



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Transportation and Marketing
Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program

Fiscal Year 2021 Description of Funded Projects

Number of Grants Awarded: 5
Amount of Funds Awarded: \$1,093,631.00

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

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

New York

Recipient: Cornell University
Project Type: Cooperative Development
Award Amount: \$250,000.00
Match Amount: \$250,000.00
Total Project Amount: \$500,000.00

A New Dawn for Shepherds: Grazing Sheep Under Utility-Scale Solar Arrays

Cornell University's goal is increase cooperation among producers and industry organizations by examining the needs and opportunities of a cooperatively structured business or multi-producer owned organization to provide coordination and logistical services for farmers grazing sheep under solar arrays. The project further investigates the potential benefit that can be derived by farmers joining together to market lamb and further explores the price enhancement derived from a value-added, branded product labelled as "produced under solar arrays." The New Dawn project area will focus on New York, Pennsylvania, and the New England states to expedite project management and cost control. The outcomes derived from the project will be useful to sheep farmers throughout the United States.

Tennessee

Recipient: University of Tennessee
Project Type: Market Development
Award Amount: \$219,218.00
Match Amount: \$219,218.00
Total Project Amount: \$438,436.00

Quantifying Consumer Preferences, Valuation, and Marketing Channel Effectiveness for the Pick Tennessee Products Program

University of Tennessee is partnering with Tennessee Department of Agriculture to help add value to Tennessee's agriculture and forestry industries by providing information to aid in effective promotion of the products and services that participate in the Tennessee Department of Agriculture's (TDA) Pick

Tennessee Products (PTP) Program. Objectives to address this overall project goal are: 1) develop market profiles of PTP core customers based on demographics, perceptions, and motivations; 2) estimate willingness-to-pay (WTP) for PTP in key product categories using example products; 3) provide assessment of effectiveness of various marketing channels in reaching the core customers, building brand awareness, and generating value for Tennessee producers; and 4) disseminate results by providing outreach and education materials to Tennessee producers about opportunities related to participation in the PTP Program and value it could add to their products based on consumer research. An online consumer choice survey will assess Tennessee consumers' awareness of PTP and WTP for PTP in several key product categories. In addition, an eye-tracking study will evaluate how different promotion content impacts consumer preferences for products in the PTP Program. Results will aid in developing a digital marketing campaign which will be launched during the study and consumer online traffic will be measured. A second post-campaign survey will provide measures of campaign awareness, PTP awareness, and WTP. Results will aid future marketing efforts related to the PTP Program by identifying core consumer demographics and perceptions allowing for better target marketing strategies to these customers.

Texas

Recipient: Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

Project Type: Market Development

Award Amount: \$249,962.00

Match Amount: \$249,962.00

Total Project Amount: \$499,924.00

Increasing Sales by Promoting the Attributes of Pecan through a Systematic Science-Based Marketing Strategy

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension's main goal is to quantify the potential economic benefits of promoting evidence-based health benefits and taste-related attributes of pecans. The results of this quantitative evaluation will serve as a basis to propose a plan that systematized the promotion and marketing practices in the pecan industry, which will have the potential to be expanded to the entire specialty crop industry. With this goal in mind, they propose the following objectives: To develop health-and taste-related information based on scientific evidence and ongoing industry marketing efforts; to assess consumer preferences and producer benefits from selling pecan products varying health- and taste-related information; to evaluate the effect of health- and taste-related information on actual sales and to develop a systematic science-based marketing plan based on the generated evidence and the experience of partnership with industry. The conclusions of this study can be used to enhance the already successful programs developed by the pecan industry for marketing messages to increase sales. The outcome and experience of this academic-private industry partnership will serve as a basis to develop a systematic marketing strategy that can inform producers/retailers of other specialty crops about how to potentially improve sales.

Virginia

Recipient: Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Project Type: Market Development

Award Amount: \$245,855.00

Match Amount: \$245,855.00

Total Project Amount: \$491,710.00

Eliminating marketing barriers to support the transition from methyl bromide fumigation to vacuum and steam treatment technology: The Case for Export Logs

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University's goal is to support the transition from methyl bromide (MB) fumigation to non-chemical phytosanitary treatment methods for the treatment of export logs (value of \$1.2 billion in 2020) and other agricultural products. Over the last 10 years, the U.S. has started to focus on the gradual elimination of ozone-depleting chemicals like MB for phytosanitary treatment. A Virginia Tech (VT) team developed an effective alternative to MB using vacuum and steam technology. Today, the solution has been brought to the market and is available for commercial use. The research team will conduct a study to identify the most feasible location for a vacuum and steam treatment facility in Virginia. This location will also serve West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, North Carolina, and South Carolina. The team will visit log importers and phytosanitary authorities in China and Japan to capture barriers and drivers of this new technology from their perspective. These countries represent 86% of the U.S. export log market. The outputs of this project will be highly beneficial not only to the export log industry but to other agricultural commodities that can be treated using steam and vacuum such as fruits, vegetables, cotton, rice, straw, and seeds. In addition, using environmentally friendly treatment technologies would help gain market penetration in alternative markets such as the European Union.

Vermont

Recipient: Vermont Agency of Agriculture

Project Type: Market Development

Award Amount: \$128,596.00

Match Amount: \$152,680.00

Total Project Amount: \$281,276.00

Market Development through Business Education

Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Market's (VAAF) goal is to assist producers in increasing sales through education of how to operate in and interact with critical market channels. By focusing on three key channels – direct to consumer, local, and regional/national – VAAF will be able to support the broadest array of businesses who will benefit from a deeper understanding of tactics to increase sales and consumer connection. Business owners will receive services tailored to the specific buyer to make the grant-funded opportunity relevant, timely, and meaningful to increasing long-term market competitiveness. Focusing on cohort-based trainings will encourage business owners to learn from each other and their own successes or struggles in certain market channels while increasing the impact of Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program funds. VAAF's application builds on successful past work and strong partner relationships, leading to long-lasting positive impacts as businesses increase their market potential, sales, and knowledge.