

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Specialty crop growers can apply for grants to boost their businesses**

*MDA offers workshops to assist with grant applications*

ST. PAUL, Minn. – The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has received \$700,000 in federal funding to help promote and enhance the specialty crop industry. Fruit, vegetable and other specialty crop farmers can apply for Specialty Crop Block Grants to help them compete in today’s marketplace. Grant projects may include outreach to increase consumers’ nutritional knowledge about specialty crops, assistance in the development of good agricultural practices, investment into specialty crop research, development of new and improved seed varieties, and pest and disease control.

MDA Marketing and Development Director Mary Hanks says growers of fruits, vegetables, culinary herbs and spices, medicinal plants, tree nuts, flowers, and nursery plants are eligible to apply.

“We encourage those in specialty crop production to apply for these grants that support and further promote their industry,” said Hanks. “I’d also encourage industry representatives to attend one of our scheduled workshops to learn more about the application process.”

The workshops will be held on Friday, February 3, from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. at the Courtyard Marriott, 1080 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, Moorhead, and on Monday, February 6, from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. at the MDA offices, 625 North Robert Street, St. Paul.

MDA will accept grant applications through April 20, 2012.

A list of eligible and ineligible commodities can be found at [www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp](http://www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp). A grant manual is available on the MDA website at [www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/grants/specialty.aspx](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/grants/specialty.aspx).

Questions regarding the grant program or the application process can be directed to David Weinand at 651-201-6646 or email [David.Weinand@state.mn.us](mailto:David.Weinand@state.mn.us).

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