



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture – Rural Development

World Wide Web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ca>

Ben Higgins, State Director

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Contact: Sarah Pursley
Office: (530) 792-5801
Cell: (916) 798-9295

GRANT SUPPORTS CENTRAL COAST AGRICULTURE

USDA Rural Development grant will allow Central Coast agriculturalists to better market and distribute products locally.

PASO ROBLES, Calif., July 26, 2007 – In conjunction with the California Mid-State Fair’s Cattlemen & Farmers Day celebrations today, USDA Rural Development State Director Ben Higgins presented an \$88,000 Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) check to Chuck Pritchard, Central Coast Resource Conservation and Development Council (CCRC&D) President. The grant funds will assist in creating a new cooperative business that will market and distribute locally grown produce and meat products, as well as complete a mobile harvest facility for area livestock producers.

“In today’s global marketplace, California’s farmers and ranchers understand that they need to stay on the cutting edge of innovation to stay competitive,” said Higgins. “By supporting new production and marketing strategies, this grant will improve the competitiveness of Central Coast agriculturalists, while giving consumers more access to locally-grown produce and meat products.”

USDA Rural Development’s RBEG funds are available to rural communities, non-profit corporations and tribes for projects that strengthen the economic conditions of rural areas through business and job development and training as well as project planning. CCRC&D will use funds to help local agriculture producers create a cooperative business for processing, marketing and distribution of centrally grown produce and meat products.

“Farm Bureau supports all opportunities for marketing locally grown and produced value added agriculture products,” said Paul Clark, President of the San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau. “This grant will go a long way in supporting these two programs that will benefit our local farmers and ranchers and those who purchase their products”.

USDA Rural Development’s mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. As a venture capital entity, Rural Development has invested over \$76 billion since the beginning of the Bush Administration to provide equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. As a result, over 1.5 million jobs have been created or saved through these investments. Further information on rural programs is available at one of California’s 25 local USDA Rural Development offices or by visiting <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ca>.

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United States Department of Agriculture • Rural Development
430 G Street, Agency 4169, Davis, CA 95616-4169
Telephone (530) 792-5801 Fax (530) 792-5837
<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ca>