



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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Federal grants will help promote Washington farm products, improve farm practices

OLYMPIA – Five Washington organizations will receive federal assistance as they work to expand economic opportunities for farmers and develop more efficient farming practices.

U.S. Department of Agriculture Specialty Crop Block Grants are designed to promote the profitability and improve the production of fruits, vegetables and nursery crops. Washington is the third leading producer of specialty crops in the country.

“Washington growers produce the finest foods found anywhere in the world,” said Valoria Loveland, director of the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA). “Although these grants are not huge, they will provide seed money to develop tools and business relationships that will pay dividends down the road. When Congress adopts the new Farm Bill, we anticipate that the level of specialty crop grant awards could increase substantially in future years.”

The successful grants applicants announced today are sharing \$164,000 in funding. Each project must be funded in part by the applicant and be aimed at specific projects with achievable results. This year’s grants were awarded to:

- Washington Apple Commission (\$26,500) to provide training to six supermarket chains in produce department layout and produce handling in China. The project will design a model produce section and conduct promotions of Washington produce. Washington produces 90 percent of the country’s exported apples.
- Hop Growers of America (\$40,000) to help fund industry's participation in the Brau Trade Fair in Nuremburg, Germany. Washington is the leading producer of hops in the U.S., and the grant will help local growers increase sales to European brewers.
- Organic Seed Alliance (\$33,000) to develop a national market for specialty grown organic vegetable seed and launch the Growers Organic Seed Cooperative. The new producer-owned cooperative will enhance the quality of seed, increase organic seed farm income and help organic producers across the country comply with National Organic Program requirements for use of certified organic seed.
- Northwest Agriculture Business Center (\$35,433) to conduct test marketing of a sparkling apple-berry juice and a packaged loose-leaf tea from Washington. The two beverages will be developed by Skagit Valley Apple Growers Association and Sakuma Brothers.

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- Washington State Potato Commission (\$29,255) to create a training program for safe, effective operation of chemigation systems in potato fields. The new training program is aimed at increasing product efficacy and reducing the risk of off-site applications and human exposure.

After reviewing this year's grant applications and receiving input from an industry advisory panel, WSDA selected the most promising projects for inclusion in a single Washington State grant application. USDA gave final approval of the state's application this week.

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