

MDA ANNOUNCES NEW SPECIALTY CROP GRANT PROGRAM Application Deadline is July 10

ANNAPOLIS, MD (May 29, 2009) – The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) today announced a new grant program to fund projects that solely enhances the competitiveness of specialty crops. The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program was established by the 2008 Farm Bill.

MDA has set up a competitive grant process to award these federal funds in 2009. The Department will be administering funds totaling \$500,623 for the development of projects that will benefit Maryland's existing specialty crop producers. MDA intends to fund projects that can produce the highest degree of measurable benefits to Maryland specialty crop producers in relation to each dollar spent. Grants will be issued from \$25,000 to \$200,000 per project in Maryland.

Specialty crops are defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops. Visit www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0 for a comprehensive list of eligible specialty crops.

MDA is seeking applications from eligible non-profit organizations, government entities, for-profit organizations and universities for projects that aim to promote or enhance the production of and access to Maryland specialty crops. Applicants must reside or their business or educational affiliation must be in Maryland.

Electronic grant applications must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on July 10, 2009. Paper applications must be postmarked by July 10, 2009. MDA will conduct a conference call on June 10 to go over details of the program for interested applicants. For questions about the grant application, to register for the conference call, or to download the application, visit www.mda.state.md.us/pdf/specialtycrop.pdf, or contact Karen Fedor at FedorKM@mda.state.md.us or 410-841-5773.