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Chair of Legislative Council, Vermont Grape and Wine Council

2/28/2024

To the House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry

Thank you for considering adding vine fruit to the scope of H. 813. The grape growers of the state suffered tremendous losses in the 2023 and would benefit hugely from support in recovering from this financial devastation.

Stella14 produces wines exclusively from grapes that we grow on the vineyards that we lease in Cambridge, VT. In 2023 we lost 90% of our crop to the severe frost. I've attached some pictures to demonstrate grape growing, pruning practices, and why the early budding last year (due to the heat in April) led to the much higher than normal loss to frost in May.

Many producers are opposed to buying in fruit from other states, and those that do pay a premium and shipping is extremely expensive, so profit margins are eaten up rapidly.

Insurance is not available for grapes in the state of Vermont (they are currently and un-insurable crop) and the grape varieties that we grow receive a much lower level of coverage from the Federal government due to their new presence in the market (versus Napa Valley Cabernet, for example). As a result of this loss we will go from our usual annual revenue potential of \$110,000 to \$12,000 (from 5500 bottles to 600 bottles). This will force me to take on off-farm employment and we will be closing our tasting room in Jeffersonville.

Due to the vintage specificity of fruit growing, I would also encourage the committee to consider looking at a producer's 5 years average rather than basing any sort of funding on last year alone.

Please see below for percentages of loss from other grape growers in the state and don't hesitate to reach out for any further information.

Producer	% Loss in 2023 due to frost
VT Vines	30%
Shelburne	60%
Northeastern Vine Supply	85%
Fall Mountain Vines	85%
Putluck Farm	33%
Heidi Passalacqua	41%
Montpelier Vineyards	72%
La Montañuela	90%
La garagista	50%
VT Vineyards	50%

Best regards,

David Keck, MS



