

## The Honorable Susan Combs

Commissioner  
Texas Department of Agriculture  
P.O. Box 12847  
Capitol Station  
Austin, Texas 78711  
(512)463-7476  
Fax (512)463-1104

Base Grant: \$500,000  
Specialty Crop Grant: \$2,660,000



## GO TEXAN.

### **Base Grant:**

#### **GO TEXAN – Marketing and Promotion:**

Texas Department of Agriculture, \$500,000.

Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) purchased television airtime in major Texas media markets to run a previously produced, award-winning public service announcement featuring Academy Award-winning actor Tommy Lee Jones touting the value of purchasing Texas agricultural products in support of Texas farmers and ranchers. The spots provided high-profile exposure for the GO TEXAN program, TDA's unified campaign promoting everything from Texas food, fiber, and wine to livestock, horticulture, and forestry products. The signature GO TEXAN logo (a glowing brand in the shape of Texas) helps shoppers quickly spot Texas products at a glance.

### **Block Grant:**

#### **Marketing Activities:**

Texas Department of Agriculture, \$1,096,077.

TDA developed and launched a multi-faceted \$1.1 million marketing effort to promote Texas specialty crops, including fresh produce and Texas horticultural products. This campaign included the following activities:

#### **Advertising and Printed Materials**

TDA spread the word about Texas specialty crops with publications ranging from the *Texas Wine Grape Guide* and *Cut Flower Manual* to the Texas pick-your-own and farmers market brochures, the *Texas Produce Directory*, *Texas Horticulture Directory*, Texas forestry brochure, *Texas Christmas Tree Farm Directory* and more. Colanders, shovels, cutting boards and gardening knee pads are some of the new and unique promotional materials TDA selected to help spread the word out about Texas specialty crops.

Specialty crops were also promoted through advertisements in publications such as *The Packer* and *Produce Business*, with offers to

provide copies of TDA's *Texas Produce Directory*, recipe cards and other materials. TDA also teamed up with prominent Texas retailers to promote Texas crops through full-page newspaper and store advertisements (see Promotions and Tastings, below).

#### **Promotions and Tastings**

In-store promotions and demonstrations were held in major grocery stores in Texas and the Midwest to raise awareness of Texas produce. In tandem with these efforts, TDA purchased newspaper and store advertisements to generate greater interest in the promotions and demonstrations. An initial impact report showed that promoted commodities experienced a 48 percent increase in sales overall, with some experiencing more than a 180 percent increase.

#### **Trade Shows and Travel**

TDA promoted Texas specialty crops at trade shows and events across the state and as far away as Canada. Texas producers generated more than 1,000 potential new buyers through these activities. Recipe cards and cooking demonstrations featuring Texas produce items were developed for other high-profile events, such as the Texas Restaurant Association's Southwest Foodservice Expo, which draws food buyers from across the southwest region. Solid leads were developed at every event, including the SYSCO Food Service Show, the Food Marketing Institute, All Things Organic and several regional and state horticultural shows.

#### **Workshops**

To assist producers with marketing strategies, TDA organized workshops across the state, bringing in major retail buyers to talk about their buying processes and empowering producers with marketing strategies and ideas. The workshops linked the efforts of TDA, the Texas Cooperative Extension,

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**BLOCK GRANT:**  
**MarketingActivities:**  
**Workshops**  
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grower associations and wholesale and retail buyers. Participant surveys showed that attendees felt the workshops met nearly all of their objectives for gaining knowledge (97 percent), promoting products (96 percent) and gaining market contacts (89 percent).

**Web site**

In late August 2002, TDA launched its new "Pick Texas" Web site, a comprehensive resource promoting everything from fresh Texas produce, plants and farmers markets to choose-and-cut Christmas tree farms and foodservice items. The site includes lists and directions for pick-your-own destinations, markets, farms and more, and nutrition information for children related to top Texas fruit and vegetable commodities. Seasonal availability and tips for selecting and storing Texas produce and plants are also included. The Web address is [www.PickTexas.com](http://www.PickTexas.com). According to TDA's Information Resources division, the Web site remains one of the top hits for all the agency's Web content.

**Nutrition Projects:**

[Texas Department of Agriculture and Partnering Agencies, \\$488,058.](#)

Under TDA's nutrition effort, Commissioner Susan Combs launched Healthy Food for Healthy Kids in February 2002, encouraging children to include more Texas fruits and vegetables in their diets. This effort included the following activities:

**In-School Nutrition Promotion**

TDA developed Healthy Food for Healthy Kids bookmarks, book covers, stickers, pencils, posters and coloring books featuring fun illustrations of top Texas crops and information on proper nutrition. A special kids' section was also added to the new specialty crop Web site at [www.PickTexas.com](http://www.PickTexas.com). Commissioner Combs visited with students, educators and parents at targeted schools throughout the state to also help spread the word. This effort was carried out with input from the Texas Education Agency's Coordinated Approach to Children's Health (CATCH) program. TDA also provided materials and information on Texas fruits and vegetables to Texas public foodservice directors through participation in summer education service center workshops and seminars.

