USDA Agricultural Marketing Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Transportation and Marketing
Federal State Marketing Improvement Program

Fiscal Year 2025 Description of Funded Projects

Number of Grants Awarded: 6
Amount of Funds Awarded: $922,039.40

For more information, please visit the grant program's website: https://www.ams.usda.gov/fsmip.
NOTE: The project descriptions below were provided by the grant recipients.

ALABAMA

Recipient: Auburn University
Project Type: Market Development
Supplemental Award Amount: $141,288.70
Cost Share: $141,288.70
Total: 282,577.40

Marketing Options for Producers and Agribusiness in the Southeast: Social-Affinity Labels and Distant Markets

This project explores innovative marketing strategies and channels by estimating the value consumers place on products from these farms. Specifically, the project team is examining consumer interest in paying more for food labeled with origin information (Southern, Alabama, Georgia, or unspecified) and three affinity farm attributes: American-owned farm, Black Belt (originally named for the region's soil color), limited resource farmer (LRF), and clouded title. A representative internet-based survey in two distinct regions uses a choice experiment to measure consumer willingness to pay (WTP) for food products with the origin and attribute combinations. In the Southeast, the primary driver of WTP is likely "local," while in the Northeast the non-local food WTP may be dominated by the social affinity attributes. Indeed, Northeast consumers—who are wealthier on average—could have more potential interest in supporting LRF farmers. Key research questions compare premiums and market size across regions, anticipating that distant markets in the Northeast might be more profitable for Southern farmers. In addition to research publications, the team plans various Extension publications and presentations for producers and agribusinesses to help develop profitable marketing strategies. The team includes academic research economists with experience in choice experiments and food marketing, and extension specialists with experience working in the region and state government partners. The supplemental funds will support a new objective that expands the choice survey to include an additional location attribute (a Georgia product) and an additional affinity attribute (American-owned farmland) to the study design.

FLORIDA

Recipient: University of Florida
Project Type: Market Development
Supplemental Award Amount: $187,342.00
Cost Share: $187,990.00
Total: $375,332.00

Enhancing the Local, National and International Reach of Florida Agricultural Products: Analyzing the Determinants of Consumer Preferences for the Fresh from Florida Program

With joint efforts from the University of Florida and Florida Gulf Coast University, this Fresh from Florida (FFF) project aims to expand the market for Florida's agricultural products by analyzing the determinants of consumer preferences for the FFF program at the local, national, and international levels. To achieve this goal, the team addresses six objectives with the fifth and six added as part of the supplemental funds : (1) measure psychological and behavioral factors influencing in-state consumers' preferences for FFF-labeled food products; (2) estimate and compare consumers' willingness to pay for FFF-labeled products across different regions of the U.S. (Florida and Northeastern Region) and Canada (Eastern provinces and territories); (3) assess the effectiveness of marketing communication scenarios in motivating the purchase decision of the FFF-labeled products; (4) develop and disseminate outreach materials, highlighting benefits of FFF program participation to Florida producers and agribusinesses (5) expand the international market analysis to include Florida-grown blueberries in South Korea, Canada, France, and the United Kingdom; and (6) apply a consumer response hierarchy framework to identify stages where marketing interventions can have the most significant impact in international markets. The project intends to use different approaches, including focus groups, online consumer choice surveys, and non-hypothetical experiments involving neurobehavioral measures (e.g., electrical brain activity and eye movement). Apart from academic publications, a key delivery is a 3-part webinar disseminating research findings, providing targeted marketing recommendations, and assessing attendees' level of understanding of, and interest in, enrolling in the FFF program. Other deliverables of the supplemental funds include market-specific export guidance for Florida blueberry producers and recommendations for leveraging the FFF brand internationally. This research will inform the development of strategic marketing plans that better align with consumer preferences, enhance export opportunities for high-value specialty crops and improve the overall growth and sustainability of Florida's economy by supporting local businesses and enhancing the state's economic competitiveness.

KANSAS

Recipient: Kansas State University
Project Type: Market Development
Supplemental Award Amount: $135,583.70
Cost Share: $135,583.00
Total: $271,167.70

Electronic Supply Chain Information in Beef Cattle Production and Market Development

This project collects, records, and forwards animal production and animal health information downstream. Such information is among the most valuable resources cattle producers can use to improve efficiency and sustainability, enhance animal health, increase traceability, facilitate supply chain management, and ultimately provide testimonials addressing consumer desires regarding meat production practices. Specifically, CalfDex, a cell phone app that was developed to record production information in the field for cow-calf producers in 2020 FSMIP awarded grant, was publicly released in late 2023, has been downloaded by nearly 2,600 users as of August 2025. Two major advancements are priorities that this project focuses on to take CalfDex to the next level of recording, analyzing, and sharing production information from the ranch: 1) Building electronic cow and calf RFID ear tag scanner ID linking capabilities, and 2) Developing a website mirror to the CalfDex app. through collaboration between Kansas State University (Agricultural Economics and Veterinary Medicine); U.S. CattleTrace; Stasyx; and Kansas Livestock Association, this project at this point is now well under way to accomplishing these and other advancements to the information sharing system. The advancements will provide several important benefits for CalfDex adopters including increasing data accuracy, efficiency of entry, ease of use, greater data analytics, integration of data with consulting veterinarians, and facilitating downstream sharing of data as well as traceability enhancing overall beef supply chain coordination and beef market development. The supplemental funding will increase the value of information to users as well as provide more adoption and collaboration between producers and consulting veterinarians.

