Marketing Grapes in Tough Times

Nick Frey
Sonoma County Winegrape Commission
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Marketing Is Ideally Done When Times Are Good

- Marketing is to create demand in order to sell your grapes
- Develop a marketing plan – Step 1
  - What are your price expectations?
    - Study the Grape Crush report pricing trends in your area
    - Study the bulk wine market to see if price expectations are realistic
    - Study the market for wines that use grapes at that price
  - What wineries are of interest?
    - Those that produce wines with your variety
    - Those that produce wines from your AVA/county
    - Wines are at the price point that will support your grape price goal
    - The prospective wineries are financially stable
    - The wineries successfully market their wines – sales are growing
Develop Marketing Materials

- Provide contact information – e-mail and cell phone
- Provide vineyard address if different than mailing address
- Provide details of the vineyard
  - Hillside, benchland, valley floor
  - Variety, rootstock and clones
  - Trellis, vineyard age, etc.
- Provide historical data
  - Yields and Brix
  - Average harvest date
  - Other buyers that are/have been supplied
- Provide the name of the Vineyard Manager
Reaching the Buyers

- Do you know the buyer for any of your target wineries?
  - Contact them first

- Attend industry events where you might be able to meet grape buyers or winemakers
  - Begin developing a relationship – make the sales pitch later
    - Invite them to visit your vineyard

- Direct market to other prospective wineries on your list
  - E-mail or a phone call may be better than mail

- Advertise your fruit
  - Online listings

- Consider contracting with a grape broker
Your Marketing Works!

- Consider any offer carefully
  - Does it meet long-term objectives?
  - Must you compromise on price this year?
  - What are the quality expectations of the buyer?
  - Are there special harvest requirements – high brix?
  - What are the payment terms?
  - What is the crush site? Can it be changed?
  - What are the delivery requirements – timing, container size
  - What services might the winery provide? Viticulture advice, tasting wine from your vineyard, etc?
A Contingency Plan – What If No Buyer Is Found?

- Are you willing/able to abandon the crop?
- Are you willing/able to custom crush the grapes?
  - You need a license – Type 29 if you sell bulk wine
  - You need a winery
  - You need to understand all the costs for services and storage
- Are you financially able to bear the added costs?
  - Bulk red wine sales may be 18 – 24 months out
  - Bulk white wine sales may be 3 – 10 months out
- Are you able to deal in the bulk market?
  - Price only depends on wine quality relative to other samples
  - Your hoped for grape price is no longer relevant
Summary

- Marketing your vineyard and grapes is critical – even if you have a contract.
  - Have a marketing plan
- Create the story of what makes your grapes and vineyard special
- Build your network of grape buyers – and keep track if they change wineries.
- Know the market for grapes, bulk wine and retail wines
- Be realistic in your price expectations
- If you get an offer, consider it carefully – it may be the best offer you get that year