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POSITION PAPER

Grape and Wine Research – FY 2009

To prosper in the face of strong international competition—roughly 30% of wine consumed in the United States is imported—the American wine and grape growing industry must lead in the production of wines with superior quality, excellence and value. Such a formidable task is extremely research intensive. To remain competitive with foreign producers, to improve the environmental quality of grape growing practices, and to combat and prevent grape diseases, significant additional research investment must be made.

To successfully compete in the world market where other countries have competitive advantages, including government subsidies, lower land costs, less expensive labor and less stringent regulatory requirements, American grape and product producers need cutting edge research to produce the highest quality consumer products.

WineAmerica and WGA support increased appropriations for viticultural research.

The CSREES Viticulture Consortium

WineAmerica and WGA support funding for the very successful Viticulture Consortium which has been administered as a national competitive, peer and industry reviewed program. It is one of the finest examples of collaboration between industry, federal and state resources to provide and enhance efforts to improve a major agricultural industry's quality and cost effectiveness. Grapes are the nation's sixth largest crop overall and the largest specialty crop with a yearly farm gate value of nearly \$3.5 billion. From the Viticulture Consortium's founding in FY 1996, research conducted by partners and supported by the Viticulture Consortium has been a major factor in developing grape production in new areas across the country and in building quality and cost effectiveness in existing grape producing regions. Such advances have allowed the country's grape growers and wineries to retain and enhance their competitiveness in a very globalized marketplace.

Initiated in FY 1996, the Viticulture Consortium received a Cooperative State Research Education Extension Service (CSREES) special grant of \$1.6 million in FY 2008. **This most valuable program should be funded as a special grant in FY 2009 with funding of \$2.5 million.**

The Consortium is a unique national model because it has inspired matching funds from both industry and state sources which have increased dramatically in response to growing federal support. As an active partnership of federal, state and industry resources, the Consortium enhanced research coordination and collaboration, improved efficiency and eliminated duplication of effort. It funds grants for state researchers in about twenty states through a competitive process, including California, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Missouri, Virginia, New York, Ohio, Oregon, and Washington.

The development of the national strategic plan by National Grape and Wine Initiative targets research proposals to priority industry needs. The Viticulture Consortium collaborates with land grant Universities and also funds the extension of research results to growers, wineries and processors to stimulate innovation and accelerate the adoption of new best practices.

Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Research

ARS sponsored grape research must keep pace with the needs of a research intensive, high value crop facing global competition based on product quality. Congress has been building important grape research capabilities for grape genetics (Geneva, New York). **For FY 2009, we are requesting that Congress increase funding by \$250,000 to provide for additional ARS grape genetics research at Geneva, New York.**

ARS Center for Grape Genetics

ARS grape genetics research at Geneva, New York has expanded in the last few years and there is now a serious need to add laboratory, greenhouse and office space. **We are therefore requesting that Congress provide the necessary funds, approximately \$19 million in FY 2009, to complete construction of the ARS Center for Grape Genetics (Geneva), for which engineering and architectural funds were provided in FY 2004, \$3 million in FY 2005 and \$3.625 million in FY 2006 and \$1.883 million in FY 2008.** Total cost of construction is estimated to be a little more than \$27 million. This will represent a critical investment to enable ARS to assume a proper role of national and world leadership in grape research.

WineAmerica is the national trade association of American wine producers with more than 800 wineries in 48 states. Questions should be directed to Bill Nelson, President of WineAmerica, at (202) 783-2756 Extension 123.

Winegrape Growers of America is a federation of state winegrape grower organizations representing America's production of grapes for wine. For more information contact Fowler West at The Washington Group, (202) 789-2111.