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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Twenty-two value-added ag projects share \$658,227 in grants

LINCOLN, NEB. (January 13, 2009)—The Nebraska Rural Development Commission (RDC) and Nebraska Department of Economic Development have awarded \$658,277 funding for 22 projects through the Value-Added Agricultural grant program, which invests in products and businesses that help support and grow the state's agriculture industry.

"The Value Added Agriculture grant program combines the perfect elements of research and exploration to build and expand on Nebraska's rich agricultural offerings, making it an especially attractive and potentially lucrative endeavor for producers interested in starting up new or diversifying existing operations," said Richard Baier, Director of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development.

Grants up to \$75,000 are awarded for research, educational training, and market development costs related to value-added products sold by Nebraska agricultural producers. The Nebraska RDC and Nebraska Department of Agriculture review applications and recommend projects for the Governor's approval.

Receiving funding during this funding cycle are:

• **Sandhills Creations, LLC, Callaway and Lincoln - \$20,320**

Sandhills Scentsations of Callaway and Wingsets of Lincoln have merged, creating Sandhills Creations, LLC. The partnership produces a natural bath and body care product line containing Yucca, a natural resource that's readily available in the Sandhills area. Funds will be used to purchase soap making equipment and to help market the company's products. Partners Douglas and Kandi Stengel, and Ann and Warren Woledge will contribute cash and in-kind matching funds. Contact: Douglas Stengel at 308-870-3328.

• **Victory Hill Farm, LLC, Scottsbluff - \$57,924**

Sarah and Lee Pinet will create a small-scale cheese processing facility in the Panhandle that offers producers an alternative outlet for cow, sheep or goat milk. The Pinets will contribute cash and in-kind matching funds. Contact: Sarah Pinet at 308-630-0530.

• **Nebraska Food Cooperative, Omaha - \$28,000**

Nebraska Food Cooperative, made up of producer and consumer members from around Nebraska, will expand its current distribution to central Nebraska and increase the number of producer members growing and selling produce from the region. Nebraska Food Cooperative will contribute cash and in-kind matching funds. Contact: Elizabeth Broekemeier at 402-980-3757.

• **A Safer, High Quality Food Supply, Curtis - \$46,100**

Frontier Technologies, LLC, will continue developing agricultural-focused technology housed at the University of Nebraska's College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis. Medicine Valley Economic Development Corporation and Frontier Technologies, LLC, will contribute cash and in-kind matching funds. Contact: Doug Schultz at 308-367-8801.

• **White Bison Winery, dba 5 Trails Winery, Paxton - \$20,000**

White Bison, LLC partners John and Stephen Gamet with Ida's Vitis Vineyard, and Patrick Gamet with White Bison Winery, will expand White Bison (dba 5 Trails Winery) to accommodate anticipated demand for, and availability of grapes and other fruits from six area growers. White Bison, LLC will contribute cash and in-kind matching funds. Contact: Lori Gamet at 308-239-4999.

• **Energy Grains' Closed Loop Supply Chain, Kearney - \$9,675**

Energy Grains, LLC's, closed loop supply chain strategy reduces operating costs for grain producers and ethanol producers, while providing suppliers with an opportunity to increase their share of the market. Paul Kenney and Erin Sandy will contribute cash and in-kind matching funds. Contact: Erin Sandy at 308-234-3620.

• **Nebraska Verified, Overton - \$60,000**

IntegriFlex, LLC and IMI Global are developing a Process Verified Program specific to Nebraska agricultural commodity products, and a Guide 65 for verification of associated carbon assets. Jay Elfeldt of IntegriFlex, John Saunders of IMI Global, and Great Plains Livestock Consulting, Darr Grain Partnership, Edeal Alfalfa Partnership, and Broken Bar M Ranch will contribute cash and in-kind matching funds. Contact: Jay Elfeldt at 308-746-2499.

• **Nebraska Waters, Plainview - \$30,000**

Nebraska Waters is a new value-added venture. Steve and Lori MacGregor raise and process trout into value-added freshwater fish products. The funds will be used to purchase equipment that more quickly and efficiently processes the trout. Steve and Lori MacGregor and the Center for Rural Affairs will contribute cash and in-kind matching funds. Contact: Steve MacGregor at 402-582-3694.

• **Burbach Countryside Dairy, Hartington - \$5,000**

Burbach Countryside Dairy will market a milk processing system. Burbach Countryside Dairy, Dean and Lisa Burbach of Burbach Countryside Dairy, Ed and JoAnn Hosch of Surge Sales and Service, the Center for Rural Affairs, and UNL Extension will contribute cash and in-kind matching funds. Contact: Ed Hosch at 402-254-3970.

• **Nebraska's Finest Meats, LLC, Randolph - \$24,750**

Nebraska's Finest Meats, LLC, a new value-added company in Cedar County, is a U.S. Department of Agriculture inspected meat processing facility that markets fresh, canned organic, natural, and other specialty meat products for area livestock producers. Nebraska's Finest Meats, Rosberg Farms, Inc., T&S Lowline Angus, and the Center for Rural Affairs will contribute cash and in-kind matching funds. Contact: Kelly Rosberg at 402-586-2579.

• **Mark It to Market, Holbrook - \$4,550**

GROW Nebraska will help evaluate, mentor and provide technical assistance to value added ag producers in preparation for entering products into wholesale distribution markets. GROW Nebraska will contribute cash and in-kind matching funds. Contact: Janell Anderson-Ehrke at 888-476-9632.

