

PRESS RELEASE

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Specialty Crop Grant Awarded

Spencer, IA – The Iowa Lakes Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) organization has received a grant for \$19,570 from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship for specialty crop market development.

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship will be awarding \$238,548 grants to Iowa organizations to help enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops grown in Iowa. The Department received \$276,310 through the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program from the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service to support the program.

“Specialty Crops” that are eligible under this program are fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits and horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture. There were 15 grant recipients and awards ranged from \$3,000 to the maximum request of \$20,000.

The Iowa Great Lakes Specialty Crop Promotion and Education grant project will address specialty crop market development in parts of six counties in Northwest Iowa. Excellent market potential exists in the region due to an annual influx of thousands of summer tourists and summer residents. Currently, this potential is not being met by area fruit and vegetable growers. They take advantage of area farmers markets but struggle as individual growers to break into additional outlets such as stores, restaurants, institutions and schools.

This request for funding from the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program will provide for a Project Manager to work with a newly forming cooperative of local fruit and vegetable growers, and with governmental, institutional, school, nonprofit and business partners. The Project Manager will assist the grower cooperative and partners in creating and implementing a combination of marketing and educational strategies designed to enhance long-term, sustainable success for local growers. While benefiting growers, the project will also positively impact consumers, food service providers, and K-12 students. The project is divided into three categories: workshops and public programs, school-based educational programs, and direct media marketing.

Contact Jeff at (712) 262-2083 or jeffkestel@iowalakesrcd.org if you have questions regarding local foods or this press release.

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