

# Connecticut Specialty Crop Block Grant Project Awards 2006 to 2013

## Fiscal Year 2013

Award Amount: **\$373,391.79** ■ Projects: **6**

1. Connecticut specialty crop producers have limited access to a shared-use commercial kitchen meeting local, state and federal regulatory standards for processing, freezing, or production of value added products such as sauces, jams or other products which utilize their specialty crops. Working with a university partner such as Rutgers Food Processing Center, a layout/design and governance structure will be established for a food processing center at the Hartford Regional Market (HRM). Select equipment necessary for processing specialty crop farm products, will be purchased for the food processing center.  
Award Amount: \$100,000
2. Partner with the University of Connecticut, Department of Ag Resource and Economics on a proposal that examines: (a) ways to increase access to healthy local food, (b) increase consumption of CT grown agricultural products, (c) increase awareness for local agricultural products, and (g) extend the season for specialty crops. This project will examine the costs of production associated with producing vegetables in a greenhouse later in the season compared with the alternative of producing lower margin ornamentals or no production. This project will extend current studies that are identifying the willingness to pay for the CT grown brand by utilizing new technologies. Specifically, eye tracking technology will be utilized to understand how effective the CT grown label is at capturing consumer attention while competing with other stimuli. Further, we will examine producer and retailer barriers to using the CT grown label and will provide strategies to more effectively implement and utilize the CT grown label.  
Award Amount: \$73,163.24
3. Partner with the University of Connecticut, Department of Extension on Spotted wing drosophila (SWD) to look at new management tools, in addition to pesticide applications, that will allow growers to produce a marketable crop. Trap cropping has been successfully utilized in vegetable crops for many years. This project proposes to use that concept by using an established planting of fall brambles around a day-neutral strawberry planting as the trap crop for the SWD. It is expected that the brambles will intercept the SWD and the pesticide applications will control them before they have a chance to infest the day-neutral strawberries.  
Award Amount: \$15,796
4. Partner with the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station to determine the feasibility of hop cultivation and production at CAES Research Farms in Windsor and Hamden CT. We will evaluate a number of high alpha acid disease-resistant

hop cultivars as well as traditional high trellis versus low trellis systems. Low trellis systems will utilize existing tobacco shade tent structures. Plant vigor, cone yields, and disease and insect pest problems will be evaluated over the 3 years of this project. The Station will share data and conclusions with commercial growers interested in producing Connecticut-grown hops in meetings, one-on-one, and in publications. Local hop production would add a new, high value specialty crop in Connecticut and also enhance the local craft brewing industry.

Award Amount: \$47,526

5. Partner with the University of Connecticut, Department of Plant Science on the development of sterile, non-invasive burning bush varieties. Triploid burning bush plants developed should be sterile, non-invasive because triploid plants produce seedless fruits. However, final confirmation is needed through production of fruits from these triploid plants. It is anticipated that that our triploid varieties of burning bush, if sterile as expected, should help restore the burning bush's prominence in the commercial market place.

Award Amount: \$44,709.00

6. Partner with the Connecticut Apple Marketing Board to increase web and social media presence through an updated and redesign the website to be more interactive. Creation of a mobile-optimized page and a mobile app (application). Coordinated marketing efforts with Social Media using Facebook, Pinterest , Twitter , LinkedIn and email broadcast will solidify the brand recognition of the CT Apples mission and increase traffic to CT orchards.

