

Statement issued February 5, 2018

Dissent issued February 6, 2018

LIVE Joint Technical Committee Statement on Weed Management

Leigh Bartholomew (Vineyard Certification Officer; Chair), Leti Catoira-Rice (Willamette Valley), Julie Tarara (Washington, Eastern Oregon and Idaho), Anna Huttel (Salmon-Safe). Dissenting opinion below by Daniel Sweeney (Southern Oregon)

The LIVE Technical Committee met several weeks ago and spent a significant amount of time discussing the future of herbicide use on LIVE vineyards. The technical committee is a diverse group made up of people who are farming vineyards across the Pacific Northwest. Some of us farm organically and some of us do not. We all strongly believe that we are doing what is right for our farms and our businesses.

We asked ourselves whether herbicides have a place on LIVE certified vineyards. Do we remove all of them? Do we remove some of them? Or does the LIVE Yellow List of approved chemistries remain as it is currently?

Many of us attended Mimi Casteel's glyphosate seminars put on last year. We also heard information from Julie Tarara on Integrated Weed Management and we discussed the advantages and disadvantages of herbicide use. We learned that 27% of all LIVE certified vineyards did not use any herbicide in 2017 (up from 21% in 2016) but that of those vineyards that did use herbicides 97% of them used glyphosate.

The conclusion of this committee is that we need to provide a structure for farmers to farm their vineyards in the most responsible and sustainable way that we can. We understand that we have a varied membership who farm vineyards that are very different from one another. There is no one-size-fits-all to farming and more specifically to weed management. There are shallow soils full of rocks, deep valley floor soils, irrigated sites and dry-farmed sites. Each one requires a different farm strategy to achieve the goals of the owner and farmer.

To us this means that our approach must be to allow the use of multiple modes of weed management including mechanical cultivation, animal grazing and herbicides. We suggest that we focus not on removing herbicides completely from our tool kit but on growing our collective knowledge of Integrated Weed Management with the objective to use less herbicide on our vineyards in the future.

We will push the research agenda to focus on integrated weed management strategies. We believe that to be successful we must focus our efforts on the education of our membership to improve our collective knowledge and use of herbicide alternatives.

Dissenting opinion of Joint Technical Committee member Daniel Sweeney

My name is Daniel Sweeney. I am a previous LIVE board member, vineyard tech officer, Joint Tech Committee (JTC) chair and current senior member of the JTC, having served on the committee since early 2014.

The opinion issued on behalf of the joint tech committee at yesterday's meeting does not represent my stance on the matter of herbicides in the LIVE program.



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It is my (dissenting) opinion that synthetic herbicides have no place in a program that claims to certify the sustainability of a farm or vineyard within a greater ecosystem or the free market.

I have commercially farmed hundreds of acres of vineyards in Oregon, New York, Virginia and elsewhere, in addition to nurseries, orchards, berries, vegetables and field crops. I currently operate a large vegetable farm and consult for vineyards and grapevine nurseries. I have farmed conventionally as well as to the standards of LIVE/Salmon Safe and the NOP (multiple certifiers). I have farmed with and without herbicides in all of those settings.

There are countless farming models (with lower profit margins than vineyards) that, as a rule, assume no herbicides or synthetic chemistry will be used as a means of production. In many of these models weed control is among the primary farming costs, yet that challenge is readily accepted, planned for and (often creatively) executed. It is my contention that if the profitability of a given farm hinges on chemical weed control there is nothing *sustainable* about the business model, to say nothing of environmental implications.

The credibility of the LIVE standard rests on the program's ability to justify that a given recommendation for the control of a pest in the vineyard is not only environmentally benign to the greatest extent possible, but can be used within the framework of IPM *continually*. As materials are discovered to be susceptible to resistant target populations (or more toxic than an alternative), the precedent is that they be removed in favor of ever-more sustainable control measures.

If the LIVE program seeks to improve and evolve its interpretation of the word "sustainable" and set the bar for certifications elsewhere, please be aware that the recommendation that we continue to allow synthetic herbicides (despite proven cultural control measures which present little or no risk of resistance) is a clear exception to the rules that have governed any other standard revision to date. Simply put; less toxic alternatives to synthetic weed control exist, are used globally and have been used as long as vineyards have been planted. To date the LIVE standards have put an emphasis on cultural control measures whenever possible, *except in this instance*.

The value of the LIVE certification is in the trust that consumers have in our ability to thoughtfully and consciously recommend farming practices that are safe for people and the ecosystems in which we farm. The role of a certified sustainable farm and business is to figure out how to operate profitably within those mandates. If the trust of the public is violated - intentionally or not - the certification will be judged. I believe that consumers would consider the standards inadequate (if not offensive) in allowing glyphosate when proven non-chemical alternatives exist.

If LIVE wishes to be at the forefront of defining what it means to be "sustainable", we have a clear opportunity to set the bar with the removal of synthetic herbicides from the program. My (educated) guess is that most consumers would be surprised to learn that these chemicals were allowed in the first place.

Sincerely,
Daniel Sweeney

