

The UK wine industry

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ABSTRACT

1. Pest and disease problems in UK vineyards

- a) Three main diseases: Powdery Mildew, Downy Mildew and Botrytis. Downy and botrytis in particular are not helped by our generally wetter climate.
- b) Other diseases eg. Eutypa, Esca, Phomopsis are of relatively minor importance.
- c) Pests currently not a major problem. Some vineyards suffer from red spider or scale insect infestations. Caterpillar pests are relatively rare. Capsid only a significant problem on young vines, as is Erineum mite (Erinose). Wasps are a universal and sometimes major problem – particularly on early ripening or thin-skinned varieties.

2. Herbicides for weed control

- a) Limited range of contact and residual herbicides. Some have label recommendations for vines but, of the 49 glyphosate products on the market, two have off-label approval for use in vineyards.
- b) Limited understanding by vineyard managers of how to make the best use of the herbicides available.

3. Pesticide application

Majority of commercial vineyards apply fungicides and insecticides using air-assisted broadcast sprayers. A few of the larger vineyards now have tunnel sprayers (it would seem PSD have no knowledge of these machines). However, many smaller commercial and amateur vineyards rely on hydraulic sprayers and, in some cases, hand-held equipment. Label recommendations or off-label approvals need to allow all these methods.

4. Pesticide Approval

More than half the chemicals available for use in vineyards only have off-label approval. Most of these have been obtained and paid for by UKVA. A few (as part of a package of crops) by HDC – for which we are very grateful. It is irritating that vineyards which are not members of UKVA are free to use any of these SOLAs without making any contribution to their increasing cost.

The rapidly expanding vineyard acreage has encouraged one or two agrochemical firms to put grapevines on the label of their products. Make a plea for more firms to do this.

Off-label approvals based on data obtained from trials in northern France or Germany often have very restrictive conditions of use eg. Spray volumes and maximum concentrations (see the Systhane SOLA). Hopefully an on-label approval for a product also used in other fruit crops might be more practical.

5. EU Thematic Strategy

a) Approval of pesticides

The recent EU vote will have the effect of further restricting our limited choice of pesticides. In particular, it seems likely that our only protectant fungicide (other than copper) against downy mildew, mancozeb, will be prohibited.

The zonal registration system (ie. mutual recognition of registration within a zone) at first sight is encouraging. It appears to give access to pesticides used by vinegrowers elsewhere in Europe. However, the UK is in the central zone – which includes wine producing countries such as Germany, Austria and Hungary but excludes France!

b) The “Sustainable Use Directive”

Most of the proposals under this heading will not be new to UK arable farmers and horticultural growers, particularly those involved with the various crop assurance schemes. Vine growers may have some catching up to do, particularly in the areas of operator training and sprayer testing. However, the UK relies on a “Code of Practice” and “The Voluntary Initiative” whereas this directive will introduce statutory regulations.