USDA Invests Approximately $11.5 Million in Composting and Food Waste Reduction Projects in 23 States

News Release | | January 25, 2024

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WASHINGTON, January 25, 2024 - The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is investing approximately $11.5 million in 38 cooperative agreements that support innovative, scalable waste management plans to reduce and divert food waste from landfills. The Composting and Food Waste Reduction cooperative agreements, which are funded by the American Rescue Plan Act, are part of USDA's broad support for urban agriculture. The program is jointly administered by USDA's Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). The recommended projects will be implemented between now and 2026.

"These Composting and Food Waste Reduction projects help communities reduce food waste and greenhouse gas emissions," said Terry Cosby, Chief of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), which houses the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production. "Local strategies and tools like these are important climate solutions and also contribute to food security at the community level."

USDA prioritized projects that anticipate or demonstrate economic benefits, incorporate plans to make compost easily accessible to farmers, including community gardeners, integrate other food waste strategies, including food recovery efforts and collaborate with multiple partners. The collaboration between NIFA and the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production is part of USDA's framework to transform the U.S. food system to benefit consumers, producers and rural communities by providing more options, increasing access, and creating new and better markets for small and mid-size producers.

"This work with our USDA colleagues in the Natural Resources Conservation Service is one example of how we are working together to resolve this critical issue," said NIFA Director Dr. Manjit K. Misra. "These customer-focused projects will have significant impacts on the agency's goal to reduce food loss and waste."

Recipients include projects in 23 states. Some highlights of recipients include:

- The City of Cleveland, Ohio, will expand current drop-off residential composting locations, increase waste diversion and access to composting services, and provide subsidized monthly subscriptions to composting services to SNAP-eligible households.

- The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation in Pendleton, Ore., will initiate and expand on community efforts to improve waste management and diversion of food waste from Tribal government facilities while engaging members on food waste management issues.
- The Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District in Albuquerque, N.M., will support a community compost co-op and a farm compost hub at locations that typically cannot access existing private composting services available in the area.

For a complete list of these recommended cooperative agreement recipients and project summaries, visit usda.gov/urban. These new agreements build on USDA's $12 million investment in 82 agreements since 2020.

More Information

The Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production was established through the 2018 Farm Bill. It is led by NRCS and works in partnership with numerous USDA agencies that support urban agriculture and innovative production. These cooperative agreements are part of a broader USDA investment in urban and innovative agriculture. Other efforts include:

- Investing $9.1 million for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production competitive grants in fiscal year 2023.
- Renewing the People's Garden Initiative, which celebrates collaborative gardens across the country and worldwide that benefit their communities by growing fresh, healthy food and supporting resilient, local food systems using sustainable practices and providing greenspace.
- Creating and managing a Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production to advise the Secretary on the development of policies and outreach relating to urban agriculture.
- Investing in risk management education to broaden reach of crop insurance among urban producers.
- Organizing 17 USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) urban county committees to make important decisions about how FSA farm programs are administered locally. Urban farmers who participate in USDA programs in the areas selected are encouraged to participate by nominating and voting for county committee members.

NIFA invests in and advances agricultural research, education and Extension across the nation to make transformative discoveries that solve societal challenges. NIFA supports initiatives that ensure the long-term viability of agriculture and applies an integrated approach to ensure that groundbreaking discoveries in agriculture-related sciences and technologies reach the people who can put them into practice. In FY2023, NIFA's total investment was $2.6 billion.

Learn more at usda.gov/urban. For additional resources available to producers, download the Urban Agriculture at a Glance brochure or visit farmers.gov/urban. Additional resources on food loss and waste prevention are available at www.usda.gov/foodlossandwaste.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. Under the Biden-Harris administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit usda.gov.

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