



**OREGON
DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE**

Summary of the 2026 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Awarded Projects

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Prepared By
The Oregon Department of Agriculture Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

1. Introduction

This summary is prepared annually by the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBG) to list all of the funded projects for the SCBGP for that award year.

2. List of Funded Projects

Company	Project Title	Summary	Amount
ODA	Administration of the SCBGP.	Administration of the SCBGP.	\$222,457.69
A Good Management Company	Companion Planting to Improve Water Efficiency and Resilience in Crops	A Good Management Company will lead a two year applied research project to evaluate how companion planting with native grasses can improve water-use efficiency, soil health, and production viability for specialty crops grown under limited water conditions. The project will focus on lavender and chamomile and will compare monoculture and companion planting systems on both flat and sloped farmland. The purpose of this project is to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops by identifying production practices that improve water retention, reduce weed	\$164,285

		pressure, and support sustainable use of marginal or sloped agricultural land. The project will generate field-based data to inform growers on how companion planting with native grasses may improve soil structure, reduce runoff, and increase drought resilience while maintaining crop health and productivity. Project activities include establishing replicated field plots, applying standardized irrigation across treatments, and collecting data on soil moisture, water retention, plant health, weed pressure, and soil conditions. Soil moisture will be measured at multiple depths and time intervals following irrigation events to evaluate water-use efficiency and infiltration. Deliverables will include field-based results, educational materials, and outreach activities such as field days and collaboration with local schools and colleges. Findings will be shared with producers and stakeholders to support adoption of water-efficient, climate-resilient specialty crop practices. This project supports the goals of the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program by advancing sustainable production methods, improving resource efficiency, and strengthening the long-term competitiveness of specialty crop producers in Oregon.	
Northwest Berry Foundation	Pathways to Controlled Environment Production for Oregon Berry Growers	The Northwest Berry Foundation (NBF) is the applicant and project lead for this effort, with Delphy AgAdvisory (DAA) serving as the primary technical contractor responsible for controlled environment production analysis, economic modeling, and synthesis of findings. This project is a collaborative informational study to support the Oregon (OR) berry industry in evaluating and advancing the	\$207,082

		adoption of more controlled production systems, including protected cropping structures, substrate systems, and fully enclosed Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA). The project will assess the economic feasibility and practical implications of these systems, identifying the most promising production models, system designs, and investment pathways to enhance the long term competitiveness of regional berry producers. This effort will be carried out through close collaboration between NBF and DAA, including the design and distribution of a customized survey for OR berry industry, followed by indepth interviews with growers, input suppliers, and other regional industry actors. The study will deliver actionable recommendations to guide industry adoption and build an inclusive support network involving growers of all scales, regional advisors, and local suppliers (e.g., irrigation, substrate, and protective structure providers), ensuring that the benefits of controlled production systems are shared across OR's berry sector. A summary of regional costs, labor, water, weather variability, and policy drivers will be evaluated to define tunnel, greenhouse, and indoor production systems that best align to OR's industry. Results will be shared through both NBF and DAA networks and publications, as well as a hosted interactive workshop to review findings and gather feedback from stakeholders.	
ODA –	Oregon Food & Agriculture	This project provides resources to maintain and expand the	\$299,343

