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U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Invests \$58.4 Million to Support Local Businesses, Create Good-Paying Jobs and Strengthen USVI and Florida Economy

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U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently announced the department is investing \$58.4 million to help keep resources and wealth right at home in rural Florida and the Virgin Islands through job training, business expansion and technical assistance. Across Florida and the Virgin Islands, USDA invested in 19 projects — \$57,384,078 in loans and \$1,099,998 in grants.

“For some time, rural America has been at the mercy of an extraction economy, where resources are taken from rural lands only to create jobs and economic opportunity in urban and suburban areas. That’s why USDA is committed to doing what we can to change that extraction economy into a circular economy, where value is added closer to home, so the wealth created in rural areas

stays in rural areas. Today's announcement underlines the Biden-Harris Administration's commitment to helping transform the economy and bring high-paying jobs and economic opportunities to the people who need it most," Mr. Vilsack said last week.

The funding announced will help people and businesses in diverse communities and industries in Florida and throughout 48 states, the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

Investments in Florida and the Virgin Islands include:

Business & Industry (B&I) Loan Guarantees – CARES Act

- Preferred Rental Company LLC in Hamilton County will use \$4,280,000 to provide working capital and refinance existing debt. This investment will help create and save 43 jobs for the community of Jasper, Florida.
- CITRAPAC Inc. in Highlands County will use \$2,000,000 to provide working capital to help with COVID-19 recovery and support. The loan will assist the company as it navigates through the pandemic and build inventory to supply product to fulfill recently executed agreements with four large national distributors.
- All Craft Marine LLC in Pasco County will use \$2,850,000 to provide working capital to assist with COVID-19 recovery and support. The loan will allow the company to continue operations and implement revised business model actions to stabilize production and meet customer demands.

Business & Industry (B&I) Loan Guarantees

- F&R Enterprises LLC in Bradford County will use \$9,390,000 to construct a Holiday Inn Express & Suites in Starke, Florida. The funds will also be used to purchase operating supplies and equipment. This investment will help create and save 27 jobs for the community.
- RV Crazy Inc. in Brevard County will use \$408,700 to refinance existing debt and provide working capital for a RV park located in Mims, Florida. The RV park is located near the Atlantic Coast/Space Coast and welcomes many repeated campers. Amenities include a full-service bath house with laundry, recreation hall, swimming pool and three-acre lake.
- Gulf Coast Hospitality Naples LLC in Collier County will use \$4,550,000 to acquire La Quinta Inn & Suites by Wyndham Naples East and to complete improvements to the breakfast/hospitality room, guest rooms, and public areas. The property is a four-story hotel located directly off Interstate 75 in Naples, Florida. Amenities include an outdoor swimming pool, guest laundry facility, free Wi-Fi, free parking, complimentary breakfast and a business center.
- Wash and Go West 192 LLC in Lake County will use \$4,350,000 to construct a 4,500 sq. ft. express car wash in Kissimmee, Florida. The proposed car wash will have a 125-foot conveyor wash tunnel, an equipment room, office area, lobby and restrooms. The facility will be equipped with two canopy-covered automatic pay stations and 22 vacuum stations. This investment will create 17 jobs for the community.
- Skyway Classics LLC in Manatee County will use \$3,996,900 to refinance a bridge loan that was used to construct the company headquarters. Skyway Classics is one of the fastest growing online consignment classic and luxury auto dealers in the nation. This investment will create 15 jobs for the community of Bradenton, Florida.
- TVASTAR Hospitality LLC in Osceola County will use \$9,975,000 to purchase a Comfort Inn hotel which has 197 guest rooms. The hotel is located 1.5 miles from Disneyworld. This investment will create four jobs and save 18 jobs for the community.

- Shon Owens Investments LLC in Sarasota County will use \$1,033,478 to refinance debt and consolidate businesses including Pittman Building Supply, Security Fence, Owen's Ventures, Blue Diamond Car Wash, Shon Owens Investments and Jay Funeral Chapel. The funds will also be used to acquire the real estate on which Jay Fitness Center is located. This investment will save 50 jobs for the community.
- Central Wholesale Inc. in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands will use \$4,450,000 to purchase a building and open a second location. The new 16,000 sq. ft. location is near the cruise port and well-populated areas of Estate Thomas, Havensite and Frenchman's Bay. The store will provide tourist items for visitors from the cruise port.
- Tramway Properties LLC in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands will use \$5,000,000 to refinance a real estate debt and provide working capital. The project consists of a gondola skylift, skyride to Paradise Point and providing transportation to passengers on Flag Hill in St. Thomas. Paradise Point is a popular location with restaurants and retail shops that provide panoramic views of the harbor at 700 ft. elevation.
- Abacus International LLC in St. Croix, Virgin Islands will use \$5,100,000 to purchase equipment for the company.

Value-Added Producer Grants

- Hawthorne Creek Creamery in Alachua County will use \$250,000 to assist and allow production of 60,000 pounds of handcrafted artisan cheese to help expand the customer base into more grocery stores, restaurants and establish an online market. The funds will be used for marketing, supplies and labor to increase production, customer base and revenue.
- Orchard Pond Organics LLC in Leon County will use \$250,000 to provide working capital to add value to the producer's raw product of olives for making tapenade. The funds will assist in producing 70,000 jars of product to sell through their existing wholesale and retail customer base and increase revenue.
- Shogun Farms LLC in Hillsborough County will use \$250,000 to provide funds for working capital to increase sales for their wild boar product. The funds will be used for marketing, intake of delivered boar meat and value-added processing of the boar meat. The boar meat will be sold directly to customers through online and direct sales.
- Gamble Farm Organics LLC in Manatee County will use \$250,000 to provide working capital for organic produce that will be sold at a farm stand. The funds will be used for marketing, production and will result increase revenue.
- Southern Grape Company LLC in Jackson County will use \$49,999 to provide working capital funds and marketing efforts for a winery and entertainment venue. The winery will produce wines from Carlos and Noble muscadine grapes, with the subsequent addition of other fruit-based wines or blends.
- Southern Craft Products LLC in Jackson County will use \$49,999 to provide working capital funds to add value to their raw milk. The funds will be used to assist with the production of locally-produce Creamline whole milk and allow for production efficiencies and introduction of the product to new local markets.

Background

Vilsack highlighted 751 investments that USDA is making in eight programs specifically designed to create economic opportunities for people and businesses in rural areas. These programs include [Business and Industry \(B&I\) Loan Guarantees](#), which provided [record-breaking investments](#) in fiscal year 2021, and the [B&I CARES Act Program](#), which has helped create thousands of jobs with funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

Programs also include [Rural Innovation Stronger Economy Grants](#), [Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program](#), [Rural Cooperative Development Grant Program](#), [Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program](#), [Intermediary Relending Program](#) and [Value-Added Producer Grants](#).

Under the leadership of the Biden-Harris administration, Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities, create jobs and improve the quality of life for millions of Americans in rural areas. This assistance supports infrastructure improvements; business development; housing; community facilities such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural, Tribal and high-poverty areas. For more information, visit www.rd.usda.gov.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. Under the leadership of the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate-smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit www.usda.gov.

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