



# Summary of SWBC 2017 Report to the Industry

Throughout British Columbia, the burgeoning wine industry continues to grow in scale and global renown after every successful vintage. As the regional vineyards and wineries strive to improve environmental efficiency, implement sustainable practices, and foster better customer connections, Sustainable Winegrowing British Columbia (SWBC) is creating innovative educational opportunities for farmers, winemakers, and hospitality workers to improve their environmental impacts.

## WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE WINEGROWING BC?

Created by a team of British Columbia farmers, winemakers, viticulturists, sustainability experts, and marketing specialists, Sustainable Winegrowing British Columbia is an initiative of the BC Wine Grape Council.

SWBC offers free membership to grape growers and winemakers throughout the region, providing them with access to online assessments, educational resources, and training to help them establish and promote sustainable practices for the region's vineyards and wineries.

## Our History

Members of the British Columbia Wine Grape Council (BCWGC) called for the creation of a BC-based sustainability program in 2008. The council hired Insight Environmental Consulting to research successful sustainability programs around the world. Then, they integrated their best principles into a sustainability program designed to address every level of the regional wine industry: from the vineyards to the wineries and even service and hospitality.

In this way, SWBC created a concrete set of practices for grape growers, winemakers, and service providers to assess their sustainability, with an eventual objective of providing certification options for achieving the program's standards.

## The Early Years

For the first years, the SWBC produced hard copy assessments and guidebooks for members. By 2011, an online tool was developed that improved efficiency for recording, managing, and tallying evaluations. After a gap in funding in 2012, the BCWGC regained financing from the federal-provincial-territorial initiative Growing Forward 2 in 2014.

Today, membership in the SWBC program provides access to three sustainability self-assessments and reference guides that help participants outline an action plan for tracking and improving performance. Beyond these tools, SWBC also provides workshops, presentations, and other educational resources for participants.

## PROGRESS MADE IN 2017

Each year we create a progress report for the industry to gain an understanding of the effectiveness of Sustainable Winegrowing British Columbia.

The 2017 Report to Industry evaluated participation levels, outreach and educational effectiveness, the value of the program's formatting and content, its potential for fostering collaboration and building partnerships, and the progress made towards creating a sustainable certification system for members.

A summary of the report's findings is below:

- **Participation:** Sixteen vineyards and eight wineries completed assessments for 2017. Another ten vineyards and five wineries began but did not complete their assessments.
- **Educational Outreach:** SWBC led numerous presentations and workshops to increase awareness about the program, encourage people to complete assessments, and, when necessary, provide help for technology questions relating to the program.
- **Online Assessment Tool:** The SWBC online assessment tool was improved based on participant feedback to enhance its long-term usefulness.

- **Partnership Building:** SWBC continues to collaborate with other winegrowing regions and is striving to learn from the challenges that they faced when improving their programs. SWBC also collaborates with researchers, academics, industry associations, regional groups, and environmental organizations.
- **Certification Progress:** SWBC continues to pursue funding to support the design and implementation of a certification program.
- **Water and Wastewater Projects:** SWBC leveraged funds to complete two research and education projects – one focused on vineyard water-use efficiency and the other on winery wastewater management. Both projects reviewed technologies and best practices, created guidance materials for the industry, and carried out workshops.

## Next Steps

Based on feedback from program participants and input from the sustainability committee that leads SWBC, the following priorities have been identified for the next few years.

- In early 2019, prepare a five-year sustainability report that compiles five years of SWBC assessment results and identifies trends in areas of excellence and opportunities for improvement.
- Obtain funding to begin designing the certification program.
- Prioritize and carry out recommendations from the vineyard and winery water projects.
- Continue to enhance partnerships with industry organizations, research scientists, educational institutes, and government.
- Continue outreach efforts such as workshops and presentations.
- Improve program website and online resources.
- Offer on-site assistance and workshops to support implementation of action plans.

Sustainable Winegrowing British Columbia has made tremendous progress for the sustainability of the wine industry throughout western Canada. We invite you to [join us as members](#) as we continue to strive for environmental innovation and support for farmers, winemakers, and hospitality workers within the world of wine production.