



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### 1. What does CCSW-Certified mean?

CCSW-Certified is an acronym for Certified California Sustainable Winegrowing, a certification program developed by the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance (CSWA) that provides verification that a winery or vineyard adopts and implements sustainable winegrowing practices according to the industry's code of best practices and commits to a "process of continuous improvement" in these practices.



CCSW-Certified wineries and vineyards must:

- Evaluate their operations on a scale of 1 to 4 in 227 criteria in the *Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices Self-Assessment Workbook* annually.
- Meet 58 prerequisites from the 227 Code criteria to be eligible for the program.
- Verify the accuracy of their evaluations and practices during a third-party audit.
- Identify key areas in which they can improve the sustainability of their practices.
- Create and implement annual action plans and demonstrate improvements over time.

### 2. Why will California's wine community seek CCSW-Certification?

Certification offers an incentive for wineries and vineyards to speed adoption of their sustainable practices by providing them a vehicle to communicate their high level of commitment to sustainability to public policy leaders, retailers, consumers and other stakeholders. This is in addition to their existing reasons for practicing sustainability, which include the long-term benefits for the future of their families, employees, businesses and communities, as well as environmental stewardship, high wine quality, and the economic savings of running a more efficient operation.

### 3. How can one tell the difference between a CCSW-Certified winery or vineyard and a winery or vineyard participating in CSWA's educational Sustainable Winegrowing Program?

Certified participants may use the certification logo and/or claims on company web sites, secondary marketing materials and in certified winery facilities or vineyards. CSWA also lists certified wineries and vineyards on its web site:

[www.sustainablewinegrowing.org/certifiedparticipants.php](http://www.sustainablewinegrowing.org/certifiedparticipants.php). Wineries and vineyards can still participate in CSWA's Sustainable Winegrowing Program (SWP) without applying for certification. They can complete self-assessments, attend workshops and communicate that they participate in the educational Sustainable Winegrowing Program.

### 4. What are the goals of the certification program?

CSWA's goals for the certification program are to enhance transparency, encourage statewide participation and advance the entire California wine industry toward best practices in

environmental stewardship, conservation of natural resources and socially equitable business practices.

### **5. How do sustainable practices benefit California?**

Sustainable winegrowing has been practiced by California vintners and growers for decades, and conserves the state's limited natural resources, enhances environmental quality, and contributes economically and socially to the state. California's booming population has increased competition for land, water, energy and other resources. By adopting sustainable practices, winegrowers are demonstrating their socially responsible use of these resources and their performance as a good neighbor. California wine will always be tied to the land as a signature industry of the state.

### **6. How do sustainable practices benefit consumers?**

Wine consumers can have the satisfaction of knowing they are supporting vineyards and wineries that are socially and environmentally responsible in conserving water, energy and land, protecting air and water quality, and enhancing relations with employees and communities. California's wine industry is serving as a model that other wine regions and agricultural sectors can adopt. Consumers who live in and visit California benefit from supporting an industry that creates open space and rural beauty, as well as offers cultural events. Enhanced wine quality is another benefit of the industry's adoption of best practices – such as drip irrigation, canopy management, knowledge of wine quality and viticultural improvements – from the *Code*.

### **7. Why did CSWA develop a “process-based” certification program?**

CSWA developed process-based certification to meet the most important principles of the SWP, which includes the process of continuous improvement. This approach lends itself to addressing the most critical regional and organizational issues, and can be applied across diverse regions and to both wineries and vineyards. After meeting 58 prerequisite criteria, companies use their own baselines to determine what areas need to be improved, focus their limited resources on practices that will make the most difference for their organization, and continually improve year after year to retain certification. Other types of programs, such as practice-based or performance certification programs, have thresholds that must be met in order to obtain certification, which ensures that certain practices are or are not being used or a certain level of performance.

### **8. What if an organization is already certified by Lodi Rules, Sustainability in Practice, Napa Green or another regional sustainable certification program?**

CSWA is working with regional associations to streamline the process for participants who choose to be certified by both CCSW-Certified and another program, and to make it as cost-effective and non-duplicative as possible. CSWA is currently developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) pilot program, with the goal to expand the MOU to other programs in the future if it is desirable.

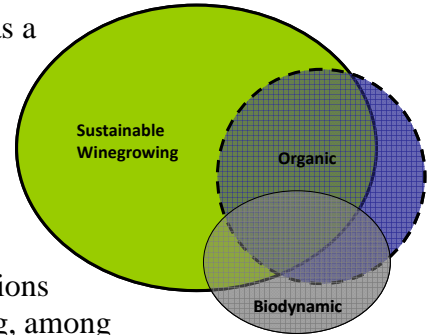
### **9. How does the California Sustainable Winegrowing Program and CCSW-Certified compare with other countries' sustainable winegrowing programs?**

The SWP is one of the most comprehensive and effective industry-wide sustainability programs in the world. It has extremely high adoption rates in terms of vineyard acres and wine production with over 68% of winegrape acreage and 62% of wine case production participating in the self-assessment. The SWP is also unique in measuring and publicly reporting performance for our entire industry. CCSW-Certified follows suit. The international wine community has worked cooperatively to develop a standardized set of sustainability principles. Each country has developed sustainability programs that meet the objectives of the principles and fit the unique circumstances of their industry. California's program is well suited to the size and diversity of our

industry, our values of innovation and continuous improvement, and our goal to be leaders in sustainable practices adoption.

**10. How does sustainable winegrowing certification relate to organic and biodynamic certification?**

Sustainable winegrowing can be viewed as an umbrella concept, or as a larger circle in a series of concentric circles, where there is overlap with organic and biodynamic principles and practices, yet each have characteristics that make them unique. The comprehensive SWP promotes 227 best practices for the environment and communities from the ground to the glass. In addition to earth-friendly methods for vineyards and surrounding ecosystems, sustainability includes energy efficiency, protection of air and water quality, enhanced relations with employees and neighbors, environmentally preferred purchasing, among many others. This broader set of issues is also addressed with CCSW-Certified.



