

Virginia Wine Board Grant Final Report

6/28/2023

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Title: Commercial Cider Apple Survey and Report

Proposal Number:

Project Type: ☒ Research ☐ Education ☐ Marketing

Original Funding Amount: \$24,500

Current Balance: \$24,343.64

Objectives and Corresponding Achievements:

- It was proposed that Panacea Wine Consulting (PWC) gather, analyze, and organize results of a survey to create the inaugural Virginia Cider Apple Report.
 - 2021 survey- a beta survey was deployed in August 2022 and completed in early October. Respondents were used as a focus group to provide counsel and suggestions for changes to the 2022 survey. A report of 2021 findings was not completed due to low response rate. A goal was set for the 2022 report to achieve a minimum of 75% of industry represented.
 - 2022 survey and report- a grower survey was deployed in December 2022 and producer survey in January 2023. The 2022 Virginia Cider Apple Report was released to respondents in May 2023. A total of 88% of the cider industry were represented exceeding goals and expectations.
- PWC was to identify stakeholders and partner organizations to assist in gathering Virginia apple grower and cider production information.
 - PWC held numerous informational sessions online and at VA Cooperative Extension Fruit School meetings to educate extension agents and leaders within the industry on the importance of this survey, and has made every attempt to connect with identified stakeholders. There has been a high level of support from cider makers, researchers at Virginia Tech, and Virginia Cooperative Extension agents. There is some interest from apple growers and the Virginia Horticulture Society.
 - A list of apple growers and cider makers across the commonwealth was established and expanded, a total of 48 cideries and 54 apple growers are currently on the list. This list continued to be refined throughout the whole process and was gathered from the following sources: the VA ABC database, American Cider Association database, VA cider

association, Virginia Cooperative Extension agents, VA Apple Board, VA Horticultural Society, and internet searches.

- PWC would then create and deploy a survey to collect valuable and currently unavailable data on cider apples and cider production in Virginia.
 - PWC developed a 2 part survey for 2022 data collection, part one for growers and part two for custom juice processors and cider producers. The survey was available online through QuestionPro, additionally a printed format was mailed to all contacts on the curated list.
 - 80 surveys were mailed to apple growers
 - 150 surveys to apple and juice pressers, processors, distillers, breweries and wineries thought to make cider, as well as distilleries across the Commonwealth.
 - PWC made phone calls to individual entities on the curated list, to engage and explain about the purpose of the survey, answer questions, and attempt to gather information. Researchers sometimes called entities 2 or more times. An estimated 438 phone calls were made to contacts and respondents.
 - PWC leveraged contacts at Va Cider Association, VA cooperative extension agents, Virginia Wine Board Marketing Office, and VA Horticulture Society to distribute the survey through newsletters, emails, and other in-person meetings.
 - Attended 7 fruit grower and cider meetings across the state
 - Engaged with individuals in-person at meeting or visits: 75 apple growers and 35 cider makers to explain survey and collect data
- PWC would then compile the 2022 data collected into a report of current cider apple and cider production in Virginia.
 - 88% response rate from cider makers
 - 60% response rate from apple growers
 - Final Report was delivered to survey respondents May 2023
 - Final Report sent to all Virginia apple and cider industry stakeholders, industry organizations, and VDACS, and any other interested state government departments in June 2023

Overall Benefit for Virginia Wine Industry:

Direct Impact and Benefit to Apple Growers:

- Understand what is currently being grown and used for cider.
- Identify if fruit they are currently growing could be used for cider.
- Identify apple varieties for possible future plantings
- See price by variety

Direct Impact and Benefit to Cidermakers:

- Understand current trends in cider production
- Identify new varieties available
- Understand price trends by variety

This report will aid in accurately assessing the total amount of Virginia-grown apples that go into cider production in Virginia. By providing a breakdown of cultivars being used, this report offers a snapshot of what cider makers want and how grower supply is meeting demand. This will help the industry grow in a sustainable and profitable way.

This report contributes to the upward trajectory of growth and success of the Virginia cider industry by informing growers and makers on pricing trends for fruit. As the availability of Virginia apples becomes more scarce due to increasing competition from other apple growing states and countries around the world, the need for long-term contracts may be needed to ensure sustainability of the cider industry in the Commonwealth. The 2022 Virginia Cider Apple Report and future reports like this will provide information for forecasting future pricing and contracts.

This report will help strengthen efforts to bring in federal funding for cider research, education, and extension programs in Virginia from sources like the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Specialty Crops Research Initiative (SCRI), the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), and federal flow-through programs administered by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS), such as the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant (SCBG) program.

This 2022 Virginia Cider Report will help tell the story of Virginia cider. That Virginia cider at its heart is an agricultural product. Without a story to precede the apple or cider in the glass, cider becomes just like any other beverage, a consumption rather than a culture. The modern story of Virginia cider is unique and diverse, with a strong taste of place and historical significance. This report helps validate and inform where the cider industry is now and establishes a baseline for measuring future growth, profitability, and sustainability.

Publications and Activities Associated with Project:

View Full Report at: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1IAK8FN8gZYigvGQp2HfEktYbtoaqrI1>



Future Work:

The full 2022 report will be presented to the apple and cider industries at the following:

- VA Cider Association Meeting in July 17, 2023
- VA Cooperative Extension- Tree Fruit Meeting, August 15, 2023
- Final Report delivered to public via VA Wine Marketing Office press release in July 2023

Final Budget and Justification:

Item Type	Original Awarded Amount	Final Amount Spent
Personnel	\$20,500.00	\$18,970.00
Travel	\$3,000.00	\$2,885.78
Supplies & Materials	\$1,000.00	\$1,622.82
Contractual	\$0.00	\$945.00
Other		
Total	\$24,500.00	\$24,343.64

The most significant changes in the budget are the following line items:

- Contractual- A contractor with extensive data management experience was hired to assist in sorting the data received from the survey company into a format where it could be worked and analyzed by the project lead.
- Supplies & Materials- QuestionPro survey software license was purchased for 1 year subscription and this was not originally calculated in the budget because another company with free survey software was originally thought capable of deploying the survey.

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