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The National Grape and Wine Initiative (NGWI) is an industry-driven partnership with academic and government representatives, designed to focus emphasis on research and extension as a means to strengthen the competitiveness of America's grape and grape product industries.

NGWI News

NGWI's upcoming article in the *Journal of Nutrition* resulting from the December 2008 Grape Health Workshop is still on track for publication this summer. Research findings included in the article will cover research conducted in the areas of grapes and grape products on cardiovascular, cancer, cognitive function/brain health, immune function, diabetes/glycemic response, anti-microbial/anti-adhesion and bioavailability.

NGWI BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

The NGWI Board of Directors met in McMinnville, Oregon July 30 and 31. The focus of the board meeting was to review and refine research priorities of NGWI theme committees, in addition to scheduled meetings and tours showcasing Oregon's winegrape production in the Willamette Valley.

Dr. Dan Schmoltdt, National Program Leader, State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES), provided the NGWI board with an update on the status of CSREES-funded research programs. NGWI was encouraged to submit names of people to serve on panels, as according to Schmoltdt, it is hard to find qualified reviewers. Last year, a total of 231 applications were received for all SCRI grants, with roughly 15% receiving funding. By the deadline this year, 277 applications had been received.

Meanwhile NGWI Research Committee Chair, Nick Dokoozlian, has challenged each of NGWI's theme committees to draft research mission statements, charges if you will, to direct the work in specific areas over the next several years. He has called for a re-evaluation of research priorities to align with work with the industry's regional and other funding entities, but has asked that those priorities number no more than three per committee so that NGWI's work will be focused instead of a "shot gun" approach.

OREGON WINEGROWING

Mark Chien

The board was given an excellent tour showcasing Oregon's winegrowing efforts in the Willamette Valley. In 1999, there were 130 wineries in Oregon. Today, there are more than 400 wineries with more planned and acres of new vineyards being planted as the state quickly approaches 20,000 acres of vineyards.

What is impressive is just not the number of new vineyards but the remarkably consistent quality of the vineyard development and maintenance. There is a very strong culture of fine viticulture in the state which has created a peer pressure dynamic to achieve a high level of quality both in the vines and the wines. Oregon viticulture has been refined and streamlined over the past ten years and greater uniformity has developed.

More winemakers are making Syrah, typically grown in the warmer southern Oregon areas. Pinot Gris is the dominant white wine variety but Chardonnay and Riesling are also popular. All vineyards are on VSP, mostly trained to a little over 72" with the fruiting wire at 24-30". Canopies are generally thin and well-maintained. More than 75% of

Oregon's vineyards are still dry-farmed even though the summers are extremely dry. Oregon viticulture is pretty easy compared to the eastern United States. Given the dry summers, only powdery mildew is a problem and botrytis later on. Oregon does not have Japanese beetles, grape root borer, grape berry moth or many of the host of insects found in other parts of the country. There are problems with mites and rust mites which have been implicated as a possible cause of Short Shoot Syndrome. There is phylloxera in Oregon and it has changed the complexion of an industry that started out own-rooted.

While the terroir is important in Oregon, it is the talented people who make up the winegrowing and winemaking industries are really what makes the difference. There are no big secrets in Oregon. Mainly, Oregon is a good match of climate and grapes. The viticulture is straight-forward but very well-executed and the better soils and sites allow for a balanced vine of moderate size. The climate remains fairly consistent allowing many exceptional wines to be produced. The greatest challenge to the sustainability of the entire industry is economics as it is based on low-yield Pinot Noir. The current economic conditions will be the test if the Oregon wine industry will endure and remain viable.

AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS

Bill Nelson, President, WineAmerica

Congress has passed House and Senate versions for 2010 Agriculture Appropriations. This year's process was the cause of considerable angst since it had to be passed in an environment where the Administration had proposed cuts to Farm Bill approved funding for the National Clean Plant Network (NCPN), pest management and the Market Access Program (MAP). Because the Hill is now hostile to so called "earmarks," the Viticulture Consortium, Pierce's disease research and pest management, and funding for Agriculture Research Service (ARS) grape research buildings was also at risk. The good news is that full funding of Farm Bill programs was approved with the exception of the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) which received some \$1.18 billion in both versions, a 12% increase over last year but still considerably less than the \$1.7 billion promised by the Farm Bill.

Grape related research special grants within the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), the new name for CSREES, was funded although we still don't know what the ultimate levels will be as differences must be resolved in conference between the House and the Senate. Funding levels include Viticulture Consortium (\$1.454 million House and \$1.2 million Senate), Pierce's disease research (\$1.531 million House and \$2.0 million Senate), Northwest Small Fruits (\$0.307 million House and \$0.3 million Senate), Vitus Gene Discovery (Missouri, \$0.422 million but no Senate funding) and Winegrape Foundation Block (Washington, \$0.233 million House and \$0.260 million Senate).

Grape related buildings for ARS received funding only in the House: \$3.654 million in Geneva, NY and \$3.0 million in Davis, CA- not enough to begin construction, but a good step forward. ARS cooperative grants for Northwest Small Fruits research were given an additional \$0.254 million in the House and \$0.275 million in the Senate. Pierce's disease management funds were increased slightly to \$22.983 million in both the House and the Senate. MAP received its full Farm Bill allocation of \$200 million. These numbers are a major achievement in tough financial times. The separate bills one passed by the full House of Representatives and the other awaiting passage in the Senate will have to be reconciled in a final conference between the two bodies.

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