• **Freeze Drying Nutritious Snack Foods for Health Stores, Schools and Hospitals, Syracuse and Lincoln - \$10,950**

Judith Moore with M & M Farms, and John Reinert with Reinert & Associates will purchase freeze drying equipment that freeze-dries Nebraska grown produce into nutritious snack foods. The snacks will be sold in school and hospital vending machines and health food stores. M & M Farms and Reinert & Associates will contribute cash and in-kind matching funds. Contact: Judith Moore at 402-269-3480.

• **Holiday Farms Expansion Project, Imperial - \$34,300**

Partners Matt Vlasin and Holiday Farms will purchase equipment and supplies for their landscaping enterprise. The project will provide employment opportunities for young entrepreneurs by expanding business to include a landscape development service and farmer's market. Matt Vlasin and Holiday Farms – Donna Vlasin will contribute cash and in-kind matching funds. Contact: Matt Vlasin at 308-882-8643.

• **Renewable Energy Training & Workshop Program, Oakland - \$8,000**

Nebraska Renewable Energy Systems – Robert Byrnes, and Dr. Darius Agoumba – Wayne State College will use these funds to purchase technical reference materials and to market the Renewable Energy Training Program offered at Wayne State College. The Renewable Energy Training Program provides hands on opportunities for college students to be trained in renewable energy production systems. The training will allow these students to conduct workshops and training seminars for ag producers and the general public. Nebraska Renewable Energy – Robert Byrnes and Dr. Darius Agoumba will contribute cash and in-kind matching funds. Contact: Robert Byrnes at 402-685-4333.

• **Aspire Cellars, Ashland - \$75,000**

Richard and Amy Hilske, dba Aspire Cellars, LLC and Aspire Vineyards, LLC will add value to their commodity grape production by adding an on-farm winery and tasting room/gift shop. Richard and Amy Hilske and Dwayne Brown will contribute cash and in-kind matching funds. Contact: Amy Hilske at 402-326-8359.

• **Nebraska Woody Floral Expansion Assists Rural Development, Leigh - \$13,551**

Nebraska Woody Florals Nonstock Cooperative will increase small farm income through developing and expanding into new markets, while continuing to educate members and procuring vital equipment. Nebraska Woody Florals will contribute cash and in-kind matching funds. Contact: Janelle Maneely at 402-487-3328.

• **Unique Nebraska-Grown Plants, Clarkson - \$21,937.50**

Bluebird Nursery, Inc. and HFH, Inc. dba Wild Plums will develop and establish a website to market "Nebraska-Grown" unique ornamental and native plants directly to gardeners across the country. Mike Hamernik of Bluebird Nursery, Inc. and Harlan Hamernik of HFH, Inc., dba Wild Plums will contribute cash and in-kind matching funds. Contact: Mike Hamernik at 402-892-3457.

• **Hollenbeck Farms, Elmwood - \$69,069**

Myron Hollenbeck, Jr. and Hollenbeck Farms- Marcy Hollenbeck, desire to meet the demand of local, source verified meat and expand opportunities for others in the agricultural sector. Hollenbeck Farms is a self sustained cattle producer who breeds, raises, and markets source verified, all natural beef along with lamb and pork through cooperative farmers. Myron Hollenbeck Jr. and Marcy Hollenbeck will contribute cash and in-kind matching funds. Contact: Myron Hollenbeck, Jr. at 402-867-4288.

• **Growing Local Farmers, Lincoln - \$13,300**

Community CROPS and Lincoln Action Program will provide training in small-scale, value-added fruit and vegetable production to 15 beginning immigrant and refugee farmers with the goal of teaching these new Americans the skills needed to enter small-scale agriculture or livestock production. Community CROPS and Lincoln Action Program will contribute in-kind matching funds. Contact: Ingrid Kirst at 402-474-9802.

• **On-Farm Biofuel Production Facility, Oakland - \$75,000**

The partnership between Mike Tighe, Terry Tighe and Robert Byrnes will develop an on-farm biofuel production facility that will produce both biodiesel and ethanol. Biodiesel will be made from used vegetable oil and oils from oilseed crushing and ethanol from non-food supply feedstocks. Mike

Tighe, Terry Tighe and Robert Byrnes will contribute cash and in-kind matching funds. Contact: Robert Byrnes at 402-685-4333.

• **Gluten Free Snacks, Lincoln - \$10,400**

Thomas R. Masters of Spring Valley Farm and John Knapp of John Knapp Farm will research and develop sorghum grain, sweet potato, blue corn and dried beans used as ingredients in low calorie, nutritious gluten-free snacks. Spring Valley Farm and John Knapp Farm will contribute cash and in-kind matching funds. Contact: Thomas Masters at 402-770-7131.

• **Pheasant Oak Wine, Norfolk - \$20,400**

Pheasant Oak Vineyard Confections and James Arthur Vineyards will expand Pheasant Oak Wine Confections operations to market products nationally thereby dramatically increasing the wine confections produced and the use of Nebraska based products. Gary Samuelson of Pheasant Oak Vineyard Confections and Jim Ballard of James Arthur Vineyards will contribute cash and in-kind matching funds. Contact: Leo Ahmann at 402-379-5510.

For more information on the RDC and its programs, contact Linda Fettig at 308-380-4966 or linda.fettig@nebraska.gov.

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