

Stakeholder Capitalism and Eco Certifications: The Case of Niagara Wineries

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[Abstract] Canadian wineries must be sustainable to export their products through achieving sustainable accreditation. However, research proves that there are barriers to the adoption of ecologically sound practices. This research examines how certified wineries perceive organic, biodynamic, and sustainable certifications and how certifications can be improved to encourage more wineries to acquire an eco-certification. Through 14 semi-structured interviews, wineries shed light on the barriers that hinder wineries from considering eco-certifications and how the barriers could be addressed. The results reveal that organic, biodynamic, and sustainable certifications could be lessened by reframing the certification and provide governmental support.

[Keywords] eco-certification, stakeholder capitalism, viticulture

Introduction

As per the European free trade agreement, Canadian companies must be sustainable to export their products (MacMillan, 2020). Many companies have achieved sustainable accreditation; however, there are issues with eco-certification that hinder companies from adopting it. Wineries are an example of an industry with multiple certification schemes, including organic, biodynamic, sustainable, LEED, etc. There is extensive research on the barriers to the adoption of eco-certifications. Still, there is a lack of research that focus on wineries' perspectives on how their eco-certification could be improved upon to address the barriers. Certification schemes are complex and sometimes do not benefit businesses. Weitzman and Bailey (2018) recognize the importance of stakeholders' perspectives in determining issues with eco-certifications, which can then inform policymakers on how they can improve. Hence, this research examines the perspective of certified organic, biodynamic, and sustainable wineries. The Niagara region is Canada's largest wine region, having 101 wineries (VQA Ontario, 2019). The Niagara region offers organic, biodynamic, and sustainable certifications; thus, it proved to be an optimal case study for this research.

Organic agriculture is defined as a holistic system that aims to protect a community's biodiversity, including the soil, plants, livestock, and people (Government of Canada, 2018). There are seven certifying organic agencies (Organic Council of Ontario, 2016); however, the wineries in the Niagara region follow Pro-Cert and Ecocert. According to Demeter Canada, a certifying body for biodynamic agriculture, biodynamics is defined as improving natural biological processes, where a farm develops a relationship with the soil, animals, plants, wetlands, forests, and other natural beings that work in harmony with one another to provide resources (Demeter Canada, 2022). For this research, sustainable agriculture is defined as a system that respects the environment, social justice, and culture and is economically profitable (Zucca et al., 2009; Horrigan et al., 2002). The Ontario Craft's Wineries (OCW), formerly known as the Wine Council of Ontario, accredits the body for sustainable viticulture (personal communication, 2019). All the certification bodies consist of a process of application, implementation of standards to farm practices, and inspection by a third-party organization to evaluate whether requirements are met to obtain a certification.

Review of Literature

Many scholars highlight the importance of certification, since it provides a variety of benefits. Such benefits include compliance, trust, legitimacy, and sustainability (Barry et al., 2012; Bush et al., 2013; Weitzman & Bailey., 2018). Eco-certifications are a market-driven system in which environmental and social standards are set and inspected by a third-party member (Bush et al., 2013). However, there are barriers to the adoption of ecologically sound management practices. Certifications have been proven to be a barrier. Certification is expensive to acquire (Soltani et al., 2013), and there is a lack of financial gains during the transition

process (Tress, 2001). Siepmann and Nicholas (2018) found that conventional farmers who used sustainable practices do not see the need for organic certification. Lack of government support is also a barrier (Wheeler et al., 2007; Soltani et al., 2013). Wheeler (2007) emphasized that farmers would consider organics if there were support from the government by having specialists help provide information, go through the transition process with them, and have policy support. Lack of knowledge and technical support is a major barrier towards adoption (Soltani et al., 2013; Seufert et al., 2017; McCarthy & Schurman, 2018; Mariani & Vastola, 2015; Leite et al., 2014; Dodds et al., 2013; Pechrova, 2014).

