

Contract Number 18-13-110
NWGGA – Vine Balance Education Books

Grant Amount
\$3,750

Contact Information

Nebraska Winery & Grape Growers Association

Jason W. Hayes, Executive Director
1335 'H' Street, Suite 230
Lincoln, NE 68508-3784
(308) 746-3861
jason@nebraskawines.com

Issue of Interest

Many Nebraska grape growers struggle with establishing and maintaining a successful, profitable, and healthy vineyard operation. To date, there have never been a grape grower standard established to ensure that the grapes delivered to a winery were following a vineyard protocol other than the brix (sugar levels) and Ph (acidity) had to meet certain levels. Very few wineries visited the grower vineyards to check on the parameters that were being followed to produce the grapes.

A new winery initiative began taking place in 2010 to assure that all wineries in the state were following certain guidelines to produce the highest quality wines possible. To begin the process of implementing vineyard guidelines and standards, the NWGGA Executive Board adopted the VINEBALANCE theme this year in an effort to provide guidance in evaluating and adopting best management practices that will minimize environmental impacts, reduce economic risks, and protect worker health and safety. VINEBALANCE focuses on grower self-assessments tools, best management practices, and resource management.

Approach to Problem

VINEBALANCE was the theme of the UNL Viticulture Conference that was held in March 2010. Dr. Tim Martinson, author of the VINEBALANCE Grower Self-Assessment Workbook, was one of the featured speakers. Dr. Martinson delivered several lectures about VINEBALANCE practices and held informal seminars. Nebraska Grape Growers became exposed to the VINEBALANCE program during this time and were encouraged to begin the self-assessment. It was announced at the conference that Dr. Martinson would sell the VINEBALANCE Workbooks to the NWGGA for a reduced rate (\$25.00 each).

Goals/Achievement of Goals

NWGGA President Tom Zumpfe talked to the Grape Board at their March meeting about a grant to purchase the VINEBALANCE books and resell them at the reduced rate to Nebraska Grape Growers. This was an effort to raise some revenue for the NWGGA and also to allow grape growers the reduced rate. The Association was given this special rate by purchasing all of the remaining books, a total of 120 books. The books were ordered in early April and received later that month. This grant allowed NWGGA to purchase 120 books for \$3,000 plus shipping and handling (\$134.60).

Members could then order the books from NWGGA for \$15.00 each plus postage or they were to be distributed at educational seminars/field days that were held in May, June and July. To date we have sold 48 of the VINEBALANCE Grower Self-Assessment Workbooks to Nebraska grape growers.

Results, Conclusions, Lessons Learned

It appears that Nebraska grape growers have begun the self-assessment process in their vineyards, based on the comments we have received about the program. We have held four educational seminars/field days in May, June, and July and we have always ended the seminars covering the appropriate chapters from the VINEBALANCE workbook. The grape growers are using the information covered in the evaluation phase and implementing it in their vineyards. They are in the process of reporting this back to us.

Progress Achieved According to Outcome Measures

Once we introduced the VINEBALANCE Program to Nebraska grape growers, 25% of growers purchased the books. We have held four educational seminars/field days (May, June, and July) and always ended the sessions discussing in detail the appropriate chapters from the workbook. This reinforces the VINEBALANCE program immediately and allows the growers to find out where they are in the self-assessment scale. The Growers Council of the NWGGA will continue to plan future seminars and field days that will focus on VINEBALANCE practices. Our hope is that in the next two to three years 75% of all growers in the state will be using the VINEBALANCE Grower Self-Assessment Workbook to determine if any modifications need to be made in their vineyard. By comparing current production practices with examples provided during the seminars, growers will be able to both assess and discover ways to improve their sustainability.

Financial Report

Of the \$3,750 provided in grant, the NWGGA purchased 120 books for \$3,000 and incurred shipping and handling charges in the amount of \$134.60, for total program expenses of \$3,134.60. The remaining \$615.40 was unused and retained by NGWB.