Wine industry trials sustainability project

The wine industry is trialling a sustainability project that claims to lead the world as a tool for cutting energy use and protecting the environment.

The $11 million New Zealand sustainability dashboard project is funded by the Government and industries.

Led by the Agribusiness Group, it is designed to give farmers and growers information on the environmental, economic and social performance of their vineyards and farms.

New Zealand Winegrowers general manager sustainability Philip Manson said 20 vineyards and 10 wineries were taking part in the pilot trial.

"We've been running for some time an annual audit, or scorecard, which has a range of questions right across the production," Mr Manson said.

"If you're a grapegrower or a winemaker looking at issues around production, what they're doing in terms of their environmental management, how they're dealing with their people. What we're doing is building off that system and looking at how we can take the information they're providing and process it so that it's giving them knowledge."

It would give winemakers the opportunity to compare their practices with the rest of the industry, and to evaluate where they could make improvements.

Results from the trial would be reported at the end of the year, before the project was rolled out across the industry.

http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/business/223455/wine-industry-trials-sustainability-project

Wine industry trialling software system

A new software system that helps farmers and growers assess their environmental and economic performance is being trialled in vineyards and wineries and is expected to be rolled out into other primary industries soon.

The Sustainability Dashboard Project is funded by industry stakeholders and the Government and aims to provide a sustainability assessment tool to help farmers and growers improve their farm performance and to respond to market and regulatory demands.

Project director Jon Manhire said the name dashboard was given to the new software because of its similarity to a car, where the driver could monitor the vehicle's performance with a quick glance at the dashboard.

He said it would be great if that farmer could see what their environmental footprint is, as well as their environmental or social impact and economic or financial impact.

Mr Manhire said farmers who put their foot on the accelerator in terms of their financial position might compromise their environmental impacts.

"What we're looking at is trying to understand some of the trade-offs between say the environment and economic performance and trying to basically identify processes to optimise their overall production."

Mr Manhire said the software would also help reduce monitoring and compliance costs and help with the demand for market assurance programmes.

New Zealand Winegrowers general manager sustainability Philip Manson said the software would improve the level of reporting.

"They can look at their practices critically from year to year (and) can also look at their practices compared to others in their region or across the country," Mr Manson said.

"So it gives them an opportunity to be able to say 'look, how am I performing relative to others, are there areas I can improve my performance, that I can make more efficient choices in the operations, either in the vineyard or the winery, to be able to improve efficiency'."

Early indications from the trial were that the dashboard software was of some benefit, he said.

The project would also be rolled out into the kiwifruit industry.

http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/rural/223880/wine-industry-trialling-software-system