

The Honorable Charles Bronson

Commissioner
Florida Department of Agriculture &
Consumer Services
The Capitol, PL10
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0810
(850)488-3022, Fax (850)922-4936



Base Grant: \$500,000
Specialty Crop Grant: \$16,860,000
Total Grant: \$17,360,000

"Fresh From Florida"

Retail Marketing Campaign:

\$500,000.

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services conducted a retail marketing campaign with thirty-four supermarket chains (5,286 outlets) in twenty-five States and two provinces in Canada promoting "Fresh from Florida" agricultural products from February 9 - May 31, 2003. Sales for the targeted commodities increased by over \$144 million due to these marketing efforts. This was the largest marketing campaign ever conducted by the Department and would not have been possible if not for the Specialty Crop Block Grant provided by Congress. Many agricultural producers and economists in the state cite this marketing effort as one of the reasons Florida's spring acreage saw a 4% increase while other states experienced decreased acreage over the same period. Retailers reported increased sales ranging from 25% to 100% of these Florida products. One of the participating Canadian retailers reported that the strawberry promotion resulted in a 218% increase in sales of that commodity. In all, nineteen Florida commodities (avocados, blueberries, cabbage, carrots, cucumbers, eggplant, grapefruit, bell peppers, oranges, potatoes, radishes, snap beans, squash, strawberries, sweet corn, tangerines, tomatoes, variety lettuces and watermelon) were included in the promotional efforts.

Expanding The Market Place:

Domestic & International Marketing \$5,000,000.

Many smaller producers are unable to bear the costs of promotion and marketing alone, and often miss opportunities to penetrate new markets. The block grant made it possible for them to promote their products in innovative ways that previously were cost-prohibitive. Grants were awarded through a competitive bid process to the following Florida entities:

Florida Sweet Corn Exchange, \$1.627 million.

Retail marketing and food service educational campaign designed not only to increase retail sales of sweet corn but also to educate buyers, chefs and menu planners on the uses and merits of sweet corn.

Florida Strawberry Growers Association, \$140,000.

Marketing initiative designed to reach new markets in the northeastern United States and Canada.

Florida Tomato Committee, \$500,000.

Multi-regional marketing program geared toward food service operators, food wholesalers and consumers highlighting the health benefits of tomato consumption.

Tropical Fruit Advisory Council, \$636,680.

Nationwide promotional and educational campaign aimed at increasing knowledge and preference of Florida tropical fruit. Activities include culinary and food service event participation

Florida Organic Growers, \$175,500.

Established a cost-share program for growers who are becoming certified as part of the National Organic Program (NOP). Certification will provide growers with increased market opportunities given the recent implementation of the NOP.

Sunnyridge Farms, \$360,017.

Research initiative designed to increase the shelf life of fresh blueberries, thereby allowing growers to sell and ship to more distant locations. Activities include encouraging retailers to purchase and promote fresh-sealed Florida blueberry snack pack portions.

Citrus Growers Association (CGA), \$150,000.

Development and marketing of a direct sell system to allow citrus growers to sell and ship

Continued...

EXPANDING THE MARKET PLACE:

Continued...

directly to consumers as well as out-of-state commercial markets, fruit stands, farmers markets, independent grocers and restaurants. Initiative includes a market research component for in-store and in-restaurant fresh juice.

Florida Nursery Growers Association (FNGA), \$163,275

Domestic and international marketing campaign designed to showcase Florida horticulture. Block grant funding facilitated participation in the International Trade Show and Plant Fair in Essen, Germany in January 2003. In addition, FNGA partnered with Disney’s Epcot to design and showcase a Florida horticulture exhibit as part of the International Flower and Garden Festival. FNGA also produced and distributed a Florida nursery products guide and source locator.

Florida Organic Growers Neighborhood Nutrition Network, \$198,000.

Marketing and educational campaign focused on expanding direct marketing channels for specialty crop producers. Initiatives include development of a local food marketing campaign for North Florida, a buy local label program, and a farmer’s market promotional campaign designed to connect schools to local farms as agricultural learning links.

Graves Brothers Company, \$83,000.

Domestic and international marketing program designed to promote consumption of fresh Florida citrus. In-store tasting opportunities as well as advertising was conducted throughout the United States and Canada. Additional marketing activities and retail campaigns were targeted toward China and Japan to further strengthen the presence and desirability of Florida citrus in the Pacific Rim markets.

Florida Department of Citrus, \$980,000.

Public awareness program designed to provide accurate information to both consumers and medical professionals on the interaction of prescription medications with grapefruit while reinforces the health benefits of grapefruit and grapefruit juice. Additional marketing activities were created to continue to reinforce Florida juice as the brand of choice.

Increasing The Consumption Of Florida Specialty Crops:

Florida Agricultural Promotion Campaign, \$330,000.

Implemented a “Northern Exposure” marketing campaign that was designed to increase consumption of all Florida specialty crop

commodities in both the northern United States and Canada.

5-A-Day Campaign

Produce for Better Health Foundation, \$1,680,000.

