



SUSTAINABLE WINEGROWING ONTARIO CERTIFIED

SUSTAINABLE WINEGROWING ONTARIO BACKGROUND

Ontario's wine and grape industry is inherently connected to the environment and community, and wineries and grape growers continue to enhance their winery and vineyard operations for improved stewardship. Sustainable Winegrowing Ontario (SWO) Certified was created in order to facilitate and drive further adoption of these environmentally and socially sustainable practices in our industry, and to communicate the SWO Certified message to consumers.

In 2007, the Ontario Craft Wineries (OCW) launched SWO Certified: An Environmental Charter for the Wine Industry, and in 2014 the Grape Growers of Ontario (GGO) launched Ontario Viticulture Sustainability. These two proactive programs were developed for Ontario's wineries and vineyards to provide information on environmental requirements and identify new sustainable opportunities while complying with existing regulations. In 2017, SWO Certified standards became an accredited certification program audited by independent third-party auditors, thus providing further validity to the sustainability efforts from the industry. Fourteen years later, the OCW and GGO merged the two programs into one unified program: Sustainable Winegrowing Ontario (SWO) Certified, thus ensuring the complete grape to glass cycle is sustainable.

The expanded Sustainable Winegrowing Ontario (SWO) Certified program will facilitate sustainability from the vineyard into the winery, providing growers and vintners with the educational resources to increase sustainable practices and to record and measure their progress. The reporting creates an industry standard for sustainable practices and helps identify individual strengths and opportunities for improvement. In establishing a comprehensive certification program, OCW and GGO recognize and give credibility to Ontario's wineries and vineyards that adopt sustainable practices by recognizing efforts to maximize resource efficiency and ensure our land and community is resilient today and into the future.

SWO Certified is our industry's assurance that Ontario's winemakers and grape growers are dedicated in ensuring that the wine they craft travels a sustainable path throughout the grape growing and winemaking process.

Goals of the program:

-  To improve the environmental and social performance of Ontario's wine and grape industry, and provide a pathway for continual improvement.
-  To continually improve the quality of winemaking and grape growing in an environmentally responsible manner.
-  To provide a way to address questions in relation to sustainability and the wine and grape industry.
-  To provide an accountable certification program for wineries and grape growers alike to encourage and maintain sustainable practices.
-  To add value to Ontario's wine and grape industry.

SUSTAINABLE WINEGROWING ONTARIO GUIDEBOOK & QUESTIONNAIRE

The development of Sustainable Winegrowing Ontario Certified was conducted in partnership and consultation with government organizations, stakeholders in Ontario's wine and grape industry, and expert consultants in sustainable winegrowing. In order to create a program specific to Ontario's wine and grape growing standards, this working group researched similar New and Old World wine growing regions that have implemented sustainability programs, as well as integrated the Ontario's Environmental Farm Plan.

From this research, the working group created a program that encompasses the three core pillars of sustainability:



ENVIRONMENT

Grape growing and winemaking practices that work in partnership with the environment.



ECONOMY

Economically feasible to implement and maintain.



COMMUNITY

A socially equitable and safe environment for the community.



SWO Certified incorporates best management practices and provides resources to help improve all aspects of sustainability in the winery and vineyard. This is a voluntary program that includes an in-depth questionnaire for wineries and vineyards to assess their sustainability practices in their winemaking and grape growing operations, which is then verified through an independent third-party audit. This in-depth questionnaire takes into account water and wastewater usage; solid waste management; material handling; energy efficiency; and more. Following the completion of the questionnaires, winery and vineyard operations interested in seeking certification contact an accredited auditor (auditor list provided by the OCW and GGO) to conduct an audit assessment of the winery and vineyard. Operations must receive a passing score of 75% to become SWO Certified.

By applying sustainable practices in both winery and winemaking operations, as well as in grape growing practices, consumers will be able to enjoy Sustainable Winegrowing Ontario Certified wines in the marketplace.

Sustainable Winegrowing Ontario Certified Program Costs

The SWO Certified program is open to all Ontario wineries that produce Ontario VQA wine, and to all vineyards in Ontario. This program is an added benefit to OCW and GGO membership. However, for non-OCW winery members there is an additional program fee related to the management and the administration of the program. This fee is dependent on your winery size, based on the Ontario Wine Appellation Authority's winery size categories:

Small Category

< 100,000 litres
VQA sales

\$500

Non-Member Pricing

Medium Category

100,000 - 750,000 litres
VQA sales

\$1000

Non-Member Pricing

Large Category

> 750,000 litres
VQA sales)

\$2000

Non-Member Pricing

**50% discount for additional affiliated sites*

Audit

Once wineries complete the SWO Certified questionnaire and wish to seek certification, they are to contact a verified auditor that is partnered with the OCW and GGO on this program. The audit process is a three-year cycle. Year one, the auditor conducts an on-site audit with winery and vineyard representatives while reviewing the questionnaires and requesting to see specific measures, as this ensures that questions have been answered correctly. Year two and three, the auditor conducts an online audit and reviews the questionnaire for any changes that have been made, and/or ensure previous recommendations have been implemented. Independent audit fees apply.



Sustainable Winegrowing Ontario Certified – What Now?

Congratulations on showcasing your commitment to sustainability in Ontario's VQA wine and grape industry by becoming SWO Certified. Certified members are encouraged to display the SWO Certified logo on their communication materials (print and website) as well as adding the SWO Certified logo on their wine labels once all vineyards are also certified.

OCW has partnered with the Wine Marketing Association of Ontario to highlight the SWO Certified program and participating members in their yearly Travel Guide. Wineries that are SWO Certified are identified by a green leaf beside their winery description.

All SWO Certified winegrowers are encouraged to actively promote and share their involvement in this program by highlighting their sustainability practices on their social media pages. Please be sure to tag **@SustainableWineOntario** on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, and use the following hashtags in your posts:

#SWOCertified

#CertifiedSustainableWine

#SustainableVQA

*All SWO Certified members should direct consumers to www.sustainablewinegrowingontario.ca should they wish to learn more about the program and participating wineries and grape growers.

Sustainable Winegrowing Ontario Certified – Your Commitment

Actively participate in the Sustainability committee – the committee meets quarterly to ensure that the program continues to meet the needs of Ontario's VQA wine and grape industry, and that it continues to evolve into a program that consumers recognize and support.

Contact Information

To access your Sustainable Winegrowing Ontario questionnaire for both your winery and vineyard, please log into your eGrape portal through the Grape Growers of Ontario.

For program questions and inquiries, please contact info@sustainablewinegrowingontario.ca.

