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Paul Dolan takes a stand. The 53-year-old president of Fetzer Vineyards leans into the misty early morning light to explore a small bundle of Merlot grapes. He picks one and tries it slowly, his head is cocked to one side. It's really ripe. You can just taste the sugar in them. It's the weather here in Mendocino. Heat during the day develops flavors and textures, and the coolness of the night means that the acids are not respire and the grapes are not mold, he says. It's also how we farm. Everything is organic. Indeed, each of the 2,000 acres is owned by Fetzer Certified Organic. Dolan has vowed to convert all of his 200 external grape growers into organic methods by 2010. And Fetzer is considered a zero waste business in the state of California. It's just how business should be done, he says. Taking a stand is something Dolan writes about with particular passion in his new book, a wonderfully readable manifesto on sustainable business. In True to Our Roots: Fermenting a Business Revolution (Bloomberg Press, 2003), Dolan encourages all businesses to commit to triple profits, a measure of corporate success that takes into account not only profits and losses, but also social and environmental impacts, and he offers Fetzer's own transformation as an example. For those who say that going organic, using alternative energy sources, providing a living wage for workers, and eliminating waste (all of which Fetzer does) are good, fuzzy goals that don't make financial sense, Dolan simply points to his own success in a tough industry. The wine business is one of the most competitive on earth: Fetzer Dukes its market overflowed with nearly 3,000 wineries in the United States alone, while fighting older, more established European labels and trying to retain upstart Australian and Chilean brands. Many U.S. wineries are still recovering from the double decline of Phylloxera and Pierce disease, which has destroyed thousands of valuable acres in California's wine country over the past decade. And the entire industry is suffering from downward pressure on prices caused by transplantation during the boom of the 1990s. Dolan hardly fits the stereotype of a boutique organic farmer running his business at a loss to pursue an expensive dream of environmental and social nirvana. No coincidence: Fetzer says it is the sixth largest premium winery in the United States; In 2002, Fetzer was the country's best-selling wine brand in the category of \$7 to \$10, with merlot number one and cabernet sauvignon, as well as number two chardonnay and riesling. Fetzer wins awards, too: He took home more medals at the 2002 California State Fair than any other factory, earned three golds and two best-in-class for award-winning varieties at the New World International Wine Competition and nine times won the Wine s Spirits Award by Winery of the Year. No, Dolan is not a woolly idealist. He is a fierce competitor who simply believes that business and social progress go hand in hand. As he writes in his book, there is no margin, no mission. Organic EpiphanyIt all started in 1986. Dolan was still the chief winemaker, and Jim Fetzer, then the general manager of the winery, decided to open an organic garden to provide a food tasting room and vineyard cafe. Theory: Great wine should be tasted with great food, and organic food has only come into fashion. But when Dolan and Fetzer were surprised by the quality of the first round of organic produce, a new gardener, Michael Maltas, defied their use of poisons everywhere on the property, asking: How can you expect me to farm this way when you guys are spraying chemicals in the vineyards? Fetzer and Dolan decided he might be on to something. Michael made us say, God, we should try this in the vineyards, Dolan recalls. In the same year, he and Fetzer began experimenting with growing a small block of grapes organically. When the first experimental grapes matured, Dolan could not believe the difference in their taste. They made the inorganic grapes seem soft. He continued to experiment with different blocks, and in 1989 he began to grow large quantities of organic grapes. The results of the experiment convinced Dolan that years of use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers deprived the soil of its riches and that the resulting dull grapes affected the quality of Fetzer's wine. In 1991, Fetzer launched a label called Bonterra (meaning good land), made from 100% organically grown grapes. It was the first mass organic wine in the United States. The philosophy extends even to packaging: To save trees, Bonterra labels are made of plant fiber, known as kenaf, and printed using soy-based ink; Plugs are not disinfected with chlorine; and the enclosures are made of recycled cardboard. A year later, Louisville, Kentucky-based Brown-Foreman acquired Fetzer (adding winery to existing brands including Jack Daniel's, Southern Comfort, and Finlandia Vodka), and named Dolan president of Fetzer. One of his first decisions was to commit to going 100% organic by 2010. All grapes on Fetzer-owned land - about 20% of the total - are already organic. Without chemicals to fertilize the grape crop and keep insects and fungi away, growers had to learn different ways to solve these same problems. They took what was then a rather unusual practice of growing covered crops, which have since become the standard Around the world. In the aisles between the vines as well as the fields, producers plant different crops to howly howly to repel errors and provide the soil with nutrients. If the disease persists, producers have other remedies such as spraying sulphur dust and copper sulfates (which are approved for organic use) on the roots of vines and spraying various oils on grapes to stay away from pests and fungi. Dolan is a fourth-generation winemaker who