



2019 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM PROPOSAL SUMMARIES

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Name of Applicant Organization: Central Oregon Veterans Ranch
Project Title: Enhancing Specialty Crop Competitiveness with Hydroponic Growing Systems
Grant Request: \$120,469
Total Project Amount: \$236,373
Project Summary:

The Central Oregon Veterans Ranch (COVR) will design and build a hydroponic lettuce production system and integrate it with existing veteran-centered agriculture therapy and existing veteran transition education programs. This new production system will validate the use of hydroponics for increasing specialty crop production and enhancing small farm methods while increasing Oregon's farm workforce and benefiting veterans that are transitioning from service or suffering from combat trauma. The proposed project will convert an existing greenhouse into a hydroponic system for growing lettuce.

COVR is a non-profit, 19-acre working farm/ranch that provides a unique environment focused on helping veterans heal from combat trauma and transition from military service to civilian life. Part of the healing experience is the opportunity to do meaningful and purposeful agricultural work growing crops and rearing animals. The veterans learn new skills preparing them for civilian jobs in both agriculture and other related fields. Produce and animals from the ranch are sold to local markets and profits go to support farming operations and other Ranch therapeutic programs.

This project will significantly increase lettuce production and provide a classroom for training veterans preparing them for careers and jobs in farming. In addition, the hydroponic infrastructure will be offered to local universities, colleges and schools for research and studies. COVR currently has a working relationship with Oregon State University for similar programs. Data and experiences with the lettuce production will be shared statewide with farming organization and other interested entities.

Name of Applicant Organization: National Associations of State Departments of Agriculture Foundation

Project Title: Farm-to-Food Accelerator: Energizing growth for Oregon's Female Specialty Crop Producers

Grant Request: \$174,942

Total Project Amount: \$207,454

Project Summary:

The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) Foundation is partnering with the Oregon Department of Agriculture, Oregon State University Food Innovation Center, Washington State Department of Agriculture and Union Kitchen to develop a multi-state project to equip female specialty crop producers to grow their value-added businesses. NASDA Foundation and its partners will develop the Women's Farm to Food Accelerator. The goal of the accelerator is to empower Oregon and Washington female specialty crop producers with food and beverage products to enter into new state and regional markets. The 90-day accelerator will provide training in product development, food safety, marketing and business development. The accelerator will include online modules, peer-to-peer learning, a women's mentor network, and one-on-one consultations with experts. We will target female producers whose products contain at least 50 percent Oregon-grown and Washington-grown specialty crops. We will also target female producers with small operations (i.e., less than \$500,000 annual gross sales, less than 20 employees). Through this project, NASDA Foundation and its partners will train a total of 75 female specialty crop producers (30 from Oregon, 45 from Washington). After completing the accelerator, we anticipate the following outcomes: 100 percent of participating producers will increase their awareness of new markets for specialty crop products, 95 percent of participating producers will increase efficiency within their businesses as measured by the number of products reaching new markets or reduced costs, and 80 percent of participating producers will increase their sales of Oregon specialty crop value-added products.

Name of Applicant Organization: Northwest Cider Association
Project Title: Growing the Market for Oregon Craft Cider in California
Grant Request: \$173,158
Total Project Amount: \$321,755
Project Summary:

Northwest Cider Association (NWCA), representing a \$300 million economic impact to the state of Oregon, proposes a project to grow the market for Oregon craft cider by hosting targeted consumer and industry focused tastings in California. NWCA, based in Portland, supports cidemakers in growing consumer demand for local, premium hard cider. Oregon is leading the nation in cider consumption, with Oregon cider synonymous with quality. However, Oregon's market is not big enough to sustain the category growth. Despite being neighbors, California does not currently sell much Oregon-made cider, nor is California producing much cider. California's population of 40 million people is ten times higher than Oregon and represents a huge market potential for growth for a higher quality cider coming from Oregon's apples.

Description of general tasks of project:

1. Create content to explain cider as an agriculture-based alcoholic product, highlighting what differentiates high quality craft cider in Oregon (made from local apples) from national brands made from juice concentrate, as a way to share the story of Oregon's value-added hard cider.
2. Host dual trade and consumer tasting events in Northern and Southern California for key influencers and cider consumers to influence both to purchase Oregon cider.
3. Educate key influencers in the trade (bartenders, restaurateurs, chefs, wholesalers, distributors, media, etc) about the quality craft cider being made in Oregon. These are the people who control purchasing decisions and influence consumer decisions.
4. Drive sales of Oregon's quality cider among consumers and trade in the state of California.

