

fertiliser inputs but lower for disease control. Where livestock such as sheep are used in the weed control regime, overall costs may not be significantly greater in organic production.

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Further reading about organic viticulture

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Madge DG. 2005. *Organic Viticulture: An Australian Manual*. Victorian DPI, Mildura.

McCoy S and Parlevliet G. (eds) 2001. *Organic Production Systems: Beef, Wheat, Grapes and Wines, Oranges and Carrots*.



TONY HASSALL

Figure 4: Weed control in an organic vineyard using a Tournesol cultivator.

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Organic viticulture

» We are delighted to have **Dr Paul Kristiansen** and his team from the University of New England's Organic Research Group (ORG) as regular contributors to Australian Certified Organic magazine.

ORGANIC VITICULTURE STUDY

Tony Hassall, Wine Industry Development Officer based at Applethorpe in the Granite Belt, Queensland, completed his two-year study of organic viticulture earlier this year. The research was part of his Master of Science in Agriculture at UNE and involved: a national survey of organic and biodynamic wine grape growers in February 2005; detailed follow-up interviews with six selected growers later that year; and an on-farm trial exploring crop protection, yield and costs in organic wine grape production for Shiraz and Merlot vines grown in Ballandean, Queensland in the 2004/05 season (Figure 1).

Organic wineries and vineyards are predominantly located in the southern mainland states of South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria, with a significant share in Western Australia, mostly in the south-western corner (Figure 2).

The survey found that organic growers are reliant on copper and sulphur sprays for the control of downy mildew and powdery mildew respectively (see news items on Reducing copper use on p.48). Key factors in maintaining low rates of disease infestation included good canopy management, selection of varieties that are not highly susceptible and avoidance of regions with adverse climatic conditions. Weed management was also considered to be a problem; mowing and cultivation were the most commonly used methods of control. Other techniques used by organic growers



Figure 1: Organic vineyard at Ballandean, Qld. (Photo: Tony Hassall)

Figure 3: Yield of organic and conventionally produced wine grapes grown at Ballandean, Qld (Row = organic vines; conv. = conventional vines)

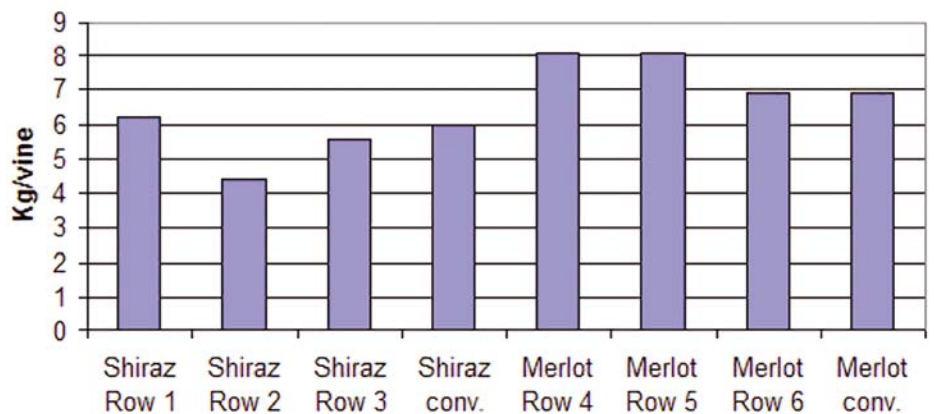
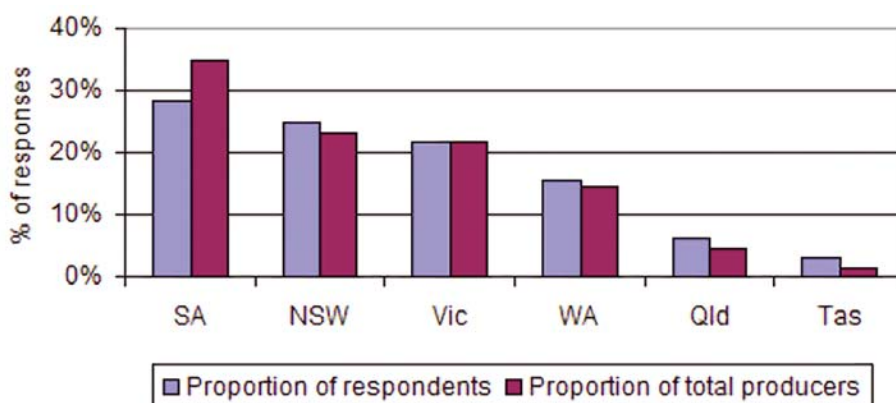


Figure 2: Distribution of survey responses by state



were mulching, hand hoeing, cover crops and grazing.

Yields can sometimes be lower in organic production – at least for some varieties – as indicated in the literature review and the survey results, however the field trial showed higher yields for most of the organic treatments except in one row of Shiraz, where losses occurred due to botrytis (Figure 3). The experimental vineyard results also showed that organic management of Merlot performed as well as or better than the conventional vines in terms of both yield and quality.

In organic viticulture costs were found to be generally higher than for conventional systems for weed control (Figure 4) and