Award Amount: \$56,995

## Fiscal Year 2012

Award Amount: **\$404,420.22** ■ Projects: **9**

1. Improve food safety in Connecticut by preparing and maintaining a USDA-licensed auditor to perform accredited on-farm food safety audits and conducting outreach to specialty crop producers to participate in an audit  
Award Amount: \$38,101.53
2. Partner with the University of Connecticut, Department of Extension to help farmers implement Good Handling Practices in packing houses by assessing the potential food safety risks using a microbiological testing protocol in a sample of packing house environments; surveying farmers regarding packing house facilities and practices; conducting a photo survey of packing houses; and developing training programs for specialty crop producers.  
Award Amount: \$26,259
3. In cooperation with the Connecticut Department of Transportation (DOT), provide greater access to and marketing for specialty crop farms located off state roadways throughout Connecticut by providing DOT-approved signage advertising specialty crops.  
Award Amount: \$15,000
4. •Partner with Wholesome Wave to continue the Double Value Coupon Program, which provides incentives for the purchase of specialty crops at farmers markets to federal nutrition assistance recipients, increasing farmers' market customer bases into low-income communities  
Award Amount: \$72,553
5. Partner with the University of Connecticut, Department Extension to increase consumption of Connecticut specialty crops by studying current consumption levels and working directly with grocery stores, school cafeterias, colleges, hospitals, coops and restaurants to increase their commitment to procure Connecticut specialty crops  
Award Amount: \$73,981
6. Partner with the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station to conduct research to develop effective disease management strategies for control of boxwood blight.  
Award Amount: \$42,447
7. Increase institutional use of Connecticut Grown produce in foodservice operations by conducting a study to determine institutional need, by identifying Connecticut Grown fruits and vegetables best suited for processing, and by determining what infrastructure currently exists and what additional infrastructure would be required to aggregate produce from Connecticut specialty crop producers and transform it into the products needed by institutions

Award Amount: \$50,000

8. Partner with the Connecticut Beekeepers Association to support new beekeepers by providing an incentive of inexpensive rental extractors

Award Amount: \$9,930

9. Partner with the University of Connecticut, Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture to develop commercially viable propagation methods for novel native shrubs

Award Amount: \$51,899

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## **Fiscal Year 2011**

**Award Amount: \$429,936.10 ■ Projects: 8**

1. Partner with Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection to provide food safety training to registered specialty crop farmers who produce processed foods, such as jams and jellies. Training on FDA's Good Manufacturing Practices and Process Control will educate on-farm producers on the sanitary processing requirements for producing safe and wholesome food.  
Award Amount \$29,162.50
2. Provide a bilingual English/Spanish cookbook customized to promote Connecticut specialty crops by featuring local fruit and vegetable recipes along with incentives for Women, Infant and Children Farmers' Market Nutrition Program participants to purchase their fruits and vegetables at local farmers markets. The project staff has established checks and balances to ensure that the specialty crop cookbook and incentives only benefit specialty crops.  
Award Amount \$85,470
3. Partner with Wholesome Wave Foundation to provide Wholesome Wave's Double Value Coupon Program so Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); and Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program recipients can double the value of benefits redeemed for fruits and vegetables at farm-to-market retail venues. The project staff has developed specific guidelines that state the program partners can only use doubling incentives to pay for locally grown fruits and vegetables.  
Award Amount \$75,000
4. Partner with Connecticut Nursery & Landscape Association to determine what motivates Connecticut consumers to purchase landscape plants, and then encourage local growers to meet those expectations in the plants they choose to produce; in efforts to increase demand and purchase of ornamental plants grown by Connecticut nurseries and greenhouses.  
Award Amount: \$35,000
5. Partner with Rhode Island Center for Agricultural Promotion and Education to provide Connecticut's specialty crop producers with the knowledge and understanding of agritourism activities that they can incorporate into their day to day operations to increase traffic and therefore sales of specialty crops. This will all be done by providing training, marketing, and technical support services, in the areas of general business, product and enterprise development, marketing, and tourism development.  
Award Amount \$34,042

6. Partner with CitySeed Inc to deliver a creative, buy local marketing campaign via free space on BuyCT Grown; to give access to print media; such as recipe cards and point of sale materials that target maple syrup, nursery products, summer berries, pick-your-own apples, tree fruit, pumpkins and Christmas trees to provide an increase of resources to specialty crops producers as well as their consumers.

Award Amount \$27,361.50

7. Partner with Connecticut Northeast Organic Farming Association to increase the sales and consumption of specialty crops by increasing the number, success, season length and size of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) projects in Connecticut, educating the public about the benefits of belonging to a CSA, reducing the turnover in membership by providing education and resources to understand what a CSA is and what membership means, and highlight the role community Farms' play in CSAs and in providing healthy food access.

