

Angove reaps rewards of true organic growth

CAMERON ENGLAND





'It's about treating the vineyard as an ecosystem'

Angove Family Winemakers joint managing director Victoria Angove in the vines. Picture: Dean Martin

ANGOVE Family Winemakers has had a great couple of years of organic growth, literally.

The company's now longterm shift to organic winemaking techniques has delivered a sales boost of more than a third for its organic range for the most recent reporting period.

Joint managing director Victoria Angove said there were many factors to the success, including the Indian Runner ducks that kept the snail population under control and the bats that patrolled for insects at night.

But, in all seriousness, it had been a long-term strategy to go 100 per cent organic that was now paying off.

"This is our 15th year of being organic, and we are now 100 per cent certified organic," Ms Angove said.

The company, which has operations in McLaren Vale and Renmark, experienced 35 per cent growth in sales of its organic range last year, Ms Angove said.

The initial move towards organic agricultural practices came from a soil health and philosophical environmental custodianship standpoint,

Ms Angove said.

“It was never

about sales and marketing, but over time we did find a market and we built a market,” she said.

“We have seen a

real upsurge, not just in

Australia, but in some of our export markets, with people far more engaged with what they’re consuming, and also far more aware of what they want their own environmental impacts to be. We’ve spent a very long time getting to this stage and it’s really been the last five years that all of that groundwork we’ve been doing as a family business has been able to really accelerate.”

Ms Angove said the pandemic also appeared to have nudged consumers

towards brands they

trusted, which she believed had also helped Angove.

Ms Angove said the company's labelling made it abundantly clear the wine was organic, as it was a key point of difference. It was also a hardwon claim, with a rigorous third-party certification process carried out every year.

In lieu of synthetic pesticides and herbicides, the company's ducks, for example, take tonnes of snails off the vines, while also providing fertiliser.

"What we're really looking for in organic viticulture is really healthy soils delivering really flavour-packed grapes," Ms Angove said.

"It's about treating the vineyard as an ecosystem and making sure that ecosystem works at its optimal level. That's done by really looking at it as a whole."

While vines did not need bees for pollination, the company has beehives on-site to help provide a holistic ecosystem, and has also planted a corridor of native vegetation at McLaren Vale in collaboration with the state environment department. The company is currently rolling out a new brand, Naturalis, which offers whites, a rosé, a sparkling and red wines in the sub-\$20 price range.

"I think there's been a perception that organics are a lot more expensive and there are certainly instances where there's a premium for organics," Ms Angove said. "We've always tried to be really pragmatic around how we've approached pricing and for \$15 or \$20 you really are getting a terrific bottle of wine."

Ms Angove said the company's US forays were quite exciting at the moment and it was also exporting to Canada and Russia. "And the UK continues to show some good signs and we're gently optimistic about what Brexit will bring for the Australian wine industry," she said.

Ms Angove said the company had a diversified sales base and, over the past five years, the domestic market had been its strongest, so it had not been overly impacted by the China tariffs issue, although it did sell wine there.

Angove, established in 1886, employs about 140 people and turns over about \$60m per year.