



**NEWS RELEASE**  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Applications now available for Specialty Crop Block Grants**

**INDIANAPOLIS (March 23, 2017)** — The [Indiana State Department of Agriculture](#) (ISDA) is now accepting applications for the [Specialty Crop Block Grant Program](#), funded by [USDA](#). These grants are available to nonprofits, producers (must impact multiple producers), academic institutions, government agencies and others to fund projects that will enhance the competitiveness of Indiana's specialty crops.

"While many farmers continue to plant traditional row crops, more and more are considering diversification in their operations to increase profitability," said Ted McKinney, ISDA Director. "These funds will create additional growth opportunities for them while strengthening specialty crop production in the state."

According to USDA, specialty crops are fruits and vegetables, dried fruit, tree nuts, horticulture and nursery crops (including floriculture). Eligible plants must be intensively cultivated and used by people for food, medicinal purposes and/or aesthetic gratification. A list of specialty crops is available, along with a companion list of ineligible commodities, on [USDA's website](#).

Applicants are encouraged to develop projects pertaining to the following areas:

- investing in specialty crop research, including research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes;
- developing new and improved seed varieties and specialty crops;
- pest and disease control;
- increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops;
- improving efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems;
- improving the capacity of all entities in the specialty crop distribution chain to comply with the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act, for example, by developing "Good Agricultural Practices," "Good Handling Practices," "Good Manufacturing Practices," and in cost-share arrangements for funding audits of such systems for small farmers, packers and processors;
- enhancing food safety and;
- sustainability.

Grant proposals are due May 10, 2017 by 5:00 p.m. (EST). For more information about the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, please visit [www.in.gov/isda/2474.htm](http://www.in.gov/isda/2474.htm) or contact Hannah Ferguson at [hferguson@isda.in.gov](mailto:hferguson@isda.in.gov) or 317.234.7707.

### **ABOUT ISDA**

The [Indiana State Department of Agriculture](#) (ISDA) was established as a separate state agency by the Legislature in 2005. The Director is appointed by the Governor and is a member of the Governor's Cabinet. Administratively, ISDA reports to [Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch](#), who also serves as Indiana's Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development. Major responsibilities include advocacy for

*Indiana agriculture at the local, state and federal level, managing soil conservation programs, promoting economic development and agricultural innovation, serving as a regulatory ombudsman for agricultural businesses, and licensing grain firms throughout the state.*

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