

California vintners digging up vines

By Chris Macias, Sacramento Bee

Faced with stagnant sales of low-priced wine and a glut of overseas competitors, grape growers in the Central Valley are ripping out their vines and replacing them with more profitable crops such as almonds.

The attrition of vineyards was highlighted in Wednesday's State of the Industry briefing at the Unified Wine & Grape Symposium, the annual trade show and convention for the state's wine industry. The presentation by Bay Area wine consultant Jon Fredrikson drew a standing-room-only crowd of more than 1,500 to the ballroom of the Hyatt Regency hotel across from the state Capitol.

Farmers, vintners and other wine professionals who gathered for the event learned that the market for lower-priced wines declined in 2014, while bottles priced at \$10 and above enjoyed growth as the economy improved

According to a survey by Gomberg, Fredrikson & Associates, the consulting and research firm co-owned by Fredrikson, wine shipments to the U.S. from all sources, including foreign countries, rose to 375 million cases in 2014, a 1 percent increase over the previous year. An estimated 224 million of those cases were produced in California.

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