

# **Final Report**

## **Specialty Crops Block Grant Program**

### **South Carolina Department of Agriculture**

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Commissioner

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#### **Introduction**

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The South Carolina Department of Agriculture received \$110,424.99 from the Specialty Crops Block Grant Program to increase consumption and consumer awareness of South Carolina specialty crops. The Department used these funds in retail and wholesale promotions, to support specialty events at state farmers markets and to develop and purchase promotional materials to promote South Carolina grown products. These efforts were tied to the South Carolina marketing and branding program.

#### **Project Purpose**

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The purpose of this project was to help qualifying specialty crop groups, state farmers markets, roadside markets, and wholesale and retail outlets take advantage of the branding and promotional campaign developed for South Carolina grown products. In the past, marketing and promotions for various locally grown products have been fragmented and inconsistent with no particular theme supporting those efforts. The state of South Carolina provided \$600,000 (2006-07 fiscal year) for a South Carolina branding and marketing campaign. As a result of positive efforts in the initial campaign the General Assembly of South Carolina provided \$2.5 million dollars in 2007-08 fiscal year to continue the program and take it to higher levels. \$1.5 million of these funds are

recurring and will be available to continue to move the program forward. The availability of the specialty crops block grant funds has assisted in bringing additional producer groups into the program allowing them to take advantage of the opportunity to tie into the professionally developed program to brand, identify and promote South Carolina grown products.

### **Project Items, Expected Outcomes, Results**

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Project items, expected outcomes, and results of each are provided in this section.

***Item 1.*** *To assist specialty crops groups that represent such commodities as peaches, tomatoes, watermelons, pecan, nursery and greenhouse products, and other fruit and vegetable crops to purchase materials and tag onto media efforts.*

*It is expected that at least four specialty crops groups will participate in the media campaign and adapt the program to each representative commodity. Specialty crops funds will be used to leverage dollars of each group to encourage participation in this first phase of the program.*

#### **Results, Item 1.**

The effort began with “Market Day” (Attachment 8), a major kickoff for the branding and marketing campaign. Many commodity boards and associations provided fresh product for display at the event and food for attendees. Several elected officials, including the Governor, spoke at the event. The new commercials and promotional materials were unveiled. It was estimated that more than 300 people attended the event. Media was present and followed up with news reports and newspaper accounts of the event.

A number of groups participated in the media campaign. Four groups leveraged specialty crops dollars with their own dollars to extend participation in the promotional campaign. The SC Watermelon Board provided \$50,000 of the Board’s own funds for the media campaign. The SC Peach Council committed \$10,000. The SC Fruit and Vegetable Association provided \$1,500 and the SC Specialty Foods Association provided \$500. Attachments 3 and 4 provide examples of billboards used in the outdoor media campaign. Other fruits and vegetables as well as nursery products were also highlighted. Marketing and promotion efforts used outdoor media and TV and radio commercials.

***Item 2.*** *To provide updated and consistent signage and materials for the roadside and community based farmers markets.*

*It is expected that updated signage and promotional materials will be delivered to 107 certified roadside markets and 50 community based markets.*

## **Results, Item 2.**

With the advent of the SC Certified Branding and Marketing program, the Department's Roadside Market program has grown. The Department provided new signs designating Certified Roadside Markets (See Attachment 1). The Department produced and distributed 150 new 3' X 4' signs to roadside markets. In addition, the Department distributed a packet of point of purchase materials including price cards, stickers, hanging signs and shelf danglers (See Attachment 2). The Department provided banners and hanging signs for 60 community based markets.

**Item 3.** *To provide promotional funds to support specialty events at the three state farmers markets, in particular Spring and Fall plant and flower shows.*

*It is expected that through expanded advertising and promotion attendance at the three spring plant and flower shows and two fall shows will increase at least 10%.*

## **Results, Item 3.**

The Department manages three state farmer's markets in Columbia, Greenville and Florence. All three markets sponsored spring plant and flower shows. Columbia and Greenville sponsored fall shows. All of these events were a great success. The events lasted four days and highlighted the greenhouse/nursery industry. The promotion supports the local vendors and provided opportunity for other vendors from across the state to participate. Specialty crops funds were used, along with farmers market fees, to provide a comprehensive advertising and promotional program. Estimates indicate that more than 135,000 people attended the spring shows. A survey of vendors indicates that sales increased more than 10% from the year before. Most indicated that this year's shows were the best they had attended.

