

Ten Thousand Acres Certified

UNDER THE LODI RULES PROGRAM IN 2008

BY CLIFF OHMART Sustainable Winegrowing Director, Lodi Winegrape Commission

The Lodi Rules program had another significant year of growth in 2008. More than 10,000 vineyard acres achieved Lodi Rules certification from Protected Harvest in 2008, more than 10% of the regions acreage. There are currently 19 wines in the marketplace that bear the Lodi Rules logo from wines made from the 2005, 2006 and 2007 vintages. This number will increase significantly when 2008 vintages are bottled. Michael-David Vineyards and Winery continues to pay a \$50 per ton bonus for certified winegrapes and other wineries are discussing ways to encourage growers to join the program.

The discussion of sustainable farming has intensified in all of California agriculture with the topic showing up on the agendas of virtually every meeting and conference. For the second year in a row, sustainability is one of the topics discussed in the opening plenary session of the Unified Wine & Grape Symposium in Sacramento. The first annual Green Wine Summit was held in Santa Rosa in early December.

Sustainable certification is also receiving increased attention. Protected Harvest, who is the third party certifier of the Lodi Rules program, certified over 20,000 acres of crops in 2008 besides winegrapes, including stone fruit, potatoes and mushrooms. Moreover, there is now another California wine region with a sustainable certification program. The Central Coast Vineyard team pilot tested Sustainability in Practice (SIP) in 2008 in the Central Coast region (www.sipthegoodlife.org). There is also activity at the state level. The California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance, CSWA, is in the process of developing a certification program for participants in the Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices Workbook program, which was based on the Lodi Winegrower's Workbook program. CSWA is a non-profit organization put together by the

California Association of Winegrape Growers and the Wine Institute (www.sustainablewinegrowing.org).

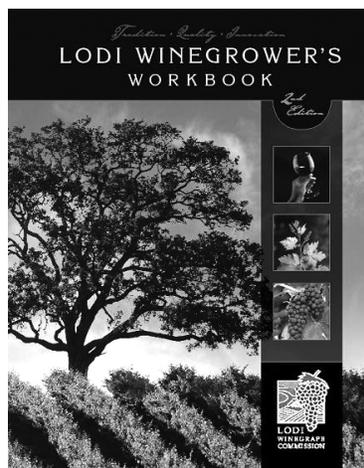
The CSWA certification program will differ from the Lodi Rules program in that it will be process-based. Growers will qualify by assessing themselves using the Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices Workbook and then demonstrating they are on the path of continual improvement in sustainability by writing and carrying out action plans. Lodi Rules is a practice-based program requiring growers to use specific vineyard practices and be at a particular level of sustainability.

LODI RULES – WHAT IS IN IT FOR YOU?

One answer to this question is obvious if you sell grapes to Michael-David Vineyards, you get an extra \$50 per ton. We hope that other wineries will follow their lead and also offer a bonus for certified grapes. There are other financial benefits, too. Pan-Pacific Underwriters is offering a 10% reduction on insurance premiums to growers participating in the Lodi Rules programs. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), through the EQIP program, will pay growers a per acre amount during the first year they join the program. Furthermore, participation in the Lodi Rules

program will improve growers' chances to receive other NRCS EQIP dollars for projects such as installing drip irrigation systems (for more information on these programs contact Dave Simpson at the NRCS office in Stockton 472-7127).

There are other benefits to participating in the program. One is that in the extremely competitive climate in the wine industry it is important to be able to differentiate your grapes and wine from those of other growers and wineries. Getting a vineyard certified Lodi Rules sustainable is one way to do so. Another is related to winegrape quality. The Lodi growers and vineyard consultants who



helped develop the farming standards for the Lodi Rules made a conscious effort to require farming practices that not only benefit the environment but also result in higher quality winegrapes. Based on the comments from growers who have joined the program I think this goal was achieved. For example, Robert Abercrombie, vineyard manager for Sutter Home and one of the first growers to join the Lodi Rules, said in 2008 “I have been growing winegrapes for 29 years and there is no question the Lodi Rules program has

made me a better winegrower”.

If you are interested in finding out more about the program or signing up in 2009 now is the time to consider it. I will be holding workshops in February and March designed to help growers new to the program understand how to meet the certification requirements and do so in a way that fits with their style of vineyard management. Please feel free to contact me by phone at 209-367-4727 or by email at cliff@lodiwine.com.

IN THE VINEYARD

BY PAUL S. VERDEGAAL

University of California
Cooperative Extension Farm Advisor

TOPICS:

Rains/Winter Irrigation
Spring Disease
Weeds
Web sites to check
Vine Nutrients
VMB/GWSS/LBAM

Nine years after the traumatic transition to a new millennium brings some continued challenges. One concern is that it looks to be another dry year in 2009. Currently we are about 60% of normal rainfall. Temperatures have also been cold again for a third year, but with more fog than has been seen in a few years. Almost like the “good old days” when the sun wasn’t seen for a month at a time. Because of the low temperatures soil conditions are not severely dry, but soil moisture is beginning to deplete.

