

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Funds Awarded: \$1,023,883.78 • Number of Subawards: 18

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture will enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops by marketing and promoting specialty crops; assisting producers with research and development relevant to specialty crops; expanding availability and access to specialty crops; and addressing local, regional, and national challenges confronting specialty crop producers through a variety of activities/projects with their grant recipients. The State's subawards include 6 research projects, 4 education and outreach projects, 4 marketing projects, and 4 projects that cross more than one focus area to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops including apples, blueberries, cranberries, peaches, and tomatoes throughout the State of New Jersey.

Project Title	Location	Description	Project Budget
LoRaWAN Field Conditions Monitoring for New Jersey Specialty Crops: A South Jersey Blueberry Demonstration	Hammonton	Anthony J. Berenato Farms will demonstrate a low-cost field monitoring system that collects soil and weather data to help New Jersey blueberry and specialty crop growers make informed production decisions. The multi-farm project will demonstrate a practical, low-cost model for field-level specialty crop decision support and develop a public platform where other New Jersey growers can learn how to install compatible monitoring nodes and potentially contribute data to the shared network.	\$32,750.00
Growing the NJ Hazelnut Industry: Grower Education, Technical Support, and Food Safety Pathways	Ringoes	Avellana Agroforestry Cooperative (AAC) will strengthen New Jersey's hazelnut industry by providing grower education, technical assistance, feasibility consultations, and food safety resources in partnership with Rutgers Cooperative Extension. AAC will deliver three programs: (1) co-organizing the annual New Jersey Hazelnut Growers Meeting; (2) a New Grower Technical Support Pilot offering public hazelnut seminars with farm tours, a site suitability worksheet, and on-farm feasibility consultations; and (3) food safety readiness and adapting Rutgers Extension food safety templates for hazelnut-specific conditions.	\$38,102.50

Project Title	Location	Description	Project Budget
Increasing Distribution, Access, Consumption, and Consumer Purchasing of Specialty Crops by Hard-to-Reach Consumers in Food Desert Neighborhoods: A Media Campaign for the Veggie Mobile	Clifton	City Green will conduct a marketing campaign to increase awareness of mobile and farm stand markets offering New Jersey-grown specialty crops in food desert communities across northern New Jersey. Through enhanced media about the mobile market, the acceptance of federal nutrition benefits, and incentives available through the Good Food Bucks program, the project will increase awareness, accessibility, and consumption of specialty crops sourced from 11 New Jersey farmers and will support access to healthy food for more than 8,800 residents, annually.	\$40,000.00
Building a Replicable Wash/Pack Model for Beginning and Small-Scale Specialty Crop Growers	Moorestown	Mckaiden Farm will demonstrate an affordable, food-safe, on-farm wash, pack, and distribution model to improve post-harvest handling and reduce crop losses for beginning and small-scale vegetable and herb growers. The project will improve produce handling, reduce post-harvest loss, and demonstrate scalable food safety solutions for small acreage farms selling through Community Supported Agriculture, farm stands, and farmers markets. Educational and outreach materials will be developed and shared at food safety training and demonstration workshops.	\$35,000.00
Morris County Farm Trail & Agritourism - Always in Season	Morristown	Morris County Tourism Bureau will develop and promote a self-guided print and digital farm trail highlighting seasonal specialty crops, products, and agricultural experiences available on Morris County farms. The initiative aims to position Morris County-grown specialty crops and local farm produce as the central focus for both customers and visitors.	\$40,000.00
Jersey Fresh & Found: Campaign to Connect New NJ Consumer Markets to Specialty Crops	Bordentown	New Jersey Agricultural Society (NJAS) will partner with the New Jersey Department of Agriculture to conduct an 18-month social media campaign that increases awareness and purchases of New Jersey specialty crops among consumers ages 18 to 35. This campaign is the distribution engine for NJAS's broader specialty crop storytelling ecosystem. This includes QR-linked educational materials produced under the companion Fresh & Local Campaign and blasting specialty crop content to a new generation of consumers who discover food, farmers, and local purchasing opportunities through Instagram.	\$40,000.00
Promoting Nutrition and Consumption of New Jersey Blueberries to Local Consumers	Hammonton	New Jersey Blueberry Growers Association will conduct a radio and aerial advertising campaign throughout the tri-state area to promote the nutritional benefits and seasonal availability of fresh New Jersey blueberries. Together, these efforts will strengthen awareness of New Jersey blueberries, educate consumers about the benefits of purchasing locally grown fruit, increase demand during the limited fresh-market season, and help New Jersey blueberry growers remain competitive in an increasingly crowded domestic and international marketplace.	\$40,000.00
Jersey Fresh: Highlighting Stories from the Garden State	Trenton	New Jersey Department of Agriculture will expand the promotion of New Jersey specialty crops and producers through print, digital, radio, streaming, events, trade shows, and other marketing channels while evaluating the impact of the Jersey Fresh brand. Project goals include creating a measurable increase in consumer awareness, purchasing and preference, new market opportunities, and increasing marketability, recognition, and demand for New Jersey grown specialty crops.	\$335,912.30

