



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE
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COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Mississippi Receives USDA Specialty Crop Grant

Jackson, Miss. - Lester Spell, Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce, announced that the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce has been awarded \$103,626.70 from the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops grown in Mississippi under the new Specialty Crop Block Grant Program.

"This program creates a great opportunity for our farming community to bring awareness to the citizens of Mississippi about the importance of farmers' markets. These markets provide the public with fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables, while providing a direct marketing outlet for our Mississippi farmers. Senator Thad Cochran and our leaders in Washington recognize these benefits and were instrumental in providing this grant for specialty crop promotion," said Spell.

The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce will promote specialty crop producers statewide by presenting educational workshops to new and existing growers for the purpose of increasing grower participation and variety of product for local farmers' markets. This program will also include the dispersal of information to consumers about the nutritional and economic benefit of locally grown Mississippi produce.

Through the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, USDA awards grants to state departments of agriculture to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops as defined as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits and nursery crops (including floriculture). Mississippi is one of the first two states to be awarded funds under the new program.

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