**11. Is there now a new category of wine called “sustainable wine”?**

At present, there is no legal term or official category for “sustainable wine.” CCSW-Certified provides third-party verification of a winery and/or vineyard’s adherence to a process of continuous improvement in the adoption of sustainable practices. While these positive practices ultimately produce quality winegrapes and wine, the program is focused on the winery and vineyard operations, which isn’t the same as certifying the product. Companies are referred to as a “CCSW-Certified winery” or “CCSW-Certified vineyard,” accompanied by the name of the winery or vineyard operation that has been certified. In the interest of clearly and accurately presenting the program, CCSW-Certified does not attempt to create a definition for sustainable wine nor does it allow the use of a CCWS-Certified logo or claim on the bottle.

**12. How does an organization demonstrate accuracy of its self-assessment scores?**

In the SWP online system and in the certification guidebook, each criteria (or sustainability practice) are accompanied by information on objective evidence that can be used to justify the score for those criteria. Examples of objective evidence include documentation, reports, or photos shown to an auditor during a site visit or uploaded onto the SWP online system, and verbal communication with the third-party auditor.

**13. How does an organization demonstrate continuous improvement?**

There are several ways to demonstrate improvement. For example:

- Achievement of (or progress towards) action plan objectives.
- Achievement of higher category scores for *Code* workbook criteria.
- Improvement of performance within a score, such as increased application of good practice or reduced implementation of an adverse practice, and
- Implementation of new equipment, technology or practice that maintains or improves performance at lower cost and/or with reduced environmental or social impact.

Improvements can be shown to an auditor during a site visit, noted in the SWP online system by uploading documentation or photos, or through verbal communications.

**14. Can an organization score a ‘1’ for every SWP self-assessment criteria and still get certified?**

No. The certification program includes 58 prerequisites that fall into 3 categories of stringency. For five prerequisites, the certified participant must score a category 2 or higher for specific self-assessment criteria to obtain certification. For 39 prerequisites, if the certified participant scores a

category 1 for specific criteria, they must put an action plan in place and move to a category 2 within the first year of certification. For 14 prerequisites, the certified participant must put an action plan in place if they score a category 1 for specific criteria, but there is no timeline for when they must move to a category 2 (these prerequisites tend to have financial implications or require more than one year to implement).

**15. What happens once a participant scores a 4 in every category? How do they demonstrate continued improvement?**

Sustainability is a journey not a destination, so an organization is unlikely to reach an end point where there is nothing left to improve upon. Even if a Certified Participant scores almost all 4's in the self-assessment there is always more that can be done to improve, and technology and best practices also evolve over time. Improvement does not refer only to moving up the scale of sustainability categories in the workbook; there can be improvement within a category score by, for instance, increasing the application of a good practice or reducing use of an adverse practice. A very high sustainability adopter might have incrementally less to improve upon each year than someone who is lower on the sustainability continuum, but there should always be room for some improvement in practices.

**16. Who are the independent, third party auditors?**

CSWA has invited experienced auditors with demonstrated knowledge about winegrowing and sustainability management to apply for CCSW-Certified accreditation. Accredited auditors must attend initial training on the certification requirements and also attend annual training programs as part of CSWA's commitment to continuous improvement. CSWA encourages auditors accredited by other third-party certification programs (*i.e.* CCOF, ISO 14001, ISO 9001, regional wine sustainability programs) to apply for accreditation.

**17. Who awards the certification?**

A Certification Review Panel, made up of a subset of the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance Board of Directors and the Executive Director, reviews the auditor recommendations and approves or denies certification. There is a petition process if the applicant disagrees with an auditor recommendation and/or the approval decision by the CSWA Certification Review Panel. The grievance would go through a formal review process that entails the applicant filing an appeal, the CSWA Board of Directors (with the exception of those on the Review Panel) considering the appeal and, if additional details are required, another audit may be required by a different auditor.

CSWA will serve as the certification body for the early years of implementation of the Certified California Sustainable Winegrowing program. CSWA will ensure the program is functioning properly, with the intent to evaluate options and evolve to external management of the program in the future. Confidentiality of applicant and certified organizations will be insured.

**18. How will people outside the wine industry know if this certification program is doing what it is intended to do?**

The addition of third-party verification is key to providing customers and stakeholders with assurances that the self-assessment scores are accurate and that the winery or vineyard is fully engaged in a process of continuous improvement for their adoption of sustainable practices. Another important way to share progress is through Sustainability Reports and interim reports that allow the California wine community to publicly share improvements of the industry over time. In January 2010, CSWA released its 2009 Wine Community Sustainability Report measuring the California wine industry's adoption of 227 best management practices, as a follow-up report to the

2004 industry-wide Sustainability Report. The report is available online at [www.sustainablewinegrowing.org/publications.php](http://www.sustainablewinegrowing.org/publications.php).

**19. What is CSWA’s long term plan for certification?**

While process-based certification is the approach that will be used at the launch of the program, CSWA is initiating a project to develop industry-wide metrics to measure and track sustainability performance. CSWA will develop performance metrics for water and energy efficiency, greenhouse gas intensity, and several others to be determined in order to baseline the industry’s significant impacts and set targets for improvement. Once the metrics are in place, they will tie into the certification program and certified participants will need to consider industry-wide targets when creating action plans. The metrics will also focus on industry efforts around best management practice development and sustainability tool creation. As the certification program evolves to include performance metrics, CSWA may then move towards allowing the use of a logo on the bottle.