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AAD Opens 2017 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program to Applicants

STATEWIDE, ARK. – The Arkansas Agriculture Department (AAD) is now accepting applications for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, made available through funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). These grants help to enhance the specialty crop industry of Arkansas, which includes the growing and selling of fruits, vegetables, floriculture and nuts. **Applications must be submitted to the Arkansas Agriculture Department by April 19, 2017.**

Proposals may include: research, promotion, marketing, nutrition, food safety and security, education, increased knowledge and consumption, improved efficiency and reduced costs of distribution systems, conservation, product development, good agricultural practices, good handling practices, and good manufacturing practices. Eligible applicants are: non-profit organizations, local, state, and federal government entities, for-profit organizations and colleges and universities. Eligible projects must solely enhance the competitiveness of a specialty crop, and benefit more than one individual or organization.

“The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program gives us the ability to receive input from growers, researchers, and non-profits here in Arkansas and design a package that fits our state” said Arkansas Agriculture Secretary Wes Ward. “Our goal is to help grow the specialty crop industry in Arkansas and the economic impact that goes with it.”

Applicants must submit project concept proposals using the online form available at <http://www.aad.arkansas.gov/aad-grants>. In addition, a two-phase application process will be used. Applicants will submit a project concept proposal, providing an outline of the project’s goals, tasks and budget requirements. After being reviewed by an advisory committee, the AAD will select projects and invite the applicants to submit full applications with further details.

Additional guidelines and instructions on completing and submitting an application, including the full Request for Applications (RFA), is available at www.aad.arkansas.gov. For additional information, contact Christian Olson, AAD Director of Marketing, at (501) 219-6324 or christian.olson@aad.ar.gov.

The Arkansas Agriculture Department is dedicated to the development and implementation of policies and programs for Arkansas agriculture and forestry to keep its farmers and ranchers competitive in national and international markets while ensuring safe food, fiber, and forest products for the citizens of the state and nation.

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The Arkansas Agriculture Department offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability and is an Equal Opportunity Employer.