The two fall shows were also a success with more than 50,000 people in attendance for the shows in Columbia and Greenville. The promotional funds provided a great opportunity to reach the general public about these special events. The Department provided new banners and signs with all the new logo related to SC locally grown.

**Item 4.** *To pull other retail and wholesale outlets such as grocery stores, specialty food stores, and selected restaurants into the program by making available materials and also conducting special promotional events.*

*It is expected that at least two specialty food stores and at least two restaurants will participate in special events to promote locally grown products.*

#### **Results, Item 4.**

The Department worked with several grocery chains to use the Certified SC Grown materials in their promotional efforts. IGA had 35 stores that used the materials and promoted SC locally grown products. Walmart participated and used the logo and materials in 50 stores. The Department also worked with Whole Foods to do in-store promotions in two of its stores in Greenville and in Mt. Pleasant (Charleston area).

The Department developed a “Fresh on the Menu” program (See Attachment 5) to appeal to local restaurants and encourage them to develop special menu items using locally grown products and highlight them on the menu using the SC Certified Grown logo. This effort began in Charleston with 60 restaurants signing up to participate in the program. The Department is working with these restaurants as well in finding and sourcing locally grown products to satisfy these needs. The Department worked with “Mac’s on Main” in Columbia on a South Carolina Menu night where everything on the menu was a locally produced product. Restaurants and Chefs have expressed much enthusiasm with this program and the Department will expand the program to other areas of the state.

#### **Goals**

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The overall goal of the South Carolina Specialty Crops Block Grant program is to increase consumption and consumer awareness of South Carolina specialty crops.

The specific goals include:

- Make sure consumers can identify and find South Carolina grown products
- Provide an opportunity for specialty crops groups with limited funds to participate in the program
- Provide an opportunity for roadside markets and community based farmers markets to participate and acquire materials consistent with the developed logo and branding program
- Provide promotional funds to take advantage of the three state farmers markets’ consumer reach particularly with special events
- Increase consumer awareness and sales of South Carolina grown products in other retail and wholesale outlets

The Department thinks that the specialty crops program described in the original proposal and highlighted in this report has been a great success. As evidenced by the information presented above, goals of this initial effort have been met. The Department continues to work in all the areas identified above and will continue to push the goals presented above. The marketing and branding effort is an ongoing effort and is evolving as new and fresh ideas come forward. New TV and radio ads are being developed and new print ads and materials are in process to keep the interest in SC locally grown products moving forward. For other items of interest go to the SC Department of Agriculture website at [www.agriculture.sc.gov](http://www.agriculture.sc.gov).

Attachment 1

Certified Roadside Market Signs



Attachment 2

Certified SC Dangles



*Nothing's Fresher*

**Ask For South Carolina®**

*Nothing's Finer*

Attachment 3

Billboards



**Juicier.**

**Ask For South Carolina.**  
**Nothing's Fresher.**  
**Nothing's Finer.™**



[www.certifiedscgrown.com](http://www.certifiedscgrown.com)



**Sweeter.**

**Ask For South Carolina.**  
**Nothing's Fresher.**  
**Nothing's Finer.™**



[www.certifiedscgrown.com](http://www.certifiedscgrown.com)

Attachment 4

Billboards

# Outdoor Media



**Ask For South Carolina.**  
**Nothing's Fresher.**  
**Nothing's Finer.™**



**Prettier.**

*Nothing's Fresher.*  
**Ask For South Carolina**  
*Nothing's Finer.*



Attachment 5

Fresh on the Menu Logo

## Restaurant Campaign



# Retail Advertising Incentives

**Peak Advertising Incentive Periods**

**January**  
Ledy Greens Jan. 14-31

**February**  
Ledy Greens Feb. 11-21

**March**  
Ledy Greens March 10-24

**April**  
Ledy Greens any time of month  
Cabbage April 14-28  
Green Onions any time of month  
Cherry/Pear/Peach/Raspberries any time of month