Implemented a cooperative campaign with the Produce for Better Health Foundation (PBH) who conducts the 5-A-Day program designed to heighten public awareness of the healthy benefits of increased fruit and vegetable consumption. Launched an “Eat Your Colors Every Day” salad bar and salad options school pilot program designed to increase student consumption of fresh produce, help to make changes in food service operations and provide nutrition education to school food service representatives. Initial pilot program began in 4 counties and was so successful it was expanded to an additional 8 counties for the 2003-2004 school year. The PBH program also included a culinary component to promote the inclusion of more fruits and vegetables in menu development for the restaurant and hospitality industry.

Methyl Bromide Alternatives Research: \$1,000,000.

Funds were awarded through a competitive bid process for thirteen research proposals designed to lessen the impact of the Montreal Protocol mandated phase of Methyl Bromide, a fumigant widely used by Florida’s specialty crop producers. Preliminary results from this research were utilized in the Florida Critical Use Exemption for Tomatoes, Strawberries and non-Tomato Solanaceous Crops petition submitted to EPA’s Office of Air and Radiation in September 2002. Final research reports are due in December, 2004.

Food Safety:

\$1,000,000.

Established an educational program designed to directly assist producers by providing them with a comprehensive set of assessment and compliance tools that are specific to Florida production, harvesting, packing and shipping practices (a tool kit). Hands-on assistance was also provided to producers to develop, apply and implement individual food safety programs and best agricultural practices for their operations. Eleven food safety research proposals were funded through a competitive grant process.

Research And Education Grant Fund:

\$320,000.

Acting on behalf of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association selected a total

of eight research projects that have the potential to significantly impact specialty crops. The range of research includes: irrigation management, integrated pest management, enhancement of specialty crop post-harvest shelf life and reduction of environmental impact. Resulting research will be finalized in December, 2004.

International Agricultural Trade Policy Center:

\$1,000,000.

Located at the University of Florida, the Center is conducting a 3-year phase of studies on specialty crop competitiveness. The research is focusing on trade and policy issues important to the competitiveness of Florida and southeastern agriculture and results presented over a 3-year period. Findings will be incorporated into programs that strengthen competitive ability for Florida and southeastern specialty crops.

Emergency Food Assistance Program:

\$489,237.

The Department's Bureau of Food Distribution distributed \$489,237 among 23 Florida food banks to help with their expenses related to the storage and distribution of USDA commodities. In Federal FY2001, the year the block grant was provided, USDA offered an exceptionally large quantities of bonus commodities to the states for distribution to the needy. Since feeding programs are responsible for costs related to storage and distribution of the USDA commodities they receive, the funding enabled our food banks to access these bonus commodities in larger numbers.

Stopping The Spread Of Citrus Canker:

Citrus Canker Eradication Program (CCEP), \$4,000,000.

The State of Florida has carried out an eradication program cooperatively with USDA since 1995 to rid the state of this devastating disease and prohibit its spread to other citrus producing states. The funding was used to assist the state in this effort.

Medfly Eradication-Sterile Release Program:

\$1,000,000.

Pest and disease prevention programs are far more cost-effective and efficient than eradication efforts in response to an outbreak. After the devastating Medfly outbreak in Florida in the early 1990's, the Department began operating a Medfly sterile release program in the affected

area. Since the program began, over 22 billion sterile flies have been released in high-risk areas of the state. The block grant funding enabled the Department to not only significantly increase the density of released flies but also to expand the program to other high-risk areas of the state that previously could not be included due to lack of funding.

Detector Dogs:

\$350,000.

The Department operates 22 Agricultural Interdiction Stations in Florida that inspect all trucks entering and leaving the state for prohibited agricultural cargo. While these Interdiction Stations have proven incredibly successful in detecting not only prohibited agricultural cargo but also illegal aliens, stolen goods and narcotics since they began operating nearly 50 years ago, the Department utilized block grant funds to obtain and train 8 detector dogs that are assigned to these Interdiction Stations. Training was conducted at USDA's National Detector Dog Training Center. These dog teams proved their value to the Department within 24 hours after graduating from the training center when they found prohibited cargo in a truck on their first day of work. Since that time, the K-9 Unit has discovered numerous quarantine, food safety and foreign produce violations at the Inspection Stations resulting in the seizure of prohibited commodities, four criminal charges and numerous administrative violations.

Florida Department Of Citrus:

\$1,180,000.

Citrus Sectioning and Peeling System, \$1,000,000.

Developed an automated citrus sectioning machine as well as a citrus peeling system that provides the Florida citrus industry with another marketing opportunity for fresh citrus. An automated sectionizing/ peeling system eliminates the inconvenience of preparing fresh citrus and provides the consumer with value added products. The research designs and prototypes made possible by the funding have now been incorporated into commercial operations.

Pectin Study, \$180,000.

Research program to provide scientific documentation on the naturally occurring pectin levels in Florida orange and grapefruit juice. This research was critical in rebutting a challenge by the European Union on the natural level water-

Continued...

FLORIDA
DEPARTMENT
OF CITRUS:

Continued...

soluble pectin in Florida juice. The research provided in-depth information in sufficient detail to demonstrate that the pectin values are a normal phenomenon in Florida juice, not a sign adulteration. Last season, Florida's citrus industry shipped 113 million gallons of juice to Europe representing approximately \$118 million.