



CALIFORNIA  
ASSOCIATION  
of WINEGRAPE  
GROWERS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Winegrape Growers Affected by Wildfires Can Apply for Assistance Through WHIP+**

SACRAMENTO, Sept. 11, 2019 – U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue this week announced that growers who suffered crop losses due to natural disasters in 2018 or 2019 can apply for assistance through the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus (WHIP+). Winegrape growers who suffered losses due to smoke exposure events in 2018 are eligible.

The California Association of Winegrape Growers (CAWG) worked with members of the California congressional delegation to ensure winegrapes are covered by WHIP+. CAWG President John Aguirre commended the actions of key members of the California congressional delegation. “The efforts of Sen. Dianne Feinstein and Reps. Mike Thompson and Jim Costa were critical in ensuring California’s winegrape growers affected by wildfires would qualify for assistance under WHIP+.”

USDA is now accepting claims for WHIP+ assistance. USDA recommends growers contact their local Farm Service Agency (FSA) county office to schedule an appointment. Growers in all California counties are eligible for assistance under WHIP+ for wildfire-related losses, provided their county received a Presidential Emergency Disaster Declaration or Secretarial Disaster Designation or their FSA county committee approves a loss claim due to a qualifying disaster event in 2018 or 2019.

Winegrapes are the only commodity under WHIP+ eligible for payments due to quality losses. Growers can receive WHIP+ payments for unharvested grapes resulting from wineries that rejected smoke exposed fruit, provided growers can document the fruit had elevated levels of smoke compounds. In addition, WHIP+ will cover quality losses attributable to smoke where the affected grapes had a value of less than 75 percent of the average market price of undamaged grapes of the same or similar variety. In this instance, growers must submit verifiable documentation that a reduced price resulted from smoke exposure.

“WHIP+ represents a substantial improvement over the 2017 version of WHIP in that it covers quality losses,” Aguirre said. There are a variety of scenarios where the value of a grower’s crop may have been discounted due to smoke exposure related quality issues, either at the time of sale or subsequent to being processed into wine. CAWG is reviewing the just released details of WHIP+ to determine how the program applies to these different scenarios.

#### **Additional information:**

[Press release: USDA Resources Available for Farmers Hurt by 2018, 2019 Disasters](#)

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