Murray Valley Winegrowers

MVW News & Views

Representing the Murray-Darling and Swan Hill wine regions NSW-VIC

November 2023
www.mvwi.com.au

China initiates Australian wine tariff review

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has announced that China will review its position on Australian wine tariffs over the coming months.

The announcement in October came prior to Mr Albanese's visit to China from 4 to 7 November 2023.

In response, Mr Albanese announced that Australia would suspend its action against China in the World Trade Organisation pending the outcome of its review of its import duties of up to 220 per cent on Australian wine.

The review by China is expected to take five months.

Australian wine industry leaders have welcomed the news but are treating it with caution given the current vast stock holdings of wine in tanks.

Murray Valley Winegrowers chair Chris Dent said growers in the region must temper their short-term expectations.

"I don't think there will be a winery out there rushing to buy more grapes for vintage 2024 in anticipation of China opening up," Mr Dent said.

"Tanks are already full and there is no certainty of what the review will deliver," he said.

"I implore growers to speak with their regular winery and prospective buyers before committing to incurring further costs in producing a red crop that may not be sold.

"We also know that China is not the market it used to be."

Australian Grape & Wine CEO Lee McLean said China's review of its wine import duties on Australian wine was a "very positive step" towards seeing the resumption of Australian wine exports to China.

"It has been a very difficult time for Australia's grape growers and wine producers in recent years following the loss of China as our major trading partner, the global pandemic, and various weather events," he said.

"So, this is very welcome news for grape growers and winemakers across the country.

"The review process by the Chinese Government is expected to take five months and Australian Grape & Wine will engage in and support that process in any way we can."

Australian Grape & Wine president John Hart OAM and Mr McLean visited Shanghai in October and met with the Chinese Alcoholic Drinks Association to discuss common objectives and significant opportunities for the two industries to collaborate in the future.

"The re-engagement with China at the political, government officials, and industry-to-industry levels has enabled the positive dialogue that has led to this decision," said Mr McLean.

"We have said from the beginning that dialogue between the parties would be critical to resolving this dispute, and we have taken a major step towards this.

"Australian Grape & Wine has worked closely with the Australian Government and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade over recent years to foster a mutually beneficial solution that advances the interests of both Australia and China.

"We acknowledge the work of ministers and officials in rebalancing the relationship with China, facilitating the resumption of trade in commodities such as coal, timber, barley, and hay. "

Mr McLean said China held a pivotal position in the global wine market for Australia.

"Before the imposition of import duties, the value of Australian wine exports to China was $1.2 billion,' he said.

"Regardless of the outcome, we remain committed to diversifying our market presence and cultivating opportunities in markets across the world."

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Lee McLean CEO AGW

Notice Board

MVW Annual General Meeting

The MVW AGM is scheduled for Thursday, 30th November 2023 at the Mildura Golf Resort (Balcony Room), 287 12th Street Mildura commencing at 4.00 pm.

The meeting will conduct all the regulatory formalities, followed by general discussions regarding the state of the wine industry and the outlook for the 2024 vintage. It will also be a great opportunity to catch up with your fellow industry colleagues and the MVW Board and staff in a casual environment afterward, with drinks and light snacks provided.

Murray Valley Wine Grape Industry Development Committee (IDC) AGM

The IDC AGM will precede the MVW AGM – come along and support your industry representatives and gain an insight into how your levies are spent.

Spray Diary & the "Dog Book"

The 2023-24 Wine Grape Spray Diary is now available - phone the office on 03 5021 3911 or email mvw@mvwi.com.au to arrange a copy. Alternatively, call into the office at 54 Lemon Ave. Mildura to collect one.

The 2023/24 edition of Agrochemicals registered for use in Australian viticulture (the "Dog Book") is now available online;

https://www.awri.com.au/wp-content/uploads/agrochemical_booklet.pdf or via the AWRI Agrochemical App (use QR Codes below) - a hard copy is also available from the MVW office.

iOS devices

Android devices

Grapes for Sale Register

The 2024 Wine Grapes for Sale Register is now open for listings.

Often buyers contact MVW for leads on fruit availability and that is when the register shows its real value

The Wine Grapes for Sale Register is a free service that simply connects growers with buyers. MVW advises wineries of the availability of fruit in the Murray-Darling and Swan Hill regions, based on the information you provide. We do not inform wineries of the total available tonnes or pass on details of registered growers (without your approval).

Please contact the MVW office to complete your Grapes for Sale Registration or scan the QR code

SCAN ME

Murray Valley Winegrowers

iDC Murray Valley Winegrape Industry Development Committee

Murray Valley Winegrowers MVW News & Views

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Representing winegrape growers in the Murray Valley region within the Shires of Wentworth and Balranald, and Rural Cities of Mildura and Swan Hill.

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HAVE YOUR SAY - IDC Project Voting 2024/25

The Murray Valley Wine Grape Industry Development Committee (IDC) is conducting its annual Poll of growers, to vote on how levies are allocated for Projects in the 2024/25 financial year.

The vast majority of growers will have received an email with the Project summaries and online link to vote using the Survey Monkey platform, whilst others who do not have email access will have received voting papers in the mail.

MVW encourages all wine grape growers to back the Projects the IDC has identified as worthy of funding and invites you to vote in favour of supporting these projects as follows;

- Grower Communications
- Industry Development Officer (Part-time)
- Information Collection and Database Management
- Production Support
- Project Preparations, Development & Delivery
- Support Regional Wine Shows
- Weather Station Network
- Winegrape Crush Report & Price Indications
- Winegrape Industry Development

Murray Valley Winegrape Industry Development Committee

iDC

Scan the QR code below which will take you to the polling platform & allow you review the projects and record your vote

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Australian Government

VICTORIA State Government

Dashboard provides greater price transparency

Inland wine grape growers have access to better price transparency following the development of a dashboard that brings together data and charts to help them plan for the next vintage.

Wine Australia's Grape Price Indicators dashboard brings together 12 different data sources and displays 21 charts in a user-friendly layout.

In 2019, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) released a wine grape market study that identified a need for better price transparency and more balance in negotiating power between winemakers and grape growers.

In response to these recommendations, 'The Grape Price Indicators' dashboard was developed with funding from the Commonwealth government through its Improving Market Transparency in Perishable Agricultural Goods Industries program.

Federal funding of $989,000 was allocated in 2022, towards the development of the dashboard, a domestic sales collection, and a strategic partnership with ABARES to enable winegrape price forecasting.

The dashboard project has been delivered by Wine Australia and overseen by a consortium comprising Australian Grape & Wine, the Inland Wine Regions Alliance, and Wine Australia.

Dashboard provides greater price transparency *continued...*

Inland growers and their representatives were consulted on the selection of the indicators.

Key indicators

The Grape Price Indicators dashboard opens on a summary page that provides an at-a-glance view of the most important indicators for movements in inland winegrape prices.

Wine Australia said a multitude of factors determine winegrape price, but this page distils these down to six key indicators divided into two groups, specific to Australian grapes and wine, and global wine market insights.

This includes the inland winegrape price itself (top left-hand chart).

Downward trends in prices indicate a likely continuing downturn, at least in the short term.

As 60 percent of Australia's wine production is exported, another key indicator is the average value of exports (top middle chart)

A decline in average value of commercial wine exports signals a declining demand for these wines in export markets and will likely result in downward pressure on prices for the grapes that go into that wine.

Another key indicator of future winegrape price movement is the volume of domestic wine sales (bottom left-hand chart).

