

Contact:
Sarah Grace Fowler
Director, Communications
(202) 296-9680
sarah.fowler@nasda.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 29, 2022

State agriculture officials say specialty crop promotion program needs increased funding to support more farmers

Saratoga Springs, N.Y. - Today at the [2022 National Association of State Departments of Agriculture annual meeting](#), NASDA members expressed the need for an established process for defining new specialty crops under the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, the U.S. Department of Agriculture program dedicated to helping farmers market crops such as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture and nursery crops.

“The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program makes a tremendous difference for farmers, providing them with resources to increase the competitiveness and value of their products,” 2021-2022 NASDA President Richard A. Ball said. “With a process to bring new crops into the program, we can create new markets for farmers, offer consumers more options and incentivize innovation in agriculture.”

NASDA’s [new policy](#) states, “NASDA supports a defined process through USDA for presently unspecified or ineligible commodities to receive consideration for specialty crop designation as part of the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program.”

In addition, the policy NASDA members adopted today advocates for an increase in federal funding for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program generally, and particularly if new crops are added to the list to accompany the inclusion of new crops.

“NASDA recognizes that the addition of new commodities designated for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program impacts available federal funding for all specialty crops,” Ball said. “NASDA is simultaneously advocating that the addition of new commodities be accompanied by an appropriate increase in federal funding.”

Acknowledging the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program’s current funding limitations, NASDA members also [withdrew](#) the organization’s support for “the dual designation for hemp as a specialty crop.”

“We want to see the hemp industry thrive. First, we must secure an increase in funding for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, ensuring additional resources will be available to support hemp farmers,” Ball said. “NASDA will continue to advocate for the advancement of all agriculture, including the hemp industry.”

###

NASDA is a nonpartisan, nonprofit association which represents the elected and appointed commissioners, secretaries and directors of the departments of agriculture in all 50 states and four U.S. territories. NASDA enhances American food and agricultural communities through policy, partnerships and public engagement. To learn more about NASDA, please visit www.nasda.org.



National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
4350 North Fairfax Drive
#810
Arlington, VA 22203
Tel: 202-296-9680
www.nasda.org