

Vermont Grape and Wine Council/Stella14 Wines presentation for the

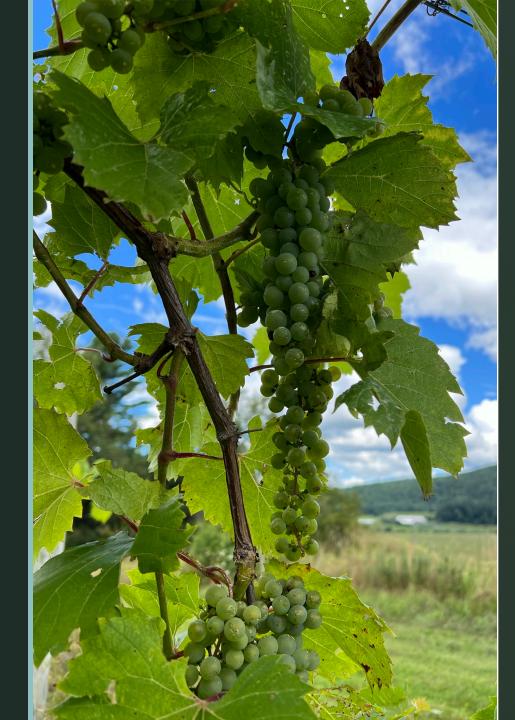
House Committee on Agriculture and Forestry

## Grape-Growing in Vermont

### Overview

- State of the grape-growing and winemaking industry in Vermont
- Tax and tourism financial opportunities
- Current acclaim and demand for Vermont wine
- What we grow and how we grow
- The benefits that wine production can provide to the state of Vermont as a value-added product
- Challenges and opportunies





# Current state of the industry

- Vermont currently has ~170 acres planted to grapes
- Around 28 wineries
- Strong focus on Organic/Regenerative/Biodynamic farming



# Quick comparison with national statistics

#### United States

- \$8.15 Billion tax dollars in State and Local taxes\*
- \$16.69 Billion in Tourist Expenditures
- All 50 States produce wine

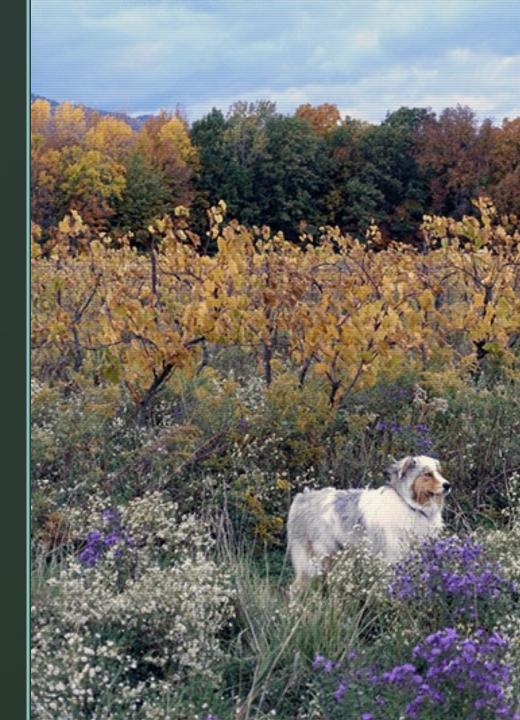
\*Consumption taxes, which account for state and local sales taxes as well as excise taxes that apply to specific retail services

#### Vermont

- \$21.3 Million in State and Local taxes
- \$837,300 in Tourist Expenditures (0.005% of national total)
- VT lower than any state in tourist \$ other than Hawaii, North Dakota, Wyoming, Montana, Mississippi, Rhode Island, and Delaware

# Press has been outstanding

- Alice Feiring: A Scene Grows in Vermont
- The Manual: Is the Future of American Wine...
  Vermont?
- Travel and Leisure: How Vermont Became New England's Natural Wine Destination
- New York Times: How the Most Delicious Wines
  Stay True To Themselves
- MANY MORE





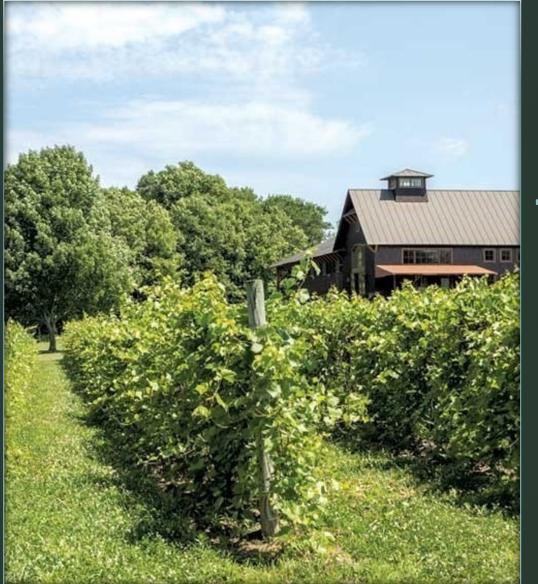
### What we grow:

