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# USDA Awards Over \$244,000 in Specialty Crop Block Grant to U.S. Virgin Islands for Agricultural Enhancement

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WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced today that its Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has awarded the U.S. Virgin Islands over \$244,000 through its Fiscal Year 2023 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP). This funding aims to bolster the competitiveness of specialty crops while creating new market opportunities for local producers.

Jenny Lester Moffitt, USDA Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, said, "With this year's Specialty Crop Block Grant funding, the U.S. Virgin Islands is investing in innovative projects that will help address the needs of specialty crop producers within the region. These projects will also advance USDA's efforts to keep U.S. specialty crop products competitive in both national and international markets."

The grant will fund four key initiatives led by the V.I. Department of Agriculture. One notable project includes support for the Virgin Islands Women in Agriculture Association. The organization will use the funds to enhance consumer awareness about specialty crops through activities, lesson plan development, and distribution of educational books for all age groups. Other funded projects are aimed at training for underserved farmers, increasing the production potential of cucumbers and watermelons, and intercropping of jicama.

This significant award to the U.S. Virgin Islands is part of a larger package, totaling \$72.9 million, which has been distributed to 54 states, territories, and the District of Columbia under the non-competitive FY 2023 SCBGP. The overarching goal of these grants is to support farmers who produce specialty crops like fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, and nursery crops.

The USDA said it aims to strengthen U.S. specialty crop production and markets, thereby contributing to the nation's health and well-being by ensuring an abundant supply of highly nutritious fruits, vegetables, and other specialty crops.

The funding is authorized by the 2018 Farm Bill and covers a three-year period beginning on September 30, 2023. Since its inception in 2006, the SCBGP has invested over \$1 billion to fund nearly 12,000 projects designed to boost the long-term success of specialty crop producers and enhance marketing opportunities for U.S. specialty crops.

For further details about the 2023 SCBGP Awarded Grants, interested parties can visit the official USDA [webpage](#).