As of January 2004, TDA had distributed nutrition-related materials promoting Texas fruits and vegetables to more than 250

school districts across the state. Follow-up surveys will track the impact of these efforts. According to follow-up surveys returned to date, participating school districts noted that these materials improved students' recognition of available Texas produce and encouraged the school to purchase Texas produce for use in daily school meals.

**Non-School Nutrition Promotion**

TDA produced and ran bilingual radio spots in English and Spanish in at-risk counties across the state for an eight-week period to promote Texas fruits and vegetables as part of a healthy diet for children. Texas Department of Human Services considers an at-risk county one where 60 percent of the county's children are eligible for free or reduced meals and less than 20 percent participate in the summer foodservice program. The radio spots ran in 72 broadcast markets.

**Lone Star Card**

Teaming up with the Texas Department of Human Services, TDA also kicked off a pilot program at six Texas farmers markets, enabling the markets to accept the Lone Star Card, an electronic debit card that transfers food stamp benefits. TDA designed materials such as posters, newspaper advertisements and shopping list pads to help market the pilot projects.

**Pest and Disease Programs:**

[Texas Department of Agriculture, \\$697,500.](#)

As global trade continues to increase, the risk of introducing an exotic pest into a sensitive area is greatly magnified. TDA's ongoing efforts to effectively safeguard Texas agriculture from the threat of pest invasion has greatly benefited from the funding for these initiatives and will enhance the agency's ability to protect Texas producers and consumers while assisting with phytosanitary certification needs.

**Sweet Potato Weevil Detection Project**

Intensive survey and trapping in several East Texas counties continues to identify boundaries and help TDA focus efforts in areas of pest infestation. Survey actions help determine which of the efforts for control and eradication are most beneficial and cost effective for future marketing plans. Well-defined areas ease the burden of additional phytosanitary proof on producers in adjacent weevil-free zones.

## Citrus Root Weevil Eradication Project

The goal of this project is to assist in the ongoing eradication of this pest and to limit the spread of this weevil. No citrus root weevils were detected outside of the quarantined area, and the number of weevils detected in the quarantined area was reduced by one half from the previous year. Without clearly defining the infested area and the eradication activities, other states would consider the entire state of Texas as infested and severely restrict nursery trade.

## Citrus Pests and Diseases

Funding provided for the application of insecticidal sprays at the sites of Mexican Fruit Fly (Mexfly) and Sapote fruit fly detections. It also assisted in fruit fly survey activities and eradication of these exotic pests. Treatment efforts have been very successful in reducing populations of these fruit flies, and have delayed additional quarantining and fumigation of citrus from producing zones. Successful eradication of these fruit flies greatly enhances the marketability of Texas citrus fruits to other states and countries.

## 72-Hour Road Station Inspections

By monitoring traffic that may carry plants, diseases or pests of regulatory concern, this project enabled TDA to better protect Texas agriculture from the introduction of exotic pests and diseases. Ten separate 72-hour road station inspections were conducted, helping to identify out-of-state areas from which product was being shipped and allowing for communication with those states to assist in their phytosanitary certification efforts.

## Plum Pox Project

This project was used to determine if Plum Pox Virus had been introduced into Texas stone fruit orchards. Extensive surveys were performed and all samples were found to be negative for plum pox. An added benefit to the sampling was to confirm that nursery stock ordered from Texas nurseries was free of Plum Pox Virus.

## Japanese Beetle Project

The goal of this project was to monitor the establishment of Japanese Beetles (JB) in certain Texas counties through detection and delimitation surveys. The data from TDA

surveys suggests that JB populations are either very low or are not established in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. Currently, Smith, Van Zandt and Wood Counties are positive for JB. When an area can be declared as JB-free, it reduces the phytosanitary burden on the nursery industry.

## Nematode Survey of Texas Potato Fields

A nematode pest of international regulatory concern, potato root-knot nematode, was identified in a Texas potato field. This resulted in all Texas-grown potatoes being prohibited entry into Mexico and Canada. Surveys of potato fields were conducted to determine the extent of the infestation, and the results of this survey indicated that the infestation had not migrated to other counties. Data collected from this survey established areas free of nematode pests of international regulatory concern and made products from these areas eligible for previously closed export markets. This data has also proven to be beneficial to the Texas nursery industry for marketing to out-of-state locations.

## Research Projects:

[Texas Department of Agriculture, \\$378,365.](#)

### Evaluating Nutraceutical Compounds in Texas Fruits and Vegetables

[Texas A&M University, Texas Agricultural Experiment Station.](#)

Texas fruits and vegetables that have high human disease-prevention compounds, known as nutraceuticals, were evaluated. The breeds evaluated were not suitable for the fresh market due to shape, size, color or taste, but could be used as raw materials for extracting nutraceutical compounds. These compounds could then be used in juices, frozen treats, sherbet, yogurt and other specialties targeting children and the elderly. The lead researcher was Leonard Pike, a professor and director of the Vegetable & Fruit Improvement Center in College Station.

