

West Virginia Department of Agriculture

Walt Helmick, Commissioner



304-558-3708

www.agriculture.wv.gov



Facebook: West Virginia Department of Agriculture



Twitter: @WVDeptofAg

NEWS RELEASE
October 28, 2015

Contact: Buddy Davidson
Communications Officer
304/ 558 N 3708; 304/541-5932 (cell)
bdavidson@wvda.us

SCHOOLS, LOCAL PRODUCE AMONG AG GRANTS RECIPIENTS

Charleston, W.Va. – The West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) has announced that 11 research projects will share in nearly \$240,000 in grants to help develop production and increase demand for specialty crops. The grants are funded by the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and are administered by the WVDA.

“In the long term, these grants will benefit West Virginia’s farmers and consumers when we as a state produce more of what we eat and stop sending the dollars we spend on food elsewhere,” said Commissioner of Agriculture Walt Helmick. “We consume in excess of \$7 billion and produce less than \$1 billion. There’s a huge financial opportunity for West Virginia.”

The projects are:

The Golden Delicious Apple Project

Recipient: Central Appalachian Empowerment Zone (\$6,999); Clay County (and portions of Braxton, Fayette, Nicholas & Roane)

The goal of this project is to reintroduce the Golden Delicious Apple Tree to Clay County using reclaimed mine land donated by Natural Resources Partners. The project will create employment opportunities by reestablishing the world’s most popular apple to the county where it was first discovered.

Creepy Vegetables: Specialty Crop Varietal Trials with Youth Producers

Recipient: West Virginia State University Research & Development Corporation (\$25,000); Kanawha County

This project is designed to increase production, knowledge and consumption of 10 specialty crops by youth at 10 locations in three counties in West Virginia. The goal of this project will not only be to implant knowledge in the state’s youth, but it will also aid in combating the growing obesity epidemic in the state.

Linwood Alive: Specialty Crop High Tunnel Construction

Recipient: Linwood Alive (\$15,107); Pocahontas County

This project will enable the citizens of Pocahontas County, a rural area with minimal food resources, to establish an educational yet functional sustainable garden program for the community. The goal of this project is to increase access to specialty crop food growth; educate people on the benefits of high tunnel construction, food safety and nutrition; and provide a focus on health and wellness in the community.

-more-

Exploring the Potential for Flash Freezing Locally Grown Specialty Crops

Recipient: New Appalachian Farm and Research Center (NAFRC) (\$23,500); Upshur County

This project will explore preserving products at the peak of freshness, providing local food hubs and markets fresh products year-round, which is a necessity for them to be financially sustainable. The research collected during this project will determine price points for flash frozen products for future reference.

The Richwood Pantry Farmers Market

Recipient: The Richwood Pantry Farmers Market (\$22,500); Nicholas County

Due to the recent closure of the only local grocery store, residents in eastern Nicholas County are forced to drive between 26 and 52 miles round-trip for fresh produce. The goal of this project is to establish both a food hub and cooperative farmers market in the area, open four months each year, to help better provide more than 1,100 local families access to fresh produce.

Rock Branch Elementary Leadership Garden, Building a Better Tomorrow

Recipient: Putnam County School-Rock Branch Elementary (\$12,000); Putnam County

The goal of this project is to get the youth of Rock Branch Elementary interested in agriculture and teach them how to grow their own food. The grant will be used to purchase a high tunnel for the school, where each grade level will enjoy age-appropriate experimental hands-on teaching. The harvest from the greenhouse will supply the school cafeteria with healthy, nutritious food with any surplus being donated to the local food bank.

Enhancing the Learning Farm Incubator, Huntington, WV

Recipient: Unlimited Future, Inc. (\$14,418); Cabell County

The goal of this project is to enhance the extended-season production of beginning farmers and increase the number of specialty crop growers engaged in year-round or extended-season production. The Learning Farm Incubators will function as a social enterprise, generating revenue for program sustainability. The long-term goal of the Learning Farm Incubator network is to establish a sustainable training and development program to increase the successes of beginning farmers in the Tri-State region. (WV, KY and OH).

Beginning with the End in Mind

Recipient: West Virginia University Research Corporation (\$10,000); Statewide

This project aims to grow 40 profitable specialty and value-added producers in West Virginia. The goals of this project are to increase the capacity of beginning and mid-level specialty crop and value-added producers, to improve the ability of these producers to manage a range of risks associated with operations, to increase the expertise of agricultural service providers, and to make available online decision support tools that can be utilized by all aspiring and beginning producers.

Producer and Professional Education Developing Specialty Crops

Recipient: West Virginia Department of Agriculture (\$75,000); Statewide

This project addresses food safety laws set to be implemented at the end of 2016 by building a collaborative food safety team to deliver consistent and current food safety messages and to provide resources for grading and processing. This project will allow specialty crop producers to fulfill regulatory requirements, making them more competitive in the marketplace.

Mid-Atlantic Maple Camp

Recipient: West Virginia Department of Agriculture (\$15,000); Statewide

The purpose of this project is to establish a comprehensive maple camp to provide producers access to current information, best practices and increased income opportunities associated with the production and distribution of three syrup products. The curriculum will provide valuable information to participants at all levels of production about opportunities to explore, participate and adopt established and alternative practices.

Specialty Crop Impact: Commodity Events & Agritourism

Recipient: West Virginia Department of Agriculture (\$19,852); Statewide

This project will examine the role of two specialty crops, strawberries and peaches, in relation to how they impact agritourism and production through local fairs and festivals. The goal of this project is to provide insight into the role of specialty crops as well as to assess the best practices to maximize the economic impact attributed to promotion of these local events.