

Millennials gravitate to high-end wines, survey finds

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

DAVIS, Calif. — Today's graduate students and young professionals are following in the footsteps of baby boomers in their preference of higher-value wines, a new survey has found.

Many millennials — members of the generation born between the early 1980s and the late 1990s — are “foodies” who have incorporated good wines into their quest for new experiences related to food, according to a survey by Robert Smiley, a University of California-Davis professor and dean emeritus.

The industry must retain them as customers by focusing on sophisticated marketing and communication, the survey found.

Smiley and his colleagues



Capital Press File

This photo shows winegrapes ready for processing. A new study shows today's millennials are following in the footsteps of baby boomers in their preference of higher-value wines.

conducted the 14th annual survey of the heads of 27 wine companies and 150 California wine professionals about trends in the industry.

Among the survey's other findings, according to a UC-Davis news release:

- Most executives remain confident in the health of

the industry but are also taking precautions, including downsizing wine inventories, strengthening their supply chain and mechanizing to reduce labor expenses.

- Water and climate-change concerns have prompted executives to purchase only vineyards with good access to water, choose only vigorous, water-efficient rootstock and invest in water-efficient technology. They're also considering the vineyard development in Oregon and Washington.

- Labor availability and increasing input costs were of greatest concern.

The findings regarding millennials are consistent with past studies by Smiley's team as well as by groups such as the San Francisco-based Wine Institute and the Sacramento-based California Associa-

tion of Winegrape Growers.

The trend toward premium wines has been a big factor in the growth, Wine Institute spokeswoman Gladys Horiuchi said.

“I think it all contributes to the mix,” she said, noting that many restaurants popular with “foodie” consumers offer higher-end, locally produced wines. “There's a lot of this farm-to-table trend in restaurants, for sure.”

The improving economy in some sectors has given many millennials the spending power to enjoy higher-end wines more frequently than just on special occasions, Smiley has said.

Smiley and other UC-Davis researchers have encouraged wineries to invest in their quality lines and in branding, noting that industry

professionals expect wines in the \$14- to \$20-per-bottle price range to demonstrate the strongest sales in the near term.

Wine production in California has become ever more lucrative despite the lingering drought, which caused the quantity of last year's overall grape crush to be slightly lower than that of 2014.

Brisk sales were a factor in increasing vineyard acreage in the state from 2009 to 2014, from 531,000 acres to 615,000, industry insiders said.

The industry is in the home stretch of harvesting what is expected to be a 3.9 million-ton winegrape crop — an increase of 5 percent from 2015, according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Stink bugs spread across Washington

By **DAN WHEAT**
Capital Press

YAKIMA, Wash. — An increase in brown marmorated stink bugs has scientists concerned the Asian pest could threaten tree fruit and other crops in Eastern Washington next year.

In recent weeks, researchers have captured hundreds of the bugs in traps, mostly in Yakima and Walla Walla. One pheromone-baited trap outside a Yakima residence collected nearly 200 bugs in five days, said Michael Bush, Washington State University Extension entomologist.

“That compares to 36 we captured for all of 2015 throughout Yakima County, so it's quite a jump,” he said.

WSU Extension agents and master gardeners are getting more calls from people finding the bugs in their homes and offices as they escape the fall chill, he said.

The bugs are so named because they emit a smell of dirty socks when crushed.

Called “the Beast of the East,” it was identified in Pennsylvania in 1996 and caused an estimated 30 percent loss in apple and peach crops in the mid-Atlantic states in 2010.

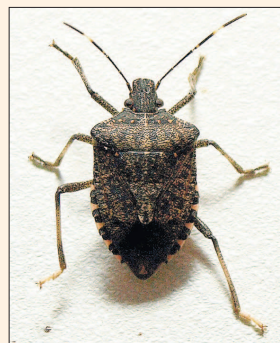
Growers there resorted to broad-spectrum synthetic pyrethroid pesticides to control the bugs at the expense of their integrated pest management programs, said Elizabeth Beers, entomologist at the WSU Tree Fruit Research and Extension Center in Wenatchee. She's on a national team of scientists fighting it.

The bugs were found in Portland in 2004 and later in the Willamette Valley, Medford, Hood River and Vancouver. In 2012, traps first caught two bugs in Yakima.

The insect has more than 300 host plants and spreads by human movement.