A decline in the volume of wine sales in the domestic wine market signals a fall in the demand for wine and is likely to result in downward pressure on winegrape prices.

Similarly, a higher than ideal level of total stocks-to-sales ratios (bottom middle chart) indicates too much wine in stock and a reduction in demand for wine grapes, thus putting downward pressure on grape prices.

Wine Australia said for global indicators, Australian wine prices on the global bulk wine market are a key driver, especially in relation to its competitors.

Consequently, Ciatti bulk wine offer prices are included in the dashboard (top right-hand chart). The dashboard allows analysis of trends over the last five years, as well as Australia's position when compared to Chile, Italy, South Africa, and Spain.

The latest bulk wine prices are a major influence on the prices paid for inland wine grapes in the upcoming season.

Another key indicator is the global balance between wine production and consumption (bottom right-hand chart); production exceeding consumption implies an oversupply of wine globally, putting downward pressure on wine and winegrape prices.

The summation of all these indicators is shown in the winegrape price indicator direction arrow, which can be found to the right of the 'inland winegrape price' chart.

The direction of this arrow is driven by a regression analysis on a selection of the datasets surfaced on the dashboard.

Finer details

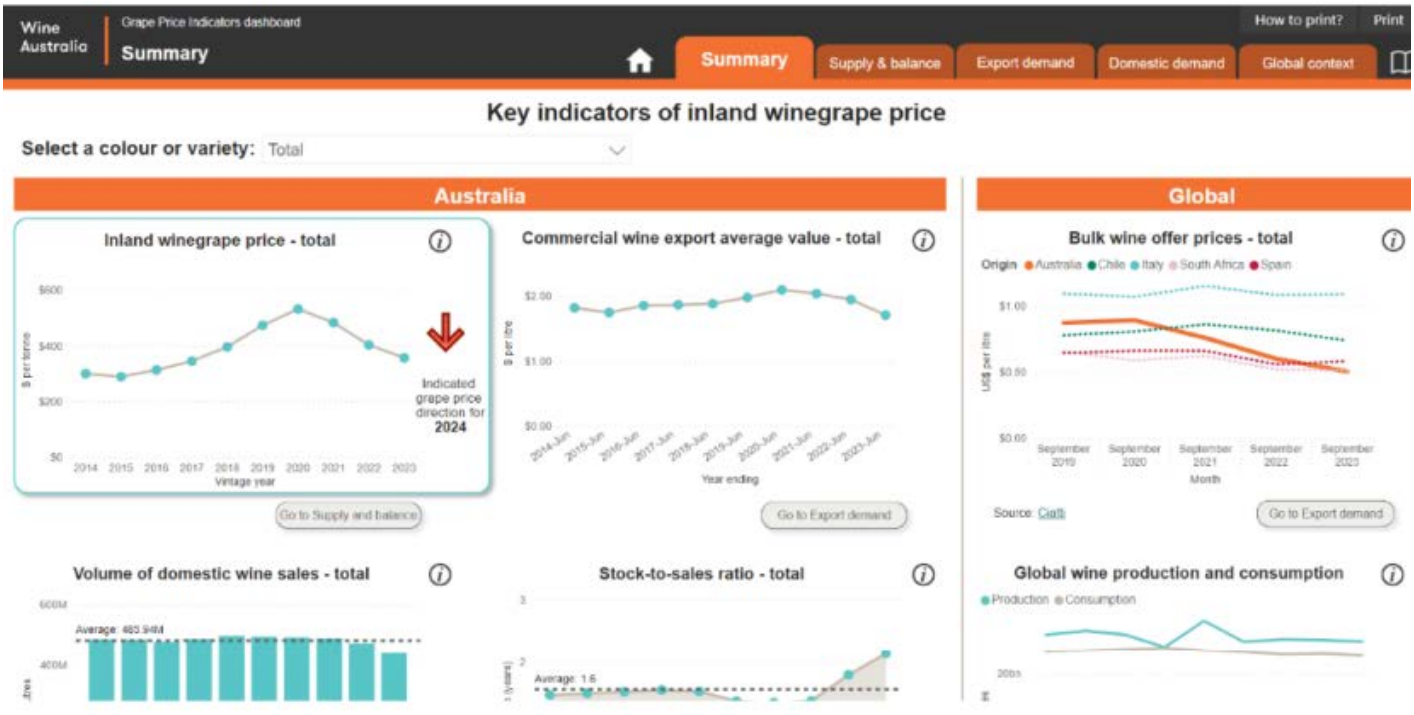
The dashboard includes four supplementary pages that provide more detail and context.

These four pages are: supply and balance, export demand, domestic demand, and global context.

Users can navigate to these using the buttons below the key indicators on the summary page, or by using the tabs at the top of the dashboard.

To access the Grape Price Indicators dashboard visit market explorer.

wineaustralia.com/grape-price-indicators



Wine Australia's Grape Price Indicators dashboard summary page.

Calls for independent body to manage Basin *By Christine Webster*

A key adviser representing wine grape growers is renewing the call for an independent body to be established to manage the Murray Darling Basin.

He like all other irrigators wants a healthy river free of carp and providing water fit for use by communities and farms with no access to potable urban water supplies.

Peter Ebner, an irrigator from Red Cliffs has been in the Victorian Water industry since the early 1970s and regularly communicated with the Murray Darling Basin Authority. (MDBA)

He said given the critical importance of the Basin to the country, the management of the Basin and its water resources, should by overseen by an autonomous central authority, a model not unlike the Reserve Bank of Australia free from lobbyists with vested interests and political posturing.

"This should ensure that accountability for delivering an outcome for the Basins rivers and ongoing management of the Basin is directly focused, and they are tasked with getting on with things in a reasonable time frame for the benefit of the Basin and its communities," he said.

Mr Ebner said he had a "lot of respect" for the MDBA and its river operations group, which had been set an onerous task.

"They basically had five states throw the Basin plan at them, when their skill set was managing storages, running the river, and working with NSW and Victoria to ensure SA got its monthly flow entitlements, and communities had access to water," he said.

Delay of Basin review needed

Mr Ebner believes a review of the Basin plan should also be delayed beyond 2026 until current and hopefully new projects are in place and operational.

Factors such as COVID-19 delayed the community consultation process, the recent flood prevented field work required to gain approvals for projects to proceed.

"I think the states should be given another period of time to complete their Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism (SDLAM) projects and get them operational as they are critical in reducing the volume to be obtained under the Basin Plan from 2750 to 2075 GL," Mr Ebner said.

Many irrigators across the basin are making financial investments, developing or redeveloping properties.

That 675 GL will remain in the pool of water providing allocations to farms and towns.

"These projects need a bit of time to ensure they are delivering or capable of saving the volumes of water that have been pledged under these projects," Mr Ebner said.

"The Commonwealth should guarantee funding without a set date to ensure these projects can gain approvals and be constructed.

"Everyone needs to calm down, get along and get things happening again."

Mr Ebner said although progress towards sustainable diversion limits was happening in Victoria and SA, NSW was years behind.

"The aim of the target is to bring the Basin back to a sustainable level of environmental health while continuing to support agriculture and securing the future of Basin communities," he said.

"The plan also includes a commitment to delivering by mid-next year an extra 450GL a year downstream to South Australia.

"So, without the SDLAM projects those two volumes 2750+450 GL equals the total capacity of Hume Dam that will be set aside for environmental purposes totally," Mr Ebner said.

"This means water that was once used for farming irrigation and stock and domestic can never be used for those purposes again."

