



Washington State Department of Agriculture

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\$4.2 million in federal grants to benefit Washington's specialty crops

OLYMPIA – The [Washington State Department of Agriculture](#) (WSDA) was notified today that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has approved the state's application for \$4.2 million in grant funding for projects that will support the state's fruit, vegetable and horticulture growers.

In all, the [2014 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant](#) will fund 27 projects managed by WSDA in partnership with other organizations. Washington is the third largest producer of specialty crops in the U.S. behind California and Florida. Specialty crops are defined as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops, including floriculture.

This year, hops and wine grapes, tree fruit and berries, even cut flowers, are among the farm sectors benefitting from the grants. The awards for individual projects range from \$20,000 to \$250,000 and will go to commodity commissions, agricultural associations, and non-profit organizations. Washington State University is receiving 12 of the project grants.

This year's projects include those that address barriers to export Washington's specialty crops, expand institutional markets for specialty crops, resolve critical pest and disease issues, and research to improve honey bee pollination. Several contracts address resource issues including irrigation water. Visit www.agr.wa.gov/Grants/SCBGP to see a list of projects.

The USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program was created to support the competitiveness of the specialty crop industry. Visit www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp for more information from the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service.

In awarding these funds, WSDA selected projects that directly benefit specialty crop producers within the next five years. They address critical issues identified by industry and contain strong performance measures.

Each year, WSDA conducts a competitive solicitation process to award the funding. For this round, 97 concept proposals were whittled down to 53 full proposals, based on recommendations from a 15-member review panel. WSDA Director Bud Hover invited those 53 applicants to submit full proposals with funding narrowed down to \$7.5 million.

WSDA has received more than \$19 million since 2008 for projects supported by the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. The program is authorized under the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Farm Bill).

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