



Virginia

2008 Commercial Grape Report



2008 Growing Season



For the majority of grape producers across the Commonwealth, 2008 demonstrated the quintessential components for a successful growing season. Rainfall in the early season could be described as plentiful, and in some cases excessive. However, mid-summer gave way to dry weather, with subsequent months progressively becoming hotter and drier. By and large, the growing season remained relatively problem free for most. Some obstacles included reports of damage from hail storms, a few cases of uncontrollable downy mildew and powdery mildew, and elevated wildlife pressure in some vineyards. A good number of these setbacks could be described as typical for grape growers in the mid-Atlantic and did not appear to have an impact on the crop at the state level.

Harvest commenced in late August and, with the exception of some very late-maturing varieties, was completed by late October. In some instances, scattered frosts mid-October forced producers into an early harvest. Overall, yields were generally good. Fruit quality was variable. While some growers commented on the purity and high quality of fruit, others commented on the slowness with which fruit ripened in September. Premium fruit quality could be linked to areas where crop levels were managed and where crops were able to evade rainfall preceding harvest. A common thread, however, was higher than usual juice acidity and somewhat lower than usual pH. Many growers mentioned that harvest was delayed a week to 10 days.

Grape Production Increases In 2008

Grape production in Virginia increased in 2008 with the production of Vinifera varieties accounting for the majority of the overall production. Producers harvested a utilized crop valued at \$10.4 million, receiving an average price of \$1,530 per ton.

Survey Highlights

Virginia ranked 7th nationally in commercial grape production and 7th for bearing acreage.

Virginia's grape producers harvested 7,000 tons of commercial grapes in 2008, up 25% from the 5,600 tons produced in 2007.

Virginia bearing acreage increased from 2,400 acres in 2007 to 2,500 acres in 2008, a 4% increase over that time span.

Chardonnay sustained its top position for 2008, comprising 24 percent of Virginia's total Vinifera production harvested for the year. This ever-popular variety accounted for 23 percent of all the Vinifera variety bearing acreage and 18 percent of the total vineyard acreage across the Commonwealth.

Chardonnay, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Vidal Blanc represented the top five varieties produced in Virginia in 2008. Chardonnay producers harvested 466 tons more in 2008 compared to 2007. Cabernet Franc producers harvested 109 tons more in 2008, and Merlot producers harvested 177 tons more in 2008. Also, Cabernet Sauvignon producers harvested 31 more tons in 2008, and Vidal Blanc producers harvested 22 more tons in 2008 compared to 2007.

Grape Production and Price By Variety, 2008

Variety ^{1/}	Tons	Utilized ^{2/}	Avg. Price
	Produced	Tons	Per Ton
Cabernet Franc	924	885	\$1,632.00
Cabernet Sauvignon	524	518	\$1,828.00
Chambourcin	225	218	\$1,065.00
Chardonnay	1,288	1,264	\$1,588.00
Merlot	823	807	\$1,775.00
Norton	170	164	\$1,286.00
Petit Verdot	225	223	\$2,024.00
Traminette	220	214	\$974.00
Vidal Blanc	497	480	\$1,006.00
Viognier	469	464	\$1,888.00
Virginia ^{3/}	7,000	6,800	\$1,530.00

^{1/} All other grape varieties were not published to avoid disclosure of individual operations. ^{2/} In 2008 an average of 3% of production was unutilized above the normal 2%. ^{3/} State price and production based on all reported varieties. Price based on reported sales.

Grape Production and Acreage by District and County, 2007-2008 ^{1/}

Grape Production and Acreage by Variety, 2007-2008 ^{1/}

Variety	Tons Produced		Bearing Acres		Non-Bearing Acres	
	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008
VINIFERA						
Cabernet Sauvignon	493	524	220	224	49	41
Cabernet Franc	815	924	304	316	29	19
Chardonnay	822	1,288	443	441	45	47
Gewurztraminer	20	41	10	15	2	2
Merlot	646	823	247	265	38	35
Petit Verdot	159	225	80	98	21	17
Pinot Noir	52	60	25	28	13	11
Sauvignon Blanc	91	87	28	34	5	2
White Riesling	73	95	43	41	5	4
Viognier	287	469	149	154	31	32
Other White Vinifera	339	425	121	125	36	37
Other Red Vinifera	439	504	154	175	28	25
HYBRID						
Chambourcin	174	225	78	79	14	17
Seyval Blanc	110	114	52	48	5	8
Traminette	155	220	60	66	8	15
Vidal Blanc	475	497	143	149	16	19
Other White Hybrid	72	72	60	41	6	7
Other Red Hybrid	14	37	10	17	3	3
AMERICAN						
Norton	178	170	91	115	25	9
Seedless Table (all)	8	0	5	0	*	*
Other Red/Black American	68	99	37	37	5	7
Other White American	110	99	40	32	6	13
STATE TOTAL	5,600	7,000	2,400	2,500	390	370

^{1/} Some variety totals are not published to avoid disclosure of individual operations or may have no data. Production and acreage are included in the state totals.