Award Amount \$48,478.66

8. Partner with Connecticut Farm Bureau Association, Inc. to enhance the competitiveness of Connecticut fruit and vegetable producers by identifying barriers to in-state distribution, facilitating interaction with institutional and retail buyers, and exploring business opportunities that can impact full-time, volume producers.

Award Amount \$55,218

## **Fiscal Year 2010**

**Award Amount: \$445,339.20 ■ Projects: 9**

1. Procure and distribute a variety of promotional materials that identify and market the state's specialty crop industry Partner with the Connecticut Vineyard and Winery Association to support a two-year statewide marketing campaign to increase consumption of Connecticut's grapes and other winemaking fruits
2. Partner with the Harvest New England Association to increase use of the logo by producers, wholesalers, and grocery stores through the facilitation of a conference/tradeshaw, development of the Harvest New England website, and expansion of promotional items for specialty crop produce
3. Partner with the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Connecticut to build on its educational and communications resources to educate farmers in the best practices for growing, storing, and marketing locally-grown, organic and sustainable winter specialty crops as well as provide educational resources for consumers to determine the availability, flavor, and nutrition of those fruits, vegetables, and herbs •Partner with the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System to hasten the adoption of deep zone tillage in Connecticut's vegetable farms through the utilization of health surveys, deep zone tillage research, and a series of outreach meetings and articles
4. Partner with the University of Connecticut to evaluate several native shrub species for their suitability as replacements to invasive species used in parking lot island plantings and residential landscapes
5. Partner with the Massaro Community Farm, Inc. to establish an apiary at the Massaro Farm in Woodbridge, Connecticut that will provide educational programs to the community, research opportunities for the industry, and potentially increase the pollination and production of honey in Connecticut
6. Partner with the Maple Syrup Producers Association of Connecticut to test the validity of a three pronged approach to grow the Connecticut maple products industry through using sustainable forest management to increase the number of maple trees tapped, enhancing the current equipment to increase productivity, and developing a marketing model to increase traffic to retail and direct market outlets
7. Partner with the Connecticut Christmas Tree Growers' Association to select the best parent trees for establishing a seed production nursery that will improve the genetics of true firs grown in Connecticut, thereby improving the competitiveness of natural Connecticut grown Christmas trees

## **Fiscal Year 2009**

**Award Amount: \$320,502.74   ■   Projects: 10**

1. Work with USDA Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) training requirements and establish a uniform food-safety GAP program in Connecticut by training a Connecticut Department of Agriculture employee to become a licensed authority to conduct USDA GAP audits throughout Connecticut.
2. Conduct a needs assessment conference, web site, training programs and written informational materials to enable Connecticut farmers to prepare for Good Agricultural Practices audits and/or meet increased consumer demand for evidence of safe food handling when growing, harvesting and handling fresh fruits and vegetables
3. Implement a fifty percent cost-share reimbursement program up to \$500 to become USDA Good Agricultural Practices certified
4. Partner with the University of Connecticut to: develop a budget generator suitable to analyze the expected profitability of multiyear specialty crops; estimate cost and profitability of grape production for winemaking for representative farms under alternative technological assumptions; examine the potential market for locally produced grapes as an input to Connecticut wine producers; and implement outreach programs to disseminate information concerning the expected profitability and prospects of expanded grape production
5. Partner with the Connecticut Greenhouse Growers Association (CGGA) and Connecticut Nursery & Landscape Association (CNLA) to increase sales of CT Grown ornamental plants by focusing consumers' attention on 36 specific plants, one each month, over a three-year period
6. Host the 50th Anniversary of the Connecticut Christmas Tree Growers Association, Inc. to provide current education information to Christmas Tree growers to help them increase their sales
7. Partner with the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station to: develop greenhouse environment and fertilizer protocols to maintain high nutritional values of vegetable crops grown in various seasons of the year; determine the nutritional value of locally grown salad greens and compare these values to those of the same crops available in supermarkets that were produced in distant regions; and disseminate this information to the agricultural and farming community and the public
8. Partner with the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station to use biochar and earthworms in experimental field plots to demonstrate the value of these treatments in establishing asparagus fields

9. Partner with the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station to develop an environmentally friendly biological control method against bacterial spot, using natural enemies of the pathogen, called bacteriophages or phages (viruses that attack bacteria) to ensure better yield, reduce chemical pesticide input in the environment and allow organic production of stone fruits in Connecticut

## **Fiscal Year 2008**

**Award Amount: \$116,864.85 ■ Projects: 1**

Coordinate with Connecticut's Department of Public Works and the Connecticut Marketing Authority to develop a design for a new facility at the Hartford Regional Market that will incorporate new vendor stalls that will promote additional specialty crop vendors.

