



NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Grants support Indiana agriculture, specialty crop production

INDIANAPOLIS (Jan. 25, 2017) – The [Indiana State Department of Agriculture](#) (ISDA) awarded \$376,500 to six agricultural organizations for projects that will support specialty crop production in the state. These grants were established through the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service's [Specialty Crop Block Grant Program](#) and designed to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops, paving the way for further growth in the field.

"Specialty crop production is an important part of Indiana's diverse agricultural industry," said Ted McKinney, ISDA Director. "As a critical source of revenue for many Hoosier farmers, we must continue to find new, innovative ways to increase profitability and sustainability of specialty crop production while making advancements in food safety. These projects will help us achieve those goals."

According to USDA, specialty crops include fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture and nursery crops, and floriculture. Along with enhancing the markets for specialty crops, these projects also work to address some of the chief issues impacting the industry, such as increasing nutritional knowledge and consumption of specialty crops, developing new and improved seed varieties, and investing in specialty crop research, to name a few.

The following list includes the organizations and programs that received funding through the Specialty Crop Block Grant program:

Organization: Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service

Program: Cantaloupe Safe Practices Education

Award amount: \$104,500

Purdue University will determine best practices for Indiana cantaloupe production with a focus on food safety.

Organization: Purdue Extension, Hancock County

Program: FoodLink 2.0

Award amount: \$58,000

FoodLink 2.0 aims to provide a greater diversity of food choices while educating consumers about Indiana's specialty crops.

Organization: South Central Community Action Program, Inc.

Program: Growing Opportunities

Award amount: \$58,000

The project aims to expand the impact of the Growing Opportunities greenhouse job training program to more people in Monroe County through building on the relationships it has started with its partner organizations. The project is also aimed at promoting healthy families and children through expanded consumption of specialty crops by people in poverty, along with reducing hunger.

Organization: Schooner Hill Start-A-Hive

Program: Schooner Hill Start-A-Hive

Award amount: \$35,000

Schooner Hill Bee Hive Farm will partner with Brown County 4-H Extension to promote the competitiveness of specialty crops through apiculture education, training and use implementation for residential and small farm applications.

Organization: Purdue Extension, Marion County

Program: Urban Farm Incubator

Award amount: \$57,900

Urban Farm Incubator aims to increase opportunities for new and beginning farmers, develop local and regional food systems, support the growth of organic specialty crops and improve food access in underserved communities.

Organization: Indiana State Department of Agriculture

Program: Indiana Grown Initiative

Award amount: \$63,100

Indiana Grown will work to educate Hoosier consumers about the importance of buying specialty crops grown in Indiana, while supporting growers statewide.

For more information about the Specialty Crop Block Grant program, contact Hannah Ferguson at hferguson@isda.in.gov or visit www.isda.in.gov.

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ABOUT ISDA

The [Indiana State Department of Agriculture \(ISDA\)](http://www.isda.in.gov) 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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