



South Carolina Department of Agriculture

Hugh E. Weathers, Commissioner

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Specialty Crop Block Grant Applications Being Accepted

COLUMBIA, S.C. – Applications for the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) are available at www.scspecialtycropblockgrant.com and are **due by 5 p.m. on Friday, April 20**. The application must be completed online.

“The SCBGP is an important resource for strengthening the specialty crop industry,” said SC Commissioner of Agriculture Hugh Weathers. “I encourage specialty crop farmers, researchers and other industry supporters to propose projects that enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops, sustain the livelihood of farmers, and strengthen local economies.”

Applicants should propose projects that provide one or more of the following benefits:

- Enhanced food safety
- Improved capacity of all entities in the specialty crop distribution chain to comply with the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act, for example, developing “Good Agricultural Practices”, “Good Handling Practices”, “Good Manufacturing Practices”, and in cost-share arrangements for funding audits of such systems for small farmers, packers and processors
- Investment in specialty crop research, including research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes
- Development of new and improved seed varieties and specialty crops
- Enhanced pest and disease control
- Increased child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops
- Increased efficiency and reduced costs of distribution systems
- Enhanced sustainability

Proposed projects:

- must fall within the criteria as described in the application
- can be up to three years in duration
- must benefit groups of producers, not individuals.
- must not use funds for capital expenditures such as buildings, equipment, or land.

Applicants with questions or who need guidance with writing, processing or submitting an application should participate in a **conference call at 2:00 pm on Thursday, March 22**. Email SCDA Grants Coordinator Betsy Dorton at bdorton@scda.sc.gov to RSVP and obtain the conference call phone number.

The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program is administered by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service. The program is committed to help strengthen the market for specialty crops. Specialty crops are defined as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture (including honey), and nursery crops (including floriculture).

For more information contact Betsy Dorton, 803-734-2210 or bdorton@scda.sc.gov.

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