Agriculture Services	Network: Developing Specialty Crop Industries Across Oregon	Oregon Food & Agriculture Network. The name of the network is a working title and will be finalized before work begins on this project. Three regions (Eastern Oregon, Mid-Willamette Valley, and Southern Oregon) are establishing Network programming in 2026 and there is a financial need to sustain and build new programming into future years. This is critical because trends in Oregon point to many challenges for specialty crop producers – in particular, the need for one-on-one technical assistance to help them adapt to changing agricultural conditions and additional market requirements as they scale into new sales channels. Oregon is one of the most diverse specialty crop states in the country, growing more than 220 agricultural commodities and generating more than \$1.3 billion in annual sales. This industry is facing rapid shifts due to rising input costs, pressure to mechanize labor, and global market competition for specialty crops. These challenges, as well as others, will be addressed by Oregon's newly established Oregon Food & Agriculture Network. Funding from this project will also allow ODA to build out the program and serve additional agricultural regions of the state where critical resources are needed for business growth and development for specialty crop producers and value added specialty crop manufacturers. Under this project, ODA will be able to provide base funding to coordinators at existing Network locations, establish and train two additional Network locations, and develop technical assistance programming to focus on key priorities of specialty crop industries in each of the Network locations.	
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ODA – Integrated Pest Prevention & Management	Maintaining an Apple Maggot Pest Free Area for Milton-Freewater	Viability of the Milton-Freewater (MF) fruit industry relies on early access to markets before larger competitive regions. This access is only possible by maintaining a fruit fly pest free area (FF-PFA) designation. Such status is threatened by the fluctuating presence of apple maggot (AM), a significant insect pest that depletes apple fruit quality. AM has been detected in the neighboring Pendleton, OR and Walla Walla County, Washington). Since 1980 through 2019 MF has been declared AM free. In 2020 three AM were found in different locations in the MF area, threatening its FF-PFA status. In 2021, two AM were detected separately within a 0.5 mile of two of the three 2020 detections in the production area. In 2023 another detection occurred near one of the 2020 and 2021 detection site. This site is the only delimitation grid remaining from the original three AM detections delimitation areas in 2020. This last delimitation needs 1 more year of negative trapping for AM to be declared eradicated. The third detection from 2020 was inside the town of Milton-freewater, and outside the production area, did not have any detections in 2021. To accomplish project goals intensive trapping and fruit sampling will be needed in MF area. Depending on results of trapping, a variety of mitigation procedures will be recommended to the production community.	\$42,998
Oregon Raspberry &	The Berry Breakthrough – A Product Accelerator	The Oregon Raspberry & Blackberry Commission(ORBC) will address the need to foster value-added product innovation	\$107,500

Blackberry Foundation	Program for Oregon Caneberries	creating new and larger outlets for an overstock of raspberries and blackberries in all forms, especially puree and Individually Quick Frozen (IQF) berries. ORBC seeks funding to launch a mentorship program for ten entrepreneurs with an existing product prototype that utilizes or could be reformatted with Oregon berries. The primary focus is on expanding the market for berry purees and IQF, but products utilizing high-volume berry formats will be considered. Participants will undergo a 12-week product development and business residency. This curriculum leverages a partnership between Portland Community College, focusing on small business fundamentals, and the Food Innovation Center, providing expert technical assistance in food science. This dual-track approach ensures that entrepreneurs are equipped with both the culinary technicalities and the commercial acumen necessary for retail success. The program concludes with a pitch competition where four finalists will present their refined products to a panel of prominent industry leaders and retail buyers. One best product and one second-best product will be awarded a financial stipend. These funds can accelerate their market entry, covering costs such as professional co-packing, branding, or distribution fees. In addition, the best product will be spotlighted at the 2028 Fancy Food Show ORBC booth. By bridging the gap between Oregon’s agricultural surplus and innovative consumer goods, this initiative will provide a sustainable economic pipeline for the state’s berry growers while	
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		launching the next generation of food brands.	
Oregon Rohingya Myanmar Muslim Society	Expanding Specialty Crop Access Through Culturally Specific Community Markets	The Oregon Rohingya Myanmar Muslim Society (ORMMS) will lead and implement the "Expanding Specialty Crop Access Through Culturally Specific Community Markets" project. This initiative aims to boost the competitiveness of Oregon-grown specialty crops by expanding market access and promoting specialty crop consumption among local communities in East Multnomah County. The purpose of this project is to improve community-based market access for beginning specialty crop producers. By enhancing market readiness, the project connects growers to culturally specific markets to meet high demand for Oregon-grown heritage produce. Featured crops include vegetables (Roselle, water spinach, pumpkin, bitter melon, bottle gourd, Myanmar eggplant, and specialty chilies), culinary herbs (cilantro, Thai basil, mint, and ginger), and fruits (strawberries and watermelon). In partnership with Sufiya Farm (mentorship site) and Best Fresh Super Market (retail partner), ORMMS will support 15 beginning farmers through FSMA-aligned food safety training and hands-on technical mentorship. Key deliverables include eight seasonal community market events in East Multnomah County, essential retail infrastructure (NTEP-certified scales, cold-storage), and bilingual nutrition education materials. During the project period, ORMMS will coordinate market pop-ups, conduct multilingual outreach, and provide in-language education	\$139,997

