

Washington, DC - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) and Congressman Michael A. Arcuri (D-NY) today announced that they have secured the House Appropriations Committee's approval of \$3.65 million for the construction of a new state-of-the-art grape genetics research facility for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Research Service (ARS). The House members requested the fund as part of the Agriculture Appropriations bill for fiscal year 2010.

"Investing in grape genetic research today, will help scientists learn about ways in which New York farmers can grow grapes in a way that is both more profitable to them and also provides customers with better products," said Hinchey, who is a member of the House Appropriations Committee. "These funds will help improve the scope of grape genetic research in upstate New York and further enhance a critical industry in our state, which employs thousands of people."

"The work that will be done at the grape genetics lab will be critical for the agriculture community and New York State's economy as a whole," Arcuri said, "Improving the way that growers cultivate and process their grapes and studying the best ways to provide for healthy and strong grape crops will allow our growers to be the leader in the industry and will mean more jobs in Upstate New York."

The funds that Hinchey and Arcuri obtained from the committee will go toward construction of the nearly \$30 million ARS facility that will focus on research programs to make U.S. grape growers and grape products more competitive. The Center for Grape Genetic Research will replace the current outdated ARS facilities in Geneva with a state-of-the-art research building. If this funding gains final approval, Congress would have appropriated a total of nearly \$16.8 million for the center. ARS has completed planning, design, and site prep work. The agency is ready to commence construction as soon as the balance of construction funds is appropriated.

Building the Center for Grape Genetics Research will allow ARS to expand the current research program from eight positions currently devoted to grape genetics to approximately 30 positions (12 scientists, 18 technicians and other support personnel). Scientists at the Center for Grape Genetic Research focus their research on: improving the yield and quality of wine, table, and juice grapes; developing strategies to fight plant diseases and pests that afflict vineyards; helping farmers implement sound environmental practices; and promoting the long-term sustainability of the wine and grape industry in New York and throughout the country.

The \$7 billion New York wine and grape industry supports more than 900 family owned vineyards, 206 wineries, and 3,700 jobs. New York is the third largest wine producing state in the country, with the second largest wine consuming population. Three million people visit New York wineries each year, with over one-third of visitors coming from out-of-state. Research is one of the keys to continued growth of the wine and grape industry.

The Agriculture Appropriations bill for fiscal year 2010, which contains the funds for the grape genetics research building, is expected to be voted on by the full House as early as next week. While there are several legislative steps to go before the funds become official, securing the approval of the House Appropriations Committee is considered critical.