**May**  
Ledy Greens any time during month  
Cabbage May 1-31  
Green Onions any time during month  
Cherry/Pear/Peach/Raspberries any time of month  
Cauliflower May 11-21  
Yellow/Green Squash May 21-31

**June**  
Cherry/Pear/Peach/Raspberries any time of month  
Yellow/Green Squash June 1-17  
Peaches June 21-30  
Cauliflower June 21-30  
Watermelon June 24-30  
Tomatoes full season June 21-30  
Pepper full season June 21-30  
Sweet corn June 21-30

**July**  
Peaches any time during month...  
...included during holiday period  
Cauliflower July 11...included during holiday period  
Watermelon July 1-14...included during holiday period  
Tomatoes July 1-14  
Pepper full season July 1-14  
Sweet Corn July 1-14

**August**  
Peaches any time during month

**September**  
Ledy Greens any time during month except during holiday

**December**  
Ledy Greens any time during month except during holiday  
\* New Year Special

**Together, we can do this!**  
How can you help? Take advantage of this opportunity to leverage your own promotional investment by participating in this retail incentive plan. Such promotions in other areas have been successful. (New Jersey returns amount to over \$54.00 for every dollar invested in branding promotion). In the process, we'll help you identify ways to produce a healthier bottom line in your own produce department.

Please, take the pledge to participate in the Certified South Carolina Growers retail program. When you return your pledge, we will publicize the fact that your store is on board with the program.

For more information, contact: Amber M. Rant, Certified South Carolina Program  
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South Carolina Department of Agriculture  
P.O. Box 11130  
1200 Senate Street  
Columbia, SC 29211



**Nothing's Fresher  
Buy South Carolina  
Nothing's Finer**

**2008 Retailers' Advertising Program**

**Make the Most Out of Your Produce Division**  
As a retailer of fresh produce, you are probably aware that the South Carolina Department of Agriculture is committed to increasing the supply, availability and sales of South Carolina produce and products through its Certified South Carolina Growers program.

# Fresher.



MARKET PLACE | WHAT'S IN SEASON | SC RECIPES | CERTIFIED FRESH MEDIA | SC DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

**Buy South Carolina. Nothing's Fresher. Nothing's Finer.**








**Welcome.** Uscilla facipsu scilisi. Del doloreet iriuree tumsand rerostion venis ent ex eugiam qui blam zzzrit nisi te dit lore dolorpero consed te feui tie eugait augait augait iure feuis nis nim iuscil iustrud et, sequi tet lumsandrem eu feuis nim velismolor irilis nos nibh eelenim in iriurem el utpat aut augait, velenisit dolese veraestisi essim acin hent lor sum zzzriustisi.

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**Find Certified SC Grown Here** Consed te feui tie eugait augait augait iure feuis nis nim iuscil iustrud et, sequi irilis nos nibh eelenim in.



**Ask for Certified SC Grown Where You Shop** iriurem ei utpat aut augait, velenisit dolese veraestisi essim acin hent lor sum zzzriustisi.

MARKET PLACE | WHAT'S IN SEASON | SC RECIPES | CERTIFIED FRESH MEDIA | SC DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE | CONTACT US | VISIT SC

Attachment 7

Print Media



# Greener.

**Agribusiness is big business,  
creating a \$33.4 billion economic  
impact in South Carolina.**

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[www.certifiedSCgrows.com](http://www.certifiedSCgrows.com)

Attachment 8

Market Day Roll-Out



# “Market Day” Campaign Roll-out

May 22, 2007

**State House Grounds**

This event will create a statewide opportunity to launch the primary focus of the campaign educating South Carolinians on the quality, opportunity, diversity and availability of Certified South products.

