



Organic, Sustainable and Biodynamic Farming

Organic, Biodynamic®, and Sustainable ... what you need to know

Biodynamic®: Biodynamic® farming methods follow a philosophy started by Rudolph Steiner in his now famous 1924 “Agriculture course”. This is the highest form of organic farming. More than the elimination of chemical inputs, it emphasizes a wholistic approach to land stewardship that focuses on working with nature to create a healthy, balanced environment in and around the farm. Biodynamic® farming stands out from all other agriculture in an important way: it treats the farm as a living organism wholly capable of sustaining itself and unique from all other farms. On-farm recycling improves the individualizing character and includes the integration of animals and animal feeds, perennial plants, flowers and trees, water features, and composting. Dependence on imported materials for fertility and pest control is reduced. Water conservation is emphasized. Farms are required to maintain at least 10% of total acreage as a biodiversity set-aside. Riparian zones, wetlands, grasslands, and forests: all are considered an integral part of the life of the farm. Specially prepared medicinal plants, minerals, and composted animal manures help increase the vitality of the grapes grown and further anchor each individual farm in time and place. Once certified by the Demeter Association, the only Biodynamic® certifier in the US, the farm is audited every year.

Practicing Biodynamics: In the U.S., a winery may not legally or accurately refer to itself, its vineyard practices, or its wines as “Biodynamic” without being certified. Legally, Demeter owns the certification mark BIODYNAMIC® for the protection of consumers and trade. Additionally, the term “Biodynamic” refers to an entire farming system, as outlined in the Demeter Farm Standard. Some wineries practice biodynamics with going through the rigors of the certification process. Outside of the U.S., several organizations can certify biodynamic farming practices.

Organically Grown: The organic farming method avoids the use of synthetic chemicals in favor of natural methods; such as crop rotation, tillage and natural composts, which help to maintain soil health and control weeds, insects and other pests. Independent agencies certify a farm has used organic methods. The organic movement is healthy and growing; organic farming practices have adherents around the world. Many vineyard managers are convinced beyond any doubt of the improved long term health of their vineyards and resulting superior quality of fruit and wine. Their commitment is one to the physical, economical, and moral environment.

Sustainable Agriculture: There are many wineries today (especially in California) that use the term ‘sustainable’ in reference to their farming practices. These practices are interpreted and implemented differently from farm to farm, but the idea is to approach agriculture in a way that is environmentally responsible, socially equitable and economically feasible. The sustainable code does permit limited use of certain chemicals, soil additives, and herbicides with the intention of maintaining the most healthy vineyard environment. This is a voluntary commitment to adhere to the Code of Sustainable Winemaking Practices. However, with no third-party certification for sustainable farming, there is no accountability nor are there measurable goals associated with this method.

Conventional: This approach to farming is primarily concerned with production yields rather than product quality or environmental impact.

Industrial: Here, agriculture is large-scale, with machine- and chemical-intensive farming. This method erodes the natural ecosystems of the land and treats the harvest as a commodity.

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