

## How to tell your LODI RULES story.

Stephanie Bolton, PhD, LODI RULES Sustainable Winegrowing Director



Growers and wineries often tell us that it's hard to talk about **LODI RULES**.

We get it. There are 150+ scientifically sound farming practice standards plus a comprehensive pesticide risk tool. How can you possibly sum that up in an interesting and concise way?

**“What does the certified green seal mean?”**

Even though you may have a hard time articulating what the **LODI RULES** seal means, you really do know what it stands for because you live it. You practice sustainability every day. Many of you helped to create this program from the ground up.

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**There is no “right” answer, so first, take the pressure off of yourself. The worst answer you can give, which hurts everyone in the program, is “I don’t know.”**

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Sometimes, I don't tell anyone that sustainability is my job and I ask them about it nonchalantly. One man certified in another program told me, “I really have no idea what sustainability means but we have a sign out in front of our winery.” He and his family *owned* the winery. Please, please, please do not let that happen with **LODI RULES** – prepare yourself, your family, and your employees! Never ever say “I don't know.”

## A three-step trick to simply explain LODI RULES to anyone while keeping their interest.

Memorize this trick and practice on random strangers until you get good at it! WE are our best ambassadors.

*PRO TIP:* People love talking and thinking about themselves, so the more you tie your audience's personal interests into your sustainability description, the better. Try ending your **LODI RULES** explanation with a question: Is your business interested in sustainability too?



**Step 1.** Think about your definition of sustainability.

**Step 2.** Remember that the seal simply means a third-party audited commitment to your definition of sustainability.

**Step 3.** Add in one clear sustainability example that you know the person you are talking with can relate to and will find interesting, and briefly describe it.

## USING THE THREE-STEP TRICK: GROWERS.

Choose some of your favorite sustainable winegrowing practices – things that are unique to your farm and that you are particularly proud of – and then either tie them back to a **LODI RULES** standard or more generally to a topic that is addressed in the **LODI RULES** program: your employees, business, water, soil, ecosystem, pest management, reducing pesticide risk (not usually an appetizing topic, but beneficial insects are pretty cool), vine health, community, habitat for animals, greenhouse gas emission reduction, etc.

### Grower Example #1:

“ Sustainability means farming that’s good for the environment but also for people too. The certified seal on our vineyard signs means that we keep records to prove that we are sustainable during an audit every year. For example, there is one **LODI RULES** practice that recommends providing bonuses for our workers around the holidays. This year, we gave everyone a \$100 Visa gift card and sent them home with a turkey and a CSA box full of local fruits and vegetables. We want our employees to feel valued and like they are part of our family. It takes good people to grow good grapes, and we want to keep them around for a long time. ”

*Consumer take-away:* This farmer really cares about people and is good to work for. Maybe I want to work in a vineyard one day. I wonder if he’s accepting interns...

### Grower Example #2:

“ Sustainability means being environmentally and socially responsible while also being profitable. Being certified sustainable with **LODI RULES** means that a professional actually checks up on us every year to prove our sustainability. Soil regeneration is important in the **LODI RULES** program – there’s a whole chapter of farming practices about soil management. We apply compost from repurposed San Francisco food waste in the winter, and in the spring we grow all types of gorgeous cover crops which help to add nutrients and water back into the soil. ”

*Consumer take-away:* Wow, this farmer is really eco-conscious. Way to take big city waste and turn it into something good for the environment. Maybe I should start a compost pile for my garden.

## USING THE THREE-STEP TRICK: WINERIES.

If you are a winery, brag about your vineyards or your farmers. Share your role in supporting sustainability. Tell people what you’re doing in the winery to reduce waste and use less water. Do you give a bonus for **LODI RULES** grapes? Even better – you can talk about how over \$13 million dollars in grape bonuses alone have gone back into the pockets of sustainable farmers. Ask your farmers for some key talking points about the cool sustainable things they are doing – it may take a little prodding, but everyone is doing something worth talking about. We need to get these real, honest, positive messages about **LODI RULES** out to the consumers, the media, and the industry. They don’t know what we’re doing unless we tell them!



**Winery Example #1:**

“We’re very proud to have this little **LODI RULES** seal on the back of our wine label. It means that the farmers we work with are taking care of the environment and of their workers – and they get audited every year to prove it. We pay extra for sustainable grapes but we’re happy to support these responsible farmers. One of our farmers is this really wonderful guy who has had some of his employees for over 40 years, which is really rare these days, right?! He also has fruit trees in his vineyard which serve as habitat for animals, and he bring us the most delicious figs and olive oil.”

*Consumer take-away:* I want to try those figs and that olive oil. What a nice, caring winery! I don’t mind spending top dollar for these wines since it goes to a good cause. Maybe I’ll get a few bottles and take one to my sister Susie. She likes eco-friendly things and wine with a story.

**Winery Example #2:**

“This **LODI RULES** seal on the back of our wine labels is very important to us. It signifies a third-party audited commitment to sustainable winegrowing, which means farming the grapes in a way that protects the environment and cares for the people. We farm our vineyards for the next 100 years, not just the next 10. We’ve revived a dried-up stream that now runs through our ranch, we farm around huge old oak trees which provide a home for birds and small animals, and every year we donate part of our wine club profits to the community boys & girls club.”

*Consumer take-away:* Oooohhhh...that’s what sustainability means. I thought it was like organic or something. These are good folks who really care about plants, animals, and people.



**YOUR TURN.**

What is your definition of sustainability?

What is your favorite example of sustainable winegrowing on your farm or from the farms you buy grapes from?

When asked, what will you say the **LODI RULES** seal means?

*PRO TIP:* Ask these questions during your company meetings.