

FROM

GROUND

TO

GROCERY

...AND BEYOND!

AGRICULTURE IN

DOÑA ANA COUNTY

THE LAS CRUCES
Bulletin

FALL 2022

A letter from the New Mexico secretary of agriculture

We often say the most optimistic people are those who take a seed, plant it in soil and wait for moisture to let it grow. But that is only the beginning, as weather events like hail or freezing temperatures inevitably transpire. And that's not all. Market forces can lead to the final crop not covering expenses of growing and harvesting. The most optimistic people are indeed

our farmers and ranchers! Doña Ana County is blessed with a strong agricultural heritage. Everywhere you look as you drive around the area, you can see the fruits of labor, including pecans, chile, onions, lettuce, dairy cattle, beef cattle, sheep goats, pigs, grapes, greenhouse nurseries, and more. We have a strong future with New Mexico State University, and our past is pre-

served at the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum. We have a bright future with recognition of a significant past!

Agriculture is a food business, and our local cuisine would be absent without our great local products. The next time you enjoy a meal, I encourage you to take a new look at your plate and reflect on the path that led to filling that plate. Think about the local

connection on that plate and the people who made it possible. Think about the challenges our agriculture producers have in managing limited water and expensive inputs in order to put our favorite foods on our plate.

I salute all of our optimists in agriculture and appreciate everyone who enjoys our local bounty. I continue to encourage everyone to seek local

products, support the farmers' markets, visit stores where local products can be found, and have fun enjoying New Mexico agriculture with family and friends! Cheers!

Sincerely,



Jeff M. Witte

*Secretary New Mexico
Department of Agriculture*



Jeff Witte

An inseparable bond: New Mexico, NMSU and agriculture

The importance of agriculture in New Mexico cannot be overstated.

This is the third edition the Las Cruces Bulletin has produced of this agricultural update section. Our goal is to provide our readers with an overview of information and trends with agriculture in New Mexico and, specifically, in Doña Ana County.

A lot of New Mexicans are in tune with the agricultural community and business in our state. But many, myself included, don't have a full grasp of agriculture and its impact. Our hope is

to help bridge that information gap.

Most Las Cruces know New Mexico State University got its start as a land grant university and agricultural education has always been at the core of NMSU's mission. Not quite as many realize the state's department of agriculture is located on NMSU's campus, or the state's 4H organization is also headquartered here. NMSU's cooperative extension provides outreach in all 33 New Mexico counties.

Did you know know the value of agriculture sector production in New Mexico,

which includes crop production, animal products and production, forest products sold, the value of farm dwellings and other farm income has totaled more than \$3 billion for the past five years?

You may have heard we are now the leading state in America when it comes to pecan production. But did you know we are only fourth among states when it comes to acreage? That's because we have such a high yield, at more than 90 million pounds per acre. Texas has nearly three times the acreage of New Mexico (112,000 to 46,000), yet it

produces barely one-third of the pecans (33.6 million pounds to New Mexico's 91.1 million pounds).

And many may know the legend of Fabian Garcia, a Mexican immigrant who was part of NMSU's first ever graduating class, and is renowned for his work in developing chile, and who last year finally earned national recognition as the first Hispanic and the first New Mexican inducted into the National Agricultural Center's Hall of Fame.

But did you know another NMSU ag legend, Fabiola Cabeza de Baca Gilbert, is credited with inventing the

U-shaped fried taco shell? I mean, arguably, the national phenomenon of Taco Tuesday might not even exist without the contributions of our NMSU Aggies.

And, more seriously, the tables of New Mexicans would be much barer without the hardworking men and women of agriculture in our state.

Sincerely,



Richard Coltharp

*Publisher
Las Cruces Bulletin*



Richard Coltharp

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Cover photo courtesy of New Mexico Wine and Grape Growers Association

New Mexicans encouraged to buy local

By **KRISTIE GARCIA**
New Mexico Department of
Agriculture

You don't have to go far to find quality agriculture products. From fresh green chile to beef, from cheese to onions and to value-added products, such as salsa, candied pecans or lavender soap, you can find just about anything you need right here in the Land of Enchantment.