Beers said it's natural for the bugs to increase but that they seem to like moist climates such as Portland's and Vancouver's. Nonetheless, they are well established in Yakima and Walla Walla and have been found in Wenatchee.

Brown marmorated stink bug



Courtesy of en.wikipedia.org

Binomial name:
Halyomorpha halys

Appearance: Shield shaped and dark, mottled brown

Diet: Primarily tree fruits

Life cycle: One or two generations in cooler climates; up to five in warmer ones

Origin: Asia

First observed in U.S.: 14-17 mm (Actual size)
Mid-1990s

Sources: Penn State Extension; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Capital Press graphic

“I am very concerned,” Beers said. “I work with tree fruit and it's considered one of the highest, at-risk crops. I'm not sure why.

It eats lots of things and apples are very prone to attack.”

Peaches, nectarines and pears are probably more vulnerable than cherries, she said.

Broad-spectrum pyrethroid pesticides are an option in the event of a large outbreak, but growers could also sacrifice a tree by baiting bugs there and spraying it, Beers said.

Netting already used for weather protection is an option, and so is biological control, she said.

Over a year ago, an Asian wasp, *Trissolcus japonicus*, which eats brown marmorated stink bug eggs, was found in Vancouver and is better able to combat the bugs than native egg parasitoids, Beers said.

“It's probably not a silver bullet, but it may help keep populations down to a dull roar,” she said. “It could help prevent an explosion but won't eradicate it.”

Congress mulls plan to flood Wash. farmland

Agency makes plan for farms

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

Federal lawmakers may authorize the Army Corps of Engineers to pursue a \$451.6 million project to convert hundreds of acres of privately owned farmland into Puget Sound fish habitat, unsettling to a farmer who owns property vital to the government's designs.

“It's definitely, definitely in the back of my mind, all the time,” said Scott Bedling-

ton, third-generation Whatcom County farmer. “I have to farm. That's what we live off.”

The corps and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife propose to inundate 2,100 acres in Whatcom, Skagit and Jefferson counties, including by removing dikes protecting farms.

The flooded land would include about 800 acres of Whatcom County farmland and about 250 acres of Skagit County farmland.

The corps and WDFW spent 15 years and \$22 million developing the Puget Sound Nearshore Restoration

Project.

The corps forwarded the plan to Congress last month. The plan calls for \$293.6 million in federal funding and \$158 million in state funding over about 10 years.

The U.S. House recently included the project in its version of the Water Resources Development Act, a list of corps' projects eligible for funding.

The Senate, however, left the project out.

The Washington Farm Bureau hopes House and Senate negotiators will drop the project from the compromise bill. Farm Bureau government

relations director Tom Davis said the agencies didn't consult with the farmers whose land the project depends upon.

“They are asking Congress to authorize a project that would destroy prime farmland without talking to the landowners,” he said. “It's disrespectful. It's just assuming everybody is going to go along with their bright idea.”

Bedlington, who grows seed potatoes, estimates the plan would inundate 700 to 800 acres he owns or rents.

He said he told WDFW officials at a meeting arranged by the Farm Bureau that his farm wasn't for sale.

Hunt suspended for remaining wolfpack members

State unclear whether it will resume after sport hunting season ends

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

Washington wildlife managers have halted their hunt for the surviving members of a wolfpack preying on cattle, but it was unclear Wednesday whether the operation will resume, sources said.

State wildlife managers have provided no information since Oct. 6 on their attempt to remove the Profanity Peak pack in Ferry County.

At the time, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife said attacks on livestock were likely to continue unless the pack's lone surviving adult and several pups were killed.

Ferry County Commissioner Mike Blankenship said he learned from the county sheriff Tuesday that WDFW won't look for the wolves during a two-week hunting season that began Saturday.

WDFW has not told the county whether the operation will start up again, he said. “They have failed to answer that question,” he said. “We don't have any clear decision-making going on.”

Efforts to get comment and an update from WDFW were unsuccessful.

WDFW has released bare details since beginning the lethal-removal operation Aug. 4. At first, the department roughly followed its policy and provided weekly updates. But the updates have become more sporadic.

Blankenship said a pause makes sense for hunter safety, but that he hopes WDFW returns after that even though the grazing season is ending.

County commissioners have been calling for the pack's removal since 2014. “My fear is they don't finish the job,” Blankenship said. “The wolves that are left will train the next batch.”

