



**STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE**

ANDY GIPSON
COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

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MDAC Accepting Applications for Specialty Crop Block Grant

JACKSON, Miss. – Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson announced the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC) is now accepting proposals for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program.

The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and authorized by the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (Farm Bill). The purpose of the program is to enhance the competitiveness of Mississippi's specialty crop industry by leveraging efforts to market and promote specialty crops; assisting producers with research and development relevant to specialty crops; expanding availability and access to specialty crops; and addressing local, regional and national challenges confronting specialty crop producers.

Specialty crops are defined as fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture. Specialty crops are an important part of Mississippi's agriculture, accounting for more than \$201 million of our state's agriculture industry last year.

Past project examples include: an initiative by Farm Families of Mississippi to develop and implement a promotional campaign to educate the public on the benefits of buying and consuming locally-grown specialty crops; an initiative by Mississippi State University (MSU) to research the relationship between reniform nematodes and fungi that are associated with end rot disease of sweet potatoes; a project by MSU to compare field production of vegetables and edible flowers with two soilless culture methods and trained growers on their use; another project by MSU to conduct a tea cultivar evaluation trial and investigate the potential of tea production in Mississippi; and an initiative by the Mississippi Beekeepers Association to conduct demonstration experiments to assist beekeepers on two non-chemical techniques to control Varroa mites in beehives.

Projects funded through this program must address at least one of the following priority areas: education/extension, research and development, or promotion/marketing. Eligible applicants include producer groups and associations, non-profits and colleges and universities. Funding will not be awarded to projects that solely benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution or individual. Applications must be submitted to MDAC by April 6, 2020. To obtain an application, visit the Alerts and Announcements section at www.mdac.ms.gov, call Susan Lawrence at (601) 213-7542, or email susan@mdac.ms.gov.

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