1982 Summary, Fresno County
Peter Christensen and Harry Andris, Farm Advisors

Most raisin and wine grape growers would just as soon forget 1982. It was a bit of a shock after the near ideal 1981 season. The two seasons were opposites. Nineteen eighty-one had an early, fairly light crop with good prices and a trouble-free early harvest. The cooler 1982 season was interrupted with hail in March, frost in April and the disastrous September rains. Most of the raisin crop was still in the field and over half was unprotected (not in rolls) when the tropical storm hit on September 24 and 25. Thus, a projected huge (300,000 tons or 33 larger than last year) raisin crop was nearly cut in half. Unfortunately, the field price of $1,300 per ton means nothing to the many growers whose crop was destroyed and reflects only $600 to $700 per ton on total production prior to the storm.

Many wine grape growers fared little better. The winery announcements to eliminate or limit their Thompson Seedless crush, the 25% to 50% lower than 1981 grape price offerings, large yields along with delayed maturity and the September rains left many growers with poor winery delivery options if any.

Table grape growers fared much the best with excellent quality and a fairly strong market considering a record volume of shipments. The rains cut short the late storage table grape harvest such as Emperor and will affect storageability of some lots. This was the only real bad news for table grape growers. The good news was the eradication of medfly.

New plantings mostly include French Colombard, Chenin blanc, and Thompson Seedless. There is some continued interest in Flame Seedless, Ruby Seedless, and the 5 new University of California table grape variety releases. Overall planted area was similar to 1980 and 1981 levels—7,000 to 8,000 acres. However, there was a notable shift toward more French Colombard and Chenin blanc and less
Thompson Seedless in 1982 plantings. Some planting commitments of these varieties will be completed in 1983, but planting projections thereafter are very low at this point.

Grafting red wine grapes over to whites is expected to continue through 1983 but at a slower pace than in 1981. About 250 acres were topworked in Fresno County in 1982. Our 1983 pullouts of 700 acres mostly involved red wine grapes such as Rubired, Royalty, and Carignane plus some acreages of old or marginal Thompson Seedless, Muscat of Alexandria, and table grape varieties.

The spring rains increased infections of Phomopsis in problem vineyards and mild temperatures increased mildew problems. Newly registered Bayleton was used widely and successfully for mildew problems this year.

Variegated leafhopper is becoming a fairly widely distributed vineyard pest. Late fall broods of this insect defoliated some vineyards by mid October.