Buying local not only supports New Mexico farmers, ranchers and processors, but it helps the consumer experience fresh products. From farmers' markets to retailers, and

from local meat processors to farm-to-table operations, there are plenty of ways to bring New Mexico products to the dinner table.

The New Mexico Department of Agriculture offers the NEW MEXICO—Taste the Tradition/Grown with Tradition Logo Program to companies who make or grow New Mexico products. Explore numerous companies that are members of the program at ElevateNMag.com.

Another way to support local is to visit farmers' markets around the state. Search farmer's markets at the New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association website at



ketsnm.org.

For a family-friendly fun way to shop for the holidays, make plans to attend HomeGrown: A New Mexico Food Show & Gift Market Nov. 19-20 at the New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum. Many New Mexico products will be available for purchase.

For gift ideas, holiday

traditions and recipes, keep an eye out for the first-ever New Mexico Department of Agriculture Holiday Lookbook, an online gift guide bringing attention to New Mexico products. The lookbook will be available sometime in November.

And don't forget about the Land of Enchantment's unique agritourism operations, such as pick-your-own fruit/vegetable operations, corn mazes and pumpkin patches. The fall is the perfect time to explore all that New Mexico has to offer.

If you want to get in on the fun of promoting New Mexico food products, apply to become a NEW

MEXICO—Taste the Tradition Chef Ambassador. Chef, sous chefs or pastry chefs in the state of New Mexico are eligible to apply. For more information, please visit ElevateNMag.com or call 575-646-4929. Ambassadors will be selected through a competitive application process and will serve a two-year term advocating for and promoting New Mexico agriculture at various events, such as the New Mexico State Fair and HomeGrown, as well as industry conferences. The chefs will receive recognition and gain industry exposure while providing a voice for New Mexico agriculture.

The deadline to apply is Monday, Oct. 10.

If you are looking for a tasty adult beverage – whether it's for a gift, a party or to enjoy in the comfort of your own home or backyard – the New Mexico wine and beer industries have many options. Check out the robust wine industry and locate wineries near you by visiting nmwine.com. View the many brewery options in New Mexico at nmbeer.org.

Whether you're wanting to pick fresh produce or find the perfect ingredients to make your favorite New Mexico recipe, you don't have to travel far to "Taste the Tradition."



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New Mexico agriculture at a glance

By SARAH RODERICK
New Mexico Department of
Agriculture

Did you know New Mexico is the leader in chile production in the United States? However, chile isn't the only agriculture product for which New Mexico is known. Bountiful harvests of pecans, dairy products and onions are common in the Land of Enchantment. Agriculture is woven into the New Mexico's history and proudly produces goods that are available in local markets and in stores nationwide.

A glance at New Mexico agriculture:

- **New Mexico brings the heat** when it comes to chile production. In 2021, 8,500 acres of chile were harvested, and the value of New Mexico chile production in 2021 was estimated at \$51.8 million, ranking New Mexico No. 1 in chile

production nationwide.

- **New Mexico is nuts for pecans.** In 2021, New Mexico produced 78.7 million pounds of pecans for a value of \$122.9 million, making New Mexico No. 2 in pecan production behind Georgia.

- **Dairy is anything but cheesy in New Mexico.** In 2020, New Mexico was No. 4 in cheese production in the nation. New Mexico also produced 8.17 billion pounds of milk, ranking No. 9 in the nation in milk production.

- **Beef is what's for dinner in New Mexico,** with 1.3 million head of cattle located in the state, estimated to have a market value of \$1.4 million in 2021.

- **Hemp, hemp, hooray.** In 2021, the value of outdoor hemp production was \$4.28 million, and the indoor nursery industry produced 46,939 square feet of hemp.

