



August 29, 2013

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## **Agricultural Round Table** State of the Texas Wine Industry Meeting

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Texas Hill Country, Comfort, Texas- This past Monday, August 26, representatives from the Texas wine industry met with representatives from Texas Department of Agriculture, including Commissioner Todd Staples, Texas A&M, economic development corporations from surrounding counties, CVBs and other local businesses interested in the growing wine industry. This meeting, a first of it's kind, was initiated and hosted by Bending Branch Winery owners Bob Young and John Rivenburgh while lunch was provided by the Kendall County, Kerr County and Gillespie County Economic Development Corporations.

“The industry is becoming an economic engine in Texas and the economic development of this industry is a partnership with the State Department of Agriculture, local Economic development organizations and the tourism organization both State and local,” Dan Rogers, President/CEO Kendall County Economic Development Corporation.

Education was a big topic, as it is needed throughout the industry from vineyard to winery and marketing to business in order to create growth and new jobs. Both Texas Tech Texas with the Viticulture Certification Program, which recently graduated their 3<sup>rd</sup> class, and Texas A&M with research and experiential learning programs are geared towards these goals. The industry members present will focus on gathering information on what types of jobs are needed, how many and what type of programs and classes can be created by working with local community colleges.

Texas Hill Country Wineries has partnered with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Viticulture and Fruit Lab in Fredericksbrug to provide education for existing and new growers in a series of Grower Field Days coming soon. “I was excited to learn of the growers’ interest in education/training/experiential learning because as I mentioned yesterday, experiential learning is a current emphasis at Texas A&M University,” Daniel Lineberger, Professor and Head of the Department of Horticultural Sciences. THCW and the member wineries will also work with A&M on providing internships for students their program.

On the other side of the industry, marketing was discussed with Texas Department of Agriculture representatives, Rick Rhodes and David Kercheval. A relationship to share information between both groups was established and will include working on celebrating milestones that the industry reaches and starting the buzz again among both consumers and media. “Today’s meeting has created a tremendous opportunity for all of us to work together in growing all aspects of the wine industry. Through our partnerships and collaboration, the potential is certainly there for a level of synergy beyond anything we have previously experienced,” David Kercheval, Field Representative, Trade and Business Development, Texas Department of Agriculture.

The state currently has 308 wineries, employing over 10,000 Texans but we recently dropped from the 5<sup>th</sup> largest state in wine production to 6<sup>th</sup>. With the collaborative efforts of the associations and representatives in attendance, it is believed we can continue to grow and increase in production, jobs and awareness. “It was nice to see and have the experience shown in our meeting both from the wine industry, Economic Development Corporations and Texas Department of Agriculture leaderships. We are looking forward to creating and growing ongoing relationships to strengthen the growth of our industry,” John Rivenburgh, Bending Branch Winery, President Texas Hill Country Wineries.

For additional information on Texas Hill Country Wineries, please visit [www.TexasWineTrail.com](http://www.TexasWineTrail.com).

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For more information, please contact:

January Wiese, Executive Director

C 512.914.5561

[January@TexasWineTrail.com](mailto:January@TexasWineTrail.com)

[www.TexasWineTrail.com](http://www.TexasWineTrail.com)

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The Texas Hill Country Wineries not-for-profit community organization that preserves and promotes the healthy and value added lifestyle of Texas Wines. The THCW contributes to the quality of life in and around the Texas Hill Country nationally recognized wine trails and events. Representing 36 unique and independent wineries committed to promoting industry advancement and consumer awareness through event and agricultural programs. For more information visit [TexasWineTrail.com](http://TexasWineTrail.com).