



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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### **Connecticut Department of Agriculture Receives \$429,936 to increase awareness and sales of Connecticut specialty crops.**

**Hartford, CT** –The Connecticut Department of Agriculture has received a \$429,936 grant from USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) through the Specialty Crop Block Grant-Farm Bill Program. Funds will be used for nine projects that solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops in the state.

“This money has a great impact on Connecticut agriculture. Given how diverse Connecticut’s farms are, this money provides us with opportunities we wouldn’t normally have.” said Agriculture Commissioner Steven K. Reviczky. “These nine projects have the potential to impact specialty crop producers’ bottom line. It will increase awareness of CT Grown products and potentially create jobs both on and off the farm.”

Specialty crops are defined as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, nursery crops, Christmas trees, honey, maple syrup, and floriculture. According to the latest [USDA Census of Agriculture](#) (2007), specialty crops account for 60 percent of Connecticut’s agricultural products based on value by sales.

The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program is offered to state departments of agriculture within the 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana

Islands. Projects must solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops in Connecticut and benefit the industry as a whole and not an individual producer, business, or product.

Applications undergo a competitive review process to determine the eligibility of the proposed projects and their costs.

The 2011 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program funding has been awarded to the following sub-grantees and their projects:

**Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection**

To provide food safety training to 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.

**Connecticut Department of Agriculture**

Provide a customized bilingual English/Spanish cookbook 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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**CitySeed Inc**

To deliver a creative, buy local marketing campaign via free space on BuyCTGrown.com; 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.

**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) farms 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.

**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.

More information about the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program is available at [www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp](http://www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp). Questions about Connecticut's grant projects should be directed to Jaime Smith at the Connecticut Department of Agriculture, 860-713-2559.

**CONNECTICUT GROWN** - The Local Flavor

[www.CTGrown.gov](http://www.CTGrown.gov)

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