

CAROLINE AND DORCHESTER FARMS RECEIVE GRANTS FROM USDA AND MARBIDCO

Federalsburg, July 19, 2010 - USDA Rural Development State Director Jack Tarburton highlighted the selection of three Maryland Ag businesses to receive a portion of \$22.5 million through the Value-Added Producer Grant program. Two of the recipients are located in Dorchester and Caroline Counties where USDA officials presented them with ceremonial checks followed by tours of their Ag operations.

The Value-Added Producer Grant program is a nationally competitive program designed to support farm families in rural America by helping them to market their commodities and increase their financial returns. Value-Added Producer Grants may be used for planning activities or to provide working capital to market value-added agricultural products and farm-based renewable energy projects. A value-added product is created when a producer takes an agricultural commodity, such as milk or vegetables, and processes or prepares it in a way that increases its value to consumers.

"Not every family needs a lawyer or an accountant, but every family does need a farmer," said Jack Tarburton, USDA Rural Development State Director.

"Today, the Obama Administration and USDA are concerned that we are losing too many family farms. The value-added producer grant program is designed to help improve financial returns and help create jobs for agricultural producers."

The program also meets USDA's "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" initiative that is designed to create economic opportunities, to promote local and regional food systems that help keep wealth in rural communities, and to encourage a national conversation about what we eat and where it comes from in order to benefit producers of all sizes.

At a morning ceremony in Vienna, Maryland officials gathered at Layton's Chance Vineyard and Winery for the announcement of \$90,614 in USDA Rural Development grant funds that will help the family run business make and market premium wine. Layton's Chance Vineyard and Winery, is a new business organized in 2007 by the owners of Lazy Day Farms. Lazy Day Farms has been in existence for about 60 years and seeing a need to diversify their farming operation they planted a vineyard and built a winery. The Layton family will use the funds for working capital to help with the costs of marketing, supplies -- such as bottles, corks, and labels and ingredients to process the grapes into wine.

In the afternoon, officials traveled to Federalsburg, Maryland to present a \$64,000 USDA Rural Development grant to Seaberry Farm, the largest beach plum grower in the country. Beach Plum is one of several shrubby plums native to North America. It produces small, distinctively flavored fruits traditionally used for jam and jelly. The farm is owned and operated by Drs. Richard and Wen-fei Uva who will produce beach plum value-added products designed to meet various market needs. The funding will support working capital expenses such as insurance, supplies, product packaging, labels and other marketing needs.

In addition to the USDA Rural Development grants, Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO) announced an \$18,693 grant to Layton's Chance Vineyard and Winery and \$9,600 grant to Seaberry Farm. In 2004, MARBIDCO, a quasi-public corporation, was established to enhance the profitability and sustainability of agricultural and resource-based industries in Maryland. Its mission is to help Maryland's farm, forestry, and seafood-related businesses to start or diversify operations, bolster the production of quality locally-grown food and fiber products, and help sustain rural working lands for future generations.

"MARBIDCO is truly delighted to be able to assist Layton's Chance Vineyard and Seaberry Farm with well-deserved matching funds to help two very entrepreneurial farm families continue their business development aspirations," said Stephen McHenry, MARBIDCO Executive Director. "It can be quite a lot of work, but value-added processing is a viable way for farmers to find new markets for their products, increase farm-gate revenues, expand local job opportunities, and help sustain agricultural operations for the next generation."

The third recipient in Maryland of the Value-Added Producer Grants is Southern Maryland Wine Growers Cooperative. USDA provided \$59,379 to help with marketing, supplies and equipment to manage the winery and tasting room at the Port of Leonardtown Winery. MARBIDCO also provided nearly \$111,000 in financial assistance to the Southern Maryland Wine Growers Cooperative as it was getting up and running recently.

The three Maryland Ag businesses were in a select group of 194 recipients in 45 states and Puerto Rico. A list of all the grant recipients is available at www.usda.gov. USDA Rural Development is committed to the future of rural communities. Last year, the agency returned more than \$421 million to rural Maryland. They have over 40 loan, grant and loan guarantee programs that support agriculture, business opportunities, home ownership, home repair, rental housing, broadband technology, public safety, health care, education, social and cultural needs and energy related projects. Additional information on rural programs is available by calling the Maryland and Delaware State Office located in Dover, Del. at (302) 857-3580 or by visiting their website at www.rurdev.usda.gov. TTY users should call (302) 857-3585.