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TOP STORY

Environment

Napa Valley Grapegrowers coordinates with global wine industry on climate change

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TRY 3 MONTHS FOR \$3



Vineyards outside Porto, Portugal.

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Seeking international colleagues and fresh ideas in the hunt for answers to the question of climate change, the Napa Valley Grapegrowers took their search abroad last week.

A delegation from the NVG spent several days at the Climate Change Leadership conference in Porto, Portugal, coordinating with other envoys from global wine regions on the meaning of climate change for the worldwide wine industry.

Speaking Friday from Porto, NVG Industry & Community Relations Director Molly Moran Williams said, “We just, as a community, have experienced droughts and earthquakes and fires and floods and extreme heat and weather events. So it’s been only natural to start thinking about what we can do to not only adapt vineyards, but to do whatever we need to do to kind of mitigate for the climate realities that we’re facing.”

Williams' fellow NVG delegates were Michael Silacci, winemaker at Opus One and NVG vice president, and Sonya DeLuca, NVG associate director and COO.

Delegates came away with insights from a lineup of speakers that included the likes of international wine scientists, executives, government officials and one former vice president and champion of climate change awareness, Al Gore.

"I was impressed by the leadership taken by the Portuguese vineyard and winemaking community," Silacci said. "While Napa Valley farmers and winemakers think in shades of green, we need to bring the blue and the yellow fringe closer to the center, closer to unity to make strides to hit the reset button on climate change."

DeLuca added, "We know that vineyards are actually powerful tools in the toolbox for climate mitigation. Not only are they climate neutral but have the potential to be climate positive in the medium and long term.

"However, a big part of our interest in this conference was to learn more about vineyards as part of our greater ecosystem and the connectivity between habitat, forests, and farmland."

NVG is developing a report comprised of takeaways from the Porto conference, Williams said.

“It’s about resilience and looking at how we can be the best caretakers of the land,” Williams said. “So, our upcoming report to members will dig into this through the lens of vineyard practices and climate action.”

Another outcome of the conference was the creation of the Porto Protocol, which obliges members to limit their impacts on the environment even more than they may already be doing.

Napa winegrower Robin Lail, founder of Lail Vineyards in St. Helena, was named the U.S. Representative for the global group. The Protocol has also set out to compile a database of peer case studies that can be shared between businesses looking to go even greener.

In a release from the group, Lail said, “In Napa Valley, growers and vintners are already actively engaged in protecting the environment as we farm for our grandchildren ... We are re-evaluating our farming practices at Lail Vineyards and my goal as The Porto Protocol’s U.S. representative is to reach out to farming communities across the country to do the same.”

Henry Lutz

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Henry Lutz covers the local wine industry. He has been a reporter and copy editor for the Register since 2016.

