



Grants Available to Enhance Wisconsin's Specialty Crops

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Contact: Ashley Huibregtse, 608-224-5002
Jim Dick, Communications Director, 608-224-5020

MADISON – The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) is now accepting applications for 2012 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program funds. Non-profit organizations, producer organizations, government agencies, universities and other agricultural groups are encouraged to apply.

“DATCP is seeking applicants that will enhance the competitiveness of Wisconsin’s specialty crop industries in domestic and foreign markets,” said Juli Speck, a DATCP Grants Specialist. “Specialty Crop Block Grant Program funds are to be used to benefit the specialty crop industry as a whole and not provide direct profit to a specific organization, institution or individual.”

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Farm Bill) authorized the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide grants to states for fiscal years 2008 through 2012. Specialty crops are defined in law as: fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture. A more comprehensive list of eligible specialty crops is available at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp>.

Priorities for 2012 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program funding include:

- Specialty crop research especially environmental sustainability, pest and disease control, and varietal improvement.
- Assistance in developing “Good Agricultural Practices,” “Good Handling Practices” and “Good Manufacturing Practices” for an industry.
- Increasing the demand for and supply of locally-produced foods in Wisconsin.
- Industry innovation in production, processing and packaging.
- Education to increase the consumption of Wisconsin specialty crops.

“The larger the impact of the project, the more likely it will be funded through the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program,” concluded Speck. “Applicants may submit more than one project application, and applications that build on a previously funded project are also welcome.”

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program funds will be distributed through a competitive review process. Selected applications will be included into one Wisconsin state plan and submitted to the USDA for final approval. In anticipation of receiving funds, projects would be approved and could start in fall 2012.

Visit http://datcp.wi.gov/Business/Grants_and_Financial_Aid/Specialty_Crops_Grants/ for eligibility requirements and application materials. Applications are due to DATCP by 4:30 p.m. on April 2, 2012. Optional grant writing workshops for potential applicants are planned for February and March 2012.

For more information, contact Speck at juli.speck@wisconsin.gov or 608-224-5134. You can also connect with DATCP on Twitter at twitter.com/widatcp or Facebook at facebook.com/widatcp.

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