Summary:
The Australian wine industry is hardly a youngster, and yet in the last couple of decades it has rewritten the rule book about the global wine trade. In achieving this, it has introduced millions of new customers globally to the interest and fascination in wine as a beverage. Along that path, older industry players, regional innovators and more recent adventurers have contributed to the challenge of working with a wide range of environments, grape varieties and approaches to winemaking. There is no better example than WA to support an illustration of taking an old and wild type plant, the grapevine, and seeking to get it to grow and understand its performance across environments that had more of a history with general grazing agriculture. The other feature of wine, that has strongly differentiated it from much of agriculture, is that it really has only one end point, a glass in front of the consumer. This may come in a variety of labels and brands, but requires a strong team effort by a quite complex value chain to really deliver.

Biography:
Dr Jim Fortune grew up in WA and having completed an agricultural science degree at the University of Western Australia (1977), did an obligatory period of time in the “north” on the unrelated area of gas pipelines before heading to New Zealand to undertake a PhD in Agronomy at Massey University (1986).

Strong interests in plant and animal agriculture continued into the academic arena in NZ, Victoria and back in WA. A return to UWA in the late 80’s saw a six year period spent as a Lefroy Fellow and CLIMA Fellow where the general focus was how to feed sheep in Mediterranean environments. This linked nicely with understanding more about annual and perennial plants. Little did he know that the time spent working with tagasaste would actually come in handy when thinking about another woody perennial, the grapevine.

A shift to Adelaide University and farming systems eventually translated into a move into research administration via the CRC system. In 1998, that saw a move to GRDC in Canberra, followed with a return to Adelaide in 2003 as Executive Director of the Grape & Wine R&D Corporation. Of recent he has been enjoying “spreading his wings” back to broader agriculture and the wine industry as a consultant.

(jfortune@bigpond.net.au)