

Central Valley Business Times

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Ten companies or organizations in the Central Valley are getting grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture that the government says will mean more jobs and a stronger rural economy.

Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan says the Central Valley's recipients are among 298 in 44 states and Puerto Rico to receive business development assistance through the "Value-Added Producer Grant" program.

In the Central Valley, grants totaling just under \$1.5 million are going to:

- Lodi -- Pacific Coast Producers \$300,000
- Manteca -- Delta Blue Blueberries \$49,000
- Hanford -- Rosa Brothers Milk Company Inc. \$300,000
- Sacramento -- Blue Diamond Growers \$300,000
- Turlock -- California Dairy Campaign \$100,000
- Chico -- Hog Wild for Organic Pork \$67,500
- Tulare -- Top O' the Morn Farms \$300,000
- Stockton -- Arburua Enterprises Inc \$35,000
- Yuba City -- Sunsweet Growers Inc. \$300,000
- Davis -- Community Alliance with Family Farmers \$45,475

"These projects will provide financial returns and help create jobs for agricultural producers, businesses and families across the country," says Ms. Merrigan. "This funding will promote small business expansion and entrepreneurship opportunities by providing local businesses with access capital, technical assistance and new markets for products and services."

"It is so vital to take every opportunity we have to create jobs in our region, and it is important

that we create some of those jobs in the agricultural sector," says Rep. Jerry McNerney, D-Pleasanton, who represents much of San Joaquin County. "Together, we can get our economy back on track. I commend these companies for applying for these grants and their commitment to our community."

The Value-Added Producer Grants announced Friday total more than \$40.2 million. Funds may be used for feasibility studies or business plans, working capital for marketing value-added agricultural products and for farm-based renewable energy projects.

Those getting money include independent producers, farmer and rancher cooperatives, agricultural producer groups, and majority-controlled producer-based business ventures.

Value-added products are created when a producer increases the consumer value of an agricultural commodity in the production or processing stage.