



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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**New Mexico Department of Agriculture accepting applicants for
specialty crop grant program**

Grant program seeks to bolster specialty crop industry in New Mexico

LAS CRUCES – The New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA) is accepting new proposals for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP).

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) established the grant program with the purpose of enhancing the competitiveness of specialty crops. Specialty crops are defined by the USDA as “fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture and nursery crops.” Through enhanced competitiveness of specialty crops, the goal is to improve food access in underserved communities and improve development of local and rural food systems.

The program is part of the Farm Bill, and the USDA allocates funding to state departments of agriculture. Interested individuals and non-federal entities (producer groups, non-profits, trade associations and colleges/universities) are eligible to apply. The deadline for all proposal applications is Monday, Feb. 15. In order to apply, interested parties must submit a project proposal to NMDA for review by a panel of staff and experts. Grant funds cannot be awarded to projects that solely benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution or an individual.

All project proposals must prioritize either marketing, training, certification, food safety, pest control or plant health for the benefit of specialty crops.

“These are all areas that most effectively advance the competitiveness of specialty crops in New Mexico,” said New Mexico Secretary of Agriculture Jeff Witte. “Keeping these priority areas in mind, we can provide the necessary support to projects that will fruitfully progress the specialty crop industry in our state.”

NMDA has emphasized several target outcomes for potential proposals.

“Projects that help rebuild following the COVID-19 pandemic, expand markets, connect consumers to producers, promote local agriculture or promote the growing emphasis of female and young farmers are all favorable,” said Witte.

Before applying, applicants should consider their eligibility for federal funds, types of expenses needed, infrastructure, timeframe, potential beneficiaries, possible partners, reimbursement of expenditures and other factors. Considering all of these factors beforehand can help determine the potential need for federal aid.

Visit <https://youtu.be/QS2o-zFY420> to watch a video explaining this grant program.

In order for potential applicants to learn more information and gain a better understanding of the program, the following virtual outreach workshops will be held:

Thursday, Jan. 14 at 1 p.m. Mountain Time

Register in advance for this meeting at:

<https://nmsu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJoqc-ugrDwrE9GzUC39wwt4AkZ5U96gI-Y2>

Tuesday, Jan. 19 at 4:30 p.m. Mountain Time

Register in advance for this meeting at:

<https://nmsu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJotcumtrj4pH9oAY1JclczFZR4z9TERrIVi>

Thursday, Jan. 21 at 7 a.m. Mountain Time

Register in advance for this meeting at:

https://nmsu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJYof-uqrTooE9YQNuu_wFK53MLeoNn-wSLT

If interested parties cannot attend any of the workshops, a one-on-one meeting may be scheduled by emailing specialtycrops@nmda.nmsu.edu by Thursday, Jan. 14. Emails must include the preferred date and time.

For more information about the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program and the application process, please visit the ElevateNMAg website or www.nmda.nmsu.edu. Questions should be directed to specialtycrops@nmda.nmsu.edu.

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Cutline: The New Mexico Department of Agriculture is accepting applications of new proposals for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program until Feb. 15. Lettuce is a prominent specialty crop in New Mexico. (Photo courtesy New Mexico Department of Agriculture.)



Cutline: The New Mexico Department of Agriculture is accepting applications of new proposals for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program until Feb. 15. Horticulture is an example of a specialty crop. (Photo courtesy New Mexico Department of Agriculture.)