

## Overview

The Winegrape Pest Management Alliance - Reflection and Future

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California Winegrape Pest Management Alliance

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The California Winegrape Pest Management Alliance recently completed a second year of its multifaceted educational program serving both agricultural and non-agricultural communities. This proactive effort is enhancing the adoption of reduced-risk pest management while improving understandings and relationships among growers, their employees, and surrounding neighbors.

The Alliance is a grower-driven partnership with the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA). The California Association of Winegrape Growers (CAWG) provides organizational leadership and a prestigious and diverse management team guides efforts. Representatives of grower organizations, wineries, UC Cooperative Extension, UC Sustainable Agricultural Research and Education Program, USDA-ARS, DPR, and US EPA Region 9 constitute the management team. Karen Ross, president of CAWG, is the principal investigator and Joe Browde is the project coordinator. Funding is provided by DPR and EPA grants, CAWG, regional grower organizations, and wineries.

### Objectives

The Alliance has the statewide mission to promote pest management practices that minimize the potential for environmental and human harm while maintaining the economic viability of production. A specific goal is to educate the winegrowing community about means to reduce drift incidents for sulfur and limit uses of higher-risk herbicides classified as groundwater contaminants or priority I materials by the 1996 Food Quality Protection Act. For grapes, higher-risk herbicides include simazine (Princep), diuron (Karmex), norflurazon (Solicam), oryzalin (Surflan), oxyfluorfen (Goal), and paraquat (Gramoxone).

Although targeting sulfur and weed management, Alliance demonstration and outreach efforts characterize how practices for managing these two targets affect and can be beneficially integrated with other components of whole farming systems. Emphasis is placed on applying reduced-risk approaches for managing sulfur and weeds as models for dealing with other pest-related problems.

A separate but related goal is to enlighten the general public to the challenges faced by winegrowers and their commitment to taking safe, effective management actions. Productive interaction between agricultural and non-agricultural communities is crucial for sustaining viticulture in an ever-changing landscape and society.

### Achievements

Over the course of two years, vast numbers of growers, pest control advisors (PCAs), vineyard foremen and workers, and members of the general public have been educated through field days, workshops, seminars, worker training programs, and written outreach. Nearly 1000 growers and PCAs across the state were educated at field days during the first year alone! Second-year results were more impressive as work was expanded to include significant programs for foremen and workers, the general public, as well as growers and PCAs. Totals of 390 growers and PCAs, 1158 vineyard foremen and workers, and 355 members of the general public were educated through 28 Alliance sponsored or cosponsored events.

Events included presentations by growers, PCAs, vineyard foremen, extensionists, researchers, and county regulators. Key topics for grower and PCA audiences were specific reduced-risk tactics and strategies for managing sulfur and weeds, the integration of sulfur and weed management into whole farming systems, relevant laws and regulations, safe and successful farming at the urban interface, and field demonstrations of management practices and results and equipment. Foremen and workers predominantly were trained on sulfur best management practices in both Spanish and English. The general public was educated about the basics of winegrape production, that most growers care and act to minimize risks, and about the Alliance and other statewide and regional programs in sustainable winegrowing.

Especially noteworthy achievements during year two were the development and implementation of a worker training module on sulfur stewardship and safety and the establishment of both the Spanish Viticulture Technical Group and Vineyard Open House Program in Napa.

#### Next Steps

The Alliance is envisioned as a multiple-year project, with significant achievements expected as a result of repetition and expansion of effort over time. Clearly, this approach has been successful. Attendance at events has been excellent. Results from questionnaires distributed at workshops confirm that attendees enjoy the presentations and demonstrations and find them useful. Moreover, a survey of North Coast growers documents that most have been exposed to the Alliance and its teachings, and have altered or will alter pest management practices as a result.

The plan for year three is to intensify and expand efforts for three key audiences - growers and PCAs, vineyard foremen and workers, and the general public. Innovative demonstration and outreach will continue to be used as a basis for instruction of reduced-risk pest management, with a continued emphasis on practices pertinent to sulfur and weeds. Activities will include more detailed characterizations of the components of integrated powdery mildew and weed management systems. A key topic will be the stepwise development of cost-effective, under-the-vine weed management programs using demonstration vineyards. Planned elements include identifying and monitoring weeds, determining the management strategy, comparing and selecting tactics, and implementing and assessing the program over time. For public education, the intent is to expand activities into new geographical areas, especially those with increasing agricultural-urban interfaces.

By intensifying and expanding its effort, the Alliance expects to achieve marked reductions in sulfur drift incidents and uses of higher-risk herbicides. Direct measures of reductions in risk are being made by analyzing regional changes in

reports of sulfur drift and pesticide uses.

Alliance activities have advanced concepts and application of reduced-risk pest management for winegrapes across the state by complementing regional programs and providing inter-regional sharing of information. The synergy resulting from educating the three key groups described here will continue to reduce real and perceived risks from pesticides and improve inter-group understandings and relationships. Efforts by the Alliance continue to help position winegrape growers as leaders in sustainable agriculture.