Fresno County grape growers generally had a good 1970 season. Yields were fair, prices were good, and the harvest period was quite favorable.

Yields were below normal in most varieties. This was due to lower than normal cluster counts and the hot spell in June which probably limited berry development. Frost damage was localized and overall was considered light.

The greatest disappointment in yields was in varieties used for fresh shipment for home wine making -- Alicante Bouschet and Muscat of Alexandria. Muscat yields were especially low.

Harvest went well, with a reasonably good labor supply and good weather. Raisin drying conditions were excellent. However, the number of acres harvested for raisins was down due to the higher demand for Thompson Seedless by wineries. Raisin quality was good.

Table grape yields were down, especially in Emperor. Quality was generally good. Fruit color advanced well in our late season Emperor, enabling a good start on harvest. The lower supply of table grapes was reflected in good prices, and the signing of farm labor union contracts reflected the easing of union boycott activities.

Interest in planting wine grapes is tremendous and for several reasons: the prices paid for wine grapes, the availability of long-term grower-vintner contracts, the general optimism in future wine sales, the unfavorable outlook for some field crops growers especially those with incomes heavily reliant on cotton, and the already heavily planted alternative crops such as tree fruits and nuts.

The greatest interest is in planting French Columbard and Barbera. Some interest also continues in planting Chenin blanc, Ruby Cabernet, Rubired, Grenache, Thompson Seedless, and Muscat.