Victoria delivering 200GL annually

Mr Ebner said Victoria had made significant progress in developing plans for projects that could return more than 200GL each year to the Basin even though it's hard to find what each project will provide.

But he said before they could proceed, environmental effect statements were required for each project by the Victorian Environment Minister and there was still work to be completed to gain EES approval.

Mr Ebner said this did not seem a practical requirement by government as the projects were mainly about returning water to wetlands and waterways located on a flood plain with a long history of being flooded including during last year's flood.

"These approvals added so much time to these projects that could have helped restore the shortfall of water to the Murray by the June 2024 deadline," he said.

"The environment already holds a significant volume of water.

"The rush into buybacks by the Commonwealth isn't warranted, as least not for some time.

"We are yet to see what environmental improvements can be sustainably made with the current volume held by the environment," he said.

"Can we learn as we go using the current volume and the 675GL SDLAM volumes as they become available?

"It could be another decade or more before constraints between Hume Dam and Yarrawonga are resolved to allow greater flows than currently permitted to benefit the environment downstream."

Barmah Choke concerns

Mr Ebner said he understood the recent flood had pushed more sand into the Barmah Choke of the Murray River in southern NSW.

He said this would contribute to a further decline in passing flows to downstream communities and the environment and affect the

Calls for independent body to manage Basin *continued...*

availability of water to downstream irrigators during the peak summer demand period.

He said it wasn't clear yet how the declining capacity of the Barmah Choke would be shared between NSW and Victoria.

"Water quality and improving the rivers aquatic environment to protect banks from slumping and erosion under high flow events are not going to improve while carp remain in the river," Mr Ebner said.

"High flows will just repeat the damage observed in recent years in the lower Goulburn."

He said the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's predicted mid-range sea level rises for southern Australia of 0.3m by the year 2050 and 1m by 2100.

Mr Ebner said this later rise prediction was uncertain due to recent breakdown of ice shelves at both poles.

"A rise of this extent will drive more seawater into the Lower Lakes in South Australia, during storms, high swells and high tides."

Mr Ebner wonders what does the future hold for the lakes and the barrages?

"Is there one, or will 450GL save them or is it inevitable that they will return to an estuarine system?" he asks.

Climate change impact

Mr Ebner said the Victorian Government's Northern Region Sustainable Water Strategy predicts a 21 per cent reduction to inflows to the total Murray River system by 2050 under medium climate change.

Mr Ebner said the socio-economic impacts on river communities from the Hume Dam in NSW to the Murray Mouth in SA needed to be strongly considered as part of the Basin Plan.

He believes a strategic plan could be developed to purchase and retire substantial irrigation farms below the choke.

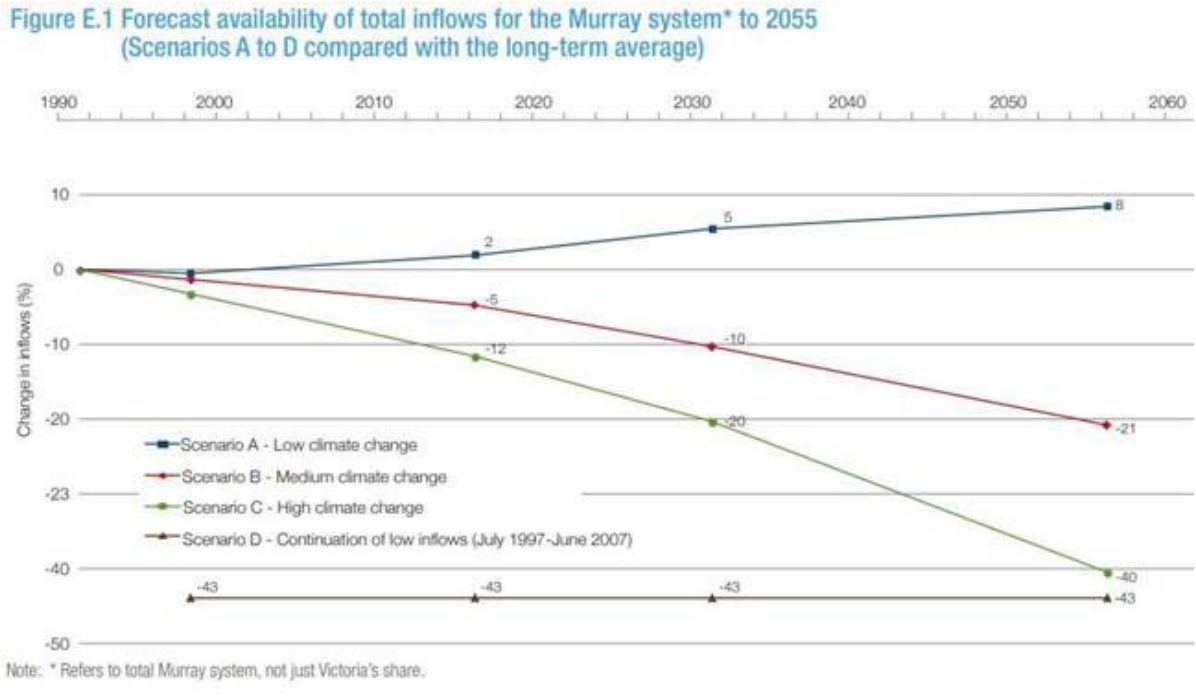
Mr Ebner said this should include their water entitlements and licences to irrigate which would take them out of irrigated farming.

"Under a system like this, demand for water decreases as the irrigation footprint declines," Mr Ebner said.

Peter Ebner

"The land could then be used for other farming activities."

For more information about the Basin Plan review visit mdba.gov.au



Forecastinflows. Source: The State of Victoria Department of Sustainability and Environment 2009

Wine grape sector committed to sustainability

A national program established in 2019 to boost the sustainability of the winegrape industry and wineries by June 30 this year has attracted over 1,200 members across Australia.

Sustainable Winegrowing Australia is administered by the Australian Wine Research Institute (AWRI) with governance, endorsement, and active support from Australian Grape & Wine and Wine Australia.

Sustainable Winegrowing Australia's Program Manager, Dr Mardi Longbottom said the members of the program came from 51 of the nation's 65 regions.

"There is huge diversity of members in our program now," she said.

"It represents 45 per cent of the vineyard area in Australia and just over half of the national crush last year.

Dr Longbottom said half of the program's members had become certified and almost 30 per cent of Australian vineyards were under Sustainable Winegrowing Australia certification.

"Membership numbers have grown significantly since the end of 30 June 2020, to the end of last financial year," she said.

Dr Longbottom said growth over this period had also occurred in the number of members who had become certified.

To become certified, members need to complete a training workshop, complete an audit, and update their details once they meet the requirements.

Dr Longbottom said all the data recorded from its members was kept confidential.

"We do aggregate the data and present it in an aggregated format and anonymously," Dr Longbottom said.

"All of that data gets reported back to members in benchmarking reports and hopefully all the members have gone through that process and really looked through that benchmarking process," she said.

Sustainable Winegrowing Australia's manager Dr Mardi Longbottom and Australian Grape & Wine's industry policy manager Anna Hooper.

Dr Longbottom said the data had been used to help inform Wine Australia's emissions reduction road map and do a life cycle analysis of Australian wine's contribution to emissions.

"We also have a research project looking at that data and we are using machine learning and artificial intelligence to better make use of the data," she said.

Dr Longbottom said this information would hopefully assist with developing more decision support tools for members.

Certified members of Sustainable Winegrowing Australia can apply to use its trust mark that is owned by the AWRI and Australian Grape and Wine.

