

## Vine Talk: A season to test the best of us

Vineyard

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What madness this season has already brought! Record September rainfall across many regions and tornadoes ripping down power poles causing an entire State to shut down - what's next?

I recently heard that weather forecasters are unable to predict the weather more than seven days in advance with any degree of certainty. Nevertheless, Indian Ocean Dipole measurements back in June and July did predict well above average spring rainfall. Its advisable that growers take note of these predictions and be mindful of incorporating them into their planning.

August and September were particularly challenging months for broadacre farmers. They experienced a great start to the season with fantastic crop potential across all states, followed by massive rainfall that caused the demand for fungicides and insecticides to skyrocket. Disease infection limited yield in crops where it normally would not be an issue and crops required more frequent spraying. For example, legume crops that normally receive only one fungicide needed four or five to prevent ascochyta and botrytis wiping out the crop.

You may wonder why I am talking about cereal-cropping issues in a viticulture-focused article. I am attempting to promote the idea that forward planning and early communication on product demand can assist in ensuring your best chance of securing product supply. It may come as a surprise, however, the supply chain for some products can take months to secure volumes above the normal forecast levels.

Let me give you an example. In September, a grower rang me after a downy mildew event had

occurred in his area. His vines were only at four-leaf stage, but he was looking to apply RIDOMIL GOLD® PLUS to be proactive and stop any early infection. When he went on to describe his downy mildew strategy for the 2011 vintage, I wasn't surprised to learn that he harvested a relatively healthy crop compared to many neighbours in that difficult year. His secret was early planning, securing product, and applying good chemistry in a preventative manner.

Bear in mind I am writing this a few weeks ahead of publication and the sky may remain blue from now to harvest! However, what I do know is that many companies like Syngenta have sold out of some products due to the unprecedented demand from broadacre crops. If you are reading this and are still pondering the idea of securing that extra volume of product, I would suggest you speak to your reseller!

**Tags:**

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downy mildew

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