What is Sustainability & Sustainable Wine? Local beginnings, global implications

Understanding sustainability is essential to the study of sustainable grape growing and wine making. As the industry transcends the triple bottom line with implications in economics, environment and societal wellbeing – finding a balance would be the ultimate goal. The idea of sustainability is no longer debatable; it was discussed at first covertly, but now openly for half a century and is now a common term driving environmental policy, economic development and social equity worldwide.

In 1987 the World Commission on Environment and Development identified and defined sustainability in the *Bruntland Report, or Our Common Future*: “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” The report characterized the tragedy of the commons, which Hardin discussed in 1968, on a global scale. This change affected all nations and would require this balance aforementioned (Bruntland, 1987).

This paper will bring together history and practice, and combine literature and location. It not only uses the model of economics as the driving force for sustainability – but rather the environment becomes the center point, with economics as a subset of the field. Wine can be sustainable if it includes “development without growth beyond environmental carrying capacity, where development means qualitative improvement and growth means quantitative increase (Daly, 1996).” More vines, more vats, more bottles, and more wine results in a disregard for the region’s biological constraints. Rather, moving beyond growth, the region can implement a form of development that addresses the qualitative needs of the people, the wildlife, the water quality, the timber, and all other stakeholders in the region. This revolution in economics bridges a literature gap and quite possibly suggests that land preservation and management techniques coupled with sustainable development might be the model that can best serve the farming and viticulture industries.

Given that consumers are increasingly expecting wine to be produced in a sustainable manner (Bisson et al, 2002) and a complexity in defining sustainability, this paper can discuss the literature and discourses specifically within viticulture, oenology, and consumption of wine. Certification, water use and quality, soil, air and climatic impacts, energy, chemicals, wildlife, materials, waste, globalization, and worker health are all important topics within the discussion of sustainable wine. No factor is more important, but rather when combined there is a great possibility to have the lowest environmental footprint.

Specific programs will also be discussed including work that is already commencing in France with the creation of the Association des Climats du Vignoble de Bourgogne. The traction on proper labeling in California and third party certification through the Certified California Sustainable Winegrowing Program (CCSW) managed by the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance will be deliberated. Oregon’s certification since 1997 with LIVE (Low Input Viticulture & Enology), now a statewide program (2009) called Oregon Certified Sustainable Wine will be considered. South Africa’s Integrity and Sustainability program and label (2010) will be examined. In addition, New Zealand’s quest for 100% sustainability certification, Chile’s National Sustainability Code for wines, and others will be reviewed.
WORKS CITED