Dr Longbottom said about 700 applications for its trust mark licence had been received so far.

She said her organisation had been working with a lot of industry stakeholders this year to streamline the trust mark rules and licensing process as much as possible.

"There are a lot more trust marks appearing on wine bottles and there are a lot more members who have signs up and are proudly displaying that they are members of the program."

"We have put in some definitions for what qualifying grapes and wine are," Dr Longbottom said.

To be certified wineries, wine businesses, and vineyards must complete an audit pursuant to the Australian Wine Industry Standards of Sustainable Practice, for winery and/or viticulture, once every three years.

Qualifying grapes must be harvested from a certified vineyard that was both certified at the time of harvest and has completed SWA membership requirements and certification training by 14 September of the previous calendar year.

To qualify, wine needs to be at least 85 per cent made from qualifying grapes that are fully processed at a certified winery, that was certified at the time the grapes were received, and that has been stored at a certified winery

Sustainability certification essential for growers

By Christine Webster

MVW is advising growers that joining and becoming certified with Sustainable Winegrowing Australia will increase their chances of finding a market for their fruit.

Almost 100 growers from the Murray Darling and Swan Hill regions are members of Sustainable Winegrowing Australia.

MVW industry development officer Stephen Kelly said wineries were starting to look for this type of certification from growers.

"Particularly if they are exporting to Europe," he said.

"If growers are out of contract and looking for somewhere to send their fruit, they have a much better chance if they are certified.

"Some wineries are insisting that their existing growers become certified."

Mr Kelly said about one third of MVW's members had joined the national program.

"We have 99 growers who are members and 47 of these have gone through the certification process," he said.

Mr Kelly said "quite a few growers" were also completing what was required to be certified in time for the approaching vintage.

He said about 80 growers took part in workshops about Sustainable Winegrowing Australia in Mildura and Swan Hill during August.

Mr Kelly said some growers also took part in sessions earlier this year.

Growers taking part in the Sustainable Winegrowing Australia training workshop at Mildura on 17 August.

The Sustainable Winegrowing Australia training workshop in Swan Hill on 15 August

"To become a certified member and have your vineyard audited before harvest, you do need to attend one of these workshops," he said.

Mr Kelly said some of the growers who were members of Sustainable Winegrowing Australia had already been part of a previous program that also encouraged sustainable practices.

"So, some of these memberships go back to 2010, but for some of these growers, they have only in the last two to three years become certified with Sustainable Winegrowing Australia," he said.

The Sustainable Winegrowing Australia program was established in 2019 and is supported by the Australian Wine Research Institute, Australian Grape & Wine, and Wine Australia.

A trust mark can also be applied for by certified wineries that have used grapes from certified growers.

"This is why growers are being encouraged to obtain this certification, as it becomes much easier for them to market their wine grapes," Mr Kelly said.

He said members received a workbook to undertake annual internal audits of their vineyards and they were externally audited every three years to maintain certification.

"This is the process I have been helping growers with," Mr Kelly said.

"You can follow through the workbook step by step, and you will then have everything ready for the external auditor."

Mr Kelly said Sustainability Winegrowing Australia gave growers third party accountability of ensuring their practices were reducing the environmental impact of grape production.

If you need assistance with your Sustainable Winegrowing Australia program, please contact Stephen Kelly on 03 5021 3911 or stephen@mvwi.com.au.

Sustainable Winegrowing Australia certification a bonus

A Robinvale winegrape grower is recognising the benefits of becoming a certified Sustainable Winegrowing Australia member.

Phillip Englefield is one of nearly 50 MVW members who has gained certification with the organisation.

He completed his external audit about a month ago and was previously an Entwine-certified grower.

Mr Englefield said Entwine eventually "morphed into Sustainable Winegrowing Australia", which was formed in 2019.

He along with almost 100 MVW members have joined the initiative to provide them with third party accountability and recognition of their efforts to reduce the environmental impact of wine grape production.

"A lot of people do want to operate sustainably, and I always operate this way because it is economically in my best interest," Mr Englefield said.

He said having Sustainable Winegrowing Australia certification would hopefully put him ahead of growers who did not have it.

Mr Englefield said more wine grape processors were giving this type of accreditation weight when considering where to buy their grapes from.

"Some processors can be a bit like sheep at times," he said.

"If one starts thinking this type of certification is a good idea, then they will all probably start thinking this is the case and will all end up looking for it. "

Mr Englefield said growers were being encouraged to have Sustainable Winegrowing Australia certification to gain market access to their grapes.

"That is how the program is being sold, but time will tell whether this incentive will eventuate," he said.

Mr Englefield said having a Sustainable Winegrowing Australia trust mark logo on bottles of wine produced by certified wine grapes and wineries was also a good incentive for growers.

He also welcomed the workshops held for growers from the Murray Darling and Swan Hill regions to inform them about the benefits of becoming certified with Sustainable Winegrowing Australia.

"It has been a help that the wine grape industry has run these types of events," he said.

"I have participated with it along with a lot of other growers."

Mr Englefield said preparing for the accreditation process was not a difficult process.

"It looks daunting, but when you

Phillip Englefield

actually sit down and do it, it is not necessarily easy, but it isn't hard either," he said.

"It is just a process, and you work your way through the manual, and it is done, and then the auditors come to have a look at it."

Mr Englefield said the aim was to help growers become certified and recognise the good practices they already have in place.

He said he and many other growers already operated sustainably.

"If I am going to stay alive in this business, I need to watch every cent, where it goes, what it does, and who is doing what," Mr Englefield said.

Murray Valley Winegrowers
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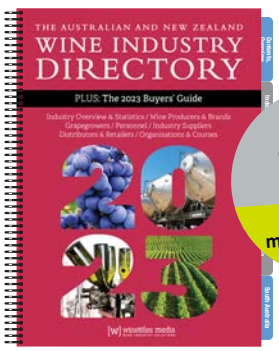

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More streamlined water delivery arrangements

A new framework for Victorian water users will come into effect on 20 November 2023 following consultations by the Department of Energy, Environment, and Climate Action (DEECA).

The new approach will apply to water delivery entitlements in the Murray, Goulburn, Campaspe, Loddon, Broken, Bullarook, Ovens, Werribee, and Thomson-Macalister river systems.

DEECA said the changes will clarify and protect existing water users' rights to take water during the rare event that river rationing was required.

Water users will also have more flexibility in managing their own delivery risks.

DEECA said the new approach would not affect anyone's water shares, it would simply clarify the right (entitlement) to have water delivered.

The new system would also enable the Minister for Water to make rules to cap and allow for the trade of these delivery rights.

DEECA said it would also protect the rights of existing entitlement holders in water systems where delivery risks were increasing.

The changes are also expected to provide water users with confidence of stronger penalties to protect them from impacts of others taking more than their fair share during any river rationing.

DEECA's senior manager water reform legislation oversight Penny Clark said on commencement of the new framework, everyone with an existing approval to take water from these systems will receive a 'Place of Take Approval'.

"This will mean everyone's approvals to take water will be managed under the same part of the Act, and therefore anyone taking water without authorisation is subject to the same enforcement provisions. This will not affect how anyone can take water," she said.

Ms Clark said river diverters should also be aware that "extraction share", the existing right to a share of the available water if river rationing is required will be moved from works licences to the place of take approvals.

"This will make extraction share an enduring right and enables the Minister for Water to set caps on extraction share, and rules for trading extraction share to protect existing water users," she said.

