

Penn State food scientists seek to improve Pa. wines

UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. - Food scientists at Penn State University have found effective ways to remove acidity from wine grapes grown under the somewhat cool conditions of the East. Research by Dr. Robert B. Beelman and associates should enable Pennsylvania wines to compete more favorably with those produced elsewhere, it was announced recently.

Most promising to date for red wines is the use of a bacterial process known as malo-lactic fermentation. This fermentation produces a natural reduction in acidity. One strain of the bacteria, named PSU-1, completes malo-lactic fermentation rapidly.

"We are developing a system for preparing freeze-dried cultures of PSU-1 for

simplified preparation of starter cultures for inoculating bacteria under small winery conditions. We feel that the quality of Pennsylvania red wines will be improved substantially by consistent stimulation of malo-lactic fermentation during winemaking, Beelman said. Inoculations with these bacteria are similar to yeast inoculations commonly used in winemaking.

The best method for reducing acidity in Pennsylvania white wines, Beelman claimed, is to use calcium carbonate in a process known as double-salt deacidification. He said the method for white wines was found to be reliable and accurate. It produced no noticeable adverse effect on the aroma or flavor of wines.

The Penn State wine researchers examined a process of winemaking used in some areas of France to reduce acidity, carbonic maceration. The process involves holding intact bunches of grapes in closed tanks under carbon dioxide prior to crushing and pressing. During the holding period, some acids in the grapes are metabolized by enzymes.

The wines made by this process are much lower in acids than wines made from the same grapes with conventional methods. However, the process is not considered worth the extra time and effort it requires in the winery.

A method used commonly in the past to reduce acidity of grapes in the eastern U. S. is called "amelioration." Legally, this means adding either water or pure sugar to

adjust the acid content or to develop alcohol during fermentation. The volume may not be increased more than 35 per cent.

"Research in our laboratory found amelioration or dilution to be inefficient," Beelman stated. "Only malic acid was reduced significantly while tartaric acid in the wine remained unaffected by amelioration up to 30 per cent. We achieved only about half the expected reduction in acidity," he added. "Aroma, bouquet, flavor, body, and varietal character are also diluted by amelioration. Thus, we do not recommend this method for Pennsylvania wines made from delicately flavored varieties like French hybrids and vinifera or European varieties now grown in the Commonwealth."

Beelman did suggest that dilution with water or pure sugar might be suitable for

wines made from grapes with strong flavors, such as Concord or Catawba.

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Farm exports reported

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Sales of cotton, corn and soybean cake and meal and exports of cotton, soybeans and corn led commodity activity for the week ending May 1, as reported last week in the U.S. Department of Agriculture weekly U.S. Export Sales Report.

Reported cotton sales dropped from the record level of the last reporting period, but still was the second largest quantity for this season.

Reported corn sales for the current marketing year were at 484,900 metric tons. Nearly 950,000 metric tons were exported.

Reported sales of soybean cake and meal, at 271,500 metric tons, were the highest level in nearly a month. Major buyers were the European Community, Mexico, and Canada.

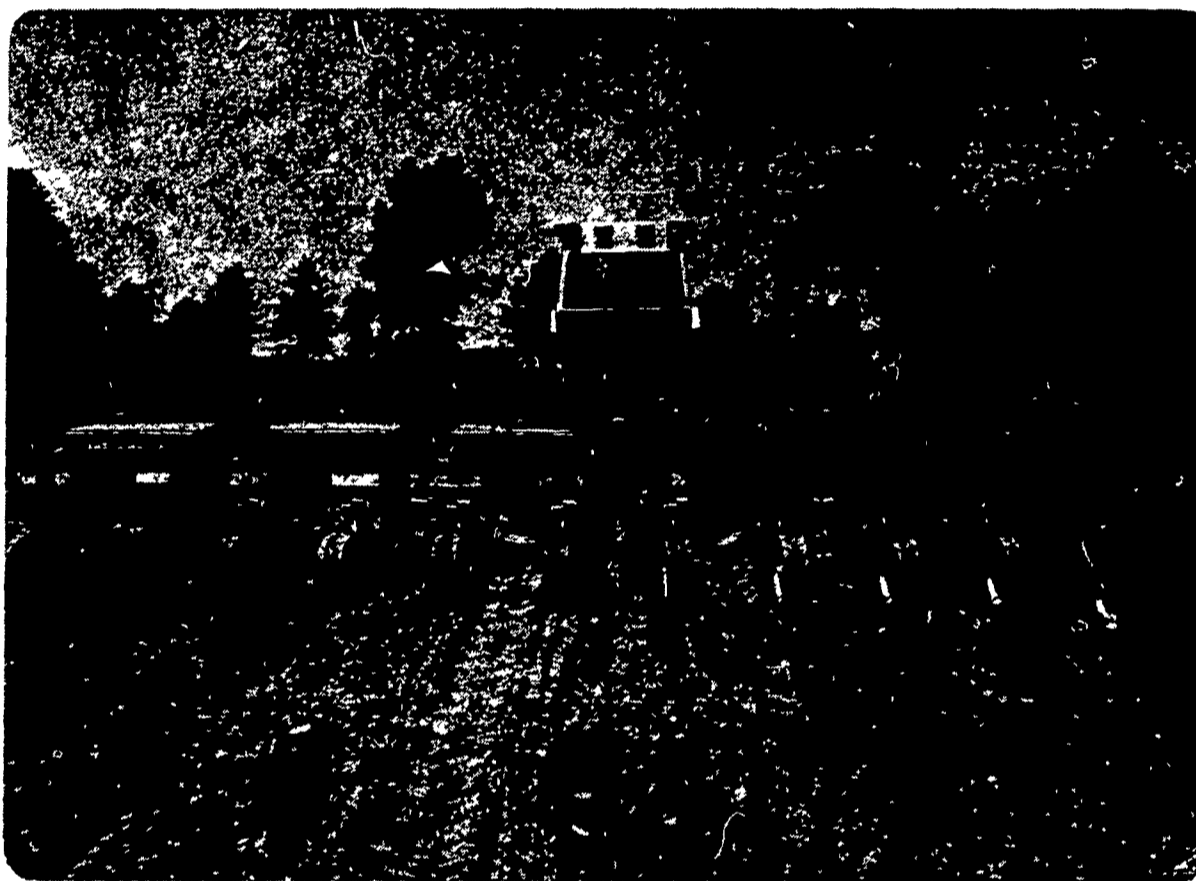
Exports of soybeans were reported at 475,100 metric tons. Major recipients were the Netherlands, Japan, Romania, and Spain.

Straus heads FNS

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Secretary of Agriculture Bob Bergland on May 6 appointed Lewis B. Straus of Somerset, N.J. administrator of the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

As FNS administrator, he will be in charge of USDA's federal - state food programs, including the food stamp, food distribution, national school lunch, school breakfast and special milk programs, as well as the special food service program

for children and the special supplemental food program for women, infants and children.



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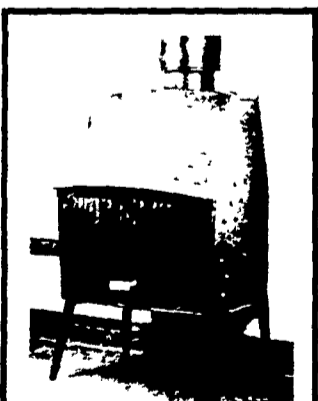
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