- Vermont's wine industry thrives on hybrid grape varieties
- Majority developed as crossings of Vitis vinifera and numerous other Vitis species bred for their coldhardiness and resistance to disease

## Why Vermont and Why Now?

- Developments in hybrid grapes varieties
- Desire for new and exciting wines in younger generations
- Focus on sustainable and thoughtful land stewardship
- More demand than supply





## Let's look at the financials...

#### • A Ten Acre Vineyard:

- At full production can yield (on the average to low side) 2 tons of grapes per acre
- 20 tons of grapes = 3000 gallons of juice
  = 1250 cases of wine
- At \$20/btl (low for Vermont wine right now) this would be \$300,000 in revenue
- With a tasting room and wine flights, that becomes \$525,000 or \$600,000 with full glass pours

# Developments occurring right now:

- Slow vineyard expansion
- Expanded national/international presence
- Champlain Valley AVA in progress
  - American Viticultural Area



### Value-added product

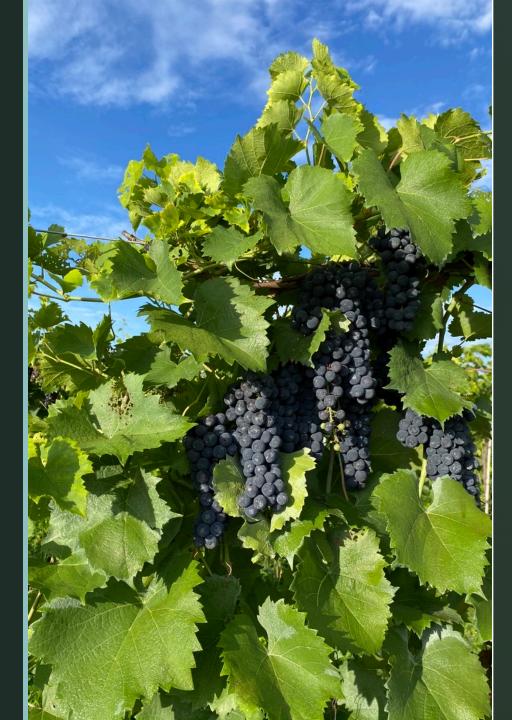
- Grape sales in Vermont are on-par with premium grapes in many other regions, including such elite regions as the Willamette Valley in Oregon and Sonoma in California
- As a value-added product, the viability increases exponentially
- Unlike so many other beverages, fully agricultural product



### Some other benefits:

- Carbon sequestering
   – studies currently show that untilled land focused on regenerative agriculture has tremendous effect on carbon sequestration
- Vines are viable (and in fact thrive) on soils that would be considered less than Prime Farmland
- Multi-use possibilities (sheep!)
- \$\$\$ for the Vermont economy from the product itself, the agro-tourism aspect, and the development of otherwise unused land
- Huge potential for job development and sector growth





### **Climate Change**

- Hybrid varieties much better adapted for a changing climate
- Currently seeing producers in much more established regions starting to experiment and take notes from the Vermont playbook– CA, France, etc.
- Vermont well positioned to be resilient and versatile as climate continues to get more changeable

### Challenges:

- Vineyard establishment is expensive re: upfront costs
- Return on investment takes 3-5 years to even begin
- Lack of infrastructure
  - Equipment
  - Co-packing/Production space
- Limited trained labor
- Unique and evolving viticultural techniques in our growing region



### Ideas for growth



- Some grant money exists, but limited and tends to be focused on other forms of agriculture
- Collaboration with existing farms?
- New Mexico 2022 Vineyard Restoration Fund an interesting model for state support– "\$1 Million today will get you \$10 Million in taxes paid out over the next 10 years"\*

### The future is bright...

- Vermont wine culture is simultaneously old (attempts at viticulture date back to Samuel de Champlain's era), and brand new (the first two commercial vineyards were planted in 1995)
- Agriculture is the backbone of Vermont's cultural landscape and viticulture has the potential to keep that tradition progressive and exciting without changing the ethos of the state
- With the focus on regenerative agriculture, organic farming, and no-till viticulture that encourages carbon sequestration, grape growing for wine production is in line with environmental and social goals for the state

