

Maturity

- The Issue – how to prevent immature fruit finding its way to markets and retail outlets

Mandatory maturity standards

- One way is to legislate
- Currently working well in WA
- Other option is voluntary adherence to an agreed standard

Grapeconnect

- Grapeconnect went down the voluntary path and following is the method used

a voluntary maturity standard
for Queensland (2004 to 2007)

GrapeConnect **Standard Program**
connecting for better bunches

Richard Lomman
Chairman, GrapeConnect

why it started?

- Immature fruit was stifling demand at the start of the Australian season.
- There were devastating impacts on market throughput and low market prices were being experienced.
- Brix alone was clearly shown to be an insufficient measure of eating quality
- 2003-04 research showed 90% of fruit in first week of Qld's harvest was inedible -ie had acidity concentrations of over 0.8g per 100mL
- Consumer research showed a minimum sugar:acid ratio of 22:1 was required
- Plan was to use one in conjunction with the other-not both



Fruit sampled
in first week
of 2004
harvest

From 2003
consumer
acceptability
study

Table 2. Average sugar and acid concentrations, and sugar:acid ratio values at four eating quality levels

EATING QUALITY LEVEL	AVERAGE TOTAL SOLUBLE SOLIDS (BRIX °)	AVERAGE TOTAL ACIDITY (G/100ML)	AVERAGE TOTAL SOLUBLE SOLIDS (BRIX °) TO ACID RATIO
1 Excellent	17.77	0.573	31.01
2 Good	17.22	0.627	27.46
3 Moderate	16.91	0.726	23.29
4 Poor	16.45	0.875	18.80

what was needed?

- Agreement on a better vision for the category - growers and marketers established GrapeConnect membership and charter
- This led to greater industry cooperation and interaction - regular industry meetings and planning workshops commenced
- Better harvest management tools - acidity test kits were sourced and distributed, and regional and individual farm maturity monitoring programs put in place
- Improved communications (teleconferences, regular email alerts, a members only internet area for vital testing data and market reports)
- We foresaw increased value for participating businesses (promotion of G¹ segmentation of market)

GrapeConnect **Standard Program**
connecting for better bunches

how it worked?

5 core components of program:

1. *Growers tested the sugar and acid levels of their fruit prior to, and during, their harvest.*
2. *In-region and in-market verification*
3. *GrapeConnect Seal; brand promoted taste guarantee.*
4. *Public relations promoted accredited suppliers of GrapeConnect grapes to buyers.*
5. *1300 feedback line measured 'end success'.*

how it worked? (1)

Growers tested the sugar and acid levels of their fruit prior to, and during, their harvest.

- Growers reported their test results and consignment details to GrapeConnect for first week of harvest
- Weekly farm-to-market teleconferences with all members commenced several weeks out from harvest to share maturity development information
- Member's grape sugar and acid data was monitored in the lead up to harvest to assist the management committee in a potential emergency review of the standard that may be requested due to imminent weather, pest risks or a naturally low sugar year!

The Merck Reflectoquant equipment used for measuring total acidity



Numerous tagged bunches in each member vineyard were monitored in the lead up to harvest

Examples of pre-harvest monitoring reports, and individual farm reports on the maturity of consignments

s:a results

		Titratable Acidity		pH		Total Solids
		g/L	g/100g	g/L	g/100g	
Market	Sample	1.0	1.0	3.4	3.4	15.8
	Phys.	0.0	0.0	2.2	2.2	22.4
	Chem.	0.0	0.0	1.2	1.2	24.4
Area	Sample	0.1	0.1	2.8	2.8	24.4
	Phys.	1.1	1.1	1.5	1.5	18.8
	Chem.	0.0	0.0	1.8	1.8	18.8
Client	Sample	0.1	0.1	1.1	1.1	24.4
	Phys.	1.2	1.2	2.0	2.0	20.2
	Chem.	0.8	0.8	1.4	1.4	18.8
Supplier	Sample	0.4	0.4	1.1	1.1	18.1
	Phys.	0.6	0.6	1.3	1.3	14.7
	Chem.	1.0	1.0	1.4	1.4	18.1
Lab	Sample	0.6	0.6	1.3	1.3	14.7
	Phys.	1.0	1.0	1.4	1.4	18.1
	Chem.	1.1	1.1	1.5	1.5	14.7
	Sample	1.8	1.8	1.4	1.4	14.7
	Phys.	0.4	0.4	1.1	1.1	14.7
	Chem.	1.3	1.3	2.0	2.0	14.7
	Sample	0.6	0.6	1.3	1.3	14.7

on-farm S:A report

To: GrapeConnect
 From: S. DEBONNAN
 Date: 16/12/14

Ab. No.	Access/L	Bunches	Comments
142	69	2037.1	Perfection Fresh
156	63	2176	PF

how it worked? (2)

In-region and in-market verification

- Independent consultants conducted random sugar and acid tests on farm in the production regions, and on the market floor in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. These tests verified adherence to the standard, and monitored correlations in test results to ensure the efficacy of sampling and testing methodology.
- Wholesale partners reported consignments received to GrapeConnect.
- GrapeConnect also conducted random weekly retail sampling and maturity testing of all industry fruit at store level during the first six weeks of harvest.

how it worked? (3)

GrapeConnect Seal; brand promoted taste guarantee.

