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# **USDA Provides more than \$1.5 Million to Support Projects that Protect Maryland Food Supply and Natural Resources**

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Media Contacts:

Cecilia Sequeira, 301-851-4054

[K.Cecilia.Sequeira@usda.gov](mailto:K.Cecilia.Sequeira@usda.gov)

Suzanne Bond, 301-851-4070

[Suzanne.M.Bond@usda.gov](mailto:Suzanne.M.Bond@usda.gov)

WASHINGTON, February 6, 2024 - The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is allocating more than \$1.5 million to Maryland as part of a nationwide effort to strengthen the country's infrastructure for pest detection, surveillance, and mitigation, as well as protect the U.S. nursery system. Through the authority of the Plant Protection Act Section 7721, USDA is providing more than \$70 million in funding this year. These funds will support 374 projects in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and Puerto Rico.

"Agriculture is Maryland's number one industry, made up of 12,400 farms, which employ about 350 thousand people. Protecting Maryland's agricultural industry is vital," said USDA Under Secretary Jenny Moffitt. "These projects will help Maryland

protect its resources and continue contributing to a strong national agricultural economy.”

These funds will support projects covering a range of plant health protection activities, including, but not limited to:

- \$353,420 to develop new tools to detect *Ralstonia solanacearum*;
- \$351,161 to release and evaluate the efficacy of a leaf-spotting fungus as a biological control of the noxious weed, common crupina;
- \$250,000 to contribute digital imagery and information for the U.S. National Fungus Collections;
- \$198,442 to evaluate the use of predatory, stingless wasps as biological control agents of the emerald ash borer;
- \$150,000 to research and improve the identification and detection of disease-causing fungi on plants intercepted at U.S. ports of entry;
- \$109,899 toward research to improve predictive modeling and pest surveillance;
- \$57,306 to enhance and share the varroa mite monitoring tool with the beekeeping community; and
- \$22,000 to support the National Clean Plant Network’s use of citrus-pathogen collections for research.

Since 2009, USDA has supported more than 5,520 projects and provided nearly \$870 million in PPA 7721 funding. These projects help USDA, and its partners quickly detect and respond to invasive plant pests and diseases. They also help our country maintain the essential infrastructure in place that enables U.S. specialty crop producers to have access to healthy, certified disease-free plants.

View the fiscal year 2024 Plant Protection Act’s Section 7721 spending plans online: [www.aphis.usda.gov/ppa-projects](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppa-projects).

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