

Written by Joy Venhorst
Thursday, 07 July 2011 12:24

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AMES, Iowa — The Agricultural Marketing Resource Center (AgMRC) is assisting producer groups gathering information to use in applying for the USDA Rural Business and Cooperative Service (RBCS) value-added producer grants, announced in the Federal Register June 28, 2011.

AgMRC is a virtual library of agricultural value-added opportunities, business development and consulting resources for producers, located at www.agmrc.org.

“There is a direct link on the home page of the site to take producers directly to the federal notice of solicitation of applications, grant templates and a directory of consultants and service providers,” said Ray Hansen, director of the center. “Additional resources for producers to develop their business or to find a new market opportunity for an existing business also are available.”

Producers can investigate specific commodity information on many different niche opportunities and locate specific laws, consultants and individual contacts within their individual state to assist them in the grant application process.

“The consultant database available on the website includes specific commodity consultants, business development consultants and those consultants specializing in grant writing,” Hansen

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said.

RBCS announced the availability of \$37 million in competitive grant funds for fiscal year 2011 to help independent agricultural producers enter into value-added activities. The grant will fund one of the following two activities:

Developing feasibility studies or business plans (including marketing plans or other planning activities) needed to establish a viable value-added marketing opportunity for an agricultural product; or

Acquiring working capital to operate a value-added business venture or an alliance that will allow the producers to better compete in domestic and international markets.

Value-added products are defined as follows:

A change in the physical state or form of the product (such as milling wheat into flour or making strawberries into jam);

The production of a product in a manner that enhances its value, as demonstrated through a business plan (such as organically produced products);

The physical segregation of an agricultural commodity or product in a manner that results in the enhancement of the value of that commodity or product (such as an identity preserved marketing system).

Value-added also includes using any agricultural product or commodity to produce renewable energy on a farm or ranch.

Applications must be completed and submitted no later than August 29, 2011.

Located at Iowa State University, AgMRC is a national center for value-added agriculture resources. For more information, visit www.agmrc.org or call toll-free at 866-277-5567.

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