
Fiscal Year 2023 Description of Funded Projects

Number of Grants Awarded: 5
Amount of Funds Awarded: \$1,095,345.00

For more information, please visit the grant program's website: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/fsmip>.

NOTE: The below project descriptions were provided by the grant recipients.

Florida

Recipient: University of Florida, Gainesville, FL

Project Type: Market Development

Award Amount: \$239,544.00

Match Amount: \$241,416.00

Total Project Amount: \$480,960.00

Enhancing the Local, National and International Reach of Florida Agricultural Products: Analyzing the Determinants of Consumer Preferences for the Fresh from Florida Program

The Fresh from Florida (FFF) program plays a critical role in informing consumers of the value of Florida-grown products and enhancing the competitive advantage of Florida agriculture. With joint efforts from the University of Florida and Florida Gulf Coast University, we aim to expand the market for Florida's agricultural products by analyzing the determinants of consumer preferences for the FFF program at the local, national, and international levels. To achieve this goal, we propose to address four objectives: (1) measure psychological and behavioral factors influencing in-state consumers' preferences for FFF-labeled food products; (2) estimate and compare consumers' willingness to pay for FFF-labeled products across different regions of the U.S. (Florida and Northeastern Region) and Canada (Eastern provinces and territories); (3) assess the effectiveness of marketing communication scenarios in motivating the purchase decision of the FFF-labeled products; (4) develop and disseminate outreach materials, highlighting benefits of FFF program participation to Florida producers and agribusinesses. We intend to use different approaches, including focus groups, online consumer choice surveys, and non-hypothetical experiments involving neurobehavioral measures (e.g., electrical brain activity and eye movement). Apart from academic publications, a key deliverable is a 3-part webinar disseminating our research findings, providing targeted marketing recommendations, and assessing attendees' level of understanding of, and interest in, enrolling in the FFF program. Our research will inform the development of strategic marketing plans that better align with consumer preferences and improve the overall growth and sustainability of Florida's economy by supporting local businesses and enhancing the state's economic competitiveness.

Mississippi

Recipient: University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS

Project Type: Market Development

Award Amount: \$249,854.00

Match Amount: \$250,055.00

Total Project Amount: \$499,090.00

Decision Support Tools for Building a Sustainable Timber Market in Mississippi

This research will develop two decision support tools that Mississippi timber market stakeholders can use to assist their decision-making. It will collect secondary data and conduct interviews with sawmills and logging companies to create Mississippi's timber demand and supply profiles. Second, it will develop a mathematical programming model and a solution algorithm for the timber resource allocation problem. Sawmills can use the model to optimize their timber purchase decisions by considering several critical factors, including resource availability, transportation cost, and timber competition among sawmills. The model can also be used to evaluate if the timber resource is sustainable in the long term. Third, it will develop a hybrid simulation model comprising a discrete event simulation and an agent-based simulation for the timber distribution network in Mississippi. Sawmills, logging companies, and trucking firms can use the simulation model to test numerous what-if scenarios. These scenarios include 1) measuring the impact of sharing real-time truck waiting times at sawmills on truck driver and logging company dispatcher's behavior, 2) investigating the value of coordinated timber delivery scheduling on supply chain stakeholders, and 3) evaluating the utility of timber storage facilities in reducing the transportation cost and timber truck empty haul distance and 4) working with collaborators to conduct experiments using the proposed models and disseminate the results to stakeholders in Mississippi.

Rhode Island

Recipient: Rhode Island Commerce Corporation, Providence, RI

Project Type: Market Development

Award Amount: \$185,600.00

Match Amount: \$187,406.00

Total Project Amount: \$373,006.00

Market Research, Promotion and Brand Adoption to Improve Economic Impact of Rhode Island Food Brands to Local and Regional Markets

This proposed project would strengthen these programs by studying the economic impact of two Rhode Island local food marketing programs and researching the best marketing methods to increase brand awareness and member participation. This will be accomplished through the following objectives: 1) Determine the brand awareness and economic impact of state locally grown programs "RI Grown" and "RI Seafood" to increase membership and revenue for producers and food businesses. 2) Research and test targeted marketing and promotion strategies to determine ideal target market(s) for increasing brand loyalty and local food consumption. 3) Disseminate findings and marketing resources to members and food business partners to increase the overall impact of RI Grown and RI Seafood.

Tennessee

Recipient: University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN

Project Type: Market Development

Award Amount: \$241,138.00

Match Amount: \$241,138.00

Total Project Amount: \$482,276.00

Developing a Successful Marketing Channel for Rural Wineries in Tennessee

The overall goal of this project is to evaluate the feasibility of improving market access for wineries through increased effectiveness of social media advertising. Specifically, this project will include surveys combined with eye-tracking technology to examine how social media could be used to better promote Tennessee wine and winery tourism to consumers. This project will also educate Tennessee wineries on how to utilize social media communications with potential customers and how to use market information from social media to develop a targeted marketing base. This project will conduct economic research to help clarify marketing barriers for wineries and provide marketing opportunities to help wineries successfully market their products and venues to consumers. Results of this project are applicable for not only wineries throughout Tennessee, but for wineries throughout the United States, particularly those in emerging wine production areas.

Vermont

Recipient: Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets, Montpelier, VT

Project Type: Market Development

Award Amount: \$179,209.00

Match Amount: \$179,411.00

Total Project Amount: \$358,620.00

Market Development through Agritourism

This project takes a comprehensive approach to elevate the state of the agritourism sector in Vermont. Agritourism is a promising agricultural sub-sector encompassing on-farm product sales, hospitality, education, entertainment, and outdoor recreation. Creating these authentic on-farm experiences for the public spurs rural economic development, connects communities to local farms and access to local food, improves agricultural literacy among consumers, makes sure our state's open land remains in productive agricultural use, helps farms be profitable and resilient, and draws tourists to the state. Interest in agritourism is growing around the world, but Vermont producers need support to effectively market their agritourism offerings to the public. This proposal supports the growth of agritourism in Vermont by developing state-wide agritourism branding guidelines, supporting agritourism operators to better market their offerings, improving and optimizing the state's consumer-facing agritourism hub, and marketing Vermont's agritourism opportunities to in-state and out-of-state consumers. VAAFAM will partner with Vermont Fresh Network, Vermont Department of Tourism, and others to support the growth of this sector and drive more consumers to engage in authentic farm and food experiences in Vermont.