- **Somebody has to feed the animals.** Hay is one of



PHOTOS COURTESY NMDA

Hay is one of the most important crops in New Mexico, as it's the sustaining force behind the significant beef and dairy industries in the state.

the most important crops in New Mexico, as it's the sustaining force behind the significant beef and dairy

industries in the state. It also is a major feed source for horses and other livestock. The value of production of hay in 2021 was \$186.1 million, and 815,000 tons were produced. Alfalfa is the major hay type in the state grown on over half of all the hay acres.

- **There's nothing to cry over when talking onions in New Mexico.** The crop is estimated to bring in \$4.1 million in 2021, making the Land of Enchantment No. 5 in the United States for onion production.

Sources: 2020 New Mexico Agricultural Statistics Bulletin. United States Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service



Dairy is an important product in New Mexico. In 2020, New Mexico ranked No. 4 in cheese production in the nation and ranked No. 9 in milk production in the nation.



In 2021, the value of outdoor hemp production was \$4.28 million, and the indoor nursery industry produced 46,939 square feet of hemp.

State wine industry gets nearly \$1 million for vineyard restoration fund; vineyards, wineries can apply

New Mexico Department of Agriculture news release

Despite the wine industry's long and successful history in New Mexico – the first grapes were planted here in the 17th century – it has faced the same challenges such as labor shortages, climate events and COVID. During its 2022 session, the New Mexico Legislature created the New Mexico Vineyard Restoration Fund to give the industry a boost.

The fund will provide \$950,000 to New Mexico wineries and vineyards for

the reimbursement of purchased rootstock to replace lost vines or to expand the planting of vines for the future growth and viability.

The New Mexico Wine and Grape Growers Association will manage the funds, with oversight from the New Mexico Department of Agriculture and New Mexico State University.

“The wine industry is vital to the livelihoods of those who plant vines, harvest grapes, make wine and serve it to customers,” said New Mexico Agriculture Secretary Jeff Witte. “It’s also important to the state’s



overall economy.”

New Mexico's grape and wine industry generates approximately \$876 million in total economic activity, according to a report by the NMSU Agricultural Science Center at Los Lunas. The 2017 Census of Agriculture lists 376 vineyards in New Mexico,

covering 1,280 acres. There are at least 20 wineries in the Las Cruces area alone, according to <https://nmwine.com/#Wineries>.

Those eligible to apply for the restoration funds are New Mexico wineries with an active license and established vineyard that is three or more acres in size, and wineries that want to plant or expand to three or more acres; in-state vineyards that currently grow grapes for the industry and are three or more acres in size; New Mexico farmers with experience, land and water rights and an interest in grape growing; and

beginning grape-growers or new farmers planting a vineyard.

The 2022 planting season application deadline is Monday, Oct. 31. The application period for the 2023 planting season begins Wednesday, Feb. 1. Program funds will be available through June 30, 2025 or until fully exhausted.

Contact Chelsea Canon at 505-859-0541 and canon.chelsea@nmwine.com.

For more information and to apply, visit nmwine.com/vine-fund/. Also visit nmdeptag.nmsu.edu.



New Mexico Vineyard Restoration Fund will provide \$950,000 to New Mexico wineries and vineyards for the reimbursement of purchased rootstock and to expand the planting of vines.

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NMSU PHOTO

An artist rendering of what the finished NMSU biomedical research facility will look like.



BULLETIN PHOTO BY MIKE COOK

NMSU's biomedical research facility under construction.

Ag modernization continues at NMSU

BULLETIN REPORT

The first phase of New Mexico State University's Agricultural Modernization and Educational Facilities project is underway on the university's Las Cruces campus.

Construction is funded by \$43 million in general obligation bonds passed by New Mexico voters in 2018 (\$25 million) and 2020 (\$18 million).

Ground was broken in August 2021, as construction began at the corner of Knox and Stewart streets on the west side of NMSU's Las Cruces campus.

Construction of the two-phase project began in June and includes building and modernizing facilities that support human health and biomedical research, student learning and public outreach and food security and animal production efficiency, NMSU said.

