



NEWS RELEASE

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\$18 MILLION AVAILABLE FOR VALUE-ADDED PRODUCER GRANTS

Mt. Laurel, NJ – September 10, 2009 - The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development State Director Howard Henderson would like to urge farmers and business owners to apply for some of the \$18 million grant money available nationwide to help add value to the commodities they produce.

“New Jersey producers need to file their applications promptly so they can potentially take advantage of this \$18 million for the value-added producer grants,” Henderson said. “This program supports President Obama’s goal to strengthen rural economies and create jobs by helping farmers and ranchers add value to their agricultural products.”

USDA plans to award planning grants of up to \$100,000 and working capital grants of up to \$300,000 to successful applicants. Applicants are encouraged to propose projects that use existing agricultural products in non-traditional ways or merge agricultural products with technology in creative ways. Businesses of all sizes may apply, but priority will be given to operators of small to medium-sized farms operating as a family farm – those with average annual gross sales of less than \$700,000.

Applicants must provide matching funds equal to the amount of the grant requested. Ten percent of the funding being made available is reserved for beginning farmers or ranchers and socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers. An additional 10 percent is reserved for projects involving local and regional supply networks that link independent producers with businesses and cooperatives that market value-added products.

The national application period for USDA Rural Development Value Added Producer Grants closes on November 30, 2009. For more information on how to apply, producers should visit www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/vadg.htm or see page 45165 of the Sept.1 Federal Register.

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