In addition, Siepmann and Nicholas (2018) revealed that the barriers to adoption for German winegrowers is that the organic regulations are restrictive because the regulations tell you how much you can spray or how much sulphite you can use in your wine that will help it last longer. Last, several on-farm production issues proved to be a barrier, such as pest and disease management issues (Siepmann & Nicholas, 2018; Tress, 2001; Wheeler, 2007) and frequent spraying on the vines, especially using the copper spray, which is toxic to the environment (Siepmann & Nicholas, 2018). In addition, high production costs are a barrier (Dodds et al., 2013; Soltani et al., 2013; Mariani & Vastola, 2015; Siepmann & Nicholas, 2018). Finally, another barrier is the associated paperwork and farm inspections, which farmers in studies cited as burdensome. All these barriers have hindered farmers from adopting ecologically sound practices.

Several scholars (Barry et al., 2012; Lee, 2009) note that governments play a significant role in developing and supporting eco-certifications. However, Lee (2009) expound that governments do not have the expertise to provide assessments. Therefore, it is important for stakeholders, including businesses, scientists, NGOs, and governments, to work together to develop standards to improve certifications and productions (Barry et al., 2012). Furthermore, stakeholders must join forces to address the acute issues that impact both the environment and society. Stakeholder capitalism is a form of capitalism in which companies achieve long-term value creation by ensuring that all stakeholders' needs are met. The purpose of stakeholder capitalism is to include all stakeholders in decision-making and to refrain from allowing one stakeholder to dominate another (Schwab & Vanham, 2021). This research examines how Niagara's wineries perceive their organic, biodynamic, or sustainable certifications and how they can be improved to give them a voice as an important stakeholder.

Methodology

The researcher undertook fourteen semi-structured interviews with certified organic, biodynamic, and sustainable wineries in the Niagara Region from June to August, 2019. However, the number of certified wineries will not be revealed to respect and protect the wineries' privacy, but there was a sufficient sample size. Each interview lasted 60 to 90 minutes. First, the researcher found certified wineries from internet sources and then conducted random sampling to select wineries to curb bias. Next, the researcher sent out a recruitment email to ask wineries to participate. After the interviews, the data went through NVivo, a software program that codes interview transcripts. The purpose of using NVivo is to analyze similarities and differences among participants' answers, which then form the analysis.

Results

Organic, biodynamic, and sustainable producers in the Niagara region share certain clear opinions on how the certifications could be improved. They have also shared ideas on how the government could better support the transition process. Organic producers generally viewed the regulations as cumbersome. They argued that there are problems with the regulations, but at the same time, they accepted them and "worked within the system," as one winery representative said. These winery representatives raised two issues. First, there is a lot of paperwork involved, which was time-consuming, especially given that the wine industry had a lot of administrative paperwork to do already. Second, there is a problem with product availability. For example, two wineries pointed out that the regulations allowed copper as a spray, which was very toxic to the environment. These wineries wanted access to other products that were better for the environment.

Sustainable producers were generally more positive in how they viewed their regulations. Most sustainable producers described the sustainable certification as an adequate and flexible program that helped encourage wineries to be mindful of their practices and improve their sustainability score. One winery

representative said that sustainable regulations were not a binding regulation in which you needed to be sustainable immediately but, instead, helped you transition into sustainability and improve over time. Another winery representative said that sustainable certifications helped give credibility to what wineries were doing to achieve sustainability and this, in turn, created consumer trust. However, two problems were raised by several of the wineries. First was the fact that these were not legally binding. Second, the regulations were not seen as evolving. One of these wineries explained that there were no punishments for not following through with the regulations because there were "no teeth" to sustainable regulations. As for the latter problem, three wineries said that the sustainable regulations need to be updated and fine-tuned regularly, especially with new technology and new pesticides constantly becoming available, to ensure that they were up to date and reflected the most current best management practices. One vintner specifically said that the province's sustainable regulations should be tweaked to reflect what works best for the Niagara region, rather than copying what works in New Zealand or Oregon, the USA, since the climate was different in each area.