- GrapeConnect grapes were labelled on the box to identify to buyers that the product adheres to the standard. Businesses maintain their desired box print, with the GrapeConnect 'seal' logo incorporated into the design of the box end.
- Grapes marketed directly through retail chain distribution centres carried a pallet label only. Eg crates

how it worked? (4)

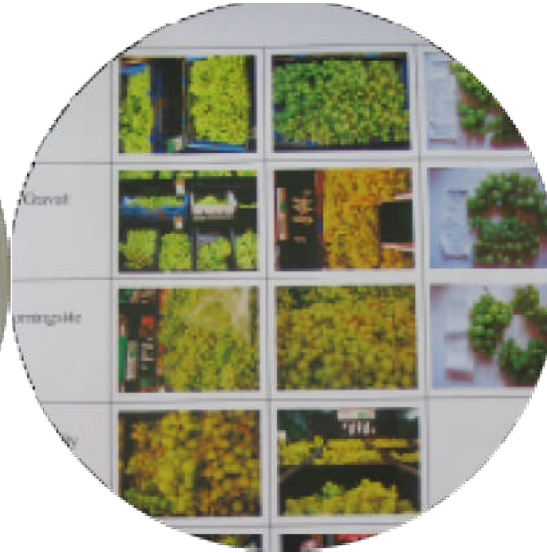
Public relations promoted accredited suppliers of GrapeConnect grapes to buyers.

- Public relations activities and the distribution of GrapeConnect promotional material were put in place to increase retail buyer awareness of the program.
- Regular meetings with key retail buyers were scheduled to report on the program progress and retail survey results
- Wholesale partners were also supplied with signage recognising them as an accredited GrapeConnect supplier - and they affixed this at the front of their market stand to promote their involvement in the program.

how it worked? (5)

1300 feedback line measured 'end success'.

- A hotline for feedback and inquiries formed the final component of the standard program. For the cost of a local call, buyers could provide verbal feedback on GrapeConnect grapes they had purchased. This feedback served as a verification of the overall success of the program, and ensured that any problems were addressed and rectified in a timely and effective manner. The 1300 phone number was promoted in a range of formats as part of the public relations activities.



Example of retail surveys - showing store locations, maturity test results and photos



Wholesale membership signage at markets



Boxes promoting member involvement in program - stickers used in pilot season

where is it now?

- The program ceased in 2007 - at that time:
 - Program funds had to be diverted to critical market access projects
 - WW/Coles had changed their specifications in line with the standard, and had implemented more thorough monitoring of sugar:acid ratios at the start of the domestic harvest
 - All suppliers had significantly improved their harvest management, regardless of GrapeConnect membership
 - The point of difference was now negligible ; as the bar had been raised for all suppliers

where is it now? Cont.

- To date GrapeConnect members still continue voluntarily with sugar:acid monitoring to manage their start of harvest
- This is an important tool in forecasting harvest dates for growers and wholesalers
- Weekly teleconferences between growers and marketers continue

Where to now?

- The project is approved and work has started
- We need support from growers, wholesalers and retailers to progress the introduction of a mandatory standard
- **NO ROCKET SCIENCE REQUIRED**
- We need to grow the category by creating demand
- Pleasurable eating experience leads to increased sales

What will maturity level be??

- This would follow WA's model, be seasonally adjusted and be at a level above that which would delay purchase or repurchase – still to be formulated
- Varietal differences
- Project has just started

Total industry involvement

- Growers
- Wholesalers –upcoming meetings
- Supermarkets-committee members have met with Coles and WW and we have their support
- Retailers – as above but more contact with other areas of retail needed

Concluding

- Talk to your neighbours and discuss at local grower meetings
- Wait for satisfactory sugar levels in your crop

Doing the smart thing will make the transition to a mandatory standard much easier

General Industry involvement

- There is very little representation of large growers at industry level
- Grape Exchange, 2PH and Cordomas in the north
- Palmview in south
- This is not seen in majority of other categories and industries

Industry Involvement cont.

- A greater voice is required from the big end of town - following reasons
- 1) They pay a high percentage of the levies that are collected
- 2) You are leaving the decision making and the workload to small-medium growers (1 notable exception)

Industry involvement cont.

- 3) Impacts by legislation require industry representation, ie some one has to lead, co-ordinate, lobby, set strategic plans. These things are done by industry.

Government prefers dealing with industry as opposed to individuals!

Industry involvement cont.

- 4) There is also the allocation of levy and matched funds for Research, Development and Advertising and promotional activities
- 5) Targeting export markets to maintain and grow the industry further

thankyou