"The NMSU Las Cruces campus is unique among American collegiate campuses in that its agricultural district, which is approximately 164 acres in size, is adjacent to the campus core," NMSU said in a news



BULLETIN PHOTO BY MIKE COOK

NMSU's new feed mill building

release. "The last major facility added to the agricultural district was Skeen Hall, constructed in 1999 as the Center for Sustainable Development of Arid Lands."

"Much of the ag district, including the campus livestock, education and research center, consists of older, underused facilities," said University Architect Heather Watenpaugh. "The conditions and use of those older facilities no longer align with the needs of the College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences (ACES) or the academic advancement trajectory of NMSU in general."

Modernization of NMSU's ag district will help create an agricultural workforce that can advance the industry in New Mexico and help New Mexico's economy grow, said ACES Dean Rolando Flores Galarza.

Much of the current ag district, the campus livestock, education and research center, consists of dilapidated and disused facilities whose conditions and use do not align with the needs of the College of ACES or the academic advancement trajectory of NMSU in general, Flores said.

More than \$50 million for NMSU projects if statewide GO Bond C passes in November

There are three general obligation bond questions on the statewide November ballot, including Bond C, which would allocate more than \$215 million to higher education, special school and tribal school capital improvement and acquisition projects. If it passes, New Mexico State University will get more than \$50 million of that total.

Here are the projects NMSU will fund if Bond C is passed by New Mexico voters:

- Thomas and Brown Hall replacement: The 50-year-old Thomas and Brown Hall, 1305 Frenger St. on the NMSU campus in Las Cruces, will be replaced and modernized to expand hands-on learning facilities for students and multi-disciplinary lab space for students and faculty, and will include a learning community designed to enhance student success. (\$22.5 million)
- Health and Social Services building and O'Donnell Hall renovations: These two buildings house most of the departments in NMSU's newly created College of Health, Education and Social Transformation. Renovations will consolidate and integrate some departments that are currently housed in multiple locations and create more state-of-the-art multidisciplinary smart classrooms and provide capacity for planned growth in disciplines like nursing and kinesiology.

(\$13.5 million)

- Nursing Skills and Simulation Center expansion: The expansion and modernization will address the statewide shortage of more than 6,200 registered nurses and clinical nurse specialists, NMSU said. The renovation will establish an operating room suite to be dedicated to the nurse anesthetologist program and free up classrooms currently being used as lab space. (\$2 million)

- New Mexico Department of Agriculture renovation, phase 3: NMDA is headquartered at NMSU in Las Cruces and serves the entire state. Previous phases of the project, funded by severance tax bond and general fund appropriations, are expected to be complete in April 2023. Phase 3 includes replacement of the outdated original NMDA main building, with construction of a new administrative facility to provide space for additional staff. (\$10.5 million)

Other projects: Infrastructure improvements and roof replacement at Doña Ana Community College in Las Cruces (\$1.35 million), and renovations, infrastructure improvements and roof replacement for Martinez Hall at the NMSU-Grants campus (\$1.25 million) are also included.

Project summaries are from gobond.nmsu.edu

Green is gold: The Fresh Chile Co. wins top award at international trade show

BULLETIN REPORT

The Fresh Chile Company (FCC) was awarded the 2022 Gold Innovation Award at the SIAL (French for Salon International de l'alimentation) America trade show in Las Vegas, Nevada in March, the New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA) said in a news release.

The Las Cruces-based company received the accolade for its new freeze-dried Hatch chile product.

FCC owners Randy and Carol McMillan and Lane Grado attended the trade show as part of the NMDA exhibit, which also featured New Mexico companies Stahmanns Pecans of La Mesa, New Mexico and Navajo Agricultural Products Industry of Farmington.

The food and beverage industry trade show featured hundreds of exhibitors from various countries and industries across the world, NMDA said.

"We are so honored to

receive the first-ever SIAL America Innovation Award for our freeze-dried Hatch chiles," Randy McMillan said.

The McMillans founded FCC in homage to Randy's father, who engrained a love of homemade chile products in the family home from an early age, NMDA said.