"For irrigation district customers, delivery share remains unchanged and will continue to be their right to a share of the available water if river rationing is required."

In the River Murray downstream of the Barmah Choke, not being able to deliver all the water that people were entitled to during peak demand periods over summer and autumn has always been a risk.

DEECA said the river is actively managed to avoid rationing water users wherever possible.

Shortfalls can occur during a heatwave and a sudden spike in demand, or when not enough capacity in the system existed to supply water to meet all downstream needs throughout summer and autumn.

DEECA has developed a series of fact sheets and frequently asked questions to explain the changes.

They can be found at https://www.waterregister.vic.gov.au/water-entitlements/about-entitlements/place-of-take-approvals

Figure 1 - Victorian declared water systems

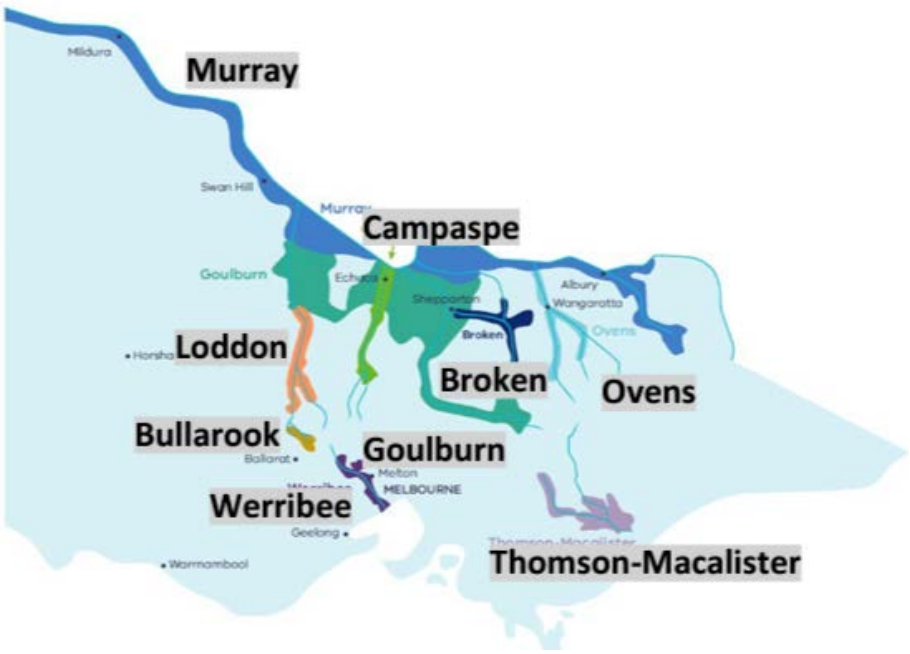

Figure 1: A new delivery framework has been developed for water users accessing the Murray, Goulburn, Campaspe, Loddon, Broken, Bullarook, Ovens, Werribee, and Thomson-Macalister river systems.

Source: Department of Energy, Environment, and Climate Action

National Agricultural Plastics Stewardship Scheme

Key Messages

- The research and design phase of the project has now been completed
- This update outlines the key achievements of the project as well as the proposed scheme design and operation
- The Scheme's Implementation Plan has been submitted to the Australian Government
- One of the critical next steps is the establishment of an Industry Working Group to progress the Implementation Plan
- The scheme is aiming to commence nationally from the 2024/25 financial year onward, pending progress of the Industry Working Group and outcomes from further consultation with key stakeholders.

Background

This project developed a proposed agricultural plastics stewardship scheme for non-packaging plastic waste. The scheme aims to facilitate and incentivise a viable market to recycle agricultural plastics. It involves solutions for on-farm retrieval, from farm collection logistics, processing technology and equipment and development of recycled plastic products and their markets.

The component of the scheme of most interest to winegrowers in the Murray Valley is: **Piping, irrigation and drainage** – tube and tape.

Scheme Design

Following extensive consultation and research of existing schemes, it is proposed that the Product Stewardship Organisation (PSO) for agricultural plastics be a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. This would ensure the following principles are met:

- Voluntary
- Purpose-driven and independent
- Not-for-profit
- Flexible.

The company would consist of a Board representing members and other experienced Non-Executive Directors with ultimate responsibility for establishing the constitution with a clear description of why the organisation exists.

Separate funds would be established for individual plastic waste streams with responsibility for recommending the levy rate and contributing to Board deliberations on expenditure. The PSO would provide shared administration common to all funds.

Additional funds could join the scheme as they emerge, providing flexibility over time

Funding

A detailed economic analysis was conducted to determine the operating costs of the stewardship scheme. This figure was then used to develop a cost per kilogram of plastic sold in the Australian market. It is expected that this cost will be passed on at an individual 'point of sale' level, however this would be confirmed through the ACCC Authorisation process.

The scheme is estimated to collect 51,000 tonnes of agricultural plastic waste per year in the first five years of operation, which increases to 68,000 tonnes per year thereafter. The plastic recovered is expected to increase from 41,000 tonnes per year (33%) to 54,500 tonnes per year (64%) at full operation.

The scheme will raise revenue through a levy applied to plastic put on the Australian market, as high up the supply chain as possible (i.e. the manufacturer).

Collection sites

The scheme ensures the majority of plastic waste can be aggregated through strategically located collection sites that are relatively easily accessed by farmers to drop off material free of charge. The drop-off collection points for the scheme include those situated in priority locations with capacity to temporarily store and aggregate agricultural plastic waste prior to it being pre-processed and transported to a recycler.

The scheme plans to operate approximately 450 collection sites at full operation after 10 years.

Re-processing

The ultimate aim of circularity is for waste agricultural plastics to be turned back into their original products, such as irrigation tube being recycled back into irrigation tube.

The recycling pathway of different plastic products and polymer types will differ based on a number of factors and influenced how the scheme was designed. This is largely dependent on the plastic value, quality and technical feasibility to be mechanically recycled. The scheme will preference mechanical recycling due to its technology readiness and commercial scale

drumMUSTER

Developed with the environment in mind, the drumMUSTER program collects and recycles eligible, empty and clean agricultural and veterinary chemical containers.

drumMUSTER is Agsafe's national product stewardship program that is supported by agvet chemical manufacturers, industry stakeholders which includes member and farming associations, as well as state and local governments.

Working hand-in-hand with local councils and other collection agencies, drumMUSTER has established collection facilities all over Australia and since its inception in 1998 the program has recycled over 37 million containers.

drumMUSTER Regional Consultants work tirelessly across the nation to build and maintain strong relationships with program stakeholders, while national staff manage the day-to-day operations and facilitate a range of projects from the National Office in Canberra.

Once the containers have been collected, they are recycled into re-usable products such as wheelie bins, road signs, fence posts and bollards.

The drumMUSTER service benefits both the user, the environment, industry and the wider community by providing a reliable, cost effective and sustainable option for the recycling of empty eligible agvet chemical containers.

Using the program is easy. Simply triple rinse your eligible containers, round them up, making sure the lids have been removed as this is a different type of plastic, and take them to your local drumMUSTER collections site. These are usually at the local waste transfer station. You can find the nearest collection site to you at www.drummuster.org.au

For further information, call 02 6206 6888 or visit www.drummuster.org.au

ChemClear

drumMUSTER's sister program is ChemClear. If you have unused or obsolete agvet chemicals that you would like to safely dispose of, you can register them online at www.chemclear.org.au and they will be picked up when a collection is scheduled in your area. Collections are conducted once registrations reach a level that can be supported. On average, collections are conducted in each state every two years.

