

A DEEPER DIVE

LOAD

RULES



“ In agriculture, sustainability means farming in a way that is environmentally and socially responsible while also being economically viable. ”

LODI RULES is a sustainable winegrowing certification program addressing all aspects of farming management practices. Focused on environmental and social responsibility and created by California farmers, LODI RULES is accredited, certified, and audited by a true independent third party — Protected Harvest.



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OUR STORY

In the Lodi, California, AVA — where nearly one-fifth of California winegrapes are grown — there exists a visionary group of farmers that tax themselves to fund the Lodi Winegrape Commission. The Commission's purpose is to maintain excellence in wine, the business of winemaking, and stewardship of the land, now and in the future. In 1992, the Commission launched a grassroots farmer education program whose aim was to reduce the amount of pesticides used. The farmers sought to understand all facets of the vineyard ecosystem and learned to practice —and teach — integrated pest management.

The initiative was inspired by a tradition that is rare in America: Many Lodi farmers are fourth- or fifth-generation winegrowers. These families wanted to farm more responsibly to ensure that farming could carry on for future generations. This grassroots educational program in 2005 turned into the formal LODI RULES sustainable certification program, after over a decade of research and insights from farmers, viticulturists, and leading environmentalists.



The program is continually reviewed and updated to reflect new knowledge on how we can all do better. Our LODI RULES motto is: **“May we farm in a way that meets the needs of today without compromising the ability of future generations to create their own livelihoods.”**

Today's LODI RULES growers and vintners make up an innovative community with a history and commitment to farming high-quality winegrapes through the implementation of practices that balance environmental, social, and economic goals.



By the Numbers

As of 2019:

- **Hundreds** of LODI RULES farmers
- **51,051** certified vineyard acres in California and Israel
- Over **1,200** certified vineyards
- **\$9.5 million** paid in bonuses to LODI RULES farmers



LODI RULES CERTIFICATION

LODI RULES has two key components. First, its Standards, the more than 100 sustainability practices that LODI RULES seeks to have winegrape growers adopt. Second is a unique pesticide risk model, which calculates the environmental impact of the growers' integrated pest management programs.

Standards

The **LODI RULES** Standards are the most thoroughly and rigorously vetted set of sustainability practices in California's viticulture history. All Standards have been peer reviewed by world-renowned scientists, members of the academic community, and environmental organizations.

The LODI RULES Standards are the backbone of the program and fall into six categories: business management, human resources management, ecosystem management, soil management, water management, and pest management. Each Standard meets three criteria: first, it is measurable; second, it addresses at least one of the three aspects of sustainability; and third, it is economically feasible to implement.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

- Sustainable vision plan
- Succession plan
- Management meetings
- Risk management plan
- Operating budget
- Training & development
- Neighbor relations
- Energy tracking
- Efficiency of operations
- Recycling
- Viticulture research
- Knowledge sharing

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

- Human resources plan
- Employee handbook and orientation
- Written job descriptions
- Employee evaluations
- Safety and other trainings
- Teambuilding and bonuses
- Benefits

ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT

- Watershed stewardship
- Environmental survey
- Ecosystem management plan
- Cover crops
- Woodlands, trees, vegetation
- Wetlands
- Riparian habitat
- Birds and bats

SOIL MANAGEMENT

- Nutrient management plan
- Soil erosion and conservation
- Mapping and analysis
- Tillage
- Organic matter
- Water penetration
- Petiole or blade analysis
- Nitrogen



WATER MANAGEMENT

- Water management plan
- Irrigation and pump efficiency
- Water quality
- Back flow prevention
- Soil moisture content
- Water budget for vines

PEST MANAGEMENT

- Insects and mites
- Powdery mildew, rot, canker disease
- Soilborne pests
- Weeds
- Vertebrates
- Dust abatement
- Employee training
- Sprayer calibration and maintenance
- Drift management

Pesticide Risk Model

LODI RULES growers use a unique risk model to quantify the environmental and human impact of all pesticides applied in a vineyard. This model takes into account the dietary risks to consumers, as well as the acute risk to farm workers; small aquatic invertebrates; birds; and bees and beneficial insects. The Lodi region has documented a great decline in the use of high-risk pesticides since 1992, thanks to sustainability adoption by farmers.

Practice and Adoption of Management Goals of Lodi Winegrape Growers by Vicki Hillis, Mark Lubell, and Matthew Hoffman from a Center for Environmental Policy and Behavior Research Brief



CALIFORNIA'S ORIGINAL SUSTAINABLE WINEGROWING PROGRAM *circa 1992*
created by Lodi farmers and accredited by world-renowned scientists

WHEN YOU DRINK WINE MADE FROM LODI RULES CERTIFIED GRAPES, YOU ARE SUPPORTING
A FARMER, A VINTNER, *and an ENTIRE* **AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY**
who embrace their responsibility to care for the environment and the people.



