



Chapter 16
LESSONS LEARNED
AND NEXT STEPS

Lessons Learned and Next Steps

The SWP program has followed an adaptive management approach moving through the cycles of design, implementation, documentation and analysis, and refinements. During this process, a number of lessons learned come to light. They may prove useful for other groups pursuing implementation of a comprehensive sustainable practices program. Some of the lessons learned are directly relevant to improving how the SWP program pursues its next steps.

Lessons Learned

LEADERSHIP AND COLLABORATION LED TO SUCCESS The leadership demonstrated by the state and regional associations and their grower and vintner members was instrumental to launching the program. Once a forum was created to define sustainable practices and later organize workshops, existing local leaders stepped forward to contribute, and a number of new leaders emerged. This grassroots leadership was essential in crafting sustainable practices relevant to regional conditions and different size operations. Moreover, the high level of workshop participation (more than 1,000 individuals) and the submission of assessment results is directly attributable to the local leadership from regional associations, private companies, and interested individuals.

SUCCESS BUILT UPON EXISTING PROGRAMS There is no need to “recreate the wheel” when beginning to launch a program like as the Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices. Successful regional sustainable viticulture programs existed within the industry that provided examples of what could work for designing and executing the assessment workshops around the state. For the vintners, the Sonoma Green Business Program provided specific environmental standards and the Wine Institute’s Code of Advertising Standards set an example of a proactive social responsibility program of self-governance.

CONTINUED IMPLEMENTATION & IMPROVEMENT REQUIRES ASSISTANCE Sustaining this initial success will be a challenge, especially in the current climate of reduced publicly-funded and private foundation resources. The SWP program will need to secure additional resources to provide the tools and methodologies needed to foster large-scale adoption of sustainable practices. The assessment results identify “low-hanging fruit” or simple changes that can result in cutting costs and improving environmental practices. For example, now that the program and report have identified the need for energy audits and, therefore, possible conservation programs, the next logical step is to move forward and assist businesses of all sizes to perform the audits.

TRUST AND COOPERATION NEEDED Continual improvement will require thinking, and acting, outside of the traditional institutional boxes among the private sector, regulatory agencies, academia, and the nonprofit sector. Elements of mistrust among these various stakeholders co-exist with genuine interest and excitement in finding innovative ways of working together and crafting regulatory, research, extension, and private sector solutions to achieve measurable

environmental, economic and social results. In these times of limited public and private resources, it is especially important to improve information flow among sectors, streamline regulatory approaches to focus on measurable outcomes not bureaucratic processes, and create incentives for each sector (private, academia, regulatory, nonprofit, etc) that rewards the adoption of sustainable practices.

STATEWIDE APPROACH CAN HELP REGIONAL PROGRAMS Regional reports from the statewide database have been provided to regional groups. Many regional coordinators are using the regional results to engage their members in further defining what they can do to be sustainable in their winegrowing regions. In addition to the regional programs that inspired the statewide SWP program, a number of regional associations have built their own sustainable programs using the statewide workbook and workshops as a catalyst.

ASSESSMENT RESULTS ESTABLISH BASELINES The assessment results are most useful for establishing baselines for each criteria. These baselines can then be used to document changes in practices over time. A criteria-by-criteria and chapter-by-chapter comparison of the overall assessment results reveals there is a large variation in terms of what constitutes category “4”, “3”, “2” and “1” practices both within a chapter and between chapters. The breadth (13 chapters) and depth (221 criteria) of the workbook made the task of setting all category “4s”, “3s”, “2s” and “1” and chapters equal in terms of the level of sustainability near impossible.

Next Steps

With the publication of this report, the SWP program has completed the first full program cycle from design and implementation to data collection, analysis and reporting. The following “next steps” have been identified as critical steps toward increasing the adoption of sustainable winegrowing practices.

