



ASA HUTCHINSON
GOVERNOR

ARKANSAS AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT

ARKANSAS FORESTRY COMMISSION
ARKANSAS LIVESTOCK & POULTRY COMMISSION
ARKANSAS STATE PLANT BOARD

1 NATURAL RESOURCES DRIVE, LITTLE ROCK, AR 72205 | (501) 225-1598 | AAD.ARKANSAS.GOV



WES WARD
SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 12/7/2017

Contact: Adriane Barnes, (501) 516-6255, adriane.barnes@arkansas.gov

Twelve Days of Arkansas Agriculture: Arkansas Specialty Crop Producers Reach International Audience

LITTLE ROCK, AR – Arkansas specialty crop producers reached an international audience as exhibitors in the Arkansas Agriculture Department’s (AAD) booth at the Produce Marketing Association’s 2017 Fresh Summit specialty crop event in New Orleans. This year marked the seventh year for the AAD to sponsor Arkansas specialty crop producers at the annual trade show that brings together more than 20,000 producers, retailers, wholesalers, processors, and other industry partners from across the globe. Arkansas specialty crops featured at the 2017 Fresh Summit included sweet potatoes, tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, watermelons, peppers, zucchini, and Muscadine wines and juices.

Arkansas consistently ranks in the top 25 states in the nation in the production of 21 agricultural commodities, which include the following specialty crops: sweet potatoes, pecans, blueberries, grapes, watermelons, tomatoes, and peaches. Additionally, Arkansas ranks among the top 25 states in acres harvested for specialty crops including blackberries and dewberries, peas, okra, mustard greens, snap beans, and turnips. The Arkansas specialty crop industry adds \$1.4 billion to the state’s economy annually and provides 27,135 jobs with a labor income of \$905 million.

James Meeks, owner of Triple M Farms of Ashley County said “The Fresh Summit event gives you a chance to see new technology and labor saving devices and machines. The latest in packaging is also on display which helps to stay up to date on what is happening in the produce world.”

The AAD works to actively market all of Arkansas’s agriculture products through events like the Fresh Summit, as well as the [Arkansas Grown](#) and [Arkansas Made](#) branded programs. “This event allows us to showcase Arkansas’s farmers and help them gain access to new markets. It’s another way we try to help our growers remain profitable and competitive in an international marketplace. Anything we can do to give our farmers and producers more exposure is a win for Arkansas agriculture,” says AAD Marketing Director Christian Olson.

Overall, the AAD covers 90% of event participation costs through Specialty Crop Block Grant funds. Producers are responsible for covering the cost of travel, meals and lodging. Specialty crop producers interested in participating at the 2018 Fresh Summit to be held October 18-20 in Orlando, Florida should contact Christian Olson at Christian.Olson@aad.ar.gov, or complete an online application available at the AAD Grants page, [here](#).

This release is the fourth edition to the Twelve Days of Arkansas Agriculture campaign, which highlights some of the programs and services provided by the AAD that support our state’s agriculture industry. Follow each of the 12 stories by searching the #12DaysofARagriculture hashtag, or visit aad.arkansas.gov. The AAD is dedicated to the development and implementation of policies and programs for Arkansas agriculture and forestry to keep its farmers and ranchers competitive in national and international markets while ensuring safe food, fiber, and forest products for the citizens of the state and nation.

###

The Arkansas Agriculture Department offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability and is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

