



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

ANDY GIPSON
COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

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MDAC Now 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 in 2025.

Past project examples include increasing awareness and consumption of specialty crops to school-aged children through garden grants; developing and implementing promotional and marketing campaigns to educate the public on the benefits of buying and consuming locally-grown specialty crops; improving food safety through Good Agricultural Practices; research and feasibility analysis of potential new varieties and specialty crops; evaluating management strategies to improve health of honey bee colonies; educational seminars, trainings, and short courses for specialty crop growers; using optical imaging in packing lines of sweet potatoes and blueberries; and high tunnel research trials on a variety of fruits, vegetables and herbs.

Eligible applicants include producer groups and associations, non-profits, colleges and universities. Funding will not be awarded for projects that solely benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution or individual. Single organizations, institutions and individuals are encouraged to participate as project partners. Applications must be submitted to MDAC by April 1, 2026. 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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