**Blogpost – Cam Brown – May 2015**

 **Lessons in Sustainable Wine from Washington and Oregon**

As part of the Michigan Sustainable Wine Feasibility Study, a group from Michigan’s wine industry, the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, and 5 Lakes Energy spent last week meeting with wine industry members in Oregon and Washington who have been actively involved in sustainability initiatives.

We met with members, managers, and participants of [Salmon Safe Farming](http://www.salmonsafe.org/getcertified/vineyards), [Low Input Viticulture and Enology (LIVE),](http://liveinc.org/) [Winerywise](http://www.winerywise.org/), and [Vinewise](http://www.vinewise.org/). At these meetings, our group learned about the development of sustainability programs and certifications; why they were developed, by what means, and how are they maintained. Three major trends were evident on why the industry has committed to sustainability and how the programs have been successful in the Pacific Northwest: a clear value add for wineries or vineyards, the ability to build successful partnerships between wineries, vineyards, and organizations, and the opportunity to utilize sustainability as a response to market and regulatory demand.

Whether it was operational efficiency at [St. Michelle Wine Estates](http://www.smwe.com/), grape and wine quality at [Domaine Drouhin](http://www.domainedrouhin.com/en/), or water conservation and efficiency at[Vinmotion](http://vinmotionwines.com/), all of the wineries expressed similar sentiment; sustainability, whether through organic, biodynamic, or sustainable certifications has added significant value to the business that offsets or neutralizes most additional costs of participation. Since 2007,[Adelsheim Vineyard](https://www.adelsheim.com/) has worked to certify all of their vineyards through LIVE. 223 acres are currently LIVE Certified, and the winery has also been certified. Through LIVE or other certifications, wineries like Adelsheim and Domaine Drouhin are able to send a transparent message directly to their consumers about their farming and production practices while simultaneously questions from retailers about practices.

The team at Adelsheim has been actively involved in the LIVE Board, supporting the organization’s growth and development. Their commitment to LIVE demonstrate how LIVE has built strong relationships with wineries and vineyards. The industry’s support for LIVE has grown in part due to LIVE’s accreditation by the [International Organization for Biological and Integrated Control (IOBC)](http://www.iobc-wprs.org/) and a partnership with Salmon Safe Farming. Through both relationships, LIVE has built a credible set of standards that can be practically implemented by vintners and growers. Additionally, the partnership with Salmon Safe expands the brand recognition for both parties through collaborative marketing efforts while also providing wineries with the resources to make credible and recognized claims about the sustainable farming practices used to produce their wine.

In Washington, a collaboration of wineries, industry associations, and universities developed Vinewise and Winerywise as a self-assessment resource for sustainable winegrape growing and winemaking practices. Unlike LIVE, these resources are not supported by a formal program and certification; they are educational tool that helps wineries and vineyards evaluate their practices, implement more sustainable practices, and prepare for third party certification if they so chose. St. Michelle Wine Estates has used both tools across their vineyard and wineries to increase operation efficiency, reduce resource use, and establish protocols to implement sustainable practices. When the Washington State Department of Ecology (DOE) announced the development of [a new general permit for winery wastewater](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/permits/winery.html), the wine industry used Winerywise as evidence of their commitment to sustainability. Wineries who have implemented water efficiency strategies from Winerywise are well positioned to answer the Washington State DOE’s questions, and provide valuable input because they are tracking, monitoring, and recording, water use, discharge, and conservation.

The wine industries in Oregon and Washington have developed valuable resources that can be used to inform and assist any sustainability initiatives in Michigan. The[Winerywise Winery Water Use Checklist](http://www.winerywise.org/files/Winerywise%202%20Water%20Management.pdf) is a great resource for Michigan wineries who have questions about water use, or wastewater. For more information, please refer to the following webinar for a [presentation on the sustainability feasibility project and winery wastewater](http://5lakesenergy.com/sustainability-issues-and-solutions-for-the-michigan-wine-industry/) in Michigan by Liesl Eichler Clark of 5 Lakes Energy and Erin Gerber of Lakeshore Environmental. PDFs of both presentations can be found online here: [Michigan Grape and Wine Conference](http://www.michiganwines.com/conference#sthash.NlUGZH5C.dpbs).

Posted by Cam Brown, 5 Lakes Energy

May 11, 2015