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1. [Home](#)
2. Print
3. Pdf
4. Node
5. Entity Print

# USDA Grants More Than \$3 Million to Protect Maryland Crops and Natural Resources

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## Press Release

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**WASHINGTON, January 14, 2025** - Maryland is set to receive more than \$3 million from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to combat invasive plant pests and diseases and protect the state's vital agriculture and natural resources. This funding is part of a \$70 million nationwide initiative supporting 357 projects across 49 states, Tribal lands, Guam, and Puerto Rico, authorized under the Plant Protection Act Section 7721.

"Agriculture is one of the top industries in Maryland. Of the 12,600 farms in Maryland, 81 percent are family owned and altogether they employ about 350,000 people," said USDA Under Secretary Jenny Lester Moffitt. "It is vital that we protect Maryland's agriculture industry. These projects will help Maryland do that and continue contributing to a strong national agricultural economy."

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

- \$524,523 to fund and evaluate a biocontrol program to manage common crupina, a noxious weed that poses threats to the environment and agriculture;
- \$327,489 to leverage advanced tools like AI, real-time PCR, and CRISPR to quickly detect exotic species of the tomato yellow leaf curl virus;
- \$286,000 to ensure the accuracy of a genetic sequencing protocol for plant virus detection in specialty berry crops;
- \$249,052 to research how *Tropilaelaps* mites live, spread, and can be detected, as well as funding to develop effective monitoring and detection methods;
- \$207,355 to improve virus detection techniques for strawberry and raspberry plant material movement and quarantine regulations;
- \$146,277 to develop and evaluate molecular detection tools for an invasive root lesion nematode; and much more.

These efforts are part of a broader mission to ensure U.S. agriculture thrives in the face of new challenges. Since 2009, USDA has invested nearly \$940 million in more than 5,800 projects to detect and respond to invasive plant pests and diseases quickly. This work also ensures specialty crop producers have access to certified, disease-free plants.

For a full list of projects funded in Maryland and nationwide, visit the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service [website](#) (562.47 KB).

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