Organic producers' concerns ranged from the appropriateness of the regulations to the agronomic conditions found in the Niagara region to specific practices associated with the regulations. One of the organic producers specifically addressed appropriateness in citing the origin of the Canadian rules was the United States and, specifically, California. According to the respondent, the American regulations did not reflect Niagara's climate or related disease issues. It was a slow process to change the regulations to reflect the Niagara region. This winery representative felt that Ontario's regulations should be modelled after the European regulations because they had better standards and products that indicates what organic represents.

Excessive bureaucratic requirements were another issue raised by organic winery participants. One organic producer stated that the paperwork involved for certification was too extensive and that it would be easier to have forms geared specifically towards winemaking. One winery representative stated that the organic regulations had requirements for you that had nothing to do with being organic. For example, the paperwork included a section on *Health and Safety*, which had nothing to do with being organic. The organic regulations also required you to fill out a sheet that a producer had laid out mouse traps at every door and checked them every day, but this had nothing to do with organic winemaking because mice cannot chew through tanks, barrels, or bottles. This winery representative said that this requirement was geared towards grain farms. In this representative's opinion, the organic wine producers should have the option of putting "not applicable" onto the form. Another winery representative said that the paperwork was time-consuming, which was difficult at times.

The lack of subsidies to transition was raised as a barrier to adoption by several organic participants. Other countries had programs to encourage farms to convert to organic practices. However, Canada did not have a program that helped pay for certification, educate farmers on the transition process, or compensate them for any risk they encountered in the transition. Several winery representatives felt that a local expert is needed in the Niagara region that producers could call for advice on organic practices and transition successfully. Another issue raised by two winery representatives is the difficulty of getting organic products approved in Canada. Organics represent three per cent of producers in Canada, a very small segment of the overall agricultural market, which is why spray companies did not have any interest in getting products approved in Canada. A winery representative explained:

[...] at the end of the day, the cost of getting new products listed as organic falls on the producer's responsibility. The companies that produce this stuff are kind of like you said, in that, they are saying well, there is a small market here. There is not a huge population of growers going to buy this to make it worthwhile for our company to spend the millions of dollars that it would take to get it certified organic.

A winery representative extended this concern, linking it to environmental principles by stating that Canada had minimal products available to use. One of them was copper, which helped counteract powdery and downy mildew, but it was harmful to the environment. According to this interviewee, OMRI Canada should look for more sustainable products to counteract the disease pressure. While a conventional farm

has a choice of sprays to use, an organic producer in Niagara only has three options: fighting insects, moulds, or mildew. Several wineries expressed a desire for more organic products to be available on their shelves besides copper. As another organic representative explained:

What would be amazing if- let's pretend that a product is approved in the United States of America and approved in Europe, that it automatically gets granted into Canada, we would have way more products. But when the company who got approved in Europe, and the company that got proved in the United States, when that makes up 95 per cent of their business, they're not going to go to the effort to get Canada for five more per cent. They just don't care. And so, when we look at the products on the organic level that what they have in the States, and what we can use in Canada, it's very, very different.

Biodynamic producers did not express anything that they would like to change about the biodynamic regulations. On the contrary, they liked how flexible the biodynamic regulations were and that they did not rely on products as much as organic producers did.

The responses from sustainable producers varied. One winery believed that there should be more ongoing tracking, an online portion that wineries could access and use every two months rather than an audit once a year. Two wineries found that some of the questions in the questionnaire were vague. One of these wineries provided the following example:

Do you regularly test the quality of water? Yes. That's a great question. Do you do it? Yes, we do. Kay, great, that's a sustainability thing that would lead to better water quality, you know, proper treatment in your facility. That could stay 'cause that's a to-the-point question; it's a yes or no question. But 'are you aware of changing requirements' is not... it's a very vague question. It doesn't have an end result in the winery that would lead to sustainability kinda thing.

