**UMO Receives $692,000 for AgPrime Program**

MOUNT OLIVE – The Lois G. Britt Agribusiness Center within the School of Agriculture and Biological Sciences at the University of Mount Olive has been awarded $692,000.00 from the NC Tobacco Trust Fund Commission to administer and award a three-year grant program named AgPrime.

Dr. Sandy Maddox, Dean of the School of Agriculture and Biological Sciences at UMO, shares that AgPrime is a cost share program designed to offer innovative agricultural producers or agribusinesses assistance in implementing farm diversification and expansion strategies which increase economic stability and sustainability. “AgPrime is recognized for its ability to fund and jump start innovative agricultural projects,” Maddox said. We are thankful for the support of the North Carolina Tobacco Trust Fund Commission which allows the University of Mount Olive, through AgPrime, to offer this opportunity to farmers and agribusinesses in our designated region.”

Maddox noted that the AgPrime cost share program has the potential to impact a 33-county region in south central and eastern NC to fund innovative projects. Agricultural producers and agribusinesses in the following counties will be encouraged to submit applications: Beaufort, Bertie, Bladen, Brunswick, Camden, Carteret, Chowan, Columbus, Craven, Cumberland, Currituck, Dare, Duplin, Gates, Hertford, Hoke, Hyde, Jones, Lee, Lenoir, Montgomery, Moore, New Hanover, Onslow, Pamlico, Pasquotank, Pender, Perquimans, Robeson, Richmond, Scotland, Tyrrell, and Washington. Applications will be accepted beginning in November of 2020. The application can be found at umo.edu/ag.

Each qualified AgPrime recipient can receive up to $10,000 cost share dollars with a 10% match required. Each project will be funded based on its potential to positively benefit the economic development of the respective local communities, agricultural diversification, farm profitability, and skill and resource development for current and future farmers. The program seeks to fund projects that can be implemented in other regions of the state by agricultural producers and agribusinesses.

Since the program started in 2016, 70 projects have been funded throughout the service region.  Examples of funded projects have included agritourism ventures, processing for vegetable specialty crops, roadside stands and other support for marketing produce, farm diversification, livestock management, cheese-making, improved conservation measures, cold storage, and season extension projects.

Who is eligible?  
North Carolina residents, in the eligible counties, who are agriculturally dependent and who have viable ideas for new and innovative agricultural projects are eligible.

While not required, priority will be given to applicants who:  
·Earn at least 50% of their personal income from their farm operation or agribusiness entity.  
·Present new and innovative agricultural project ideas that are viable and will increase farm profits.  
·Are current or former tobacco growers or former quota holders.  
·Have not received grant funds from NCTTFC or other NCTTFC-supported organizations.

Grant proposal criteria (It’s not necessary for applicants to meet all criteria to receive a grant.)  
·Does the project benefit current or past tobacco growers?  
·Will the project increase income?  
·Will the project increase or maintain employment opportunities?  
·Has the proposal been adequately researched?  
·Is the budget realistic?  
·Does the applicant have the skills to complete the project or have they identified technical assistance to help them implement a successful project?  
·Does the applicant present a new direction or innovative opportunity to diversify, expand or implement new entrepreneurial plans for their farm operations?  
·Will the project become self-supporting or enhance your ability to keep farming?  
·Does the project maintain or increase the number of acres used for production?

Grant cycle opens Monday, November 9, 2020 and closes at 5 pm on December 18, 2020.

Applications must be completed online at: [https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/AgPrime2021](https://webmail.moc.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=ojTiD4gIv7uL5kFDpRM-cfVbHDsifwUITalZHLzKT8J7V7DBkXrYCA..&URL=https%3a%2f%2fwww.surveymonkey.com%2fr%2fAgPrime2021)

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