		for growers and consumers. We will track sales data, producer participation, and consumer feedback to document increased access and the long-term competitiveness of Oregon-grown specialty crops. By leveraging trusted community relationships, this project offers a scalable model for expanding specialty crop access in regional community markets across Oregon.	
Oregon Seed Association	Improving Seed Label and Product Compliance in Inter-State Commerce	The Oregon Seed Association (OSA) is requesting funds to continue building a label compliance tool designed to improve market access by addressing regulatory burdens on the Oregon seed industry caused by non-harmonized state seed laws. The FY23-funded Seed Labeling Database is an important first step toward a comprehensive compliance solution but still lacks important features. While it compares Truth-in-Labeling requirements across states, it does not yet include seed quality standards or noxious weed seeds requirements, so compliance checks before shipment can still be a tedious task. Expanding the database will save industry time during label audit, reduce compliance risks, and help companies ship compliant seed products to all U.S. markets. At the end of the grant period, the database will include the following information in addition to Truth-in-Labeling rules: • Seed quality standards for each state • Noxious weed seed search tool • Label design parameters • Relabeling requirements per state	\$175,000

		• Additional state information such as definitions • Labeling best practices examples AgCultured, Bryant Christie Inc. (BCI), and Rain Porch will build the database expansion with the support of the Oregon Seed Association. AgCultured will review federal and state seed regulations and populate data entry templates. BCI will configure the database. Rain Porch will provide a staging environment, create webpages to host the database, and support user data collection. The database will not be exclusively available to OSA members, but all stakeholders across the U.S. However, the database will only contain information for specialty crops of importance to Oregon.	
Oregon State University – Bhattarai	Breeding hazelnuts for durable resistance to eastern filbert blight	Oregon State University (OSU), in partnership with Rutgers University, will investigate quantitative resistance (QR) to eastern filbert blight (EFB) and develop DNA markers to support breeding hazelnut cultivars with durable, long term resistance. Oregon produces 99% of U.S. hazelnuts and expanding hazelnut production in the eastern United States presents significant economic opportunity. However, EFB—caused by <i>Anisogramma anomala</i>—remains the most destructive fungal disease of hazelnuts. OSU’s current EFB resistant cultivars rely largely on a single major resistance gene from ‘Gasaway’, but emerging pathogen races in Oregon and New Jersey have demonstrated that single gene resistance is not reliable over time.	\$245,618

		This project focuses on QR, a more durable and polygenic form of resistance. OSU and Rutgers have generated more than 5,000 seedlings segregating for QR from crosses among genetically diverse parents, as well as over 200 advanced selections from the OSU breeding program. These materials were inoculated with the EFB pathogen under controlled conditions and planted at a high disease pressure field site at Rutgers University. The project will evaluate disease response in these seedlings and selections, extract genomic DNA, and identify DNA markers associated with QR. These markers will enable breeders to efficiently select seedlings with strong QR, accelerating the development of new hazelnut cultivars with durable resistance. Results from New Jersey disease screenings will directly inform cultivar release decisions for Oregon growers. Findings will be shared with stakeholders through grower meetings, field days, tours, and on farm visits, ensuring rapid adoption of project outcomes.	
Oregon State University – Mermer	Pesticide MRL harmonization to support Sweet Cherry Growers Export Standards	The purpose of this project is to generate Oregon-specific, pesticide residue and degradation data to support compliance with international maximum residue limits (MRLs) and improve export market access for sweet cherry growers and packers. The primary deliverable will be a validated pesticide residue dataset for commonly used registered pesticides that is suitable for comparison with international MRLs. Expected outcomes include reduced risk of shipment rejections, improved pesticide use decision making, enhanced regulatory confidence, and	\$250,000