Name of Applicant Organization: Oregon Aglink
Project Title: Adopt a Farmer Statewide Expansion
Grant Request: \$78,453.76
Total Project Amount: \$166,731.76
Project Summary:

Oregon Aglink will expand the Adopt a Farmer program on specialty crop farms into seven new counties in southern, central, and eastern Oregon which will double the specialty crop county engagement to a total of 14 of the state's 36 counties. During each academic year, all farm-classroom matches across the 14 total counties in this project will have one field trip to a specialty crop farm and at least two hands-on classroom visits from their farmer who will share their production practices, careers that help their farm succeed (agronomists, beekeepers, researchers, etc), and how their crops get to market so students, teachers and parents know where to buy Oregon specialty crops. Two career expos will also be held for middle school students in the new regions to increase student understanding of career opportunities in Oregon's specialty crop industry. New county classrooms will be linked with current Willamette Valley county schools by means of digital resources to broaden their understanding of specialty crop production across the state. This project's engagement with middle school students across the state will enhance the competitiveness of Oregon specialty crops through increased knowledge and consumption of a variety of specialty crops including but not limited to blueberries, cherries, peaches, garlic, onions, potatoes, and peppermint.

Name of Applicant Organization: Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation

Project Title: Exploring Oregon's Specialty Crops in the Classroom

Grant Request: \$56,416

Total Project Amount: \$65,231

Project Summary:

Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom will facilitate learning about Oregon's specialty crops through the development and enhancement of classroom-ready resources including curriculum, educational and promotional videos, educator workshops, virtual farm field trips and subscription-style boxes distributed to Oregon classrooms featuring Oregon's specialty crops

Name of Applicant Organization: Oregon Hazelnut Commission

Project Title: Enhancing and Scaling the Oregon Hazelnut Sustainability and Stewardship Program

Grant Request: \$166,600

Total Project Amount: \$262,166

Project Summary:

The Oregon Hazelnut Commission (OHC) seeks to enhance the competitiveness of the Oregon hazelnut industry through targeted outreach, education, and improved farm-level reporting capabilities for hazelnut growers designed to increase productivity through adoption of best management practices (BMPs) and identification of areas for improvement in production and pest management practices. The OHC will use funding to scale and enhance its preexisting Sustainability and Stewardship Program by upgrading and expanding its current Pilot Project implementation. Specific proposed activities include: updating grower-oriented educational materials and Workbook; updating the existing online grower education and data collection platform to include new data collection and reporting tools; conducting grower workshops to increase participation in the Sustainability and Stewardship Program; analyzing data on the implementation of BMPs; using data analyzed from the online platform to inform educational programs and incentives to increase implementation of BMPs; and, leveraging the results from the fully implemented Oregon Hazelnut Sustainability and Stewardship Program to tell the story of Oregon Hazelnuts industry practices to potential buyers.

Name of Applicant Organization: Oregon Raspberry and Blackberry Commission
Project Title: Consumer Research and Domestic Market Development for Processed Oregon Berries
Grant Request: \$153,481
Total Project Amount: \$187,888.20
Project Summary:

The Oregon Raspberry & Blackberry Commission (ORBC) and Oregon Strawberry Commission (OSC) will obtain market knowledge via an indepth research study, and leverage this information to improve market development and access for processed Northwest berries and value-added berry products in key domestic US markets.

The research will provide a better understanding of consumers, the marketplace, market positioning, and the competitive landscape, and will comprise of:

- A series of 8 focus groups: 2 per region in the Northwest, Southwest, Midwest, and East
- Business interviews with chefs and product developers (10)
- A quantitative research study (national, 750+ respondents)

This information will be used to develop data-driven educational priorities and in-market communication campaign to provide exposure to Oregon berries, better connect our farmers to consumers, and ultimately to drive sales of IQF, canned and freeze-dried berries as well as value added products outside of the traditional summer berry season. This program will serve as a best practice model to benefit future domestic market development opportunities. Program elements will include:

- Communication toolkit for packers and industry: presentation slides, infographic images, brochure, recipes booklet (6 – 5 ORBC, 1 OSC)
- In-Store educational program in the regions with the biggest market potential (4 cities selected): sampling, recipes, special displays working with a local retail partner
- Top food experts/local media event to engage local consumers and influencers (4 events)
- Supporting an in-depth social media campaign

Name of Applicant Organization: Oregon State University – Brunharo

Project Title: Integrated weed management in turfgrass seed production: reducing weed-seed contamination

Grant Request: \$174,608

Total Project Amount: \$186,343

Project Summary:

The goal of this project is to develop a more solid understanding of the management of turfgrass seed crop residue as an integrated weed management tool to reduce weed-seed/volunteer crop seed contamination in commercial turfgrass seed lots. Gaining this knowledge and completing the associated Extension and teaching efforts related to this research will lead to more effective, economical and sustainable weed management practices and increase the competitiveness and acceptance of Oregon turfgrass seed in domestic and international markets.