Audit questions that involved asking you if you were aware of something did not necessarily mean that you were taking actions to prevent environmental impacts. The questions needed to be more streamlined, such as the inclusion of a rating system. The "Yes and No" items needed to have more details in them. Several representatives stated that the questionnaire must be updated because the 2019 Winery Sustainability Survey had the same questions as the 2017 Winery Sustainability Survey. Compounding this issue was a belief that there were also questions in the questionnaire that wineries simply cannot answer. As one representative cited, the questionnaire had a section on expanding your winery, but these questions were not relevant to an established winery. One winery representative wondered if wineries would lose marks if they cannot answer the questions in the questionnaire. Here, again, the representatives pointed to the need to answer "not applicable" questions. Another winery representative spoke of the need for greater clarity was also raised in what information the Ontario Wine Council interpreted the answers so that wineries could understand where they were losing marks. To several respondents, the Ontario Wine Council needed to go even further, educating the wineries on how to do the questionnaire because every winery operated differently.

Each winery was in a different rural area, so the questions should reflect the variance of each winery's operations. For example, as one representative said, some wineries have septic systems while others are on municipal sewage, so the questions needed to be fair and context-specific rather than having wineries lose marks because they did not answer a question "correctly." One winery representative clarified this point by providing an example: "did you contact a minister of Natural Resources for advice before maintaining on your own drain?" That's not relevant to us because we don't have a municipal drain, so when we say not applicable, that's an example of what happens to that question? We don't know."

Three wineries agreed that sustainable guidelines needed to "level up" in terms of best management practices. One spoke of the need for the Wine Council to review the sustainable guidelines regularly to evolve and adapt to new sustainable practices. This winery representative stated that the regulations needed to be concrete rather than idealistic. The regulations and the transition process needed to be more precise. A way to do this was to give wineries five years to transition to sustainable, which means that they had five years to implement sustainable practices, such as converting all light bulbs to LED. If a winery did not

complete the transition in five years, it would lose its certification. Another winery representative said that the regulations needed to tighten up. The policy would pave the way forward towards sustainable wine production in both the vineyard and the winery. A third winery representative said that the industry needed to be more involved if we saw significant support for sustainable wine production. One winery representative said that the Wine Council needed to assist wineries in seeking solutions for infractions. For example, a winery had to install meters to monitor its water usage, but no one at the Wine Council provided advice or directions on where to get the meters. There needed to be resources available to help resolve issues, rather than expecting vintners to figure it out all in isolation.

All certified sustainable wineries obtain the Green Leaf when they achieve certification. One vintner said that while the logo sent the right message, there needed to be a website that provided sufficient information to explain the meaning of sustainable certification. The wineries could use the logo on their website, and if you clicked on the logo, it should direct you to a site that explained its meaning. Interestingly, one winery representative said the winery would not want to change anything about the sustainable guidelines or the certification process.

Regarding governmental support, the organic producers said there was no governmental support for transitioning to organic. Three wineries noted agricultural programs and grants available to improve their practices in terms of purchasing new equipment, such as LED lights or new trellising, but that these grants and programs were available for all producers, whether organic or not. One winery representative stated that the government could provide support by implementing regulations and providing transition grants. For example, the government could implement regulations or restrictions on using neonic insecticides that harm the bees. Another winery representative returned to the subject of the availability of organic products noting that the government could be supportive through regulations by bringing in more allowable products to give organic vintners more tools to combat the problems in the environment. The government should also provide transition grants that could help with the costs of transitioning to organic, especially transitioning from conventional. A winery representative wanted subsidies for being organic during the three-year transition period in which they did not receive the price premiums until they were certified.