MISSISSIPPI

Recipient: University of Southern Mississippi
Project Type: Market Development
Supplemental Award Amount: $190,443.00
Cost Share: $195,461.00
Total: $385,904.00

Decision Support Tools for Building a Sustainable Timber Market in Mississippi
This research project will develop two decision support tools for Mississippi timber market stakeholders. First, the project team will collect secondary data and conduct interviews with sawmills and logging companies to create Mississippi's timber demand and supply profiles. Second, the team will develop a decision support tool for the timber resource allocation problem, and sawmills can use the tool to optimize their timber purchase decisions by considering several critical factors (e.g., resource availability and transportation cost). Third, the team will develop a simulation model comprising a discrete event simulation and an agent-based simulation for the timber distribution network in Mississippi; stakeholders can use the simulation model to test numerous what-if scenarios. These scenarios include 1) measuring the impact of sharing real-time truck waiting times at sawmills on truck drivers and logging company dispatcher's behavior, 2) investigating the value of coordinated timber delivery scheduling on supply chain stakeholders, and 3) evaluating the utility of timber storage facilities in reducing the transportation cost and timber truck empty haul distance. Fourth, which will be supported by supplemental funds, includes the development of an online collaborative transportation service platform (CTSP). Transportation providers can post their service availability on the platform, and interested logging companies and sawmills can purchase transportation services. Fifth, the team will work with project collaborators to conduct experiments using the proposed models. With support from supplemental funds, the team will test and implement the developed CTSP, and disseminate the results to stakeholders in Mississippi.

TENNESSEE

Recipient: University of Tennessee
Project Type: Market Development
Supplemental Award Amount: $189,810.00
Cost Share: $189,811.00
Total: $379,621.00

Development of a Successful Marketing Channel for Rural Wineries in Tennessee

This project evaluates the feasibility of improving market access for wineries through increased effectiveness of social media advertising and specifically examines how social media marketing efforts can influence consumer preferences for Tennessee wine labeled with the Tennessee Quality Assurance Program (QAP) logo and regional labels and for new products such as light and low-alcohol wines. Specifically, this project will: 1) include surveys combined with eye-tracking technology to examine how social media could be used to better promote Tennessee wines, and winery tourism, and Tennessee wine that qualifies to carry the Tennessee QAP logo and regional logos, and new products such as light and low-alcohol wines to consumers; 2) educate Tennessee wineries on how to utilize social media communications with potential customers, how to use the market information from social media to develop a targeted marketing base, and how to best promote Tennessee QAP qualified wines, regional logos, and light and low-alcohol wines to consumers through social media advertisements; 3) conduct economic research to help clarify marketing barriers and opportunities for wineries and provide marketing opportunities to help wineries successfully market their products and venues for consumers. Results of this project will be applicable for not only wineries throughout Tennessee, but for wineries throughout the United States, particularly those in emerging wine production areas. Supplemental funding will help identify new market opportunities for Tennessee wineries, encourage research and innovation focused on new products (light and/or low alcohol wines) and newly branded products (QAP certified wines and regionally branded wines), and address barriers, challenges, and opportunities for the Tennessee wine industry, such as attracting potential consumers to Tennessee wineries through social media marketing.

WEST VIRGINIA

Recipient: West Virginia University
Project Type: Market Development
Supplemental Award Amount: $77,572.00
Cost Share: $77,767.00
Total: $155,339.00

Exploring and Developing Fiber-Based Agricultural Products in West Virginia

This project aims to identify fiber products for marketing and promotion through established local and state-wide retail outlets, innovate and enhance fiber products for adoption in multiple markets, establish localized supply chain links for steady market growth, and train local producers for the development of fiber markets. West Virginia University and its partners will deliver key outcomes, including a feasibility analysis for fiber production in West Virginia, a supply chain mapping of the producers, processors, and retailers for fiber-related goods, the development of novel fiber-related products and processing methods, training West Virginia fiber producers on improved shearing and fiber handling methods for increased access to markets, and the relaunch of a West Virginia Fiber Festival. The supplemental funds will build on activities and expand the scope in three major ways: (1) Deepening market intelligence through interactive mapping and cluster analysis, and identification of regional/national partners, (2) Exploring non-traditional markets and developing prototypes for high value innovative applications of wool, and (3) Enhancing outreach with immersive exhibits, product databases, and documented opensource processing methods for replication by producers. These additions will provide West Virginia wool stakeholders with advanced market insights, broadened product opportunities, and practical tools to integrate into emerging value chains.