Scott Nielsen, vice president of the



Courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife has killed several members of the Profanity Peak wolfpack. The hunt has now been suspended.

Cattle Producers of Washington, agreed WDFW should be concerned about hunter safety, but he also criticized the department for failing to remove the pack over the past two months.

“They never do what they tell us that they're going to do,” he said. “If I say I'm going to do something and I come close, I think my boss would call that a failure.”

Nielsen said the pack's surviving members might join another pack. “It's a depreeding pack of wolves still out there,” he said.

WDFW decided in August to move against the pack. WDFW investigators have confirmed the pack has attacked 10 cattle since July 8. In another five attacks, WDFW determined the pack was probably responsible. Ranchers say the number of confirmed and probable depredations represent only a fraction of their actual losses.

So far, WDFW has reported shooting six adult wolves, leaving one female. WDFW has also killed one pup. WDFW has said previously that the pack may still have three pups.

The shootings have outraged some

environmental groups, which say wolves should have priority over cattle grazing on public lands.

Most of the Profanity Peak pack's attacks on cattle have occurred on grazing allotments in the Colville National Forest.

Blankenship said the state's wolf recovery plan is at the heart of the problem.

Wolves will remain a state-protected species until they are established statewide. So far, wolves have remained mostly concentrated in the northeastern corner of Washington and recovery goals appear to be several years away from being met.

In the meantime, the state's plan is to consider shooting wolves after four confirmed depredations.

Blankenship said wolves had to attack cattle as deer became scarcer.

“The only thing wolves had to feed on were the cows — was that fair to wolves?” he asked.

Blankenship said that as cattle leave grazing grounds, the wolves may come closer to populated areas, posing a risk to public safety.

Agricultural groups criticize Dannon's sustainability pledge

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**
Capital Press

Leading farm organizations are calling out yogurt-giant Dannon in its pledge to move to GMO-free feed in its milk-supply chain, calling the pledge “marketing flimflam” and a step backward in truly sustainable food production.

The criticism revolves around a corporate commitment by Dannon in April to work with dairy farmers to implement sustainable practices and technology, to use non-synthetic and non-GMO ingredients, and label the presence of GMO ingredients in its products.

The ag groups contend that pledge is the exact opposite of the sustainable agriculture Dannon

seems to be seeking and will force farmers to abandon safe, sustainable practices that have enhanced farm productivity over the past 20 years while greatly reducing the carbon footprint of American agriculture.

The American Farm Bureau Federation, National Milk Producers Federation, National Corn Growers Association, American Soybean Association, American Sugarbeet Growers Association and U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance sent a letter stating their dismay and concern to Dannon CEO Mariano Lozano on Oct. 17.

Crops improved with biotechnology are more sustainable than the crops farmers use to grow and a return to conventional crops would

lead to more pesticide use, increased water and fossil fuel use, increased erosion and a need for more cropland to make up for yield losses, according to the ag organizations.

They stated Dannon's pledge “appears to be an attempt to gain lost sales from your competitors by using fear-based marketing and trendy buzzwords, not through an actual improvement of your product.”

“Such disingenuous tactics and marketing puffery are certainly not becoming of a company as well known and respected as Dannon,” the groups stated.

They question whether Dannon would return to 1990s computer technology to run its business or revert to 20-year-old transportation,

processing or packaging tools.

“Why then ... would you require farmers to go back to old, inefficient and less effective cropping practices?” they asked.

In response to a request for comment, Dannon sent Capital Press a written response, saying it was surprised to receive a divisive and misinformed letter about its efforts to continue to grow America's enjoyment of dairy products. It also stated Dannon believes currently approved GMOs are safe and sustainable ag practices can be achieved with or without the use of GMOs.

“However, we believe there is a growing preference for non-GMO ingredients and food in the U.S. and we want to use the strong rela-

tionships we have with our farmer partners to provide products that address this consumer demand.”

Dannon's changes will enable consumers to make everyday choices consistent with their wish for more natural and sustainable options, choosing which agricultural an environmental model they favor, the company stated.

Dannon CEO Lozano stated the range of choice that Dannon provides — from organic and non-GMO ingredients to conventional dairy — “is a reason to celebrate rather than criticize.”

The farm groups have requested Dannon revise its pledge to recognize the sustainability, safety and environmental benefit of food biotechnology.