grew up in the culture of the wine country. Its organic transformation led him to believe that protecting the environment means more than just growing grapes without chemicals. This meant improving workers' working conditions and investing in their skills and futures. This meant reducing emissions from agricultural vehicles and figuring out how to eliminate solid waste at the winery. And that meant making enough money for Fetzer to serve as an example of the industry on how to do things differently. Fetzer employees called this vision E3, which stands for the economy, the environment and justice, or the triple bottom line. Every decision in the company is put to the E3 test: does it maintain fair and safe standards for employees? Does it protect or improve the environment? Does it make economic sense? Dirty Building and Wapper TractorsAt Fetzer, evidence of Dolan's E3 transformation is everywhere. There is, for example, a dirt building. Fetzer's offices are located in a 10,000-square-foot mossy-brown structure. It's textured like plaster, but softer, with thin fibers that you can see if you bend over and take a closer look. It is, in fact, created from pressure layers of dirt-material called PIS, or pneumatic influences of stabilized earth. The internal auxiliary beams are made from recycled wood from barns around Fetzer properties, and solar power is the main source of energy for the building. The PIS office building is a perfect example of a project that sounds idealistic and impractical. Dolan says it's anything, but. You just incorporate sustainable practices into the solutions that you will have to make anyway. We needed offices. We were going to build a building anyway. Processed wood is more expensive. Solar panels are very expensive. At one point, we looked at the \$200,000 cost overruns, he says. Solution? We have made the building smaller. And we added solar panels later when we found some more money. Fetzer also operates its entire fleet of tractors and large trucks using biodiesel, which is made from soy oils and repurposed vegetable oils collected from local fast food restaurants mixed with conventional diesel fuel. When we first started using it, the vineyard smelled like Whoppers, recalls Tom Piper, director of vineyards at the winery. It used to make us all hungry. Fetzer also broke ground with its labor policy and employee benefits. Many full-time vineyard workers have housing on the property, and the winery is now building more housing for seasonal workers. When Started asking staff to enter, we found out that our wages were very low here, says Dolan. And people needed better benefits. They especially wanted preventive vaccinations for their children. Fetzer began to cover vaccines for children and raised its salary to bring them in line with the local average. Dolan highlights English classes that Fetzer provides to employees for free. Many of our employees are from Mexico and they do not have language skills. We believe that everyone should be able to participate fully in society, he says. Dolan's director of facility management, Guy Goodacre, puts it more pragmatic. These English lessons pay off when a guy realizes his boss and doesn't pump a cabernet into a 3,000-gallon chardonnay tank. It happened to us. It was 140,000 bottles of wine that turned into pink chardonnay. To fund these environmental and social justice projects, Dolan faces an endless need to implement. Many of its initiatives began during the high growth rate of the 1990s. Its challenge is to support them at a time when the global wine industry is under enormous competitive pressure. Dolan insists that now is the time to dig in and reaffirm his position on E3 principles. This is a good time to push our organic transition with external manufacturers. With an incredible glut of grapes, producers are open to everything to make their product more attractive, he says. At the same time, Dolan worked hard to build a category for organic wines. Most stores in the United States still don't have a section for organic matter, and consumers are not familiar with them. Fetzer has developed a special organic label, Five Hills Blue, which retails for as little as \$5.99 at the Trader Joe's supermarket chain. To help build the category, Dolan says he is introducing Trader Joe's to organic wine producers in Argentina, Australia and Chile. He is also working with a second supermarket chain, Albertson's, to develop a similar branded organic wine. Dolan's methods seem to be erasing. Brown-Forman, the parent company that makes Lenox China and Hartmann luggage along with wines and spirits, launched its first-ever Conference on Sustainable Development this year. Not everything Dolan does in California translates is perfect for our other business units, but we're trying to learn as much from Fetzer as possible, said spokesman Phil Lynch. Leaders from California's wine industry, who once chastised Dolan for rocking the boat, teamed up last year under the banner of the Wine Institute (a trade group for the wine industry) to introduce the state's first sustainable wine code practice. Paul and Fetzer are pioneers, said Kari Birdsey, a spokeswoman for the institute. When they have proven that being sustainable can save money and and You are more efficient, well, that was attractive to business owners and they were willing to get on board. With his book, which hit the shelves last month, Dolan hopes that the mystique of the wine business will be enough to attract readers from other industries to listen to his message: The world is not easy to show itself in a sustainable way. You decide that this is the way a business needs to be done. It's that simple.' Alison Overholt (aoverholt@fastcompany.com) is a staff writer based in San Francisco. Francisco. veins of the earth pdf free

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