One winery representative wants the government to provide a scale for how much a person could pay for certified organic fruit because the winery had a pay structure for grapes, but not for organic grapes. As this winery representative explained:

[...] so they pay us on sugar. So, if my grapes have 20 units of sugar, I get paid two thousand dollars. If they have 30 units of sugar, I get paid twenty-five thousand dollars. Kay? So, it's a scale based on how ripe or how sweet the grapes are. And I want them to pay me more because I do organics as well. Because it costs more. And it's the better environmental play.

Several of the sustainable producers explained that the government indirectly provided support, primarily through grants. However, as was noted by several organic participants, this support is available for all producers, regardless of whether you were sustainable or not. As one winery representative explained:

For example, we've taken advantage of some of the government support programs for changing lighting, so for some of our changes, we got some rebates back. So, in that sense, they've supported us; they probably weren't intending to support sustainability to that program; they were trying to support energy conservation, which is sustainable, so yes, we have. But in terms of them directly supporting the program in some fashion, I don't know of that."

Similarly, another winery representative offered this critique:

We did not get any support in this regard. However, the government does offer up grants from time to time for producers to offset the costs of new equipment and drive innovation in the vineyard and winery. It would be nice to see them set something up to support certified wineries exclusively to improve our operations better. Unfortunately, the grants that become available currently are open to all farmers, and often the programs are abused, and funds are not fairly distributed.

The government supports innovation, and wineries were more likely to support it if they were doing something geared towards environmental protection. The local government operated farm and industry support programs, and there were federal-provincial programs that supported agribusiness development. For example, one winery representative said grants were available to help fund more energy-efficient equipment, such as a better grape presser or line bottling. This representative offered this example:

For example, we said we need to add production space, and we need to put in more modern, efficient pressing grapes equipment or more efficient bottling line something like that, and one of their criteria is innovative technology (and lots of innovative technology is going to be low on energy and emphasize efficiency energy), so some of those programs will also be supported technology and those programs are bigger dollars, and usually you provide a pot full of money, and the government provides a pot full of money. So say you have to provide half a million dollars. The government gives you \$150,000 of that five hundred thousand because it will meet these objectives of new technology that move the whole industry forward or make you particularly more competitive well they'll support sustainability. So yes, there are programs, but it's one step away from being direct.

However, several sustainable producers stated that the government could support more direct grants for sustainability. For example, the government could help with the transition by providing funding to implement sustainable practices. One winery representative said that the government could provide support by offering retrofits to make changes to the winery to make it more sustainable, like retrofits for LED lights. Another winery representative said that the government could reduce taxes for businesses if they followed a particular sustainable practice, such as meeting a certain water and energy consumption level. The result could lead to more wineries adopting sustainable practices if it led to tax reductions. Interestingly, one winery representative said that the government supported the creation of this program and provided incentives through the Green Leaf logo that wineries could use as a marketing tool to signal that they were certified sustainable. Another winery representative said that governments could support the auditors because then the wineries did not have to pay for the audits.

Discussion

Many scholars proved that there are barriers that hindered farmers from adopting eco-certifications. This research revealed that there are issues with organic and sustainable certifications. Biodynamic wineries did not state any issues. How can the organic and sustainable certifications improve for Niagara's wineries? Table 1 describes specific recommendations that organic and sustainable producers would like to see with their certification.

Table 1
Recommendations from Organic, Biodynamic, and Sustainable Producers in the Niagara Region to Improve the Certification Program

	Organic	Biodynamic	Sustainable
Local Regulations	✓		✓
Easier Paperwork Process	✓		✓
Transition Programs	✓		
Direct Grants			✓
OMRI Canada	✓		
Education	✓		✓
Stronger Regulations	✓		✓

Both the organic and sustainable regulations mirrored other countries' programs; therefore, organic and sustainable producers wanted the regulations to reflect conditions in the Niagara region more closely. Regarding the organic regulations, it should be modelled on the European regulations because Europe had better standards for organics and better spray products available. The sustainable regulations were modelled on Oregon and California, USA, and New Zealand; therefore, the Ontario Craft Wineries needed to tweak the regulations to best adapt to Niagara's climate. Low Input Viticulture Enology (LIVE) was a program in Oregon, USA. LIVE brought the wineries together to create a sustainable program that included spray products that were salmon safe, which meant it would not leach into the waterways and harm the salmon (personal communication, 2019). The wineries in the Niagara region could work together to create a Niagara-based program, like LIVE in Oregon.

