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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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\$2.7 Million for Grape Genetics Lab in Geneva Written into Ag Appropriations Bill

By Linda McCandless

GENEVA, NY: U.S. Representative Maurice Hinchey (D-22nd District-NY) has earmarked \$2.7 million in federal funds for the design and site preparation of the Grape Genetics Research Center and Laboratory at Cornell's Agriculture & Food Technology Park, in Geneva, NY.

The funding was included in the Agriculture Subcommittee's Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2004 that appropriates funds for the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and related agencies.

"This is encouraging news," said James E. Hunter, director of the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, in Geneva, which is a partner in the Ag & Food Tech Park project. "Cool climate viticulture is in a rapid expansion mode in the U.S. The grape and wine industry has a growing demand for new varieties and technologies in order to be a player in the global marketplace. This Center will help meet that demand."

If appropriated, the money would pay for design and preparation of a building that is estimated to cost \$20 million. It would be situated on the 74-acre Ag & Food Tech Park, adjacent to the Experiment Station, where start-up and established companies in the agriculture, food, biotechnology, and related industries are expected to locate.

Hunter expects a strong synergistic relationship between park tenants, the USDA's Grape Genetics Research Center, and Cornell University researchers. The USDA/ARS already has a strong presence at the Experiment Station through its Plant Genetics Resource Unit. The PGRU, as it is called, is responsible for the national program in grape rootstock breeding, as well as the collection and maintenance of the only cool climate grape germplasm collection in the U.S. The PGRU also has close ties with 10 Cornell faculty at the Experiment Station who maintain research programs in grape breeding, cultivation, crop protection, and wine making.

Funding for the bill is not guaranteed-it still needs to be voted on by the full Appropriations Committee, the full House, the Senate, and signed by President Bush.

"We appreciate the leadership that Congressman Hinchey showed in garnering unified support for the bill from the New York delegation," said assistant director Marc Smith. "We believe the Center will benefit the New York wine and grape industry from Long Island to Chautauqua."

"I am very pleased that we earmarked these funds and I will continue to work to shepherd the funding through the rest of the process," said Congressman Hinchey, who is from Kingston, NY. Hinchey, a member of the House Appropriations Committee, helps write the 13 discretionary spending bills that Congress must pass each year.

If approved, the money would be the second park appropriation-related announcement this month. Last week, Rep. Sherwood Boehlert (R-24th District -NY) announced a \$2.8 million federal Economic Development

Administration grant for infrastructure and construction of the first building at the park.

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