If no significant rain (0.25 inch or more) falls in the next two or three weeks, it probably would be a good idea to consider a quick mid-winter irrigation for

most vineyards; and if a water source is available. Winter weeds are minimal from dry conditions so far and the cold foggy weather helps reduce stored soil water loss to less than a 0.1 acre inches per week. Vines are dormant, but some soil moisture is needed to meet demand from winter cover, keep vine roots healthy and maintain good shoot growth at budbreak. Also moderate soil moisture helps avoid the temporary boron deficiency (Barnes’s Syndrome) and slow, erratic shoot growth. Depending on the soil texture and depth, a few hours (4 to 8 hours for a 10 to 14 day period) of irrigation timed with a rain if possible. This would help vines over winter and begin strong growth in the spring.

Dry conditions have slowed weed growth, but now is a good time to make a note of weed species that have germinated. A yearly assessment can provide a baseline to monitor any shift in weed species and to consider herbicide choice or timings to manage any potential resistance development. For more information on weeds you

can get a lot of information at the web site www.wric.ucdavis.edu or at www.ipm.ucdavis.edu. While out in the vineyard keep an eye out for gopher activity. It seems the populations have been building the last two years as part of a long term rise in numbers. They have been active, maybe from the dry soil conditions making digging more obvious, but they can increase in numbers quickly even with good raptor or owl presence.

Chill hours (below 45° F) have been good and though grapes do not require much more than 200 or 400 total (depending on variety and conditions) chill hours accumulation to make for a uniform and strong budbreak. There were 492 hours for November/December this year compared to an average of 452 over the last 12 years, with probably some more to come. You may hear talk of quality chilling hours and chill portions; they are useful, but more important for orchard crops.

Dry soil conditions in 2008 seemed to intensify potassium problems, as the year before. But even a little more so as the last half of dormancy was drier than the first half, which was the opposite of 2007. This year it looks like we are definitely going to be dry early and will have to see what follows. With vine nutrients in mind, it may be good to invest in some potassium, but watch the nitrogen this year especially if the crop looks average and early shoot growth is strong. Vines should bounce back this year, but if it has been a while and the budget allows, an application of potassium anytime between now and the first few irrigation sets can help stay ahead of vine demands for the long run. Petiole samples at bloom are not perfect, but can provide some guideline to potassium needs along with micronutrients. For both potassium and nitrogen, you can often get close enough by estimating vine needs on a

RAINFALL TOTALS FOR 2005-2009

	Total Inches	Oct-Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
2005	24.7	10.4	3.2	3.3	3.5	1.4	1.3
2006	23.7	7.1	5.4	1.1	5.2	3.8	0.8
2007	12.1	4.6	0.27	4.3	0.6	2.3	0.1
2008	13.6	4.5	7.3	1.8	0.1	0	0
2009	?	4.0					

percentage of last years crop and compare that to the potential crop load this year. Remember to check irrigation wells for water nitrate levels if that has not ever been done to adjust for any nitrogen applied with irrigation water. Also don't "rush" the nitrogen application before bloom unless you are using a slow release fertilizers, compost or manures.

Powdery mildew hasn't been too much of a problem in the last couple of years, but continued vigilance is required each year. Recently, it has been suggested that a late dormant lime sulfur spray is a total waste of time and money. In some respects that might have some validity, as we do not tend to see a lot of cleistothecia (over-wintering spores of the sexual stage of Powdery mildew) in this area compared to the coastal areas. But under the right conditions there can be some clesitothecia in any given year. Additionally, lime sulfur is not good for Lodi Rules growers. Generally a good application (early and complete coverage) of wettable sulfur or one of the systemics (budget allowing) is just as good, if not better than lime sulfur. What lime sulfur can provide at sufficient high gallons per acre is some added protection in problem sites or susceptible varieties and also provide some efficacy against Esca or measles caused by Phaeoacromonium and Phaeomoniella in addition to powdery mildew.

As mentioned last year and again this year; good vine training after planting, not stressing young vines and avoiding large pruning wounds are currently the most effective strategies in dealing with the less aggressive but still threatening Vine Decline organisms, which are trunk canker "cousins" of Eutypa Dieback and Bot

Canker. From budbreak until late May is a good time to be on the lookout for Eutypa affected shoots or for dead spurs most probably from Bot canker (*Botryosphaeria* spp). Although foliar symptoms are different they both cause the pie shaped cankers in older wood. Mark those vines and begin to think about a re-training strategy and or pruning later in the dormant season. If you have specific questions check www.ipm.ucdavis.edu for IPM Guidelines or give me a call.

