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2023 Specialty Crop Block Grants Awarded

MANHATTAN, Kansas — The Kansas Department of Agriculture has been awarded \$328,330.06 through the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. Funds for the program are presented by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Marketing Service to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. According to the USDA, specialty crops are defined as “fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture.” Through a competitive application process, KDA has selected recipients to further utilize the funds.

The following is a list of Kansas projects that will be funded by the grant.

- **Montgomery County Farm of the Future (Montgomery County)** — Coffeyville Public Schools will increase their students’ knowledge of specialty crop production by placing an indoor farm classroom at the high school. Students will learn agriculture, plant science, nutrition, business marketing, and food preparation skills. This classroom will be managed by high school students and will produce leafy green vegetables to be served in their district’s cafeterias.
- **Expanding Fruit Production Among Small Scale Beginning Farmers in Kansas City, Kansas (Wyandotte County)** — Cultivate KC will increase the variety, diversity, and resiliency of specialty crops grown and sold in Kansas City by providing education, training, and resources to refugee families starting their own small farm businesses through the New Roots for Refugees Program. This project will provide training, technical assistance, and resources to plant a fruit demonstration plot at the program’s training farm site and to support current farmers and recent graduates in adding blackberries, raspberries, and strawberries to their farm production.
- **Specialty Crop Video Series Highlighting Unique Specialty Crops in Kansas (Statewide)** — *From the Land of Kansas* and Kansas Tourism will partner with a local marketing entity to create a video series to spread awareness of and excitement for

Kansas specialty crops and the unique on-farm experiences they provide throughout the state. The video series will grow consumers' interest in local specialty crops and the experiences they offer and educate them on how to access and consume those specialty crops in our state.

- **Exploring Mung bean Production in Kansas (Statewide)** – Kansas State University will establish baseline recommendations for mung bean production and assess the crop's adaptability to different environments across Kansas. Mung beans are a warm season crop with a short duration and a high degree of tolerance to heat and water scarcity, making this option very attractive to farmers and useful to sustain the state's finite water natural resources.
- **Continued Safety for Produce Growers: Worker Protection Standard Training and GAPs Certification Funding and Outreach (Statewide)** — Kansas State University will help Kansas specialty crop producers receive training and certification as U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-recognized Worker Protection Standard pesticide safety train-the-trainers so that they can train the workers on their farm. They will also help Kansas fruit and vegetable producers earn Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) certification during the project, which will help growers access new markets which require that certification. This will help improve worker safety, produce safety, and the profitability of Kansas specialty crop producers.
- **Cultivate Maize: Growing Toward Educating Future Farmers with Sustainable School Meals Through School Gardens (Sedgwick County)** — Maize USD 266 will provide its 7,590 students, grades preschool through twelfth grade, with hands-on opportunities to plant, maintain, harvest, and consume produce from sustainable hydro gardens, all while never leaving their school buildings. Maize USD 266 Food Service will facilitate the project to provide school gardens for educators at 13 of their school buildings to use as a teaching tool to connect the learning goals of a variety of disciplines while exposing their students to becoming farmers and tasting sustainable specialty crops through school meals.

For more information, visit KDA's Specialty Crop Block Grant webpage at agriculture.ks.gov/SpecialtyCropBlockGrant.

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