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Department of
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STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

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Agriculture division awards \$217,388 in specialty crop grants

(Palmer, AK) – The Division of Agriculture has awarded \$217,388 in Specialty Crop Block Grants to seven Alaska organizations as part of its effort to enhance Alaska’s food security and promote Alaska’s specialty crop industry.

The grants, funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Agricultural Marketing Service, are for research projects related to specialty crops, such as pest identification and mitigation, regional food systems, crop efficiencies, variety trials, feasibility studies, or other topics, said David Schade, director of the division.

“The COVID pandemic and its fallout, including the current supply-chain interruptions, have made it clear that Alaska must take steps to address our food security issues, which the governor has made a priority,” Schade said. “These grants are useful tools to encourage Alaska’s specialty crops’ competitiveness, sustain farmers’ livelihoods, and strengthen local communities.”

The division received 11 applications for the grants and awarded seven, averaging about \$30,000, to:

- Alaska Sea Grant, of Seward, for investigation of high-pressure seaweed processing
- University of Alaska Fairbanks, for strawberry variety trials
- Glennallen High School, for grow towers for specialty crops
- Chilkat Valley Historical Society, of Haines, for the Charles Amway Berries Trials project
- Fishermen Fresh, in Southeast Alaska, for seaweed seed string improvements, and for assessing scalable hatchery techniques
- Homer Soil and Water Conservation District, for specialty crop improvements to enhance accessibility for ageing farmers

- Alaska Rhodiola Enterprises, of Palmer, for productivity to accelerate rhodiola growth and reduce harvest time

“Specialty crops,” as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, include fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits and horticulture, kelp, seaweed, and nursery crops. A list of grant-eligible specialty crops is available at: www.ams.usda.gov/scbqg.

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