

JB PRITZKER, GOVERNOR · JERRY COSTELLO II, DIRECTOR

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## **USDA Announces Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Funding Awarded to Illinois**

**SPRINGFIELD, IL-** The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) today awarded over \$544,000 in Fiscal Year 2023 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) funding to Illinois. With this grant, the Illinois Department of Agriculture will fund projects that enhance the competitiveness of specialty crop products and create new market opportunities for the state’s specialty crop producers.

“Illinois farmers build the backbone of our state’s number one industry—generating billions in revenue and making sure our families are fed,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “Thanks to the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program and the USDA, we are dispersing more than half a million dollars across eight projects, so our specialty crop producers have the resources they need to not just continue the work they love most, but dive into exciting new endeavors that will benefit our communities and our industry alike.”

“In order for our residents to have fresh and nutrient-dense food at our tables, we must continue to invest in our state’s number one industry,” **said Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton**. “The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program will fund and support our local farmers in every corner of our state.”

“With this year’s Specialty Crop Block Grant funding, Illinois is investing in innovative projects that will help address the needs of specialty crop producers within the region,” **said USDA Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Jenny Lester Moffitt**. “The funded projects will also further USDA’s efforts to ensure U.S. specialty crop products remain competitive in markets across the nation and abroad.”

Through the SCBGP, the Illinois Department of Agriculture will fund eight projects. Among IDOA’s projects is \$50,000 for the Gardeneers’ Growing Food + Equitable Justice Project where gardeneers will partner with schools in under-resourced communities. Additional funded projects focus on areas including urban agriculture, disease mitigation in cucurbits, and the shelf life of strawberries.

“Illinois is proud to be the number one producer of pumpkins and horseradish in the United States and is a top-ten producer of asparagus, cauliflower, fresh-cut herbs, peas, mustard greens and lima beans,” **said Jerry Costello II, Director of the Illinois Department of Agriculture**. “To be able to provide these resources to our specialty crop producers who not only support our state, but also the nation, is very rewarding.”

The funding to Illinois is part of a total of \$72.9 million in non-competitive FY 2023 SCBGP funding awarded to 54 states, territories, and the District of Columbia. The SCBGP funding supports farmers growing specialty crops, including fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, and nursery crops. USDA's support will strengthen U.S. specialty crop production and markets, ensuring an abundant, affordable supply of highly nutritious fruits, vegetables, and other specialty crops, which are vital to the health and well-being of all Americans.

The funding for the SCBGP grants is authorized by the 2018 Farm Bill and FY2023 funding is awarded for a three-year period beginning Sept. 30, 2023. Since 2006, USDA has invested over \$1 billion through the SCBGP to fund nearly 12,000 projects that have increased the long-term successes of producers and enhanced marketing opportunities for U.S. specialty crops products.

More information about these awards is available on this webpage: [Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Fiscal Year 2023 Description of Funded Projects - Farm Bill \(usda.gov\)](https://www.usda.gov/press-releases/2023/02/23/2023-02-23-specialty-crop-block-grant-program-fiscal-year-2023-description-of-funded-projects-farm-bill)

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