

Warmer temperatures threaten N. California vineyards

By Ashlie Rodriguez, Los Angeles Times

In the next 30 years, high-value vineyards in Northern California could shrink by 50 percent because of global warming, according to a new Stanford University study released Thursday.

Applying scenarios from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, scientists used a climate system computer model and found that Napa and Santa Barbara counties could experience very hot days during the growing season, with temperatures reaching 95 Fahrenheit or higher. The number of hot days will be greater, they say, with about 10 more sweltering days than usual.

As a result, the amount of grape-growing land is projected to decline over the next three decades, the authors wrote.

“There will likely be significant localized temperature changes over the next three decades,” said Noah Diffenbaugh, coauthor of the study and a center fellow at the Woods Institute for the Environment at Stanford. “One of our motivations for the study was to identify the potential impact of those changes, and also to identify the opportunities for growers to take action and adapt.”

High-value growers in California may need to take into account warmer weather and integrate climate information into their cultivation and practices, Diffenbaugh said. Two counties that he found would have cooler temperatures, Yamhill County in Oregon and Walla Walla County in Washington, can prepare for more optimal growing seasons.

“It’s risky for a grower to make decisions that consider

climate change, because those decisions could be expensive and the climate may not change exactly as we expect,” Diffenbaugh said. “But there’s also risk in decisions that ignore global warming, because we’re finding that there are likely to be significant localized changes in the near term.”

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