

As told at the WCA Public Forum Wednesday, May 29, 2013

Hello everyone
thank you so much for sharing this evening with us

As a parent and educator in farm based education I joined WCA because I wanted to keep my daughter (and the other 699 students at the twin hills union campus) safe at school from the potentially toxic chemical drift that occurs when orchards are converted to vineyards AND I am sick and tired of seeing our farm lands and pasture lands being converted to wine grapes.

An agricultural system based on monocultures leads down one path a path that includes increased dependency on pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides and with a monoculture also comes the elimination of local food crops, livestock and apiary products (grapes are not bee pollinated!)

Pesticides and the developing minds and bodies of our children don't mix. This is not new, we know this...

It is extremely evident that we need to institute a 1/4 mile pesticide free buffer zone around our schools.

Legislation is lacking and everyone is concerned about the impact of a 1/4 buffer zone on our small farms, initially, i was worried about the consequences of a pesticide free zone on small farms too...

then I read the crop report.

here are some numbers for you taken from the 2011 Sonoma County crop report

there are **60,184**

(acres of wine grapes in Sonoma county)

AND

12,863 combined acres of food crops (which includes everything that is not a grape vine) like squash, melons, peppers, tomatoes, sprouts, lettuces, apples, olives, berries, walnuts, plums, pears, strawberries, figs, chestnuts, prunes etc...) plus grain and forage.

NOW lets talk organics...

of the **12,863** acres of food crops in Sonoma County **7,520** acres are organic! more then half of the food crops in Sonoma County are **ORGANIC**.. that is fantastic news!! and that number doesn't include an additional 12,573 organic acres of pasture and range land!

ok, lets go back to that first number for a minute...

over 60,000 acres of Sonoma County is covered in grapes.
would anyone like to guess how many of these **60,000** acres are organic?? **678**

In over 60,000 acres **ONLY 678** are organic this is just unacceptable.

As a community we already eagerly support organic locally grown food and diverse agriculture...

we will pay an extra 2 dollars for Niman Ranch beef, at local restaurants, we seek out local organic produce and cheeses at our weekly farmers market... we love good food and we love good wine. so why is it that we are not as concerned about the pesticides in wine we drink as we are about pesticides in the food we eat???

As major players in our local ag community, holding more than 60,000 acres of agricultural land in Sonoma County it is time the wine industry start picking up the slack... and we must insist that our government officials stop and think. Think about the impact of vineyard sprawl on our community, environment and the local food system that we so enthusiastically support.

We are losing our food crops and pasture lands at an alarming rate to an industry that is showing extremely limited interest in organic farming practices.

I keep hearing about all the revenue winegrowers bring to our community, so it is to them, the winemakers of Sonoma County, I say, now is your time. time to do better, time to give back to the community by converting these conventional vineyards to california certified organic farms.

If we want to keep our children and our community safe from the dangers of exposure to synthetic chemical pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides then we must insist that the wine grape growers start doing more than writing "sustainable" on their website.

I am ever hopeful that, as a community, we can come together and find a way to keep our children safe from exposure to these toxic chemicals while at school, and create, once again, biodiversity within our agricultural community.

Now, as we move forward with yet another conversion of orchard to vineyard we must insist that the property owner Paul Hobbs Winery, as a responsible company, wanting to avoid harm to any children, conduct a "Preliminary Endangerment Assessment" via comprehensive soil testing PRIOR to proceeding with any part of this conversion... so we may better understand the impact this will have on our children, our community and our environment.

thank you,
Joy

