

NEBRASKA

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Pete Ricketts, Governor

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NEBRASKA SPECIALTY CROP PROGRAM, PROJECTS RECEIVE FUNDING FROM USDA GRANT PROGRAM

LINCOLN – From growing chickpeas in western Nebraska to reducing pesticide use in apple orchards in Nebraska City, 12 specialty crop projects across the state will receive nearly \$600,000 in funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP). Administered by the Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) using funding from the grant, the program supports research, development and marketing of specialty crops.

“Nebraska’s Specialty Crop Block Grant Program offers resources to those interested in enhancing and diversifying the state’s agricultural industry through specialty crops,” said NDA Director Greg Ibach. “This year’s projects contribute to Nebraska’s overall agricultural economy by maximizing the value of specialty crops and by keeping production and research in the state.”

Specialty crops are generally defined as fruits, vegetables, nuts, honey and some turf and ornamental crops. A full list of specialty crops is also available on the USDA’s website at www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/specialty-crop.

A brief description of the specialty crop projects being funded in Nebraska and the grant recipients follows:

- Develop biodegradable mulch film and evaluate its effectiveness on specialty crops such as tomatoes and peppers—University of Nebraska, Lincoln
- Incorporate more locally-grown specialty crops into the School Meals Program by developing a user-friendly toolkit for food service staff—Nebraska Department of Education
- Conduct a needs assessment and strategic plan with grape growers, winemakers and winery owners across Nebraska to improve the economic vitality of vineyards and wineries in order to continue producing high quality grapes and wines while promoting stewardship—Nebraska Winery and Grape Growers Association
- Improve the quality, safety and nutritional value of Nebraska-grown aronia berry products by using high pressure processing technology—University of Nebraska, Lincoln

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- Manufacture high-quality protein isolates from three types of dry edible beans and identify potential uses for those protein isolates in additional foods—University of Nebraska, Lincoln
- Investigate the feasibility of using ozone technology to eliminate or reduce pesticide use for disease control in apple orchards which in turn improves food safety—Arbor Day Foundation (dba Arbor Day Farm)
- Expand the use of drones to the specialty crop industry of viticulture to monitor possible herbicide drift and provide valuable information to grape growers and the wine industry—Nebraska Winery and Grape Growers Association
- Evaluate whether or not chickpeas can be grown successfully in the drylands of western Nebraska—University of Nebraska, Lincoln
- Compare the ability of dry beans and field peas to suppress herbicide-resistant pigweed—University of Nebraska, Lincoln
- Reduce inputs and increase yields of broccoli and peppers by determining optimum application rates of seed meals for integrated management of weeds and nitrogen fertility across four locations in eastern Nebraska.—University of Nebraska, Lincoln
- Increase tomato yield and quality while reducing irrigation and synthetic nitrogen fertilizer use through the adoption of water and nutrient use, efficient hybrid tomato rootstocks and carbon-based fertilizer amendments—University of Nebraska, Lincoln
- NDA will receive SCBG funding to host additional cooking demonstrations at the Nebraska State Fair to show consumers how easy it is to cook with and eat more locally-grown produce.

NDA administered a two-phase competitive grant application process for SCBGP funds. Phase I involved the submission of concept proposals, which allowed applicants to explain the main points of their project. The concept proposals were independently and competitively scored by a field review panel. Projects with the highest combined scores were asked to complete Phase II of the application process.

Projects funded by the SCBGP must be completed by Sept. 29, 2020. For more information about this year's grants, go to USDA's website at www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/awards and click on "FY2017 pdf."

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