



IDOA Now Accepting Specialty Crop Block Grant Proposals

November 10 2021 11:41 AM



SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) plans to award more than \$783,000 in Specialty Crop Block grants over a three-year period under federal House Resolution 133 (H.R. 133 Stimulus Funding).

The additional funds are available in response to the impact of COVID-19 on the food system, to expand the availability of fresh, locally-grown produce, to strengthen the competitiveness of the state’s specialty crop industry, and to support organizations that assist farmworkers and food businesses.

“Illinois is proud to be the number one producer of pumpkins and horseradish in the United States and is a top-ten producer of asparagus, cauliflower, fresh-cut herbs, peas,

mustard greens, and lima beans,” said Jerry Costello II, Director of the Illinois Department of Agriculture. “To be able to provide these resources to our specialty crop producers who not only support our state, but also the nation, is very rewarding.”

Proposal packets and additional information about the program can be found online at the Department’s website or by contacting AGR.ISCBG@illinois.gov and must be returned to the Department by 4:00 pm on November 29. To be eligible for funding, all projects must begin in the calendar year 2022.

Eligible applicants include non-profit organizations, local and government entities, trade and commodity associations, and public and private colleges and universities. Illinois encourages applications that benefit small farms and ranches, new and beginning farmers and ranchers, socially disadvantaged producers, veteran producers, and under severed communities.

To encourage further expansion of the specialty crop industry IDOA invites the development of projects pertaining to the following:

- Improving the specialty crop industry affected by COVID-19
- Enhancing food safety
- Improving compliance with the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act
- Investing in specialty crop research and technology
- Increasing in child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops
- Improving pest and disease control
- Improving food access in underserved communities and among veterans
- Protecting and improving pollinator health
- Improving efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems
- Developing new and improved seed varieties and specialty crops

Projects that benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual are ineligible. Farmer’s markets, roadside stands, and community-sponsored agriculture programs should consider submitting proposals to the USDA’s Farmers’ Market and Local Food Promotion Program.

USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service defines specialty crops as “fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits and horticulture and nursery crops (including floriculture).” There are more than 3,200 producers devoting more than 90,000 acres of Illinois farmland to specialty crops production, creating nearly \$472 million in annual sales for Illinois farmers.