To achieve these research and Extension goals, we will evaluate the effects of crop residue on weed suppression under controlled environments and in growers' fields, perform field and laboratory experiments to understand the dynamics of weed-seed germination and how the weed seedbank changes over time with the presence or absence of crop residue, and conduct adsorption-desorption experiments in the laboratory and in the field to understand the fate of herbicides applied to the crop residue. To disseminate the knowledge obtained from this research to stakeholders and the broad scientific community, field days, e-newsletters, scientific presentations and peer-reviewed publications will be produced by the lead PI's and associated OSU faculty.

Name of Applicant Organization: Oregon State University – Nackley

Project Title: Promoting Sensor-Based Irrigation Management

Grant Request: \$152,098

Total Project Amount: \$172,498

Project Summary:

The Oregon State University (OSU) and OSU Extension service, in partnership with the University of Idaho (UI) and Oregon's Nursery, Wine grapes, and Hazelnut growers, will enhance irrigation efficiency by 1) developing sensor-based irrigation management protocols for Oregon perennial crop production, 2) promote these protocols to the public and 3) highlight economic and environmental benefits associated with increased irrigation efficiencies. As labor shortages continue to limit production, we will enhance the competitiveness of perennial specialty crop production in Oregon by helping growers incorporate technologies that support automation and semi-automation. Our program will also improve the competitiveness of perennial crops production by creating monitoring and management systems that are more resilient to drought and heat stress. Our program will adapt viable sensor technologies developed for other production systems and modify them for Oregon's climate to increase crop production., We expect to share the knowledge about the science-based tools we will develop with hundreds of Oregon growers each year at our Extension programs, and through our collaborator's networks. The success of this project is high because it builds on significant infrastructure and research investment by OSU and UI. Over the past few years, the researchers and partnered growers, have pioneered investigations into new technologies to monitor crop water demand. On this solid foundation, we will build a program that will provide water-management solutions for some of the most valuable crops in Oregon.

Name of Applicant Organization: Oregon State University – Park
Project Title: Investigation of microbiome shift by plant probiotic in strawberry plant
Grant Request: \$174,578
Total Project Amount: \$189,062
Project Summary:

Oregon is a heart of strawberries with bright red color, sweetness, juicy and exceptional taste in the United States. Many environmental factors are crucial for determining the qualities of strawberries and Oregon has optimal climate conditions for strawberry cultivation including long mild seasons (spring and summer) and rain (average 40 in) which are directly related to the taste. Although most cultivated strawberries in Oregon are processed to make jam, puree, and other processed foods, fresh strawberries are easily accessible at roadside stands or farmers' markets. In general, the strawberry has been considered a safe fruit due to high acid contents, but several foodborne illnesses were reported because strawberries are typically grown outside and can be easily contaminated by irrigation water, soil, compost, animals and humans. Recent studies have provided positive evidence in usage of **plant probiotic, plant growth promoting rhizobacteria (PGPR)** as a **biostimulant** that increases safety and efficiency of variety of crop production. Dr. Park's group in the Department of Food Science and Technology at Oregon State University will grow strawberries supplemented with a commercial PGPR in a local strawberry farm to monitor the effects on the strawberry. Tasks to be completed during the project include the following: 1) **Function of probiotic (PGPR) on strawberry soil microbiome** will be evaluated using a next generation sequencing (NGS); 2) **Prevalence of 3 common foodborne pathogens (pathogenic *Escherichia coli*, *Salmonella* genus and *Listeria monocytogenes*)** will be assessed via multiplex polymerase chain reaction (PCR) assay; and 3) **Sensory and quality evaluation of strawberries**

Name of Applicant Organization: Pacific Coast Producers

Project Title: Expanding value-added Oregon cherry sales among domestic restaurants and bars.

Grant Request: \$174,943

Total Project Amount: \$211,393

Project Summary:

Pacific Coast Producers, a farmer-owned cooperative, serves 50 Oregon cherry growers and about 20 percent of Oregon's sweet cherry crop (specialty crop) through Oregon Cherry Growers, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the cooperative. On behalf of the cherry growers it serves, Pacific Coast Producers/Oregon Cherry Growers processes Oregon sweet cherries through three cherry manufacturing facilities (one in Salem, two in The Dalles) and markets value-added Oregon cherry products through various channels, including foodservice, retail, and export markets.

