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Sustainable Connections receives grant for food and farming program

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Bellingham-based Sustainable Connections recently received funding from the Washington Department of Agriculture through the U.S. Department of Agriculture Block Grant.

The three-year \$220,338 grant will support the work of Sustainable Connections Food & Farming Program to enhance to competitiveness and to increase the overall demand for locally produced specialty crops, defined as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops, including floriculture.

Laura Ridenour, Food & Farming Program Manager, said the grant, combined with matching funds, will allow Sustainable Connections to increase markets for local producers through targeted assessment, local branding, marketing, and increased promotion.

The grant also funds a portion of the Whatcom office of the Northwest Agriculture Business Center to continue to offer hands-on business development and technical assistance for local producers and processors.

Funding for the Specialty Crop Grant Program is allocated through the Farm Bill. Washington State Department of Agriculture was awarded \$3,744,666.16 for 28 projects, making it the third-largest recipient of federal funds this year.

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