

### **Virginia Grown Website**

The Virginia Grown program is a valuable and effective marketing tool used to identify fresh, locally-produced specialty crops, including fruits, vegetables, herbs, and Christmas trees. Virginia Grown is used by producers at on-farm markets, roadside stands, farmers markets, and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA's) selling directly to the consumer. Virginia Grown is also used by wholesalers on packing boxes and delivery vehicles, and by specialty and grocery stores to differentiate locally-grown products.

A major component of the Virginia Grown program is the website. This information portal is an excellent way to promote locally grown specialty crops and educate Virginians about agriculture in their community. In this age of information, it is critical that VDACS use VirginiaGrown.com to its fullest extent.

### **Virginia Grown Promotions to Ethnic Populations**

The Virginia Grown program has been successful in helping consumers identify locally grown and/or processed food products. This program is used to increase sales of Virginia grown products by differentiating or branding these products in the marketplace. While these programs have been extremely effective in English speaking communities, an enormous market potential lies within the growing ethnic populations in the Commonwealth which do not speak English as a first language.

A targeted, consumer oriented campaign will be initiated to bolster both the “Virginia Grown” program among ethnic populations in certain urban markets, including Northern Virginia and Tidewater/Hampton Roads. This campaign will take advantage of the purchasing power and consumer preferences of Virginia’s growing Hispanic and Asian populations.

A Community Initiative will be encouraged to foster the collaborating agencies that are currently working with the ethnic sectors in their own region. This partnership opportunity has the potential to serve as a model to encourage the marketing of Virginia Grown products through an integrated regional and community engaged food and nutrition system.

### **Capturing Ethnic Markets for Specialty Crops**

This grant will fund a research project that will enable Virginia farms to better communicate with and serve the diverse cultural groups living in the Washington Metropolitan Area, as well as the surrounding rural areas. The population of various ethnic groups in the Northern Virginia area increased between the 1990-2000 census counts:

- Asian: 81.9%
- Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander: 29.9%
- Hispanic or Latino (of any race): 108%

The premise of the proposed project is that Virginia farmers will be able to provide improved services and specialty crops in response to various ethnic demands if communication between the farmers and the cultural groups is improved, resulting in an expanded market and improved financial viability.