**MDA 2021 Specialty Crop Block Grant Awardees**

**Helena, Mont.** – The Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA) and U.S> Department of Agriculture (USDA) have partnered to announce the recipients of the state’s $3.020 million investment in projects through the Montana Specialty Crop Block Grant (SCBG) program.

 “*The quality of Montana’s agricultural products and the producers raising them are unmatched*,” said Montana Department of Agriculture Director Christy Clark. “*These grants support vital research and outreach efforts that directly benefit Montana’s farmers and ranchers to diversify, innovate, and grow their operations*.”

**2021 SCBG AWARDS**

**Montana State University-Bozeman has been awarded the following:**

* A $227,814 award for “Establishing the Industry and Market for Montana’s High-Value Fractioned Pulse Ingredients via Food Product Innovation”. Primary Investigator Wan Yuan Kuo.
* A $141,336 award for “Honeybee Antiviral Defense Mechanisms in the Context of Stressors and Stimulants”. Primary Investigator Michelle Flenniken.
* A $100,973 award for “Characterization of chickpea Pathogens in Montana and Evaluation of Fungal Species Response to Fungicide Sensitivity”. Primary Investigator Mary Burrows.
* A $94,430 award for “Improving Efficiency and Sustainability of the MSU Potato Lab Tissue Culture Program”. Primary Investigator Nina Zidack.
* A $143,573 award for “Optimizing Production, Storage, and Marketing of Winter Storage Vegetables in Montana”. Primary Investigator Mac Burgess.
* A $84,497 award for “Evaluating the Effect of Long-Term Rotations and Previous Crop on Pathogens of Pea and Lentil”. Primary Investigator Frankie Crutcher with the Eastern Agricultural Research Center in Sidney.
* A $44,913 award for “Advancement of Genetic Tools to Understand Potato Virus Y Resistance Mechanisms”. Primary Investigator Michelle Flenniken.
* A $80,651 award for “Optimizing Essential Oil Seed Treatments and Enhancing its Efficacy in Managing Root Rot Pathogens of Pulse Crops”. Primary Investigator Uta McKelvey.
* A $73,567 award for “Improving Methods of Exploring the Microbiome of Pulse Crop Fields”. Primary Investigator Carmen Murphy.
* A $349,543 award for “Identify and Explore Resistance to Control Pea Ascochyta Blight Disease”. Primary Investigator Li Huang.
* A $145,995 award for “Evaluation of Cover Crops as Contributors to Plant Disease in Pea and Lentils”. Primary Investigator Frankie Crutcher with the Eastern Agricultural Research Center in Sidney.
* A $38,932 award for “Evaluating Honeybee Infecting AnBV-1 Distribution, Sequence Diversity, and Utility for Laboratory-Based Virus Infection Studies”. Primary Investigator Michelle Flenniken.
* A $129,836 award for “Weed Management in Dryland Chickpea and Faba Beans in Montana”. Primary Investigator Lovreet Shergill with the Southern Agricultural Research Center in Huntley.
* A $45,851 award for “Varietal Education to Advance Best Practices”. Primary Investigator Mike Giroux.

**Montana Department of Agriculture:**

* A $11,365 award for “Nursery Survey for Brown Marmorated Stink Bug in Montana”. Primary Investigator Frank Etzler.
* A $19,733 award for “New Supportive Resources for Montana Beekeepers”. Primary Investigator Alyssa Piccolomini.
* A $257,141 award for “Pulse Promotion in Mexico and Latin America”. Primary Investigator Weston Merrill.
* A $56,352 award for “Montana State Grain Lab Pulse Crop Market Access Promotion”. Primary Investigator Dan Reimer.

The Specialty Crop Block Program also supported a grant for $320,862 for “Developing Direct to Consumer Market for Montana Craft Cider” for the Northwestern Cider Association. And a grant for $375,000 for “Influence of Arbuscular Mycorrhizal Fungi and Rhizobium on Soil Health and Plant Growth” for the USDA-ARS in Sidney MT.

The Montana Department of Agriculture is serving Montana Agriculture and growing prosperity under the Big Sky. For more information on department programs and services, visit agr.mt.gov.