



By Carl Collen

Thursday 4th August 2016, 9:13 GMT

USDA releases crop research funds

Agriculture secretary Tom Vilsack announces US\$36.5m for specialty crop research and extension investments



US agriculture secretary Tom Vilsack has announced 19 grants totaling US\$36.5m for research and extension to support domestic farmers growing fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture and nursery crops including floriculture.

The grants are funded through the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Specialty Crop Research Initiative, which was authorised by the 2014 Farm Bill.

"America's specialty crop farmers face many challenges ranging from a changing climate to increasing

production costs," said Vilsack. "Investing in cutting edge research helps uncover solutions to keep their operations viable and ensures Americans have access to safe, affordable and diverse food options.

"The universities, state departments of agriculture and trade associations that partner with USDA address challenges at the national and local levels to help sustain all parts of America's food and agriculture system, whether the farms are small or large, conventional or organic," he added.

USDA's Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI) develops and disseminates science-based tools to address the needs of specific crops.

The funded projects address research and extension needs that span the entire spectrum of specialty crops production from researching plant genetics to improving crop characteristics; identifying and addressing threats from pests and diseases; improving production and profitability; developing new production innovations and technologies; and developing methods to respond to food safety hazards.

[Click here for a full breakdown of where the funding is going](#)