

GRANT PROGRAM ENCOURAGES REGIONAL AG PROJECTS

The Agricultural Innovation and Value-Added Agriculture Grant Program is funded through the Nebraska Department of Economic and administered by the Rural Development Commission. Maximum awards are \$75,000 and the projects must be completed within one year from grant announcement. The grant further requires that the project must benefit more than one enterprise, person or entity.

The collaborative requirement of the program has resulted in several new value-added agriculture products, enabled construction, renovation and expansion of processing facilities; and allowed small regional clusters of producers to thrive. Examples of clusters include marketing cooperatives, wineries who purchase local grapes and other fruits, a vinery who purchases local fruits, programs purchasing local produce for use in school meal programs, and gift baskets of regional foods and products. Other projects produced goat cheese from several goat dairies, regional tourism activities based on hunting, agri-tourism, and product availability. Incorporating specialty crops, other projects included nut harvesting, popcorn, ethnic crops, and wine-flavored ice cream.

More information about funded projects can be found on the handouts for 'Aw Nuts, Community Crops, Extreme Entrepreneurs, Picked a Peck of Pickled Peppers, A Sweet Deal, and Trails to Success. Contact Nebraska Rural Development Commission, Linda.Fettig@nebraska.gov or 308380-4966.

