

# State of Alaska Division of Agriculture Programs for the Peony Industry



## **The Alaska Grown Program**

The Alaska Grown Program has been around for over 30 years and is supported by the Alaska Division of Agriculture. The 2nd oldest state-branded marketing program in the nation, Alaska Grown was created by the local agriculture industry to highlight products grown in Alaska, and help consumers identify which products are locally grown, raised, and produced.

The Alaska Grown vision is:

- That everyone has access to Alaska Grown food and farm products.
- That all Alaskan Farmers have a reliable market.
- That every person, business, and organization fulfills their role.

## **Phytosanitary Inspection & Certification Program**

The Alaska Division of Agriculture, in cooperation with United States Department of Agriculture, Animal Plant Health Inspection Service, Plant Protection and Quarantine, helps to facilitate the export of agricultural plants and plant products into international markets via phytosanitary inspection and certification. The intent is to certify that the agricultural commodities for export meet the plant health requirements of the country of destination. Depending upon the importing country, these requirements may vary. It is important to check with a Division Authorized Certification Official (ACO) in advance to determine up to date specific country import requirements and to schedule an inspection. Neither USDA-APHIS-PPQ nor State of Alaska require certification of any exports, rather provides the certification of plants and plant products as a service to exporters.

## **Western United States Agricultural Trade Association (WUSATA)**

The Western United States Agricultural Trade Association (WUSATA) provides programs and services to Western U.S. agribusinesses to educate, connect, and compete in the international export market. The Global Connect Program offers opportunities to explore export markets and the Fund Match Program helps qualifying companies compete in international markets by reimbursing eligible marketing and promotional activities up to 50% of cost. The Alaska Division of Agriculture works with WUSATA to facilitate Outbound Buying Missions where qualifying Alaska agribusinesses can travel overseas to meet one-on-one with foreign buyers and promote their products at international trade shows; as well as Inbound Buying Missions where buyers are brought to Alaska for one-on-one meetings and other special events.

In August 2019, Alaska hosted a Canada Nursery Inbound Trade Mission through WUSATA in partnership with Washington and Hawaii. Alaska peony producers were able to meet one-on-one with Canadian buyers creating relationships between Canadian buyers/distributors and Alaskan cut-flower producers.

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## Grant Programs

### **Federal State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP)**

FSMIP offers grants with a one-to-one dollar match to assist in exploring new market opportunities for U.S. food and agricultural products, and to encourage research and innovation aimed at improving the efficiency and performance of the marketing system. Alaska peony producers have established a productive and quality product, but were seeking additional market outlets. This project explored opportunities for successful and profitable marketing and exporting of Alaska grown peonies. This project capitalized on the growing popularity of peony production in Alaska and explored potential markets for the already established crops. In 2007 the Division of Agriculture was awarded a FSMIP grant. The project launched the coordinated effort of the state's peony growers to work together and form what eventually became the Alaska Peony Growers Association. FSMIP can only be awarded to state agricultural agencies.

### **Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBG)**

The USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant (SCBG) is made available to all state departments of agriculture to sub award producers and agricultural organizations. SCBG occurs annually with the award amount varying from year to year. Specialty crops are a variety of vegetable and fruit products, as well as medicinal herbs or spices, cut flowers, and even honey. Items that are not considered specialty crops are grains, dairy products, or fiber crops (i.e. hemp and cotton). The intent of the grant is to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increasing consumer access or consumption, increasing sustainable production practices, increasing food safety handling practices, understanding ecological threats from microbial or chemical sources, or enhancing the economy as a result of crop development, among other outcomes. Projects are strictly monitored to ensure that they are for the benefit of the whole specialty crop industry and that results are shared with fellow producers. Local peony growers are encouraged to apply. Since 2011, The Alaska Division of Agriculture has awarded 10 grants worth over \$322,000 directly towards the peony industry in Alaska.

### **Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops Grant Project (TASC)**

The USDA Foreign Agriculture Services TASC Grant Program seeks to address sanitary, phytosanitary and technical barriers that prohibit or threaten the export of U.S. specialty crops. The Alaska Division of Agriculture was awarded the TASC grant in 2018 for the project, Eliminating Pest-Related Trade Barriers for the Alaska Grown Peony Trade Industry. The overall goal of the project is to develop treatments and strategies to control insect and microbiological pests so that pest-free, high-quality Alaska Grown peonies enter key export marketing channels. The three-year project is researching Juvenile Thrip Morphological Identification, as well as investigating Pre-Harvest and Post-Harvest Treatment Strategies for the elimination of Thrips pests. Results from this research will be disseminated to Alaskan peony growers to increase the export of Alaska Grown peonies in the international cut-flower industry.

# Meet the Staff: Programs for the Peony Industry



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