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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ohio Department of Agriculture Receives Funds Through the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

REYNOLDSBURG, Ohio (Oct. 19, 2009) – Ohio Department of Agriculture Director Robert Boggs today announced the department has received more than \$809,000 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) through its Specialty Crop Block Grant Program.

Funding will be shared among 17 projects allowing the Ohio Department of Agriculture to partner with associations and institutions, such as the Center for Innovative Food Technology, the Appalachian Center for Economic Networks, the Innovative Farmers of Ohio, the Ohio Grape Industries Committee, and the Ohio State University. These partnerships will work to strengthen marketing initiatives and production plans, encourage food safety practices, create new markets and develop sustainable production practices for the state's specialty crop farmers.

“We are extremely thankful to our federal partners for these grant funds, which will help Ohio specialty crop farmers deliver the highest quality, safest product to consumers,” said Boggs. “These funds are invaluable to producers in their efforts to educate Ohio consumers about the economic, environmental and social benefits of eating locally-produced food. We listened to our producers and ensured that the grant dollars will help implement food safety programs that will protect the industry and consumers alike.”

Grant dollars will help advance the long-term economic viability and sustainability of Ohio's specialty crop industry and enhance the competitiveness of the state's specialty crops through market promotion, improved efficiency and reduced costs of distribution systems.

The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, created by the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 and later amended by the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (the Farm Bill), authorizes the USDA to grant money to the 50 states and the U.S. territories to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Specialty crops include fruits and vegetables, dried fruit, tree nuts, nursery crops and horticulture, including floriculture.

A complete list detailing Ohio's projects is available at www.agri.ohio.gov. For more information about the USDA's Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, visit www.usda.gov.

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