



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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New Mexico Department of Agriculture to hold specialty crop grant program workshops in January

Workshops aim to prepare New Mexicans in advance of Feb. 15 proposal deadline

LAS CRUCES – Over \$500,000 in funding is available through the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, and the New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA) is holding virtual workshops in January in preparation for the Feb. 15 grant proposal deadline.

Outreach workshops for potential applicants to learn more and to gain a better understanding of the program will be held as follows:

Thursday, Jan. 13 at 1 p.m.

Register in advance for this meeting at:
<https://nmsu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJMrc-6vqzMoHtS5wBM5H2YC7r83sAphe50T>

Tuesday, Jan. 18 at 7 a.m.

Register in advance for this meeting at:
<https://nmsu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJAsceuorTkvGNDfh1G42jLAerxTL3T5CS27>

Thursday, Jan. 20 at 4 p.m.

Register in advance for this meeting at:
<https://nmsu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJMlcO6spzOrHtcyBmMO3XEVTmlz145qvUHJ>

After registering, individuals will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

If someone is unable to attend any of the workshops, he or she may schedule a one-on-one meeting by emailing specialtycrops@nmda.nmsu.edu by Thursday, Jan. 13. Emails must include the preferred date and time.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) established the grant program to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops, which 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. 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 and must be submitted to NMDA for review by a panel of staff and experts by Tuesday, Feb. 15.

New Mexico Secretary of Agriculture Jeff Witte said many producers in the state may not know they are eligible for funding and encourages participation in the workshops to learn more.

“Whether you’re a United States military veteran who just started farming, a socially disadvantaged rancher, or a producer who has operated a farm or ranch for fewer than 10 years, you may be eligible for funding, and I encourage you to take advantage of the free workshops,” said Witte. “The New Mexico agriculture community is fortunate to have this funding available, and our team at NMDA is here to help you through the application process.”

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.

[Click here](#) to watch an animated video explaining this grant program, or visit the [ElevateNMag](#) website. Questions should be directed to specialtycrops@nmda.nmsu.edu.

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Cutline: The New Mexico Department of Agriculture is holding three virtual workshops in January in preparation for the Feb. 15 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program proposal deadline. Honey is considered a specialty crop by the United States Department of Agriculture. (Photo courtesy New Mexico Department of Agriculture.)



Cutline: The New Mexico Department of Agriculture is holding three virtual workshops in January in preparation for the Feb. 15 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program proposal deadline. Melons are considered a specialty crop by the United States Department of Agriculture. (Photo courtesy New Mexico Department of Agriculture.)