Through this project, Pacific Coast Producers seeks to build sales for value-added products made solely from Oregon sweet cherries in the foodservice channel, targeting restaurants and bars purchasing cherries as ingredients for cocktails and specialty beverages. Expected Measurable Outcome is to increase sales by 10 percent. Great opportunity exists to build demand in this growing market segment, especially if decision makers can be reached with information sharing the high value and versatile use of value-added Oregon cherries. Grant funding will support the following general tasks: development of marketing collateral communicating value and use of value-added Oregon sweet cherry products; attendance at trade shows reaching decision makers for restaurant and bar ingredient purchases; partnering with social media influencers to promote content and recipes using value-added Oregon sweet cherry products; and public relations efforts to generate stories in publications popular with decision makers for ingredient purchases at restaurants and bars. Matching funds of marketing personnel time support project success.

Name of Applicant Organization: Pear Bureau Northwest

Project Title: Fresh USA Pears Industry Video for Worldwide Distribution

Grant Request: \$43,670

Total Project Amount: \$62,222

Project Summary:

Pear Bureau Northwest (PBNW) will seek to increase consumption of USA Pears / NW Pears through a global introductory and educational video telling the story of Oregon pear industry. The video will be released to the trade in 30 or more countries worldwide during trade discussions and trade shows. Additionally, the video will be shared with consumers through social media outreach in domestic markets and worldwide, as appropriate. PBNW attends at four to five major international produce events, including Produce Marketing Associations Fresh Summit in the US, Canadian Produce Marketing Association, Fruit Logistica Asia and Berlin, and ANTAD in Latin America. The video will be used to tell the USA Pears story to interested buyers, potentially reaching up to 20,000 or more. Additionally, the video will be distributed to buyers world-wide in 11 languages reaching another 2,000 during the project. Finally, portions of the story will be isolated and shared via worldwide social media platforms, potentially creating another 500,000 impressions.

Name of Applicant Organization: Rockwood CDC

Project Title: Communities of color embrace Oregon's specialty crops

Grant Request: \$175,000

Total Project Amount: \$211,850

Project Summary:

The Rockwood CDC and its partners will increase the consumption of specialty crops among Oregon's communities of color. Rockwood is Oregon's most diverse community, with over 100 languages spoken at home in just a two square mile area. It is also among Oregon's lowest income populations and has the worst health outcomes. In response, we: work with our neighbors to run the Sunrise Center; act as the hub for a food systems collaborative; build on the policy work in our community, Gresham's and Centennial School District's Healthy Eating, Active Living policy implementation and Federally Qualified Health Center board work, all based on the social determinants of health This program nests under the broader umbrella of our expanding Rockwood Food Systems Network: supported by community gardens, Outgrowing Hunger; black farmer's development programs; local food pantries; nutrition education from Oregon State University Extension's Food Hero and SNAP education working with limited income Oregonians; and local health clinics, Wallace Medical Concern and food as medicine Rockwood Kaiser Permanente.

Name of Applicant Organization: Wilco Farmers

Project Title: Growing Oregon Hazelnut Sales in Northeast Foodservice Markets

Grant Request: \$174,904

Total Project Amount: \$227,554

Project Summary:

Wilco Farmers, a farmer cooperative, cooperatively owned by ~3,000 producer-owners, including 216 hazelnut growers, seeks to grow domestic sales of Oregon hazelnuts (specialty crop) by approximately 567 percent by December 2020 (see *Expected Measurable Outcomes*). This goal would be fulfilled by increasing awareness of and demand for Oregon hazelnuts among Northeast domestic foodservice buyers, who purchase whole, sliced, and/or diced hazelnuts to use as an ingredient in products and dishes. General tasks to accomplish this goal include: creating product exposure and promoting Oregon hazelnuts at six significant domestic food tradeshow targeting foodservice buyers; developing brochures and collateral for the tradeshow; building website resources specific to foodservice customers; a PR campaign focused on foodservice buyers; developing a digital and social media marketing campaign targeting domestic foodservice buyers; as well as placing advertisements promoting Oregon hazelnuts in foodservice publications targeting foodservice customers. Marketing messages would focus on the unique attributes of Oregon hazelnuts, including the health properties of Oregon hazelnuts as well as the uses and versatility of the specialty crop. Results would be shared with growers and project partners throughout the project period.