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New York State Agricultural Experiment Station

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USDA Awards \$1M to Cornell for Value-Added Agriculture

By Peter Seem

GENEVA, NY: The Food Venture Center (FVC) and the New York State Integrated Pest Management (IPM), both located at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, NY, are among several Cornell University entities that will receive part of a \$993,200 grant from the USDA to establish agricultural innovation centers. The grant will assist rural businesses, farmers and ranchers in developing value-added businesses through greater utilization of production agriculture commodities.

Cornell's application was a cooperative effort involving administration and faculty in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and at the Geneva Experiment Station, the Department of Agriculture and Markets, NY Farm Bureau and various agricultural organizations.

"This grant was prepared jointly by Cornell faculty, staff and administration. It was a great partnership of administration and the people on campus and at the Station," said Michael Hoffmann, associate director of Cornell Cooperative Extension, director of IPM, and one of the principals in Cornell's grant application. Bill Lesser, chair of the department of applied economics and management, is the other principal figure on the grant.

Under the grant, "the Food Venture Center will provide services and assistance for crop-value enhancement," said FVC director Olga Padilla-Zakour, a food scientist at Geneva. The FVC seeks to support farmers and producers in implementing and marketing value-added products. The center received about \$225,000 of the grant. Initiated 15 years ago, the FVC provides technical and business assistance to food processing and manufacturing companies, as well as support for entrepreneurs starting such companies.

The IPM program will receive \$77,000, which will be used to expand the "Trac-Apple" program to other commodities and IPM labeling. "Trac-Apple" provides growers with an easy method of recording pesticide applications and pest management procedures. Proper documentation in this area helps growers maintain markets in Europe. IPM labeling provides a mechanism to recognize good stewardship by producers and has the potential to add value to what they grow and market.

Along with IPM and the FVC, five Ithaca-based Cornell programs in Applied Economics and Management, and Biological and Environmental Engineering will receive a portion of the money over the 18-month duration of the grant.

The Cornell grant is part of a larger \$10M package from the USDA, divided among institutions in 10 different states. Cornell, Michigan State, Montana State, Rutgers, Purdue, the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute in Minnesota, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the Kansas Department of Commerce, and the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives each received roughly \$1M from the USDA. For additional information,

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