

Product Development and Evaluation Resources and Infrastructure to Support Value-Added Specialty Crops

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Montana State University seeks to initiate a project that will provide support for specialty crop producers and food manufacturers. Specifically the project will develop human and laboratory resources to provide technical assistance to specialty crop producers who intend to add value to their crops, and to food manufacturers who utilize specialty crops. Project outcomes include: 1) Provision of start-up and continuing technical assistance and guidance for Montana's food manufacturing groups and individual specialty crop producers who intend to add value to their crops; 2) Creation of an internship program to allow MSU students to support and learn from Montana's food manufacturing entrepreneurs; and 3) Creation of a laboratory infrastructure to develop food product prototypes and conduct sensory testing and evaluation of new and existing value-added specialty crops. With the approval of the Hospitality Management and Culinary Arts degree programs by the Montana University System Board of Regents, a tenure-track food/culinary scientist will be searched and hired. Funding from the Specialty Crops Block Grant Program will ensure that the teaching, research and outreach components of this faculty member's workload assignment will be dedicated to a) Food Enterprise curriculum development; b) outreach and assistance for food manufacturers and value-added specialty crop producers; c) research and product development utilizing Montana's specialty crops; d) developing an internship program for Food Enterprise students; and e) planning and implementing a product development and testing laboratory in space allocated to MSU's Hospitality Management/Culinary Arts degree programs.