



# CCOF

Organic Certification Trade Association Education & Outreach Political Advocacy

**For Immediate Release**

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## **CCOF Scales Up Activities in Wine Country in Response to Growing Interest in Organic from Wine Community**

**(September 9, 2009) Santa Cruz, CA.** CCOF, one of the country's oldest and largest organic certifiers, announced today that it has scaled up activities in California's wine country in response to the growing interest in organic from various sectors of the wine industry.

In July CCOF participated in the Napa Valley Grapegrowers Organic Winegrowing Conference held at Frog's Leap Winery in Rutherford. Elizabeth Whitlow, CCOF's North Coast Regional Service Representative, spoke on the process of becoming certified organic and the pitfalls to avoid. She was followed by Jody Biergiel, CCOF Processor Certification Director who gave a presentation on the regulations regarding organic wine labeling. Of the conference participants, a third were already certified organic wine grape growers and wineries, another third were in transition to organic and the remaining third were looking to learn more about what is involved in organic certification. "This is an excellent, informative event for all those interested in learning about organic wine grape growing and winemaking and finding out about some of the new techniques in pest management including innovative vineyard equipment now available. We are very happy to be involved in the event" states Biergiel.

In August, CCOF also took part in Growing Even Greener: an Eco-winegrowing Symposium held in Hopland, CA. The event focused on green trends and innovations, how to save money while going green, and increasing quality and market advantage through sustainable, organic and biodynamic practices. CCOF's Whitlow again spoke, this time on a panel discussing the different certifications available within the industry. Sponsors of the event included Mendocino Winegrape & Wine Commission, California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance, and UC Cooperative Extension.

CCOF also recently opened a satellite office in Santa Rosa to serve as a new base for Elizabeth Whitlow. As Regional Service Representative for the North Coast region, Whitlow serves Marin, Sonoma and Napa counties and works with a large number of organic vineyards. CCOF certifies some of California's oldest organic vineyards including Wild Hog, Chavez and Leeds, Coturri Vineyards, Spottswode, Rubicon Estate, formerly known as Niebaum Coppola and Yount Mill and, has recently witnessed significant expansion in this sector. In the last two years, CCOF has seen a 16% increase in certified organic wine grape acreage, up from 8,370 acres in 2006 to 9,722 in 2008. CCOF also saw continued growth in organic wine production. Certified organic wineries increased from just 28 wineries in 2007 to 45 in 2008, representing an

astounding growth of almost 61%. Many more wineries will become certified in time for this year's harvest.

This Fall, CCOF will stage its 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Organic Beer and Wine Tasting Event to kick off the annual harvest festival at the Ferry Building in San Francisco on October 23. This highly-popular event attracts some 800 people who come to experience a wide selection of award-winning organic wines, beers and spirits alongside sample pairings from the Ferry Building's acclaimed restaurants and specialty food vendors. Award-winning newcomers to the event include Alma Rosa Winery and Vineyard's 2006 Chardonnay, selected as the #4 wine in Wine Enthusiast Magazine's Top 100 wines of 2008; Hawley Winery's 2005 Zinfandel that received the Gold Medal at the West Coast Wine Competition; and Terra Savia that won the Silver Medal at San Francisco Chronicle's 2008 Wine Competition.

The increasing number of awards being won by organic wines and wines made with organic grapes appears to be driving more grape growers and wineries to make the switch to organic. "Winemakers interested in making better tasting wine are turning to organic production," states Jake Lewin, CCOF Chief Certification Officer. "Similarly, it is now not unusual to hear a customer at a restaurant ask a sommelier if they have any organic wines on the menu. And consumer concern is not just for better tasting wine, but wine grapes that are grown using more sustainable methods that protect the environment. There are a lot of factors at play driving the growth of the industry. We are happy to have been able to respond and step up our activities in wine country".

#### About CCOF

*CCOF (California Certified Organic Farmers), a nonprofit organization, was founded in 1973. CCOF's mission is to certify, educate, advocate and promote organic through:*

- *A premier organic certification program for growers, processors, handlers, and retailers.*
- *Programs to increase awareness of and demand for certified organic product and to expand public support for organic agriculture.*
- *Advocacy for governmental policies that protect and encourage organic agriculture.*

*CCOF certifies more than 2,000 organic operations in 35 states and three foreign countries and serves over 350 supporting members - consumers, suppliers, businesses and individuals - interested in supporting its work. For further information on CCOF visit: [www.ccof.org](http://www.ccof.org)*