For organic and sustainable certification, the paperwork proved intensive. Each certification required wineries to explain their entire operation regarding what they were doing or not doing. For organic producers, the paperwork was so broad and involved that it was time-consuming. Siepmann and Nicholas (2018) supported the notion that the paperwork involved was a barrier to adopting organic practices. The vintners recommended ways to reduce the bureaucratic paperwork. They recommended designing paperwork geared specifically for certain crop production, and in this case, paperwork targeted towards viticulture. This design would help wineries focus on incorporating organic practices that fit within their operations rather than use their costs and labour to add practices deemed unnecessary (i.e., mouse traps). Wineries have plenty of administrative paperwork, including Alcohol and Gaming, manufacturing license, federal excise, and certification. Vintners further recommended combining some of the paperwork and eliminating unnecessary paperwork (i.e., Health and Safety). Ultimately, vintners wanted to spend more time in their vineyards than in the office going through a large pile of paperwork. Small- and medium-scale producers who performed most of the viticulture duties themselves would benefit most.

Some of the producers noted that the challenges with sustainable certification included completing the questionnaire and identifying which practice applied to their vineyard. They recommended making the questions in the questionnaire more specific and streamlined. This clarity would ensure that vintners understood the questions and could take measurable actions to address the impacts. They also recommended that the Ontario Craft Wineries be clearer and more explicit in what they expect from wineries. Vintners felt they had lost marks unfairly when their process could not incorporate certain unnecessary requirements (i.e., Expanding Your Winery Section). The vagueness of the questions led the vintners to bypass the regulations rather than addressing their impacts. The regulations need to be tweaked for relevance to benefit both the wineries and the Ontario Craft Winery.

Several countries had transition grant programs that helped farmers transition successfully. For example, the United States has *USDA Certified Transitional Program*. The USDA believes that supporting farmers in the transitioning process and supply chain recognition are keys to encouraging farmers to transition to organic. Therefore, the Organic Trade Association employed a Task Force to develop a USDA Transitional Grant program. The program included farm loans, conservation incentives, risk management products, supply chain management, and a transitional market (Organic Trade Association, 2016). Currently, Canada does not have transition programs to help pay for certification, nor does it educate farmers on transitioning or compensate them for any risks or losses. Several scholars (Wheeler, 2007; Soltani et al., 2013) confirm that a lack of governmental support was a barrier.

Therefore, organic producers provided recommendations; however, it should expand measurably to include sustainable producers. Organic producers said that the government could provide subsidies for the organic transition to ensure that farmers would not lose money during the transition period of three years. For sustainable producers, the government could provide transition funds and retrofits to help wineries implement sustainable practices. One of the sustainable producers recommended having direct grants available for sustainable farms. Currently, the government provides grants for all farms, whether the farm is organic, biodynamic, sustainable, or conventional. However, grants, such as transition grants, retrofits, or even tax reductions, could be targeted towards sustainable farms. It would be beneficial for wineries to have their taxes reduced if they follow sustainable practices. For example, tax reductions could occur for wineries that met certain energy or water consumption levels. A tax reduction would help save on costs for

wineries. Specifically, for organic certification, one of the recommendations was to have OMRI Canada work on getting more spray products approved and available for Canada's organic producers. Currently, Canada has limited sprays available, which includes copper sprays. Scholars such as Wheeler (2007) and Siepmann and Nicholas (2018) support the notion that there are on-farm issues related to pest and disease management and the use of copper spray as a barrier to the conversion to organic. Vintners of organic wines revealed that some sprays, like copper, were harmful to the environment. Therefore, OMRI Canada must provide organic products that are both sustainable and effective in combatting the disease pressures faced in the Niagara region. Europe and the United States have a bigger organics market; therefore, they have more approved organic products to use. Hence, it would be valuable for wineries in Niagara to have access to the same products approved in Europe and the United States (perhaps they could even be automatically approved in Canada). In addition, it would be beneficial for the vintners to have more products available in Canada that could help them counteract the disease pressure in their specific climate instead of using environmentally harmful products.