FCC uses fresh chile to create its product instead of dried powder or dried chile pods. freeze-dried Hatch chile is one of the newest additions to their product line.

"The flavor, texture and color are better than that of frozen chile," McMillan said about the new freeze-dried product. "You don't have to store it in a freezer. Its weight is almost zero, so shipping is easier and the quality of the product is the best. Most people find freeze-dried food to

be bland, so our goal is to bring the flavor to the market with our new product, and so far, the customers have been receptive."

SIAL America is the first food and beverage trade show hosted in the United States by the company since SIAL was founded in 1964. The first show took place in Paris, where exhibitors from 26

different countries participated. Since then, SIAL has hosted trade shows for food processing industries in major cities across the world, including Shanghai, Abu-Dhabi and Toronto. More than 16,700 exhibitors from more than 119 countries participate in SIAL shows around the world annually, attracting attendees from more than 200 countries.

As winner of the 2022 Gold Innovation Award, FCC will continue to exhibit at future global SIAL



PHOTO COURTESY NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Carol McMillan, Lane Grado and Randy McMillan of The Fresh Chile Company pose with the SIAL America 2022 Gold Innovation Award.

events, reaching an audience of more than 700,000 people and continuing to promote New Mexico agriculture on a global scale, NMDA said.

FCC is a member of the NEW MEXICO-Taste the Tradition®/Grown with Tra-

dition logo program. The program exists to identify homegrown and homemade New Mexico agriculture products and promote them as such. More than 300 members have joined the logo program since it was founded in 2000.

For more information about the program, email tastethetradition@nmda.nmsu.edu. Visit www.elevatenmag.com/logo-program.

Also visit <https://freshchileco.com/> and NMDeptAg.nmsu.edu.

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NMDA receives almost \$565,000 in federal grants for specialty crops

BULLETIN REPORT

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has awarded more than \$565,700 to the New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA) to fund seven projects to "enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops in the state and support specialty crop growers through marketing, education and research," the AMS said in a news release.

The seven NMDA projects funded will help protect New Mexico chile and tomato crops from disease

while generating electricity through agrivoltaics, the genetic dissection

of chile pepper varieties, jujube cultivar selection, selecting cultivars of lavender adapted to the growing conditions of northern New Mexico, phase two of statewide program begun in 2018 to coordinate specialty-crop sales statewide, nursery and greenhouse training and hiring a quality manager for the New Mexico State University food safety laboratory.

"USDA applauds New Mexico's continued commitment to supporting our nation's producers of fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, and nursery crops through the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program," said USDA Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs

Jenny Lester Moffitt. "The projects funded will foster innovative research and new market opportunities within the specialty crop sector, while furthering USDA's goals of creating a more fair and equitable food system and supporting local and regional producers."

Through the SCBGP, the New Mexico Department of Agriculture will support seven specialty crop projects. Many of the funded projects will benefit the state through innovative research, food safety, and value chain efforts.

"With New Mexico being the top chile pepper-producing state in the nation, we look forward to the projects furthering important crop-related re-



PHOTOS COURTESY NMDA

New Mexico farmers cultivate a wide variety of crops, many grown outside and, increasingly, grown indoors.

search," said New Mexico Agriculture Secretary Jeff Witte. "Spearheaded by our state's land-grant university, farmers' marketing association and nursery and greenhouse association, projects will also address and enhance the importance of food safety, value-chain coordination and education in support of specialty crops."

The funding to New Mexico is part of \$72.9 million in non-competitive FY 2022 SCBGP funding awarded to 55 states, territories and the District of Columbia, AMS said.

The funding for the SCBGP grants is authorized by the 2018 Farm Bill and FY2022 funding is awarded for a three-year period

beginning Sept. 30, 2022.

Since 2006, USDA has invested more than \$953 million through SCBGP to fund 11,331 projects that have increased the long-term successes of produc-

ers and broadened the market for specialty crops in the U.S. and abroad.

Visit www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/SCBGPDescriptionofFunds2022.pdf.



New Mexico green chile.



New Mexico tomatoes.