



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Rural Development
1550 Earl Core Road, Suite 101 • Morgantown, WV 26505

Phone: 304.284.4860 OR 1.800.295.8228 • Fax: 304.284.4893 • TDD: 304.284.4836 • Web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/wv>

Gail Bennett, Public Affairs Specialist – (304) 366-2921, ext. 214
Contact: Office of Communications (202) 720-4623

Agriculture Deputy Secretary Merrigan Announces Funding To Create Jobs and Strengthen the Economic Foundation of Rural America

Projects to Assist Agricultural Producers, Farmers, Ranchers, Small Business and Cooperatives

CHICAGO, February 3, 2012 - Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan today announced that USDA has selected 298 recipients in 44 states and Puerto Rico to receive business development assistance through the Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program. Merrigan made the announcement in Chicago after keynoting the “Local/Regional Food System Conference” hosted at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago.

“In his State of the Union address last week President Obama was clear that we need to do more to create jobs and promote economic growth. These projects will provide financial returns and help create jobs for agricultural producers, businesses and families across the country,” Merrigan said. “This funding will promote small business expansion and entrepreneurship opportunities by providing local businesses with access capital, technical assistance and new markets for products and services.”

For example, Bloomery Plantation Distillery, LLC, of Charles Town, Jefferson County, West Virginia, will utilize their \$49,000 grant, leveraged with an applicant contribution, as working capital to produce and market hand-crafted, artisan fruit cordials using farm-grown produce. Value-Added Producer Grants are made available to agricultural producers seeking to establish or expand markets for their value-added agricultural products.

Another example, Living Water Farms, Inc. is a three-year-old family company that focuses on the production of hydroponic greens for specialty markets in the Midwest. Located in Strawn, two hours south of Chicago’s Loop, three generations of the Kilgus family are part of a group called Stewards of the Land which was organized to market produce from small farms. The hydroponic complex was developed to supply fresh produce year-round. The current market includes Illinois supermarkets, restaurants in Chicago and St. Louis and a Midwest college food service program. The grant will help them evaluate their brand and expand distribution to other restaurants, specialty retail and institutional outlets.

One of the examples of how an award can make an impact is Agriberry LLC, located near Mechanicsville, Virginia. Agriberry is the dream of Anne and Chuck Geyer whose vision is to establish a consumer supported summer berry farm and become an agricultural training facility for first-time workers. They realized the region’s demand for an assortment of fresh, local, seasonal berries and fruits. With the assistance of a working capital value-added grant, Agriberry

Committed to the future of rural communities.

“USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.”
To file a complaint of discrimination write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.,
Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD).

has now expanded to over 35 acres of red raspberries, and other fruit. They hire a number of local workers each growing season.

Green Mountain Organic Creamery, LLC in North Ferrisburgh, Vt., will receive a working capital grant to market certified organic, bottled pasteurized milk, butter, ice cream and other dairy products. Owners Cheryl and John DeVos founded the dairy to provide local, organic dairy products to the community and throughout the Northeast. Green Mountain was recognized as the Vermont Dairy of the Year in 2011.

For a complete list of recipients receiving grants please [click here](#). Funding of individual recipients is contingent upon their meeting the conditions of the grant agreement.

The [Value-Added Producer Grants](#) announced today total more than \$40.2 million. Funds may be used for feasibility studies or business plans, working capital for marketing value-added agricultural products and for farm-based renewable energy projects. Eligible applicants include independent producers, farmer and rancher cooperatives, agricultural producer groups, and majority-controlled producer-based business ventures. Value-added products are created when a producer increases the consumer value of an agricultural commodity in the production or processing stage.

USDA, through its Rural Development mission area, administers and manages housing, business and community infrastructure and facility programs through a national network of state and local offices. Rural Development has an active portfolio of more than \$155 billion in affordable loans and loan guarantees. These programs are designed to improve the economic stability of rural communities, businesses, residents, farmers and ranchers and improve the quality of life in rural America. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA Rural Development's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.

#