



The value of benchmarking: empowering sustainable winegrowing

By Andrew Barber from the AgriBusiness Group.

Sustainable Winegrowing New Zealand has developed individualised benchmarking reports that empower its members to better understand their performance and drive change as part of a process of continual improvement. The use of benchmarking to improve efficiency (and verify the industry's environmental credentials for consumers, regulators and policy makers) is essential if New Zealand Wine is to remain a world leader. Partnering with *The New Zealand Sustainability Dashboard* we have taken a whole enterprise approach to monitoring performance, because the individually owned and operated vineyard or winery is considered to be the key site of action for sustainability. This production enterprise focus moves from driving change down through the industry, to bottom up; where it is grounded in the practical realities of making outstanding New Zealand wine in a sustainable way.

The development of a web-based sustainability learning tool for the wine industry, has initially focused on three resource use inputs; energy, water and agrichemicals. These were chosen as a comprehensive set of data already existed, allowing for early adoption and lessons to be learned based on actual grower and winery performance. Feeding this information back to individual members in a meaningful way was essential to achieve the industry's sustainability goals, and enhance the value of Sustainable Winegrowing New Zealand to its members.

Historically, various national reports have been prepared that some companies have benchmarked their own performance against. We have flipped this on its head by generating 1950 individualised vineyard water use reports, 13,600 agrichemical reports (eight reports per vineyard) and 360 winery reports benchmarking energy and water use. These reports have then formed the basis to aggregate up to national level reports.

INDIVIDUALISED REPORTS

To ensure relevance and engagement, benchmarking is tuned by operation size, varieties and regions. Even within these tuned benchmarks there are opportunities for further refinement to make fair and sensible

comparisons. If there is the perception that the playing field isn't level, then results and potential learnings can be too easily dismissed as irrelevant.

To deliver relevant benchmarks in an engaging way a number of techniques are used, including the use of infographics to add interest and make the information easily digested.

Individualised reports have four key elements:

1. The reports are concise, with eye catching and engaging visualisation of data,
2. The information must be relevant and add value,
3. They track progress,
4. They direct members to further learning opportunities.

Speaking recently with Braden from Borthwick Winery, he shared how being able to see that within their winery size category they had above average water use, they were empowered to drive water use down from over 5 to around 3 L/Lwine. Individualised reports include links through to various learning resources.

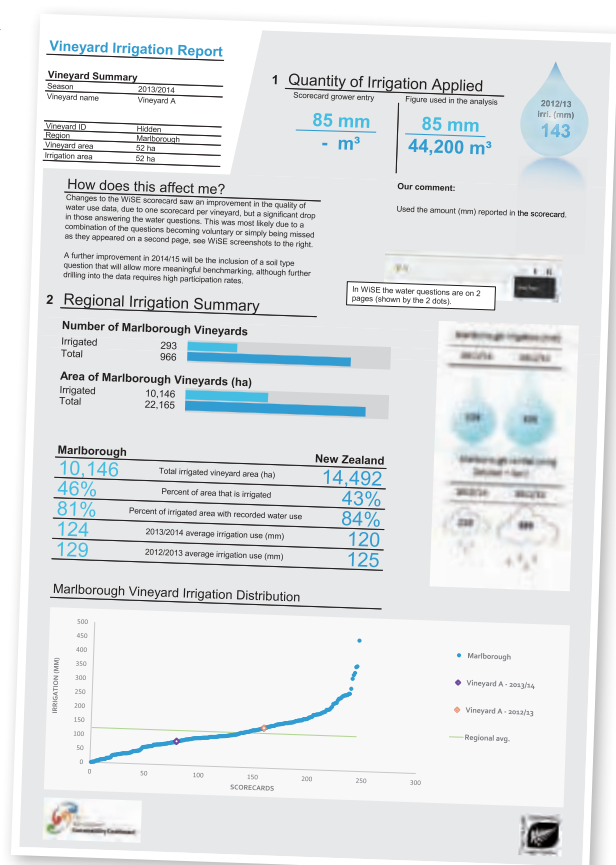
All the reports continue to evolve and we hope to further tune the irrigation use reports to reflect different soil types within a region.

While all of the current reports are based on a complete season, in-season reporting is being investigated for water and agrichemical use, which will feed into the decisions that need to be made throughout the season.

While not focused on many readers' interest in water, the agrichemical reports provide a good demonstration of the potential from this style of reporting. The 3 minute video report available from this link provides a good overview of the reporting and benchmarking capability that is being developed by the wine industry – <https://youtu.be/MYJt52cAcmw>

CONCLUSIONS

Sustainable Winegrowing New Zealand is delivering individualised vineyard and winery reports that display and track member's



performance against tuned regional and operation sized benchmarks. These short infographic-based reports flag issues, and connect Sustainable Winegrowing New Zealand members to learning and management resources.

Alongside these reports online dashboards are being developed through WiSE, the Wine Industry Sustainability Engine. Sustainable Winegrowing New Zealand members will then have another tool to help them progress along a path of continual improvement. lofty goals and stories are meaningless unless concrete action is being taken by those that make a real difference on the ground.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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