



Great wines.
Healthy vineyards.

Sustainability in Practice (SIP)[™] Vineyard Certification Program Frequently Asked Questions

Who is the Central Coast Vineyard Team (CCVT)? Founded in 1994, CCVT is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to research and promote sustainable winegrowing. CCVT developed the Positive Points System (PPS)[™], the first self-assessment tool for wine grape growers to evaluate the extent of their sustainable farming practices.

Why did CCVT develop the SIP[™] Vineyard Certification Program? The Certification Program was the natural evolution for the Vineyard Team and its programs. After more than a decade of self-evaluation using the PPS, wine grape producers wanted to develop a program that would substantiate a grower's sustainability claim. In 2004, a dedicated committee began the difficult job of modifying the PPS to be measurable and verifiable.

What are the SIP[™] Certification Standards? The Standards were developed by CCVT staff and wine grape producers in cooperation with technical advisors. In 2008, the Standards were reviewed by over thirty federal, state, environmental, social, agricultural, and university experts. The Standards were updated to incorporate changes recommended by reviewers.

The Certification Standards include both Requirements and Management Enhancements. Requirements are practices which must be completed before earning Management Enhancement points. Requirements consist of many practices, but they also prohibit the use of specific chemicals. The Prohibited Materials List (listed by active ingredient) is based on the Department of Pesticide Regulation's following designations: Groundwater Protection, Known to Cause Cancer, Known to Cause Reproductive Toxicity, Cholinesterase Inhibiting, Toxic Air Contaminants, and Restricted Materials Lists. In order to achieve certification, a grower must not use any of the active ingredients on this list.

Management Enhancement points are scores assigned to practices which allow growers to earn points based on additional, non-required, but suggested management strategies. Also included within the document is a farm plan which is required for certification – the farm plan includes documentation, reporting, and written examples of practices throughout the certification standards.

The Standards are comprised of ten chapters:

Conservation and Enhancement of Biological Diversity	Vineyard Acquisition/Establishment and Management
Soil Conservation and Water Quality	Water Conservation
Energy Conservation and Efficiency	Air Quality
Social Equity	Pest Management
Continuing Education	Product Assurance and Business Sustainability

Is the SIP[™] Certification Program limited to Central Coast vineyards? No. The Vineyard Team and cooperating growers are proud that the Standards were developed on the Central Coast, but the program is not limited to Central Coast producers. The purpose of the Certification Program is to promote the adoption of sustainable vineyard practices and provide the opportunity for marketplace recognition for SIP[™] Certified vineyards.

The Central Coast Vineyard Team recognized the need for continual improvement both in farming practices and certification standards. The standards are considered to be part of a living document; they will change over time with advances in science and research.

A Project of the Central
Coast Vineyard Team

A Local Non-Profit Dedicated to
Sustainable Winegrowing Since 1994

835 12th Street, Suite 204
Paso Robles, California 93446

Tel 805.369.2288
Fax 805.369.2292

www.sipthegoodlife.org
www.vineyardteam.org



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Frequently Asked Questions (cont'd)

How does a vineyard achieve SIP™ Certification? Certification will be awarded based on the applicant complying with all Requirements as well as achieving a minimum of 75% of the total available points. A grower's farming practices and documentation are verified through an independent audit and reviewed by an advisory committee. The purpose of certification is for growers to evaluate and substantiate their farming practices on a whole farm level.

What is the Certification Advisory Committee (CAC) and what is its role? The CAC is comprised of independent government, academic, and industry professionals with agricultural expertise, professional experience with inspections and audits, and commitment to program integrity.

The purpose of the CAC is to:

- Determine vineyard eligibility for certification based on auditor's findings.
- Grant certification based on compliance with all program requirements.
- Determine winery eligibility for licensing and use of the logo based on auditor's findings.
- Approve a list of accredited auditors.
- Review and make determinations based on applicant exemption requests.
- Review and make determinations based on applicant appeals.

How often is a SIP™ Certified vineyard audited and certified? Growers are audited and certified on an annual basis. The Program season is from December 1st through November 31st. Certification applies to the vintage within which the practices were third-party audited.

The certification process is a 3-year cycle, with all growers receiving a complete records and on-site audit in year one. Growers will receive various combinations of paper audits, interviews, and onsite inspections for Years 2 and 3.

How much does Certification cost? Certification fees are divided into three categories: Application, Audit, and Certification. The *Application Fee* is non-refundable and ranges from \$500 - \$1,000; it includes three hours of pre-audit assistance by program staff. The *Audit Fee* is charged on an hourly basis and is paid directly to the auditor (estimated fees range from \$50 - \$100 per hour). The cost of the entire audit depends on the grower readiness and organization. *Certification Fees* are paid on an annual basis and are charged on a per acre and/or per case basis. Certification Fees are as follows:

Vineyard Certification Fees	
Acres	\$/Acre
0 – 49	\$20.00*
50 - 99	\$15.00
100 – 249	\$12.00
250 - 499	\$10.00
500 – 999	\$9.00
1000 or more	\$8.00

Winery Certification Fee	
Cases	(\$/case)
0 - 7,500	\$0.16*
7,500 - 24,999	\$0.12
25,000 - 49,999	\$0.10
50,000 - 99,999	\$0.08
100,000 - 249,999	\$0.07

*\$500 minimum Vineyard and Winery Certification Fee.

If I purchase SIP™ Certified fruit and make wine, can I put the Certification seal on the bottle? Bottles of wine containing 85% or more by volume of SIP™ Certified fruit are eligible for certification and use of the SIP™ Certified seal. Wineries wishing to certify their wines as made from Certified fruit must apply and undergo a chain-of-custody audit. In addition, the Certification Agreement and fees must be fully executed and submitted prior to seal use.

How can I get more information? Great question. Online information is available at www.vineyardteam.org including the Information Package, Certification Standards, and a list of SIP™ Certified Vineyards. If you would like to speak with program staff, please call 805.369.2288 or email us at info@vineyardteam.org.

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