Project Title	Location	Description	Project Budget
Education, Engagement & Events: Increasing Specialty Crop Sales in New Jersey	Bordentown	New Jersey Nursery and Landscape Association will partner with garden centers and businesses to conduct consumer education programs, digital outreach, and public events that promote New Jersey-grown horticultural specialty crops. The project aims to increase public awareness and consumer connection to these products, to maintain and expand market opportunities for specialty crops growers and retailers statewide.	\$40,000.00
Marketing New Jersey Peaches in the Wake of Unprecedented 2026 Crop Losses	Glassboro	New Jersey Peach Promotional Council will conduct a multi-channel marketing campaign to restore consumer and wholesale demand for New Jersey peaches following a near-total crop loss caused by the post-bloom freeze in Spring 2026. The channels will include a strategic social marketing campaign, extensive billboard advertising, and a comprehensive print campaign to reestablish relationships with key retail accounts and drive sales at the retail level.	\$40,000.00
South Jersey's Own Value-Added Products	Southampton	Pinelands Preservation Alliance will work with South Jersey FEAST farms, local chefs, and the Rutgers Food Innovation Center to develop and market regionally branded, value-added products made from New Jersey specialty crops. These branded products will make New Jersey produce and farms more competitive by enabling small and medium-sized farms to earn much-needed revenue and by raising the profile of locally grown specialty crops among consumers.	\$39,900.00
AI Systems for Early Detection and Targeted Management of Fairy Ring Disease in Cranberry Fields	Glassboro	Rowan University will collaborate with research partners and New Jersey cranberry growers to develop an artificial intelligence-based system for early detection and targeted management of fairy ring disease in cranberry bogs. Expected outcomes include improved early detection of fairy ring disease, georeferenced treatment maps for GPS-guided field treatment planning, and improved disease monitoring capabilities for cranberry growers.	\$39,996.00
Evaluating Specialty Crop Production and Marketability in an Agrivoltaic System in New Jersey	Piscataway	Rutgers Agrivoltaics Research Program will evaluate dual-use agricultural systems that combine solar energy generation with specialty crop production and provide research-based guidance to growers about production parameters and market potential, with a focus on tomatoes. The work will examine harvesting windows, quality, and factors that influence marketability. Findings will be shared through extension, the program's website, and at industry meetings and conferences.	\$39,894.00
Exploring Alternative Mulch Products for Tomato Production	Piscataway	Rutgers Cooperative Extension will evaluate biodegradable plastic mulch products for commercial tomato production by comparing their application, weed control, durability, and crop yield with conventional polyethylene mulch. The trial will examine ease of application of biodegradable mulches, weed control effectiveness, seasonal durability, and impact on crop yield. The mulch products will be used in on-farm demonstrations and results of the trials will be shared at field days, extension grower events, and through outreach materials.	\$29,188.98
ABC: Apples, Bitter Rot, and Colletotrichum, Unravelling the Situation in New Jersey	New Brunswick	Rutgers University will identify the fungal species responsible for bitter rot in New Jersey apples and evaluate their distribution and fungicide sensitivity to improve disease-management recommendations. This research aims to provide a better understanding of this pathogen and to share findings that will help reduce crop loss for New Jersey apple growers, while managing fungicide resistance.	\$39,761.00