Agsafe's General Manager, Dominique Doyle, noted that farmers' committed engagement in the ChemClear program always impresses, but never surprises. "Farmers understand that they are the custodians of the land, and they are always mindful of sustainable farm practices. ChemClear enables farmers to safely dispose of chemicals off farms and out of rural communities"

ChemClear and its partners are delighted with the progress the service has made since 2003 in which the program has collected and disposed of more than 770,000 litres of obsolete, inherited and unknown agvet chemicals.

Chemicals that are part of the drumMUSTER program, and are within two years of deregistration, are collected free of charge (Group 1). Group 2 chemicals will incur a fee for service. An obligation free quote will be provided once the agvet chemials have been registered through the ChemClear website.

ChemClear's goal is to reduce the quantity of unused Agvet chemicals stored on properties and in businesses across Australia, thereby reducing negative impacts on the environment, people and trade in the future. By removing these unwanted chemicals from farms and businesses, a potentially hazardous situation can be eliminated in the event of a fire or flood.

For further information, call 1800 008 182 or visit www.chemclear.org.au

Mildura landfill

Qld ChemClear

Not Advisors, Even Better

We often get asked whether we give advice, and people are surprised when we say we don't. So what do we do?

Well our approach is a little different. We want to empower farmers and small business owners to make their own decisions rather than trust in somebody else's 'expert' opinion and do whatever they advise. We help our clients to understand their financial position, explore options, point out opportunities, and show them where they can access grants and government packages.

Our aim is to teach our clients to become their own experts and to know the financial side of their business as well as they know their grape varieties or their products. If we do our job well, our clients will be better prepared for the inevitable fluctuations in production and market prices that come with life on the land. And when natural disasters hit, it should be a comfort to know that we're here to not only find available grants or assistance packages, but help with the application process as well.

Grants and Assistance Packages

A good example of this is the *Farm Household Allowance* (FHA), an income support payment for farmers paid at the same rate as JobSeeker. There's also up to $10,000 in activity supplements that give farmers an opportunity to develop skills, access training and pay for professional advice to better manage their business into the future. Eligibility for this supplement is not as rigid as people think and worth a phone call to us for more information.

Primary producer flood recovery grants final claim date extended.

The final claim date for applicants who successfully applied for a Primary Producer Flood Recovery grant for the October 2022 floods and storms has been extended from 13 January 2024 to **31 May 2024.**

This date extension applies to successful applicants of the:

- Primary Producer Flood Recovery Grant
- Rural Landholder Grant
- Transport Support Program

This extension provides primary producers and rural landholders additional time to undertake their recovery activities and finalise their claims for Tier 2 payments.

While an extension has been provided, grant recipients are encouraged to make their re-imbursement claims as soon as possible**.**

If you need more information or some assistance in claiming further payments, give RFCS a call.

Negotiating for Positive Outcomes

A better understanding of your own business, and some clear strategies on how to achieve your goals will help relieve stress and anxiety. A meeting with your bank for a loan extension or an impending phone call to an insurer to see how your claim is progressing, however, is a sure way to raise your blood pressure again.

Negotiating in these situations is not easy - we can let emotions get in the way of logical arguments and it's often difficult to see things from the other side's point of view.

While we want our clients to have more control over their business operations, we don't expect them to become skilled negotiators overnight. That's why we offer to negotiate on their behalf. We know from experience that banks are much more likely to refinance with favourable terms if they know their client is seeking assistance from RFCS VicWest. Our ablity to cut through red tape and expediate actions comes with years of experience and a diversity of situations.

For a more complete picture of what RFCS VicWest can do for you, head to our website or follow us on our social media channels.

When you're looking for support, call us. Always here. Always free.

Financial and wellbeing support for primary producers and rural small business.

We help you:

- Understand your financial position
- Identify options and opportunities
- Access grants and government packages
- Negotiate with creditors or financial providers
- Manage your wellbeing
- Plan for the future

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An Australian Government Initiative

VICTORIA State Government

RFCS Victoria West

1300 735 578

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SWEP
SUNRAYSIA WATER EFFICIENCY PROJECT

PROJECT UPDATE

NOVEMBER 2023

SEEKING LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

Following from the successful completion of our 2023 Winter Works program, the SWEP team have now turned our attention to planning for the next stage of works.

Over the coming months, our focus will be on undertaking meter outlet works whilst preparing for a significant works program in winter next year.

Our Winter Works 2024 program will involve lining around 20km of channels and installing two new buried pipelines across the Mildura and Merbein districts and removing around 150 old Dethridge wheels. This is around five times more work than we undertook in winter 2023.

The Winter Works 2024 program will require a significant volume of the Mildura channels to be drained during winter to allow for the works to be completed. Our team are working hard to carefully plan this shutdown, with a commitment to minimising disruption to customers. We will be focussing on communicating details of the planned shutdowns well ahead of time to allow customers to plan accordingly.

We have also been working to promote the works within the construction industry with an intention to find contractors who have the experience, capability, and resources to undertake the work during the shutdown.

To this end, the SWEP team invited contractors to two information sessions last month – in Mildura and Echuca. It was pleasing to have 39 construction companies attend these sessions, an impressive turn out.

An overview of the forward program was shared, along with the technical requirements, the procurement considerations, the safety standards, and other details. We look forward to completing the procurement process over the coming months and announcing our construction partners early in the new year.

Daniel Freitag

Daniel Freitag - Project Director

SWEP
SUNRAYSIA WATER EFFICIENCY PROJECT

LOWER MURRAY WATER

www.lmw.vic.gov.au/swep
swep@lmw.vic.gov.au
1800 808 830 and ask to speak to the SWEP team

Above: Nichols Point Primary School

A SAFETY IMPROVEMENT IN THE PIPELINE FOR NICHOLS POINT

Part of the SWEP project includes removing the channel between the Nichols Point Primary School and the Nichols Point Reserve on Fifth Street, replacing it with a buried pipeline.

The team have begun conversations with Nichols Point Primary School and Mildura Regional Council to determine the best outcome for these works and to coordinate logistics for when construction is occurring.

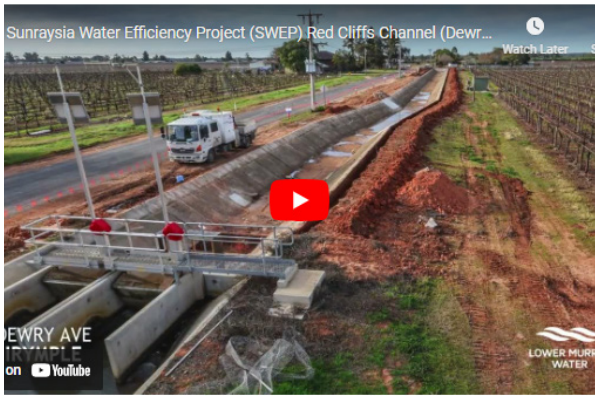
These works will improve safety for the community and provide the opportunity to reconnect the currently separated spaces.

The team are working with designers to confirm the most appropriate solution. We will remain in contact with the school, council, and neighbouring landholders about finding a construction approach that allows the team to deliver the upgrade during winter 2024, with minimal disruption to all.

WHAT IS CHANNEL LINING, ANYWAY?

Not familiar with what's involved in lining the channels? Check out the timelapse we took of our lining efforts over winter at Dewry Avene, Irymple.

Head to Lower Murray Water's YouTube channel to view our latest video at: www.youtube.com/@lowermurraywater4403



YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Will SWEP need to access my property to fix the channels?

