

## Science-based maturity standards on track for table grapes

Data collected during the 2017/18 season has provided a greater understanding of table grape variability and facilitated science-based recommendations to update maturity standards and encourage repeat purchasing.

The data and recommendations will be presented to growers, marketers and supermarkets in a series of national workshops beginning in early July. Workshop participants will be asked to provide industry input into the development of maturity standards that will benefit the whole supply chain.

The project (*TG17002 Table Grapes Supply Chain Quality 2017-2020*) is funded by Hort Innovation using table grape industry research and development levies and contributions from the Australian Government.

*“Our hope is that industry will come to a consensus on minimum maturity standards that everyone agrees to get behind and support”*

The primary aim of this three-year project is to develop systems that will allow the Australian table grape industry to consistently meet consumer taste expectations, right from the start of the season. Research has strongly suggested that when the majority of fruit in market is liked by consumers, they will buy more.

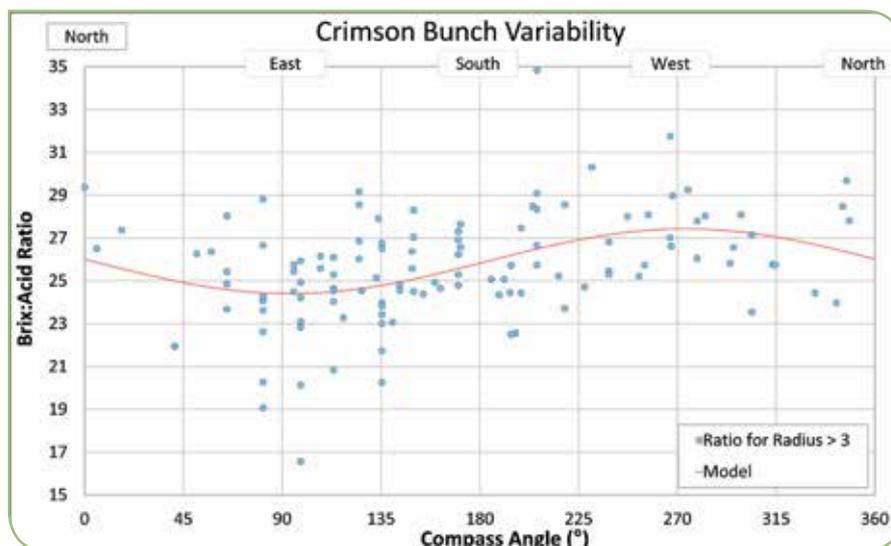


Figure 1. Variability in maturity and taste of single berries according to their position within a bunch of Crimson Seedless. This information will help set fact-based sampling protocols that will ensure the majority of grapes in a bunch will be ready to eat when purchased.

The new maturity standard recommendations are based on data collected from approximately 3,000 farm, supermarket and export samples of all major varieties collected during the 2017/18 season.

The project team's ability to measure the Brix, acid and liking of individual berries allowed them to calculate brix/acid ratio and the BrimA taste indicator measurement (brix minus acid) on the same fruit, which previously could not be done. The 3D position of each grape in a selection of bunches was also recorded along with individual Brix, acid, size and liking to determine the variability of brix and

acid within the bunch, in relation to the sun.

Delytics Ltd Managing Director, Mark Loeffen, who is leading the project said, “We now have a greater understanding of the variability of maturity within different varieties. That knowledge will enable the industry to set fact-based sampling protocols and maturity standards that will help ensure that the majority of grapes purchased by consumers are pleasant to eat.”

Australian Table Grape Association Chief Executive Officer Jeff Scott said, “The data provides tangible evidence that we can present to strategic industry stakeholders to help make a decision around maturity standards. As part of our consultations everything will be put on the table, including the variations of the current maturity standards.

“Our hope is that industry will come to a consensus on minimum maturity standards that everyone agrees to get behind and support.”

The new maturity specifications are expected to be announced and available for the 2018/19 season.



Jenny Hunt collects samples from the vineyards for maturity testing.