THE
LODI RULES
seal signifies a third-party audited
COMMITMENT
to rigorous, scientifically sound
SUSTAINABLE WINEGROWING



"SUSTAINABILITY
MEANS LEAVING
everything -
PEOPLE, PLACES, ETC -
AS GOOD OR BETTER
THAN HOW WE FOUND IT."
- Kevin Phillips,
Michael David Winery

FROM  **Vine** TO **WINE**
RESPONSIBLY SOURCED



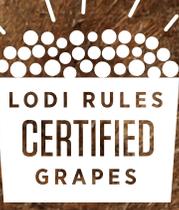
FARMING *with our*  **FUTURE GENERATIONS**
in mind 

  
SOIL • COMMUNITY
ECOSYSTEM • AIR
PEOPLE • WATER



are INCLUDED in
LODI RULES

GROWERS
receive a bonus
of  **PER TON**

FROM *some* **WINERIES** *for:* 

\$9.5 MILLION
PAID IN BONUSES
since 2010

DISCOVER WINES MADE FROM LODI RULES CERTIFIED GRAPES AT lodirules.org



How We Compare

How is certified sustainable farming different from organic and biodynamic?

Organic and biodynamic farmers follow a set of practices related to the environment. Certified sustainable farming includes practices related to the environment, the people, and the business.

- **LODI RULES** is the world's first sustainable winegrowing program.
- **LODI RULES** is California's original sustainable winegrowing certification program.
- **LODI RULES** is the first American sustainable winegrowing to go international, certifying vineyards in Israel in 2017.
- Several other sustainability programs have grown out of **LODI RULES**.
- **LODI RULES** vineyards are certified and audited by an independent, third-party nonprofit organization, Protected Harvest.
- **LODI RULES** vineyards are certified on an annual basis.

For an in-depth report, see the 2014 article “[Transnational Comparison of Sustainability Assessment Programs for Viticulture and a Case-Study on Programs' Engagement Processes](#),” in the journal *Sustainability*.



FAQs for Wine Lovers

LODI RULES is third-party accredited, certified, and audited. What does that mean and why does that matter?

Internal integrity: The founders of LODI RULES hold the program to a high standard of scientific rigor and excellence in both ethics and sustainability. A LODI RULES Committee discusses and considers every word in a new farming practice for months. The farmers of Lodi do not want to be accused of green washing — that is, placing a green or eco-friendly label on something without the designation's being valid.

Neutral certification: Standards are submitted for review to Protected Harvest, a third-party accreditor and certifier whose board is made up of leading environmentalists and some of the most respected pesticide-risk scientists in the world. Besides reviewing the LODI RULES program on a continual basis, Protected Harvest also manages the certification paperwork so that the farmers are not in any way certifying themselves.

Third-party audit: To avoid conflicts of interest, Protected Harvest also manages the annual on- and off-site audits of vineyards. Following an inspection, the auditor will recommend to the Protect Harvest Board whether or not a vineyard meets the criteria for certification. LODI RULES growers believe it is unethical for farmers to pay the auditor directly. The auditors thus feel no obligation to pass a grower who is not meeting the high rigor of verification set forth in the program.

How can sustainability improve the quality of wine?

One reason the LODI RULES founders created the program was to help raise the quality of winegrapes. Wine quality is, of course, subjective, but several farming practices in the LODI RULES program match traditional quality-enhancement practices that are considered to contribute to better-tasting winegrapes. Deficit irrigation, for example, stresses the vines into producing higher amounts of anthocyanins, which in turn improve the quality of the wine. There are many paths to high-quality grapes and wines, and sustainability is just one. Depending on the circumstances and based on our own experiences over the years, certified sustainable farming practices under LODI RULES may:

- Help farmers reduce pests and diseases, which would otherwise negatively affect the development of flavor compounds.
- Help farmers more efficiently manage soil and vine nutrients, leading to healthier grapevines and potentially fewer winemaking challenges.
- Help farmers have greater financial flexibility, which gives them the means to hire extra people for quality-enhancing farming practices such as leaf removal and shoot-thinning.
- Help growers learn from each other — the LODI RULES community is made up of farmers, winemakers, and many others who all seek to protect our environmental and human resources while producing top-notch grapes and wines.
- Create a more balanced vineyard ecosystem where the main focus can be on enhancing quality, rather than on problems or challenges.
- Improve the quality of workmanship, a scarce resource in today's agricultural world. It takes great people to make great wine. Safe and happy employees are more willing to go above and beyond for their employers.





LODI RULES in the News

Lodi Wins 2014 GEELA For Sustainability Efforts, Water & Wastes Digest
bit.ly/lodi-geela

Lodi leads California wine regions in sustainability, The Press, San Francisco Chronicle
bit.ly/lodi-press

Commitment to sustainability is one of the reasons LODI RULES, Recordnet.com
bit.ly/lodi-recordnet

Your Guide to Sustainable Wine Certifications, Wine Enthusiast
bit.ly/lodi-wine-enthusiast

Esteemed California Sustainable Winegrowing Program LODI RULES Goes International,
Wine Industry Advisor Network
bit.ly/lodi-wine-industry-advisor

How LODI RULES Supports Sustainability and Stewardship, Rockin Red Blog
bit.ly/lodi-rockinred





loderules.org

Lodi Winegrape Commission

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