For both organic and sustainable certification, education was needed. Many scholars (Soltani et al., 2013; Siepmann & Nicholas, 2018; McCarthy & Schurmann, 2018; Dodds et al., 2013; Mariani & Vastola, 2015; Pechrova, 2014) identified lack of knowledge as a barrier to the adoption of ecologically sound practices. Niagara's winery representatives noted that education was important to encourage more wineries to transition because they had to figure out what to do without outside help, which sometimes proved difficult. For organic producers, there needed to be more education on being an organic producer and transitioning successfully. Even the sustainable producers noted that education was needed to help them understand how to complete the questionnaire. Sustainable wineries were in different rural areas and operated differently; therefore, education would enable them to understand how to implement the sustainable practices that were most effective for their vineyard. This need for education also extended to organic practices as there needed to be a local expert in the Niagara region for the organic producers to call upon for guidance on organic transition.

Both organic and sustainable producers want regulations to improve. Regarding the organic certification, one of the recommendations was that the government could enact stricter regulations by bringing in more products to combat the disease pressure and enact regulations that ban the use of certain products, such as neonic insecticides. The government must also provide a pay scale for organic grapes. Concerning sustainable certification, the Ontario Government must make it mandatory for wineries to be sustainable. For example, New Zealand made it mandatory for its wineries to be certified sustainable to export their wines to other countries, particularly Europe (Dodds et al., 2013). The regulations must evolve in terms of incorporating new sustainable management practices regularly, and the transition process must be made more difficult by giving wineries five years to transition. There must also be someone to run the sustainable program, which would help ensure that the regulations evolve to include new sustainable practices and enforce punishment for those who failed to implement sustainable practices. By “levelling up” the regulations, this would ensure that both the organic and sustainable certification could improve, which would benefit wineries, governments, and society. The recommendations were not about changing regulations per se, but instead, it was about improving the regulations to benefit wineries and their operations.

The recommendations made above were based on vintners' perspectives on how the certification could be improved. Under a stakeholder capitalism model, wineries are a stakeholder in decision-making. As evident from this study, the existing standards sometimes do not benefit or target ecological winemaking, and yet these vintners must abide by the requirements. Stakeholder capitalism believes in centering the planet as a key stakeholder (Schwab & Vanham., 2021). In stakeholder capitalism, all knowledge matters, and that includes wineries. An example is when organic wineries raise copper spray as one of the few spray products available, yet it is toxic to the environment. Organic and sustainable wineries want the certifications to represent Niagara's climate instead of being modelled off other countries. Suppose certification programs follow a stakeholder capitalism model. In that case, all voices can be heard, and certification schemes will have standards that benefits governments, businesses, society, and most importantly, benefits the environment.

Conclusion and Suggestions

The purpose of this research was to explore the perspectives of Niagara's wineries on their respective certifications and how their certifications could be improved to benefit their businesses and wineries that wish to adopt ecologically sound certifications. This research proved that wineries want the regulations in their certifications to "level up" and be geared towards their business in their climate and region. The wineries also recommend that the government provide grants and have education programs available for wineries to adopt organic, biodynamic, or sustainable certifications. In stakeholder capitalism, wineries are an important stakeholder. They are part of greening the planet. Organic, biodynamic, and sustainable practices are geared towards protecting the planet, but certification programs must benefit the wineries. Future research could examine how other certification programs for other industry hinders business practices and explore whether the certification programs have given businesses as a stakeholder a voice on the development of certifications.

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