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NDA AWARDED FEDERAL SPECIALTY CROP GRANT FUNDS FOR 17 PROJECTS

LINCOLN – Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) Director Greg Ibach today announced that 17 Nebraska grant projects have been funded to enhance the competitiveness of and strengthen markets for the state’s specialty crop sector.

According to Ibach, the 17 projects will share \$599,691 awarded to NDA from the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Specialty Crop Block Grant program, which was authorized in the 2014 Farm Bill.

“We are pleased to coordinate this program on behalf of specialty crop growers in the state,” said Ibach. “The diversity of Nebraska agriculture is reflected in these grant awards. We welcome the opportunity to help support research, education and market development projects to make these crops more competitive.”

NDA was awarded the grant monies after submitting a state plan to USDA. The 17 projects included in the plan were selected by NDA through a competitive process. Specialty crops, according to program rules, include crops such as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, horticulture and nursery crops.

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Examples of some of the funded projects include:

- Potatoes: The establishment of a potato pest management program to control the Potato Psyllid and the diseases the pest causes. A project to establish a potato aphid monitoring network. Surveys to detect and monitor the Potato Cyst Nematode as well as Columbia Root Knot Nematode.
- A project to increase the consumption of dry edible beans.
- Disease research for the production of dry yellow peas.
- Research to determine production parameters for fenugreek.
- Fruits and vegetables: a project to increase access to locally grown fruits and vegetables in food desert areas. Work to increase the supply and demand at a local farmers' market. A project using forced air geothermal greenhouse technology to increase production of specialty crops.
- Education and marketing project to enhance producer knowledge of growing hops in Nebraska.

A complete listing of grants that were funded can be found on the USDA website at <http://tinyurl.com/nxfrwr8> under awards granted.

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