The SWEP team will certainly need to contact property owners to make arrangement to access the channels that are within the scope for upgrades. Our team will work with all adjoining landholders to agree on access and other matters such as seasonal operational considerations that may affect the timing or approach to undertaking the works. The team will draw up an agreement to reflect these matters to make sure a clear record is available for both parties.

Who should I speak to if I have questions?

If you have any queries about our proposed channel or meter works, please contact our Surveillance and Operations Manager, James Collett in the first instance. He can be contacted on 0429 135 509.

For general enquiries about the project, reach out to the team on 1800 808 830 or via email at swep@lmw.vic.gov.au and we will put you in touch with the right person to help you with answers.

SWEP SUNRAYSIA WATER EFFICIENCY PROJECT

LOWER MURRAY WATER

www.lmw.vic.gov.au/swep

swep@lmw.vic.gov.au

1800 808 830 and ask to speak to the SWEP team

Impact for a Qfly season

Growers may experience more serious problems with Queensland fruit fly (Qfly) this season.

Fruit Fly Murray Valley Regional Coordinator Jarad Hill said "In years with high Qfly pressure, crop loss may be experienced by industries that aren't normally impacted, such as wine grapes."

Entomologist Andrew Jessup said "The current El Niño weather pattern of earlier and warmer maximum temperatures along with crop and garden irrigation will cause Qfly numbers to build up earlier than usual. This means that potential Qfly damage will impact wine grapes unless this pest is controlled."

Jarad also reminds growers not to forget about the non-commercial fruit trees on their properties.

"Do you have fruit trees on your property – around the house, at the back of the shed, or near the pump or pickers hut? It could be these trees that shelter fruit fly from the cold and dry conditions during winter, and fruit can be infested from spring through to autumn".

"By managing fruit flies in your home garden as part of your overall property-wide integrated pest management strategy talk to your local agronomist or ag store"

Jarad said "If your neighbours are growing stone fruit, citrus, avocados, or table grapes, you are supporting them and your community by removing any non-commercial host trees from your property. You can also reduce the risk by putting nets over them or spraying them" Jarad said.

Entomologist Andrew Jessup added, "Monitoring with traps and by visual checking of both grapes and other fruiting plants, even blackberries, prickly pear, wild rose hips and boxthorn, that are present near vineyards, should commence immediately".

"Monitoring will ensure timely control of Qfly before it gets out of control. Use-by dates on stored and newly-purchased fruit fly baits and pesticides should be checked to ensure usage compliance".

If you would like more information on managing Qfly, Fruit Fly Murray Valley is here to help. Visit our website www.fruitflymv.com.au or contact us at (03) 50 220 327 or fruitflymv@mildura.vic.gov.au

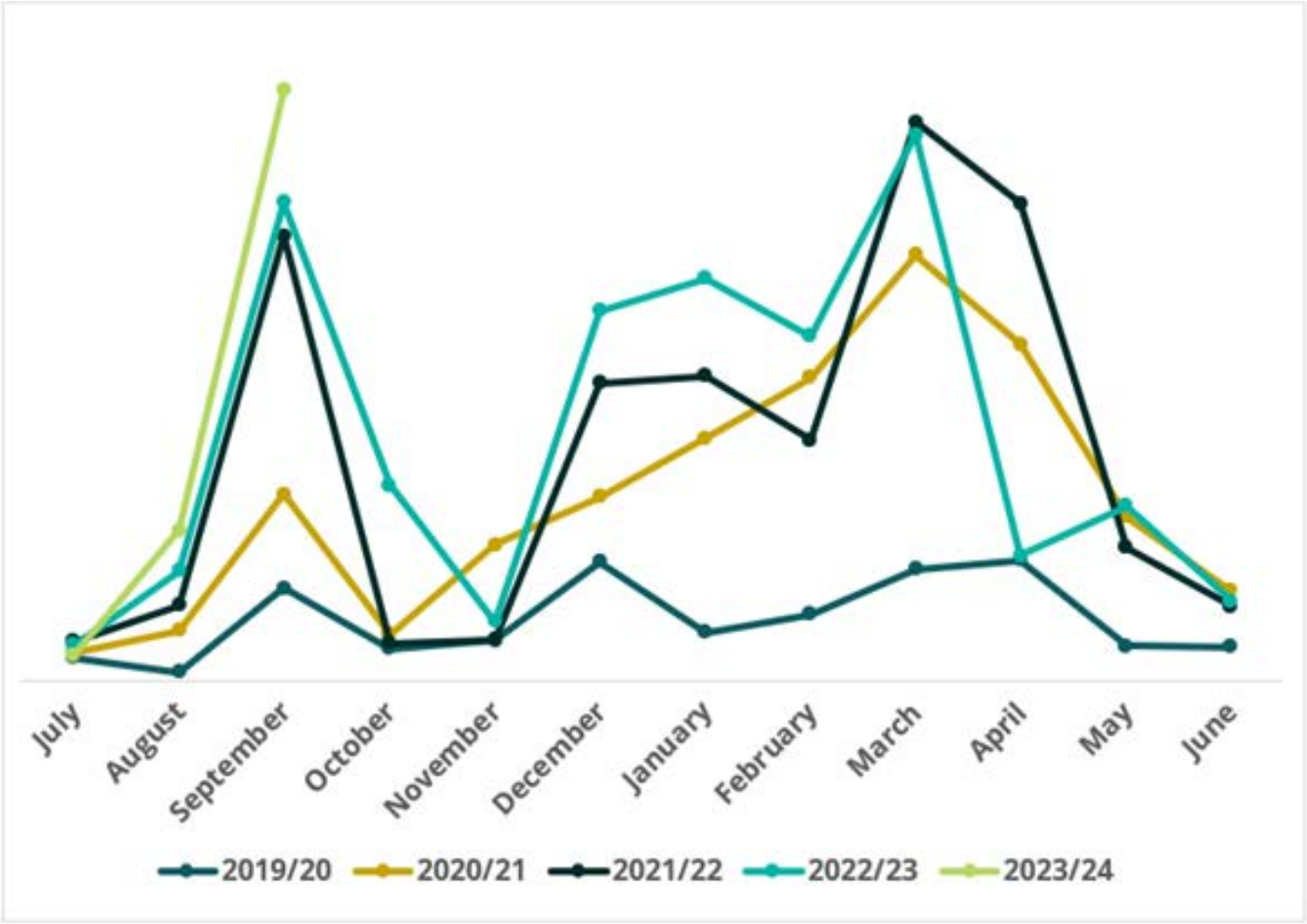


Figure 1 – Murray Valley Qfly Season Trends

Boosting Victorian Grapevine Biosecurity

Agriculture Victoria Research (AVR), Biosecurity and Agricultural Services (BAS), Plant Health Australia (PHA) and Wine Victoria (WV) facilitated two workshops on grapevine biosecurity in Mildura and Melbourne during September.

The workshops presented an overview of important grapevine viruses and the viruses present in Victoria, through the 'Growing Victorian Wine into the Future' program commissioned by Wine Victoria and funded by the Victorian Government. Kim Chalmers from Wine Victoria emphasised the importance of biosecurity and using high health status grapevine propagation material to the continued quality and productivity of the Australian wine industry.

Dr Cliff Kinotti from AVR, presented the outcomes of his survey on grapevine viruses across Victoria that were identified using high-throughput sequencing (HTS).

Dr Fiona Constable from AVR, provided an overview of grapevine viruses, highlighting the importance of testing propagation material to ensure that it was free of viruses.

