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## Wineries complete first industry carbon-reduction program

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Biofuel tractors at Willamette Valley Vineyards were a first step toward lower carbon operations.

Fourteen Oregon wineries announced Tuesday they've completed a rigorous process to measure and reduce greenhouse gases as part of the "Carbon Neutral Challenge," a joint program of the Oregon Environmental

Council and the Oregon Wine Board.

The move is the [latest in a series of signals from the Oregon wine industry](#) that it aims to be viewed by the world as among the greenest.

The participating wineries — [14 finishers of an arduous process that launched with 30 wineries signed on](#) — instituted a number of changes aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions including installing solar panels, retrofitting lighting, insulating tanks and using goats, sheep and raptors instead of lawn mowers and pesticides.

[Willamette Valley Vineyards](#) of Turner and [King Estate Winery](#) of Eugene are the largest participating wineries. Jim Bernau, Willamette Valley Vineyards founder, said even though his business has been focusing on sustainability for years, he learned a lot through the process.

“For example, I had no idea that the use of refrigeration had such a significant impact on the environment,” Bernau said. “The very detailed technical aspects of the audit were eye-opening.”

In addition to improving the technology and insulation of the winery’s refrigeration units, Bernau said he’s looking at alternative packaging for wine as well. For restaurants that sell in volume, he said, it would make better environmental sense to ship the wine in large stainless steel canisters rather than individual bottles.

Willamette Valley Vineyards had sales of \$16.5 million in 2009.

Each winery participating in the program accounted for its greenhouse gas emissions and incorporated the information into a carbon inventory tool developed by Portland-based [Ecos Consulting](#) and based on the [The International Wine Industry Greenhouse Gas Accounting Protocol](#), launched earlier this year and developed through a partnership between the Wine Institute of California, New Zealand Winegrowers, South Africa’s Integrated Production of Wine program, and the Winemakers’ Federation of Australia.

The wineries in the Oregon program also became members of [The Climate Registry](#), a national system that sets standards for calculating, verifying and reporting greenhouse gas emissions. Six of the participants paid \$2,500 each to have their carbon emissions verified by a third party and all participating wineries offset their remaining missions by investing in methane digester projects through the [Bonneville Environmental Foundation](#).

David Weigel, vice president of marketing for Ecos, said the process the wineries went through before offsets were purchased is much more than just greenwashing.

"It's a very progressive stance," Weigel said. "We coach companies to deploy real measures, to be running as lean and as powerful as you can, before you buy offsets."

[Greg Jones](#), a professor at Southern Oregon University who has done extensive research on the impact of climate change on the wine industry, said the Carbon Neutral Challenge is significant because it involves a concerted effort by a bloc of companies within a single industry.

“It’s a peer group,” Jones said. “It will only make the Oregon wine industry more catalyzed around the climate change issue.”

In addition to an actual reduction in carbon output — something that Jones said wine-growing regions desperately need to avoid impact on their businesses — the value in the challenge is in the message it sends to

other wineries and other businesses.

Other participating wineries include [A to Z wineworks](#), [Abaclea](#), [Adelsheim](#), [Chehalem](#), [Cooper Mountain Vineyards](#), [Left Coast Cellars](#), [Lemelson Vineyards](#), [Mahonia Vineyards and Nursery](#), [Sokol Blosser Winery](#), [Soter Vineyards](#), [Stoller Vineyards](#) and [Winderlea Wine Co.](#)

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