### Pecan Health Benefits

[Texas A&M University, Texas Agricultural Experiment Station.](#)

Clinical studies were done to evaluate the health benefits of consuming a recommended two ounces of pecans a day—an amount that

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is believed to help reduce heart-attack risks. The lead researcher was Rosemary Wazem, a TAMU nutrition professor in College Station.

### **New Potato Varieties**

[Texas A&M University](#), [Texas Agricultural Experiment Station](#).

About 200 specialty potato varieties were planted and evaluated in three locations across Texas to identify new specialty types that are adapted to the state's harsh growing climates and have superior taste and culinary qualities. The lead researcher was J. Creighton Miller Jr., a TAMU horticulture professor in College Station.

### **Specialty Varieties of Habanero and Ancho Peppers**

[Texas A&M University](#), [Texas Agricultural Experiment Station](#).

Economically sound growing strategies were developed for growing colored Habanero (yellow, orange and red) and Ancho peppers in South Texas. The lead investigator was Daniel Leskovar, a TAMU vegetable physiologist in Uvalde.

### **Irrigation Guidelines for Texas Wine Grapes**

[Texas A&M University](#), [Texas Agricultural Experiment Station](#).

Previously, Texas wine grape growers had no guidelines on vineyard water use to help schedule irrigation. The project used evapotranspiration formulas to develop irrigation guidelines for Texas' vineyards, which will allow growers to use water more efficiently as well as improve fruit and wine quality. The lead investigator was Edward Hellman, a TAMU associate professor of viticulture in Lubbock.

### **Controlling a Green Bean Pest**

[Texas A&M University](#),  
[Texas Cooperative Extension](#).

Green bean growers in West Texas and eastern New Mexico are threatened with market loss due to increasing corn earworm damage to their crops produced for processing plants. The project evaluated why current control methods are not working on the insects. The lead investigator was Patrick Porter, an extension entomologist in Lubbock.

### **Detecting Citrus Root Weevils**

[Texas A&M University](#),  
[Texas Cooperative Extension](#).

The project conducted a survey for citrus root weevils in selected citrus groves in the Lower Rio Grande Valley to help enhance control measures. The lead investigator was Juan Anciso, a TAMU assistant professor and extension vegetable specialist in Weslaco.

### **Salinity Tolerance in Ornamental Plants**

[Texas A&M University](#), [Texas Agricultural Experiment Station](#).

The salinity tolerance of Texas-grown roses and crape myrtles—major economically important landscape plants for Texas growers—was evaluated. Texas produces 16 percent to 20 percent of the nation's rose garden plants, with estimated annual sales valued at \$50 million. Initial results indicate that by changing irrigation methods, Texas nursery crops and landscapes will be able to be irrigated with reclaimed, recycled or saline water. The lead researcher was Raul Cabrera, a Texas A&M University professor in Dallas.

### **Improving the Texas Confectionery Sunflower Crop**

[Texas A&M University](#),  
[Texas Cooperative Extension](#).

The project offered farmers management guidelines to improve sunflower crop performance to help increase confectionery sunflower acreage. The lead researcher was Calvin Trostle, a Texas Cooperative Extension agronomist and TAMU professor in Lubbock.

### **Adapting Sweet Clover for Central Texas**

[Texas A&M University](#), [Texas Agricultural Experiment Station](#).

Adapted annual sweet clover was identified and tested for growth in Central Texas. Sweet clover is currently used in the eastern third of Texas to control weeds and fertilize pastures naturally by fixing nitrogen in soil. Previously, no improved varieties of sweet clover were available for 12.5 million acres of neutral to alkaline soils in the 20- to 35-inch rainfall zone of Central Texas. An improved variety will provide soil benefits to Central Texas and be valuable to organic farmers looking for a well-adapted and productive legume to use as a winter cover crop and nitrogen source. The lead researcher was Gerald Evers, a TAMU professor in

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Overton.

### **Using Cowpea Crops in the Panhandle**

[Texas A&M University, Texas Agricultural Experiment Station.](#)

Cowpea crops were evaluated for use in the current Panhandle cropping systems because they have the potential to provide a dryland source of high-quality fiber, and they can help improve soil sustainability in the Texas Panhandle. The lead investigator was Charlie Rush, a Texas Agricultural Experiment Station professor in Bushland.

### **Enhancing Guar Production in the Texas South Plains**

[Texas A&M University, Texas Cooperative Extension.](#)

Experiments were conducted with guar— a drought-tolerant legume grown for forage and for its seeds that produce guar gum—to enhance guar-stand establishment. About 42,000 acres of guar are now planted annually in the Texas South Plains. Guar acreage also is expected to increase with the organization of a guar processing plant in Brownfield. The lead researcher was Calvin Trostle, a Texas Cooperative Extension agronomist and professor in Lubbock.

### **Rain-fed Alfalfa in East Texas**

[Texas A&M University, Texas Agricultural Experiment Station.](#)

Production requirements were developed for alfalfa in the high rainfall and humid regions of East Texas, where alfalfa had not been commonly grown for forage. Alfalfa can provide East Texas ranchers with highly nutritious forage that does not require the use of nitrogen fertilizers. The project coordinator was Vincent Haby, a TAMU soil scientist in Overton.