		strengthened competitiveness of Oregon sweet cherries in high-value export markets. Oregon State University will conduct controlled pesticide application trials in a commercial sweet cherry orchard in Hood River and The Dalles OR using standard industry practices. Cherry fruit will be collected at multiple time points following application to characterize residue decline over time. Residue concentrations will be measured using validated laboratory analytical methods aligned with international standards. Project results will be disseminated through reports, presentations, and extension outreach to growers, commodity groups, packers, and regulators for broad industry benefit.	
Oregon State University – Moore	Developing Nitrogen Coefficients for Improved Nutrient Management in Eastern Oregon	Oregon State University will improve decision making for nitrogen fertilization by producers in eastern Oregon by developing nitrogen coefficients for regionally prominent annually grown crops. This research will aid in regulatory compliance with Oregon Department of Agriculture rules in the Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area and provide producers across the region with a tool to more effectively manage nitrogen for cost savings and reduced environmental impacts. We will 1) develop nitrogen coefficient ranges for potatoes and onions; 2) publish a technical report of the nitrogen coefficients suitable for use by producers, agronomists, and regulators; 3) publish guidance for producers on how to appropriately sample their own onion and potato crops to calculate a field-specific nitrogen coefficient; and 4) conduct in-person workshops for producers on how to use	\$249,996

		nitrogen coefficients to more effectively manage nitrogen.	
Oregon State University – Sagili	Oregon Honey Bee Health Monitoring Program	The Oregon Honey Bee Health Monitoring Program is an educational program focused on strengthening pest monitoring efforts and reducing managed colony mortality for Oregon beekeepers. Our objectives include (1) developing a rigorous training program on monitoring Varroa mites and Tropilaelaps mites with Oregon commercial beekeepers, (2) establishing an efficient sample processing system within OSU's state of the art honey bee diagnostic lab, and (3) measuring pest population levels and management strategies via an open information sharing model. This project will be accomplished in collaboration with OSU scientists, extension specialists, regional beekeeping experts, and Oregon beekeepers, and through this collaboration, this project will provide beekeepers with practical tools and information to implement and improve their mite management strategy, ultimately reducing colony losses and strengthening Oregon's pollinator-dependent specialty crops.	\$210,679
Pacific Northwest Christmas Tree Association	Target Marketing and Campaign to Increase Oregon Christmas Tree Sales.	The Pacific Northwest Christmas Tree Association (PNWCTA) will lead a two-year, research-driven marketing initiative to increase consumer demand for Oregon-grown Christmas trees in priority domestic markets. The project builds on successful outcomes from a prior Specialty Crop Block Grant investment and expands proven strategies into new and emerging consumer regions critical to long-term grower viability. The purpose of the project is to equip the PNWCTA with actionable market intelligence and professionally developed marketing tools that reflect current consumer preferences and purchasing	\$250,000

		behaviors. Key deliverables include updated market research, targeted consumer messaging, digital and print marketing materials, and performance metrics that track engagement and market response. Expected outcomes include increased consumer awareness of Oregon-grown Christmas trees, stronger market targeting in selected regions, improved sales opportunities for growers, and documented findings from grower surveys that inform a scalable marketing model for broader industry use.	
Willamette Food and Farm Coalition	Expanding Willamette Valley Specialty Crop Promotion and Access	Willamette Farm and Food Coalition (WFFC) will expand access to and promotion of specialty crops throughout the Willamette Valley by strengthening regional marketing, expanding market access points, and increasing education. WFFC will publish two editions of the Locally Grown Guide (LGG)—Upper Willamette Valley and Lower Willamette Valley—each updated and distributed throughout multi-county regions twice annually. Each edition will include print distribution and an interactive online directory, producer listings and spotlights, and specialty crop education section. WFFC will host two launch events in each region annually to increase engagement WFFC will expand access to the fall Fill Your Pantry (FYP) bulk-buying program beyond Lane County by launching a second pickup location in Clackamas County for online pre-orders, and expanding vendors to include Upper Willamette Valley producers. We will expand delivery options and pre-order operations to support higher demand and increased consumer base north of Lane County.	\$198,550

		Additionally, WFFC will fund hands-on education through demonstrations and workshops virtually and in-person at farmers markets, focusing on the preparation, preservation, seasonality, and production of specialty crops. Across the project period, WFFC will increase consumer reach, expand distribution systems, grow producer participation, and increase specialty crop sales—advancing measurable market development for Willamette Valley producers. We are collaborating with many food hubs, cooperatives, farmers markets, and agricultural producers throughout the Willamette Valley.	
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