

Wine grapes suffering in wet, cold weather

By Anne Gonzales, Sacramento Bee

Bruce Rominger's Yolo County wine grapes are, in a word, immature.

So are his processing tomatoes, languishing in a Winters field.

"We're behind, and things are moving slowly," Rominger said of his crops. "I'm not happy about this rain recently."

Wine grape growers in the Sacramento region, along with those tending other perishable crops like cherries and strawberries, are struggling through a series of fluke frosts and hailstorms. The cool, wet spring – for the second year in a row – has delayed growth, increased the threat of some diseases and snarled the harvest, as well as crushing, packing and shipping schedules.

The zany weather is adding to the California wine industry's headaches, which include depressed prices and a glut of grapes.

Kevin Steward, vineyard manager for Terra d'Oro Winery in Plymouth, is blunt about the effect of frost, snow, hail, rainstorms and cloudy days on some Sierra foothill vineyards.

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