If it does get wet this year, Phomopsis and powdery mildew sprays of wettable sulfur after bud break can be very effective, although there are many new materials and captan is still available. Check the UC IPM guidelines and talk with your PCA or give me a call. Wettable sulfur after budbreak can be a very effective and inexpensive choice for doubling up on an early start to powdery mildew control. The addition of copper is a little less definitive as a help, except with Downy mildew and maybe a little for Botrytis shoot blight. Whatever the material of choice ends up being, a good powdery mildew program includes: some sulfur (dust or wettable), rotation of materials between years, and complete coverage, are each important. I should not mention the five letter word of frost, but what little evidence exists for copper as a frost protect ant is just that. If timing is perfect and coverage perfect and it is a very mild frost event there might be some benefit, most of which is peace of mind. The only trial we did ("way back in the 90's) in San Joaquin County by "fortunate" accident showed no effect of copper against a frost on Grenache plot.

Remember to stay on the look out for

the presence of Vine Mealy bug (VMB), which is continuing to spread throughout the state and in scattered locations around San Joaquin County. The over wintering crawlers tend to be small and not active until after budbreak, but if you find vines with heavy amounts of black sooty mold, check those vines very closely and mark them. Look in any cracks crevices and loose bark and even down into the soil on large roots. Also note if there is a high amount of ant activity fairly early. We do have some hope that biological control may improve and there is ongoing research locally and statewide to improve the number of species we may have to help minimize severe infestations. In any case new materials, such as Movento (spirotetramat) and some standards like Admire and Venom are available with some marketing restrictions yet. (Talk with your PCA or check www.ipm.ucdavis.edu or www.vinemealybug.uckac.edu . And of course do not forget about the Glassy Winged Sharp Shooter (GWSS), and now the Light Brown Apple Moth (LBAM), for now only reported in Contra Costa County.

Just a reminder from last year, for some general information two new web sites may be worth checking out if you have some free time; the Integrated Viticulture web site at U.C. Davis www.iv.ucdavis.edu or for grape variety descriptions and a national nursery listing there is the National Grape Registry at www.ngr.ucdavis.edu . There seems to be more to think about than ever, but it looks like at least fuel prices are down! Considering the general economic concerns, Lodi wines may fit into a consumer market looking for value wines of excellent quality.

Good luck in 2009!.

LODI WINEGROWER WORKBOOK WORKSHOPS:

Workbook workshops are being held at grower's homes throughout the district during the winter and spring months. They are open to all LWC growers and PCAs. At the workshop Mark Chandler will highlight the Commission's activities for the past 2 or 3 years, discuss future projects, and ask for feedback from LWC members. The remainder of the workshop will be devoted to filling out the self-assessment workbook. Each attendee will receive a complimentary copy of the new 2nd edition of the Lodi Winegrower's Workbook. If you have not been invited to a workshop please call Cliff or Sherri at LWC's office (209-367-4727) and get your name on the invitation list!

BREAKFAST MEETINGS:

IMPORTANT NOTE:

All future Lodi Winegrape Commission Breakfast meetings will be held in Burgundy Hall at the Lodi Grape Festival Grounds at 413 East Lockeford St. The dates for the winter and spring meetings have been selected and are: Feb. 17, Mar. 10, Apr. 14, May 12, and June 16. Please keep these dates open so you can attend!

January 21, 2:00pm-4:00pm: Lodi Rules orientation meeting. Lodi Wine & Visitor Center Cellar Room. This meeting is for any growers interested in joining the Lodi Rules program in 2009.

Feb. 17 9:00am-10:00am: Planting and grafting trends in the California wine industry. Paul Verdegaal, University of California Farm Advisor.

Mar. 10 9:00am-11:00am: Research update on the grower-funded Pierce's Disease/Glassy-winged Sharpshooter program. Presenters TBA.

April 14, 9:00am-10:30am: Dr. Ken Giles, University of California Davis, presenting on the latest in nozzle and sprayer technology.

OTHER MEETINGS:

Jan. 29-31: Unified Wine & Grape Symposium, Sacramento Convention Center. For more information visit www.unifiedsymposium.org or call 800-550-1496.

Feb. 18, 9:00am-4:00pm: Wine and Grape Research 2009. Brief presentations by researchers carrying out wine and grape research funded by the competitive grants programs such as the American Vineyard Foundation and Viticulture Consortium West. Freeborn Hall, UC Davis campus. For more information call 800-752-0881. Attendance is \$49 which includes lunch and handouts.

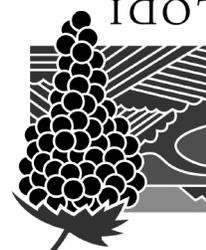
Feb. 24 - 26, Tues.- Wed. 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m., Thurs. 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.: Varietal Winegrape Production Short Course. Freeborn Hall, UC Davis campus. For more information call 800-752-0881. Attendance is \$675.00 which includes three lunches, a social at 5pm on Feb. 25 and course material.

March 8-12: UC Davis 9th Annual Wine Executive Program 2009. For more information visit www.wineexecutiveprogram.com or phone 530-754-6450.

March 19: 9:00am-4:00pm: Recent Advances in Viticulture and Enology (RAVE). Freeborn Hall, UC Davis campus. For more information call 800-752-0881. Attendance is \$220.00 which includes lunch, handouts, and a one year membership in the Trellis Alliance.

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