County	Tons Produced		Bearing Acres		Non-Bearing Acres	
	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008
NORTHERN						
Clarke	*	35	*	20	*	5
Culpeper	61	26	26	27	7	2
Fauquier	437	358	208	180	24	35
Loudoun	787	948	302	325	56	65
Madison	160	221	65	52	17	19
Rappahannock	119	166	61	58	5	9
Rockingham	30	30	16	16	*	*
Shenandoah	151	157	81	79	4	4
Warren	59	54	18	19	2	6
Other Counties	65	33	35	19	9	9
District Total	1,869	2,028	812	795	124	154
WESTERN						
Augusta	73	181	42	44	20	23
Botetourt	103	214	50	57	3	22
Roanoke	34	63	28	30	*	1
Other Counties	108	112	34	37	2	*
District Total	318	570	154	168	25	46
CENTRAL						
Albemarle	929	1,442	429	517	110	75
Amherst	79	107	43	54	5	7
Bedford	41	44	31	33	*	1
Greene	51	77	47	47	*	*
Hanover	*	94	*	30	*	*
Louisa	35	29	27	29	15	5
Nelson	384	556	127	124	18	18
Orange	620	693	128	131	21	14
Spotsylvania	38	73	31	24	*	*
Other Counties	132	52	71	47	9	11
District Total	2,309	3,167	934	1,036	178	131
EASTERN						
Accomack	*	65	*	18	*	*
Essex	94	*	31	*	1	*
King George	71	122	25	27	*	*
Northampton	108	74	36	41	3	*
Westmoreland	249	300	77	80	8	2
Other Counties	104	115	70	84	32	18
District Total	626	676	239	250	44	20
SOUTHERN						
Franklin	*	30	*	19	*	1
Halifax	*	14	*	18	*	5
Patrick	158	188	56	47	1	*
Pittsylvania	*	60	*	23	*	4
Other Counties	126	66	77	21	12	*
District Total	284	358	133	128	13	10
Other District Total	194	*	128	*	6	*
STATE TOTAL	5,600	7,000	2,400	2,500	390	370

^{1/} Some county totals are not published to avoid disclosure of individual operations or may have no data. Production and acreage are included in district and state totals.

Grape Production and Bearing Acreage ^{1/}

Rank ^{2/}	State	Tons Produced		Rank ^{3/}	State	Bearing Acres	
		2007	2008			2007	2008
1	CA	6,230,000	6,658,000	1	CA	789,000	789,000
2	WA	376,000	350,000	2	WA	56,500	58,000
3	NY	180,000	172,000	3	NY	37,000	37,000
4	PA	84,000	107,200	4	OR	13,800	14,500
5	MI	100,100	73,700	5	MI	14,100	14,200
6	OR	38,600	40,600	6	PA	13,600	13,600
7	VA	5,600	7,000	7	VA	2,400	2,500
8	OH	7,600	5,660	7	TX	2,900	2,500
9	NC	3,650	5,600	9	OH	1,900	1,900
10	TX	4,900	4,200	11	MO	1,400	1,500
11	GA	2,900	3,500	12	GA	1,200	1,200
12	MO	2,500	5,200	10	NC	1,700	1,700
13	AZ	900	800	14	AZ	250	250
14	AR	500	1,700	13	AR	750	700

^{1/} Estimates for 2008 are preliminary. ^{2/} Ranked by 2008 production. ^{3/} Ranked by 2008 acreage.



In 1979, Virginia had just six wineries and only 286 acres devoted to wine grape production. Today, there are over 140 wineries in Virginia that claim 2.5 thousand bearing acres in the State.

About the Survey:

The information presented in this report was gathered through a census of all known commercial grape producers in Virginia. To be considered a commercial producer, an operator must grow one acre or more of grapes. Data were collected during the months of November 2008 through January 2009 by mail, telephone interview, and field enumeration. Information obtained during the course of this survey is completely confidential by law; for this reason, some county, regional, and variety breakdowns could not be published to avoid disclosure of individual vineyards. For further information about this survey please contact the USDA/NASS Virginia Field Office at 1-800-772-0670.

Special thanks to all producers who took time to participate in this survey!

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