/water-efficiency/index.htm).

### Conservative Process Water System (SWP Chapters 10-3 to 10-5)

It was not enough to have an excellent water conservation program. For a use permit to expand a process water system, the county



**Far left:** John Simpson of Simpson Meadow Winery in Madera displays a cluster using traditional irrigation, alongside a smaller cluster produced with deficit irrigation. The more intensely flavored smaller berry clusters will go into his super premium label.

**Left:** The canopy is rolled over to the sunny side of the vine to protect the fruit from the direct sun and expose the clusters to indirect light for better color and flavor.

## Developing an Action Plan for Madera Winegrowing

Vintner John Simpson of Simpson Meadow Winery is determined to produce the highest quality wine with Madera County winegrapes. With small French oak barrels, a bladder press, fine winemaking and winegrowing techniques, along with sustainable winegrowing practices, he has won gold medals at state and national wine competitions. His Madera grapes have earned a “Simpson Vineyard” designation on Viognier wines produced by a Stag’s Leap area winery.

Sustainable winegrowing has been a central part of Simpson’s strategy for higher wine quality. After hosting a Wine Institute/CAWG sustainable winegrowing workshop last November for Madera winegrowers, he found that he was already doing many of the practices. The seminar workbook provided a roadmap to expand upon what he was doing.

“Budget was the primary factor in determining what to do first for our plan of action because of the economic situation in San Joaquin Valley,” says Simpson. “We’re doing the

quality enhancing methods one at a time where it is feasible and as resources permit.” Some of his top priorities were as follows:

### Save Fuel and Installment Costs with Low-Emission Engines (SWP Chapter 9-4)

The Air Resources Control Board provided Simpson an 80 percent rebate on the cost of installing lower-emission engines for two irrigation pumps and four mechanical grape harvesters. Each new engine, certified to lower NOx emissions, reduces fuel use by 15 percent or about one-half gallon of fuel per hour for Simpson. He saves \$300 per month per pump when they are operational. For rebate information, see “The Carl Moyer Program: Incentives for Cleaner Heavy-Duty Engines.” [www.arb.ca.gov/msprog/moyer/moyer.htm](http://www.arb.ca.gov/msprog/moyer/moyer.htm). Proposition 40 provides \$50 million through 2004 for this program.

### Improve Profits with Sustainable Winegrowing Events (SWP Chapter 15-14)

Simpson is building a local consumer following for his

wines by holding ecological seminars and educational tastings to show and tell how sustainable methods achieve high wine quality. These sustainable events and other promotions help increase brand loyalty and profits while establishing a dialogue with the community.

### Reduce Herbicide Use (SWP Chapters 6-20 to 6-25)

Simpson uses herbicides for weeds in alternate years, with a limited amount of mechanical cultivation. To control dust and mites resulting from tillage, he has altered his cultivators so that they will clean up a smaller area under the vine. He is finding the balance between using both herbicides and cultivation. Rye grass cover crops between the rows also help reduce dust, cool the vineyard temperature and attract beneficial insects. The broad-based strategy helps ensure success, if one technique does not work.

### Raise Wine Quality With Canopy Management (SWP Chapters 3-1 to 3-7)

To expose the fruit appropriately to light, Simpson is experimenting with rolling

the canopy over the vine to open up the shady side to indirect light. The heavier canopy on the sunny side of the vine maintains the proper fruit temperature, while the indirect light on the berries enhances both color and flavor.

### Lower Energy Costs For Drip Irrigation (SWP Chapter 9)

Simpson drip irrigates during off-peak hours in the evening and weekends to reduce costs for energy. His PG&E bill is 27 percent less by using time-of-use rate schedules. Watering at night also means less evaporation. For agricultural energy-saving tips go online to:

[www.flexyourpower.ca.gov/state/fyp/fyp\\_homepage.jsp](http://www.flexyourpower.ca.gov/state/fyp/fyp_homepage.jsp).

Currently, winegrapes from 40 of Simpson’s 1800 Madera acres go into the wines of both Simpson Meadow and Chumeia Vineyards in Paso Robles, where he has an interest as a partner. With a string of wine competition medals and local community interest, John Simpson is proving that sustainable practices are not only viable in Madera, but make good business sense.



# THE CODE OF SUSTAINABLE WINEGROWING PRACTICES



**W**ine Institute and the California Association of Winegrape Growers (CAWG) are holding workshops throughout the state to introduce the “Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices” to the California wine community. This 490-page workbook is a code of best management practices promoting social responsibility and environmental stewardship in making wine from the ground to the glass. Through the voluntary self-assessment process of the workbook, California’s vintners and growers gain information on how to conserve natural resources, protect the environment and enhance relationships with employees, neighbors and local communities.

To date, more than 70 workshops have been held throughout California to help the industry adopt the Code. At the workshops, vintners and growers meet to review the workbook chapters and use the self-assessment criteria to evaluate their vineyard and winery operations. About 50 percent of the state’s wine production and 30

percent of the vineyard acreage has been self-evaluated for sustainable practices by participants attending the workshops.

Using the data collected from the workbook evaluation forms, Wine Institute and CAWG, through their 501(c)3 foundation, the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance, will issue a “California Wine Community Sustainability Report” in the next year.

The California Department of Food and Agriculture has recognized the importance of this project by awarding a \$280,000 grant for widespread implementation of the Code’s sustainable practices. In October 2003, the Department of Pesticide Regulation also awarded Wine Institute and CAWG the “IPM Innovator of the Year Award” for the Code’s work in pest management. Additionally, American Farmland Trust gave the program a \$150,000 grant in November 2003 to measure the adoption of integrated pest management (IPM) methods. Special IPM workshops will soon be launched.

More than 50 members of Wine Institute and CAWG developed the Code workbook over two years. The book builds upon the successful programs throughout the state. Environmentalists, regulators, university educators

and social equity groups also provided expertise to the project. For information on the project or to schedule a workshop, call 415/512-0151, e-mail [swp@wineinstitute.org](mailto:swp@wineinstitute.org), or visit [www.wineinstitute.org](http://www.wineinstitute.org).



After creating an action plan, Herb Quady of Quady Winery decided his priority was refining the irrigation in their 10-acre vineyard. By investing \$300 in an expert to make a GPS soil map to determine the moisture needs of the different soils in the plot, he developed a new drip irrigation plan that regulated more precisely the amount of water needed. Quady now saves \$1000 annually on pumping costs in this vineyard. “Much of the Code workbook involves helping people gain more information about their vineyards and winery. We learned that we could conserve more water.”

**This newsletter is available online in pdf format on Wine Institute’s web site at: [www.wineinstitute.org/communications/highlight/ActionPlanApril2004.pdf](http://www.wineinstitute.org/communications/highlight/ActionPlanApril2004.pdf)**

Copyright: © 2004 Wine Institute. No part of this publication may be reproduced by any means without the prior written consent of Wine Institute.



Printed on recycled paper