



NEWS RELEASE

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SCHAFER ANNOUNCES AWARDS TOTALING \$1.3 MILLION TO SUPPORT AGRICULTURAL MARKETING PROJECTS

WASHINGTON, Aug. 1, 2008 - Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer today announced matching grants totaling over \$1.3 million to support agricultural market research in 24 states and territories.

"Farmers are the first important part in the chain of food production, and these USDA matching grants support new and practical links from farm to market," said Schafer.

USDA awarded the following grants provided under the Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program:

Alaska - \$45,750 to the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Agriculture, in cooperation with industry partners, to assess domestic and foreign markets for processed shelf-stable red meat products, and to determine the optimum organizational structure for Alaska livestock producers to market their products collectively.

Colorado - \$30,500 to the Colorado Department of Agriculture in cooperation with industry partners and the University of California-Davis, to improve the quality and consistency of draught beer nationwide by standardizing protocols to set up and maintain draught beer systems, and informing stakeholders throughout the sector of the new standards.

Delaware - \$64,170 to the University of Delaware to assess consumer willingness to pay for locally grown, organic and natural produce in a 5-state region, and to determine the impact of purchase location and state marketing programs on consumer food choices.

Florida - \$27,600 to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, in cooperation with the Gulf Coast Research and Education Center, to develop a unified production and marketing strategy to establish a new tomato variety as a viable alternative crop in Florida.

Georgia - \$68,090 to the Georgia Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the University of Georgia, Georgia Federal-State Shipping Point Inspection Service, Georgia Agricultural Commodity Commission for Peanuts, American Peanut Shellers Association, and National Peanut Buying Points Association, to conduct phase two of a project to explore changes to the current U.S. peanut grading system intended to improve quality determination, lower costs, and increase efficiency.

Guam - \$26,900 to the Guam Department of Agriculture to develop a comprehensive data collection system for agricultural production and marketing information, to improve market efficiency through a better balance of supply and demand for key agricultural products.

Hawaii - \$54,400 to the Hawaii Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the Hawaii Food Industry Association and the Hawaii Cooperative of Organic Farmers, to develop, test and implement an innovative hybrid agricultural Internet marketing system that will optimize producer expenditures on e-commerce advertising.

Kansas - \$83,150 to Kansas State University to explore issues relating to distillers grains,

including price discovery mechanisms, product quality specification profiles, market development potential, and feasibility and parameters of a distillers grains futures contract.

Kentucky - \$55,780 to the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with Kentucky State University and Western Kentucky University, to identify new niche market opportunities for sheep and goat products through direct marketing to Hispanic consumers and retailers and through alternative channels such as local butcher shops and meat processors.

Maine - \$55,805 to the Maine Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources, in cooperation with the Maine Vegetable and Small Fruit Growers Association, Heart of Maine RC&D, the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Service and other partners, to utilize word-of-mouth marketing strategies that can help farmers expand their customer base and increase sales of locally produced agricultural products.

Maryland - \$50,462 to the University of Maryland, School of Nursing, in cooperation with the Maryland Department of Agriculture, Future Harvest-CASA, Maryland Organic Food and Farming Association and the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission, to conduct phase two of a project to facilitate use of locally-produced foods in Maryland hospitals.

Massachusetts - \$37,520 to the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, in cooperation with the New Entry Sustainable Farming Project, to provide training and technical assistance to immigrant farmers to increase production capacity, improve harvest and post-harvest handling techniques, conduct effective marketing programs and develop value-added niche market products using on-farm pre-processing strategies.

Michigan - \$48,000 to the Michigan State University Department of Horticulture, in cooperation with Purdue University, Texas A&M University and the University of Minnesota, to identify, quantify and profile consumer market segments for recyclable, bio-degradable horticultural containers and to assess advantages and obstacles to nurseries of marketing biodegradable plant containers to landscape professionals, commercial plant producers and consumers.

Missouri - \$42,000 to the Missouri Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the Missouri Department of Economic Development and the Missouri Forest Products Association, to determine marketing and transportation barriers for small and medium-sized forestry product companies and assess the feasibility of establishing a regional, new-generation export co-operative to market forest products collectively in international markets.

Nebraska - \$50,000 to the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the University of Nebraska and industry partners, to conduct a pilot study to determine optimum strategies for marketing source-verified beef in high-end restaurants in major metropolitan areas.

Oregon - \$60,200 to the Oregon Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the Oregon State University Food Innovation Center, the Oregon School Nutrition Association, the Oregon Department of Education and industry partners, to conduct phase two of a project to expand opportunities for agricultural producers and processors through the development of products for Oregon school food programs.

Puerto Rico - \$34,500 to the Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the University of Puerto Rico, to train agricultural processors and packers in food safety and quality protocols and assist them to develop comprehensive food safety plans to improve their access to commercial markets.

Rhode Island - \$54,780 to the Rhode Island Division of Agriculture, in cooperation with the University of Rhode Island, the Rhode Island Farmers Market Association and the Rhode Island Department of Health WIC, to introduce Rhode Island farmers to GAP certification through training and on-site visits and to survey consumers on their attitudes and expectations about food safety and their willingness to pay for GAP-certified farm products.

South Carolina - \$109,200 to the South Carolina Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with Clemson University, the University of Illinois Extension Service and the MarketMaker Consortium Evaluation Committee, to develop a comprehensive data collection framework and a set of evaluation protocols to support continuous improvement of MarketMaker, a comprehensive multi-state, interactive web-based database of geo-coded food marketing information.

Utah - \$44,985 to the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food, in cooperation with the University of Utah, to conduct exploratory research to document and assess the market for sheep meat in the western United States.

Vermont - \$55,000 to the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets, in cooperation with numerous state and regional producer, tourism and restaurant sector partners, to increase economic opportunities for small farms and other rural populations through the development of an integrated culinary tourism program.

Virgin Islands - \$45,845 to the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Tourism, the University of Virgin Islands Extension Service and the University of Arkansas Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness, to assist producers develop a niche market for high quality, island-grown herbs.

Washington - \$55,740 to the Washington State Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the Washington Asparagus Commission and the Michigan Asparagus Advisory Board, to educate asparagus growers and handlers about food safety issues and certification, create a comprehensive food safety manual for growers and handlers, provide assistance to growers in preparing for food safety certification and create a food safety crisis management plan.

Washington - \$51,445 to the Washington Dry Pea and Lentil Commission to conduct phase two of a project to inform food product research and development professionals about the technical aspects and uses of various forms of dry peas, lentils and chickpeas in processed products to enhance the nutritional value of existing products and create new products using these ingredients.

Wyoming - \$72,840 to the Wyoming Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the Wyoming Rural Development Council, the Wyoming Technology Business Center and a project advisory group, to determine ways to better utilize existing state and county food preparation facilities to provide opportunities for the development of value-added food products by rural producers and processors.

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