



Le Mistral Vineyard Sustainability Program

Sustainability has become a popular phrase in recent years as everyone jumps on the environmental “go green” bandwagon. Monterey Pacific, a vineyard management company owned by Steve McIntyre, has been involved with sustainability since 1994 as a founding member of the Central Coast Vineyard Team which is an organization that is nationally recognized as a leader in sustainability. Monterey Pacific is one of the first vineyard management companies in the state to be certified sustainable on both a regional and statewide basis. In the mid 1990s, Le Mistral Vineyard came under the watchful management of Monterey Pacific.

Sustainable farming is a self correcting discipline that utilizes a self assessment scoring system to evaluate progress. It combines best management practices from other farming systems, like organic and biodynamic; to positively impact an organization’s Triple Bottom Line: fiscal, environment and society. It is considered a more flexible and dynamic system than organic or biodynamic since nearly every organism practices, either consciously or unconsciously, sustainability.

The key to sustainability is to focus on the process. This is not easy since a lot of people want to establish metrics or “standards” with which to judge one participant versus another, such as exists in a certified organic vineyard where there are strict standards that you either maintain or don’t. With sustainability one focuses on a continuum of improvement from one vintage to the next, as we use a self assessment tool, such as the Central Coast Vineyard Team SIP document, in order to gauge progress.

We are currently in the process of obtaining SIP certification for Le Mistral. The SIP program is a third party verification of sustainability provided by the Central Coast Vineyard Team. We should have this certification by the Spring of 2010 and additionally, we plan to acquire statewide certification as well under the California Wine Industry Sustainability Alliance. This statewide program is a collaboration between the Wine Institute and CAWG, the California Association of Winegrape Growers. Currently, this group is in the early stages of a pilot certification program in which Monterey Pacific is participating.

As you can see from the attached self assessment score sheet for Le Mistral there are tons of decisions made each season regarding the manner in which we conduct our farming protocol and the impacts to each bottom line. Listed below are but a few of the unique programs we recently adopted to improve Le Mistral’s Triple Bottom Line.

Vineyard Equipment Energy Efficiency Plan

In 2008 our maintenance staff worked with John Deere engineers to develop a plan to conserve fuel in our vineyard operations. Although new John Deere model tractors now contain a fuel efficiency meter that determines when an operator is achieving maximum fuel efficiency during a particular operation the majority of our fleet and harvesters do not contain such technology. Consequently, we set out to

determine the optimum RPM and gear selection at a given ground speed to use the fewest gallons per hour of fuel for 3 major vineyard cultural activities: spraying, mowing and harvesting. Through testing and advice from John Deere engineers we were able to develop a placard for each tractor which tells an operator what that RPM and gear selection should be. Operators are instructed to follow these guidelines at every opportunity.

Energy Savings Incentive Program

In order to reduce our energy consumption to preserve natural resources and promote sustainability, we have developed an Energy Savings Incentive Program. Each employee who drives a company vehicle or uses a company fuel card can earn \$1 for each gallon of fuel they save during the calendar year. Here is how it will work;

Each employee will have a baseline fuel usage which will equal the total number of gallons they consumed in calendar year 2007. For example; employee "A" used 3,319 gallons of fuel in 2007. If that employee reduces their fuel consumption by 15% in 2008 they would receive a fuel bonus of \$498 at the end of the year.

While it might seem difficult to imagine reducing your fuel consumption by 15%, it might not be as hard as it seems. Reducing the speed you drive, keeping your tires properly inflated, making fewer trips or purchasing a more fuel efficient vehicle when your lease is up will all help.

Vineyard Irrigation Energy Efficiency

During the growing season we employ the services of George Dennis, a retired PG&E engineer, to monitor energy usage for each well, motor and pump station. Additionally, he conducts a yearly pump test to monitor well and pump performance. George will make recommendations as to any necessary repairs that might save money and energy and insure that we are maximizing our energy efficiency with regards to PG&E time of use meter rates.

Community Involvement

One of the unique features of Monterey County agriculture is the relative lack of urban interface. Certainly, there is farm land adjacent to small towns and cities up and down the Salinas Valley but for the most part farms contain at most one older home that in the majority of cases is occupied by someone who actually works on the property. Most of the agricultural property in the valley is owned by multigenerational families whom do not actually farm the property but lease it out to individuals and companies who do. Additionally, the average parcel or farm size is quite large by comparison to most coastal rural areas in California. In the Salinas Valley, the average size vineyard is in excess of 400 acres.