

Wine Spectator

www.winespectator.com

Washington's Sagemoor Vineyards—900 Acres of Vines—Sold to Fruit-Tree Company

Local company Allan Brothers buys grape source for 70 area wineries

MaryAnn Worobiec

Posted: April 11, 2014

Nearly 900 acres of Washington state vineyards, producing grapes purchased by more than 70 wineries, are changing hands. Allan Brothers, a family-owned fruit-tree producer based in Yakima Valley, announced they will be purchasing Columbia Valley's Sagemoor Vineyards. The sale also includes 230 acres of cherry trees and 190 acres of apple orchards. The purchase price was not disclosed.

"It's basically a large Washington vineyard, remaining in local hands, which is going to be good for small Washington wineries that buy fruit from Sagemoor," said Robert Nicholson of International Wine Associates, the mergers-and-acquisitions advisory firm that facilitated the sale. Nicholson said the reason for the sale was the "maturing of the [original] partners."

Sagemoor Vineyards was established in the late 1960s and early 1970s by a group of investors who first started planting grapes in 1972. Sagemoor encompasses four different vineyards that fall within either the Wahluke Slope or Columbia Valley appellations: Sagemoor, Weinbau, Bacchus and Dionysus, totaling 883 acres of grapes, the majority planted to Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Riesling and Chardonnay. More than 70 different producers purchase Sagemoor grapes, including Walla Walla Vintners, Tamarack Cellars, Hedges, Januik, Abeja and Arbor Crest. Some of Sagemoor's grapes are bottled as single-vineyard expressions, others are used in blends.

Sagemoor's general manager Kent Waliser, who has been with the company since 2002, calls the transition "fluid," noting that the transfer of management will not affect grape contracts or the nearly 100 employees. Allan Brothers is a multigenerational fruitgrowing, packing and shipping company. This will be their first investment in vineyards.

Wine investments in the Pacific Northwest appear to be gaining momentum, with several notable sales in both Washington and Oregon in the past 12 months.