Chris Bennett from Vinehealth Australia outlined the role of the South Australian Vine Improvement Association in providing high health status vine propagation material to vineyards through an extensive germplasm collection.

Dr Chris Pittock from BAS described the biosecurity activities that Agriculture Victoria would carry out in response to pests or pathogens of grapevines and advised growers to report anything unusual via the national hotline or by using the online form on their website. Early reporting is crucial to national plant biosecurity as the ability to eradicate depends on catching the pest or disease before it spreads.

Dr Carolyn Blomley, PHA's Acting Manager EPPRD, highlighted PHA's role in preparing for an incursion of exotic grapevine pests and diseases and explained how the national emergency response arrangements would be activated under the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD) to eradicate an exotic pest or disease. Participants were introduced to some of the High Priority Pests (HPPs) identified in the Grapevine Biosecurity Plan and the resources available to help growers better mitigate risk through the adoption of improved vineyard biosecurity practices. The availability of Owner Reimbursement Costs (ORCs) for eligible growers who have had their crops or property damaged by emergency response actions was explained. Owner Reimbursement Costs are a key part of the EPPRD and are designed to encourage early reporting of suspected Emergency Plant Pests.

The workshop was well attended by wine and table grape growers from Mildura and Swan Hill, grapevine nurseries and representatives from the Australian Table Grape Association. A second workshop was held at AgriBio, La Trobe University, in Melbourne, targeting winegrape growers from the Yarra Valley and the Mornington Peninsula.

Attendees at the Biosecurity workshop.

Challenging state of global wine sector drives continued decline in Australian wine exports

Australian wine exports declined by 11 per cent in value to $1.79 billion and 4 per cent in volume to 604 million litres in the year ended September 2023, according to Wine Australia's latest Export Report released today.

This export performance is well below long term averages, driven by a global decline in wine consumption across many mature markets, especially in commercial wines (less than US$10 per bottle) where most Australian export volumes are sold.

Cost of living pressures are also slowing down the longer-term global premiumisation trend, as some consumers are moderating alcohol consumption as a cost-saving strategy.

The United Kingdom (UK) and Canada were big contributors to the decline in volume in the latest quarter. This performance reflects the broad economic challenges for wine sales in the UK, such as inflation and increasing taxes and duties on alcohol. Likewise, heightened levels of unpackaged shipments to Canada in recent times are showing signs of stabilising, while packaged volumes continued their decline.

Wine Australia Manager, Market Insights Peter Bailey said that total export value has been on a downward trajectory since peaking at $3.1 billion in the 12 months ended October 2020.

"Over the past 12 months, the United States of America (US) was a major contributor to the overall drop in value, along with Canada, and the UK. Growth to Hong Kong offset some of this decline.

"However, despite this decline over the past year, there were some positive signs in the US this past quarter, with exports growing by 8 per cent in value in comparison to the same quarter in 2022," Mr Bailey said.

The number of Australian wine exporters also increased to 1,247 in the year ended September 2023, with 98 more companies exporting than the previous year. The market that experienced the highest growth in the number of exporters among the top markets was Hong Kong, followed by Thailand and Vietnam.

There were mixed results across the Asian region, including a decline in exports to Singapore and an increase in exports to Hong Kong, two key trading hubs in the region, reflecting volatile market conditions at present. Key emerging markets such as Thailand and Philippines grew in value during this period.

The announcement that China has agreed to undertake an expedited review of its import duties on Australian wine is obviously a welcome step for grapegrowers and winemakers across the country. Wine Australia will continue to work closely with the Australian Government and Australian Grape & Wine to support this process in any way it can.

The top five markets by value in the year ending September 2023 were:

- US (down 11 per cent to $366 million. 20 per cent share of total export value)
- UK (down 10 per cent to $354 million. 20 per cent share of total export value)
- Hong Kong (up 26 per cent to $205 million. 11 per cent share of total export value)
- Canada (down 22 per cent to $148 million. 8 per cent share of total export value), and
- Singapore (down 12 per cent to $117 million. 7 per cent share of total export value).

The top five markets by volume were:

- UK (down 3 per cent to 215 million litres. 36 per cent share of total export volume)
- US (down 4 per cent to 134 million litres. 22 per cent share of total export volume)
- Canada (up 20 per cent to 74 million litres. 12 per cent share of total export volume)
- New Zealand (down 3 per cent to 31 million litres. 5 per cent share of total export volume), and
- Germany (down 9 per cent to 28 million litres. 5 per cent share of total export volume).

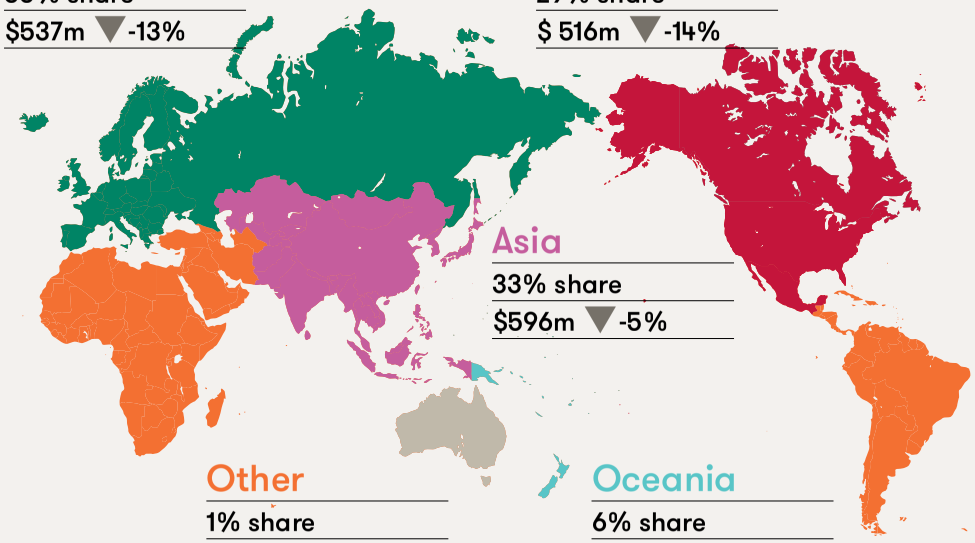
Wine Australia

Wine Australia

Export Report

1 October 2022 to 30 September 2023

Total value	$1.79b	▼ -11%
Total volume	604m litres	▼ -4%
Average value	$2.96/litre	▼ -7%



Exports by price point (value)

$10.00 +	$578m	▼	-8%
$7.50–$9.99	$103m	▼	-17%
$5.00–$7.49	$175m	▼	-23%
$2.50–$4.99	$484m	▼	-15%
< $2.50	$447m	▼	-3%

Top 5 export destinations (value)

United States	$366m	▼	-11%
United Kingdom	$354m	▼	-10%
Hong Kong	$205m	▲	26%
Canada	$148m	▼	-22%
Singapore	$117m	▼	-12%

Top 5 export varieties (litres)

Chardonnay	151m	▼	-2%
Shiraz	139m	▼	-11%
Cabernet Sauvignon	85m	▼	-5%
Pinot Gris/Grigio	46m	▲	17%
Merlot	38m	▼	-4%

59% of wine produced is exported

112 export destinations

1,247 active exporters

18,123 different products exported

15.4 million glasses of Australian wine enjoyed overseas each day

Murray Valley
Winegrowers

iDC

Murray Valley
Winegrape Industry
Development Committee