Economic Impact of Cold Hardy Grapes  
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The advancement in grape breeding has resulted in a number of high quality wine grapes that can withstand winters where vinifera grapes will die. These grapes, referred to as cold hardy, have spawned a rapidly growing wine industry in the northern United States where just 6 years ago there were fewer than half of the wineries we see operating today. Very little is known about the cold hardy grape/wine industry. Recently a study was completed at the University of Minnesota that estimated the economic impact of grape growing, winery operations and tourism related to winery visits in 12 states in the Midwestern and eastern part of the United States. In addition to economic impact basic characteristics of the industry was ascertained in order to monitor and evaluate the growth of the cold hardy grape/wine industry over time.

Results revealed that wineries are growth attractions for rural communities with an economic impact estimated at close to $200 million just for operations related to cold hardy grapes. The economic impact from tourist travel to the wineries more than equaled winery operations. Study results also revealed that wineries intend to expand operations in the near future and much of the production will be related to a just a few of the cold hardy grapes being grown.

This presentation will outline the growth in the cold hardy grape/wine industry and the background characteristics that explain the rapid increase in wineries witnessed in the last decade in the cold hardy grape states. It will also explain some of the other unique characteristics of wineries producing cold hardy grape wine.