

# State Cost Share Awards Announced For Farm Innovation

## *Diversification Projects Give Economic Options For Farmers*

**NASHVILLE, TENN.**

**F**or more than 200 farmers across Tennessee, the hope to expand or improve their farming operations became a reality. Governor Phil Bredesen and agriculture Commissioner Ken Givens announced Producer Diversification cost share awards totaling nearly \$1.2 million to help 204 Tennessee farmers invest in new or expanding areas of agriculture.

The Producer Diversification cost share opportunity is part of the Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program established in 2005 by Governor Bredesen and funded by the Tennessee General Assembly to spur farm investment in Tennessee.

"In these uncertain economic times, it is more important than ever for farmers to look at ways to diversify their operations," said Governor Bredesen. "These business investments and opportunities will not only help farmers keep their operations profitable but they will help strengthen our rural economy in communities across the state."

In its fourth year, the Producer Diversification cost share opportunity is helping farmers expand or improve their operations through production of varied agricultural products. Diversified agricultural products include agritourism, aquaculture, bees, fruits and vegetables, horticulture, organics, value-added products, viticulture and others as approved by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture.

"This program is making a real difference for producers who want to be farming in the future, and who have an entrepreneurial mindset to succeed. We're proud to be able to help them achieve their goals and to help support local communities that depend on agriculture," said Givens.

Through the Tennessee Agricultural Enhance-

ment Program, which provides a variety of cost share opportunities for farmers and also includes programs aimed at cattle improvement, hay and feed storage and animal health improvement, producers can make their operations more profitable.

Through the Producer Diversification cost share opportunity, Tennessee farmers can apply for reimbursement of 35-50 percent, up to \$15,000 in some instances, for eligible cost share activities.

The dollars are meant to help farmers who want to install farm infrastructure, purchase specialty equipment and market their diversified farm products. Applications are then reviewed for eligibility, ranked and approved on a competitive basis, based on project plans and the potential to increase farm income.

The 204 projects funded this year represent a wide range of new and emerging agricultural investments. Funding by project category for this year breaks down as follows:

- Agritourism-32 • Aquaculture-4
- Bees and honey-42 • Fruits and Vegetables-40
- Horticulture-38 • Organics-8
- Value-added Products-14 • Viticulture-26

Farmers interested in submitting a proposal for funding will have a chance to apply again next year. For more information about Producer Diversification cost share opportunities, contact the Tennessee Department of Agriculture at 615-837-5346, or via e-mail at [Ag.Growth@TN.gov](mailto:Ag.Growth@TN.gov). Information about the TAEP can be found online at [www.tn.gov/agriculture/enhancement/](http://www.tn.gov/agriculture/enhancement/).

For more information about specific projects in your area, contact Jon Frady at 615-837-5160 or [Ag.Growth@TN.gov](mailto:Ag.Growth@TN.gov). Δ