SEEK ADDITIONAL FUNDING AND NEW PARTNERS This is a priority for the program's survival. Since the inception of the Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices program, the members of the wine community have contributed more than \$700,000. The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) was the first partner to provide funding to print the initial publication of 3100 workbooks. The University of California and California State systems have provided staff and resources during the development of the workbook. The most recent partner to provide funding is the American Farmland Trust and US EPA to improve assessment results in Chapter 6: Pest Management and implement “Action Plan Workshops” on IPM methods. The program is seeking additional funding and new partners to maintain the program's initial momentum and accomplish the following:

- **Increase Participation of Vineyards and Wineries** While the initial program goals were exceeded, there are still a large number of vineyards and wineries that have not assessed their operations for sustainable practices. The SWP workshops need to be continued across the state. CSWA will continue to coordinate with the regional associations and work with Wine Institute and CAWG to reach more members of their large memberships to increase participation in the program.
- **Offer Action Plan Workshops** After the workshop participants submit assessments and receive customized assessment reports, there is a need to bring these growers and vintners back together to learn how to use these results to increase the adoption of sustainable practices. Currently, regional associations have begun to host Action Plan workshops but assistance is needed from the statewide program. CSWA will continue to seek grants and partnerships to develop Action Plan workshops specific to workbook chapters such as Energy Efficiency, Ecosystem Management, Vineyard and Winery Water Conservation and Management. The ultimate goal is to offer Action Plan workshops for every chapter of the workbook.
- **Expand Partnership Network** Many organizations, governmental agencies and educational institutions focus on sustainable business practices. CSWA will continue outreach efforts to these groups to determine the most viable areas for partnering and collaboration. Preliminary discussions with Audubon California, Sustainable Conservation and Environmental Defense as well as several regulatory agencies could develop into formal partnerships to provide potential funding, knowledge sharing and consistent and reliable permitting processes.
- **Work with Research Institutions to Target Knowledge Gaps** The SWP program is interested in strengthening ties with viticulture and enology research institutions including UC Davis, California State University at Fresno, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Sonoma State University and others. There is a need to review in detail the assessment results with the research community to identify priority research gaps and encourage mission driven research that speeds the adoption of sustainable practices.
- **Develop New Chapters** During the workshops, many participants indicated the need for specific chapters that had not been included in the original workbook. A chapter on air quality is the current priority, with potential funding already being evaluated. Other chapters under consideration include economic benchmarking and vineyard development. CSWA will continue to forge partnerships with organizations like the California Air Resources Board for assistance on specific chapter development.

- **Release Updated Edition of the Workbook** The first publishing printed 3100 workbooks. Because of the early success of the program, CSWA currently has 200 workbooks left to distribute. The workbooks have been very well received and many of the participants at the assessment workshops have helped identify areas of the workbook to edit and update. In addition to the edits, the next edition of the workbook could include at least one of the new chapters identified above.
- **Translate the Workbook into Spanish** For a large percentage of the wine industry workforce, Spanish is their primary language. Making the workbook available to all vineyard and winery employees will help to incorporate sustainable practices into everyday work. CSWA is seeking partners to assist in the translation.
- **Publish Progress Reports and 2009 Sustainability Report** To allow for thorough implementation, comprehensive and accurate data and comparative analysis, the next full “Sustainability Report” is not expected to be published until 2009 at the earliest. It is important to provide updates on the progress made in the interim. Providing that funding is secured, CSWA will make this report, program updates and progress reports available online at www.sustainablewinegrowing.org.

CSWA hopes that by publicly documenting winegrowing practices and making the report available to everyone, it can serve as a model for other sectors to collect information, report it and begin the dialogue within their industries and with other stakeholders. CSWA values your feedback, questions or concerns. Please contact us at info@sustainablewinegrowing.org.

The wine community is a leader in demonstrating farming’s crucial role as a responsible steward of the environment. With the pressure on our scarce natural resources greater than ever due to rapid population growth, wine growers are showing us how to be adaptable and resourceful. The Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices has tremendous potential to assist other agricultural sectors.

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