



VIRGINIA VINEYARDS ASSOCIATION
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Mizuho Nita, PhD
Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist for Grape Disease Management
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
AHS AREC, PPWS
595 Laurel Grove Rd.
Winchester, VA 22602

Dear Mizuho,

This is a letter of support for your proposed project to 2017 Southern Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SSARE) Program, titled "Use of protective materials to reduce fungicide usages in organic wine grape production in Virginia".

This proposed project examines various materials (paper bags and umbrellas that are designed to cover grape clusters) to protect grape clusters from free moisture so that it will prevent development of major fungal pathogens of grape, such as black rot, downy mildew, and Botrytis gray mold, which are serious issues for any VA vineyard operations.

The research on organic production under Virginia environmental conditions are generally lacking and more efforts are necessary. The proposed covering of clusters may achieve drastic reduction of fungicide insecticide usages. Thus, it can improve sustainability of wine grape production by reduce cost of pesticide application and increase market profitability (economy), reduce unnecessary environmental outputs (environment), and increase social acceptability with cleaner production system. Although the proposal is targeting organic production system, my understanding is the same approach can be adapted to conventional wine grape productions.

Sincerely;

Thomas Kelly
President, Virginia Vineyards Association