



ARKANSAS AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT

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

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SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

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Arkansas to Receive \$302,776.57 through USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

Little Rock, Ark. – Arkansas will receive \$302,776 from the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Specialty Crop Block Grant Program to fund eight specialty crop projects this year. A list of the eight Arkansas grant recipient organizations and project descriptions can be found [at this link](#). Nationwide, 56 projects were funded for a total of \$62.5 million and can be found [at this link](#).

The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program is administered by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) and state departments of agriculture. The goal of the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program is to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops and provide resources to strengthen American agriculture. Specialty crops are defined by the United States Department of Agriculture as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture). The Arkansas specialty crop industry allows for 27, 135 jobs and contributes \$1.4 billion in value added to the agriculture industry, which is the top industry in the state.

"The Arkansas Agriculture Department is pleased to help administer the Specialty Crop Block Grant funds that provide assistance to this important sector of Arkansas's agriculture industry. These funds will help Arkansas organizations provide needed outreach and promotional efforts for Arkansas specialty crops, fund specialty crop research initiatives, and help create value-added products from surplus specialty crops. We look forward to working with the recipients on these exciting projects that provide economic benefit to producers and our rural communities," says Arkansas Agriculture Secretary Wes Ward.

The University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service will use 2017 Specialty Crop Block Grant funding for research on the use of cover crops for summer vegetable production and to build collaboration about Arkansas blackberry growers. "We are grateful for the funding and look forward to working with farmers across the state on these projects," says Dr. Amanda McWhirt of the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service.

Arkansans interested in applying for Specialty Crop Block Grants Program funding must apply through the Arkansas Agriculture Department (AAD). Applications for the 2018 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program will be accepted by the AAD early next year. Contact Christian Olson at christian.olson@aad.ar.gov for details.

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. Learn more: www.aad.arkansas.gov.

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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.

