

California Wineries Get Certified

North and Central Coast operations opt for various sustainable programs

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San Rafael, Calif. -- California's vineyards and wineries can choose from a wealth of options to accredit their green credentials, and in recent weeks, five entities announced certification from three different agencies...



Biodynamic growers see their farm as self-sustaining systems; a sheep does his work on DeLoach's Demeter-certified vineyard.

DeLoach vineyard is Demeter certified. The 17-acre estate vineyard and garden at DeLoach Vineyards, Russian River Valley, became one of only 64 wineries or vineyards worldwide to achieve Biodynamic certification. When France's Boisset family purchased the property in 2003, "I knew that in order to make wine that fully expressed the great Russian River Valley terroir, we would first need to restore the health of the land," said Jean-Charles Boisset, president of Boisset Family Estates. The Boissets let the

estate vineyards go fallow, then underwent the required three-year transition to organic growing and an additional year of Biodynamic-specific practices, including minimal dependence on external inputs and creation of natural biodiversity through cover crops and annual preparations. Biodynamic practices demonstrate growers' commitment to "farming in parallel with the Earth's natural cycles and from within the context of the principles of a unique living organism," according to a company statement.

In 1994, the Boissets had converted the family's premier cru vineyards in Burgundy to organic and Biodynamic farming, a relative rarity at that time in France. Although the DeLoach estate vineyard has been farmed in line with Biodynamic principles for several years, the family delayed certification by Demeter USA to coincide with its inaugural winegrape crop in 2010. Although DeLoach produces some 200,000 cases annually, it's not yet known how much wine will emanate from the newly certified estate acreage.