## **Fiscal Year 2008, Farm Bill Funds**

**Award Amount: \$123,322.00 ■ Projects: 3**

1. Partner with the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station to conduct varietal trials and cultural experiments on ethnic vegetables at two research farms and distribute fact sheets and bulletins after the trials and experiments are completed describing the suggested varieties and cultural techniques required to successfully grow these ethnic vegetables.
2. Partner with the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station to determine the best pruning and training systems for widely grown hybrid wine grape cultivars, evaluate new vinifera and hybrid wine grape cultivars suitable for the state, and examine how planting *Vitis vinifera* cultivars with elevated graft unions could result in increased productivity by reducing inputs to offset the increased cost of plant material.
3. Partner with the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station to field test hybrid strawberry breeding lines tolerant of both root weevils and black root rot in growers' fields under commercial production conditions to determine horticultural acceptability and continue to quantify and assess resistance and/or tolerance to black root rot and black vine weevil in elite strawberry breeding lines.

## **Fiscal Year 2006 & 2007**

**Award Amount: \$215,869.24 ■ Projects: 15**

1. Produce banners promoting farmers' markets.
2. Purchase four costumes that will help school food service directors, schools, and other groups promote specialty crops in cafeterias and produce coloring books promoting the Farm-to-School Program and the use of "Connecticut Grown" specialty crops.
3. Conduct two farm tours/workshops for local chefs to teach them about "Connecticut Grown" specialty crops; work with the "Connecticut Grown" Farmers' Market program to arrange culinary demonstrations at the markets by program chefs; support a farm-to-chef program meeting; and develop a farm-to-chef program logo and promotional materials.
4. Develop a farm stand brochure that will allow the public to find farm stands and stores in their area.
5. Provide producers, wholesalers, retailers and other outlets with promotional items to identify and promote "Connecticut Grown" specialty crop products.
6. Conduct market research to determine the effectiveness of a state-wide, multi-media advertising and marketing campaign promoting "Connecticut Grown" products conducted in 2007.
7. Partner with the Connecticut Apple Marketing Board to develop a brochure and redesign the Board's website to increase apple sales in Connecticut.
8. Conduct a one-day "bee school" to help existing beekeepers become better and newcomers to be successful, and develop a brochure and update the Connecticut Beekeepers Association web site.
9. Award three scholarships to candidates studying agriculture, provide grants to the State of Connecticut Agriculture Experiment Station to conduct experiments to help tree growers, promote the annual coloring contest and award trees to eight winners, and update and maintain the Connecticut Christmas Tree Growers Association website.
10. Print passports that visitors can get stamped at each Connecticut winery to entice customers to visit different wineries in partnership with the Connecticut Farm Wine Development Council.

11. Conduct a two-year promotional campaign promoting “Connecticut Grown” annual flowering plants in partnership with the Connecticut Greenhouse Growers Association and the Connecticut Nursery and Landscape Association.
12. Produce and distribute copies of the CT NOFA Farm and Food Guide, a listing of organic and sustainable farms in Connecticut in partnership with the Northeast Organic Farming Association.
13. Conduct a two-year promotional campaign for “Connecticut Grown” trees, shrubs, and perennial plants in partnership with the Connecticut Nursery and Landscape Association and the Connecticut Greenhouse Growers Association.
14. Conduct educational programs for producers at the semi-annual Maple Syrup Producers Association of Connecticut meetings to learn more about the maple syrup craft and be better informed to make upgrades to their operations, advertise the presence of sugaring operations and create syrup samplers kits to educate the public, and compile and publish the CT Maple Syrup Recipe Book.
15. Continue to promote specialty crops from a regional and state perspective and support the Harvest New England conference in the winter of 2009 with a focus on marketing in partnership with the Harvest New England group.