

NEWS

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 13, 2015

UVI Cooperative Extension Service Partnering with USDA to Conduct Grant Workshops to Support Local Foods

Grant-writing workshops designed to help potential applicants understand, develop, and submit their Federal grant applications for the **Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program** are being offered in every state this spring through a unique collaboration between federal, state, and regional partners. The University of the Virgin Islands Cooperative Extension Service in collaboration with the Southern Regional Center for Rural Development is partnering with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA), V.I. Department of Agriculture, and UVI Small Business Development Center to conduct workshops in the U.S. Virgin Islands. This effort is known as the **Agricultural Marketing Service Technical Assistance (AMSTA) Project**.

The workshop will be held on Monday, April 20, 2015, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the VI Small Business Development Center's (SBDC) Training Facility, 4100 Sion Farm Shopping Center, Suite 17, St. Croix and video conferenced to the St. Thomas SBDC Training Center, **8000** Nisky Center, Suite 720. **To register on St. Croix, contact Stafford Crossman at 692-4071 email scrossm@uvi.edu or Hazel Jones at 340-692-5270 email visbdextx@uvi.edu. On St. Thomas, contact Dr. Louis Petersen at 340-693-1083 email louis.petersen@live.uvi.edu or Mary Jo Williams at 340-776-3206 email visbdextt@uvi.edu.**

According to AMS' Administrator Anne Alonzo, "The Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program is a key to USDA's efforts to revitalize rural economies by supporting local

and regional food systems. The grant workshops will ensure that more communities and businesses across the country can participate in the competitive grant process with proposals that create real economic opportunities and help meet the growing demand for locally and regionally produced food."

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture is coordinating the workshops through the Regional Rural Development Centers, and Cooperative Extension System educators will provide training in all regions of the country. NIFA and all partners will conduct outreach to raise awareness of AMS's grant opportunities and increase participation in the programs. A list of upcoming grant workshop dates and locations can be found at <http://www.amsta.net>.

With \$30 million authorized annually by the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Farm Bill) through fiscal year 2018, AMS's Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program awards competitive grants to develop new market opportunities for farm and ranch operations serving local and regional markets. The Farmers Market Promotion Program supports farmers' markets and other direct producer-to-consumer activities, while the Local Food Promotion Program supports enterprises that aggregate, store, distribute, and process local and regional food. Requests for applications for both programs were released on March 16. Proposals are due on May 14.

These investments are part of USDA's commitment to strengthening local and regional food systems through projects that recruit and train farmers, expand economic opportunities, and increase access to healthy foods. USDA's **Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Initiative** (KYF2) coordinates USDA's support for local and regional food systems. Projects aligned with these efforts can be found on the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Compass. For more information on AMS, visit www.ams.usda.gov, and for more on NIFA, visit www.nifa.usda.gov.

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