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Arkansas Department of Agriculture Accepting Applications for Farm to School Program Grants

LITTLE ROCK, AR – The Arkansas Department of Agriculture is accepting applications for the second-annual Arkansas School Garden Grant Program and the new Taste Test Grant Program to help schools start or expand farm to school activities. Applications will be accepted through November 30, 2021.

The Arkansas School Garden Grant Program is available to help schools start or expand gardens on school grounds. The Department will award \$500 grants to 60 schools to purchase soil, specialty crop seeds and plants, and gardening equipment.

Additionally, the Department is launching the new Arkansas Taste Test Grant Program to help schools lead cafeteria taste tests of locally grown specialty crops. The Department will award \$250 grants to 30 schools to purchase kitchen equipment and utensils, serving materials, and specialty crop seeds and plants.

“School gardens and taste tests have proven to be valuable tools in teaching children about agriculture, nutrition, and a variety of skills. The Department is pleased to add the new taste test grant program this year as another way to help schools start or expand farm to school activities. The lessons learned through these programs can have a lasting impact on children, their families, and entire communities,” said Secretary of Agriculture Wes Ward.

The grant programs are available to public and private K-12 schools, early childhood education facilities, and alternative learning environments. All eligible schools are encouraged to apply, whether they already have existing farm to school activities or they are just getting started with school gardens and local procurement. Technical assistance is available to all grantees.

The application for both programs can be found at <https://bit.ly/3bkrYSd>. Applicants are welcome to apply for one or both grant opportunities.

The grant programs were developed using funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Specialty Crop Block Grant Program to increase the production and consumption of specialty crops in schools. Specialty crops as defined by the USDA are fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, floriculture, and nursery crops.

More information about the Arkansas School Garden Grant Program and Arkansas Taste Test Grant Program can be found at agriculture.arkansas.gov/arkansas-department-of-agriculture/farm-to-school/ or by contacting Erica Benoit at erica.benoit@agriculture.arkansas.gov and Shannon Newerth-Henson at shannon.henson@agriculture.arkansas.gov.

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