

## Grants expand markets for climate-resilient grains and value-added food businesses

### AT A GLANCE

Climate-resilient crops offer opportunities while business builder grant program for grains, pulses and pseudocereals expand capacity, develop new markets and strengthen regional food supply chains.

### The Situation

Producers and food businesses working with artisan grains, pulses and pseudocereals often face challenges that limit business growth and market development. While these climate-resilient crops offer opportunities for agricultural diversification, environmental resilience and regional economic development, businesses frequently lack processing infrastructure, distribution systems, market connections and consumer awareness needed to compete in regional markets.

These challenges affect businesses throughout Idaho and the Northwest and Rocky Mountain region limiting business growth and income opportunities for farmers, processors, manufacturers, distributors and retailers. Without investments that strengthen supply chains and increase market demand, businesses struggle to develop value-added products or create reliable markets. As a result, regional economic opportunities often remain underdeveloped despite growing consumer interest in regionally sourced and sustainably produced grains and pulses.

### Our Response

In 2023, University of Idaho Extension partnered with Colorado State University and Oregon State University



Opportunities for business growth for grains, pulses and pseudocereals in strengthening local and regional food systems.

to secure funding for the USDA Northwest and Rocky Mountain Regional Food Business Center. The center was charged with strengthening local and regional food systems through resource coordination, technical assistance and strategic grant investments in the six-state region of Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Washington, Oregon and Colorado. University of Idaho Extension co-led the center's New Markets for Grains, Pulses and Pseudocereals Team which expanded market opportunities for climate-resilient crops across the six-states. University of Idaho Extension worked with regional partners to identify opportunities and barriers to market expansion, support business growth and strengthen connections between producers, processors and consumers.

The New Markets for Grains, Pulses and Pseudocereals Team managed a competitive business builder grant program open to farm and food businesses across Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Wyoming and Washington. The goal of the grant program was to expand processing capacity, improve distribution systems and support business expansion.

A total of 14 grain, pulse and pseudocereal farms and food businesses received \$358,813 in grant funding.

Funded projects included investments in:

- Processing, cleaning and packaging equipment.
- Transportation, storage and distribution infrastructure.
- Product research, development and commercialization.
- Branding, packaging and consumer education.
- Market development for wholesale, retail, food service and institutional buyers.
- Supply chain partnerships connecting producers, processors and buyers.

### Program Outcomes

Business builder investments helped participating businesses increase production capacity, improve operational efficiency, expand market access and strengthen regional supply chains for grains, pulses and pseudocereals. Businesses reported improved ability to process and distribute products, increased visibility in the marketplace, stronger relationships with customers and supply chain partners, and greater readiness to serve wholesale, retail, institutional and direct-to-consumer markets.

Two Idaho businesses, Texas Ridge Farms in Deary and Snacktivist Foods in Coeur d'Alene, were among the new markets grantees. Texas Ridge Farms used grant funds to obtain bagging equipment and now sources grain and pulses from neighboring farms and provides locally grown feed to livestock producers in north central Idaho. Snacktivist Foods developed a whole grain pasta that meets school nutrition standards, expands healthy school meal options for kids and creates new markets for regional grain producers.

Table. Business builder impacts on farm and food businesses (percent of grant recipients n=14)

| Business impact                                      | %  |
|------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Increased revenue                                    | 93 |
| Increased production to meet increased demand        | 79 |
| New business partnership or collaboration            | 64 |
| Knowledge about new market opportunities             | 57 |
| Created or updated a business plan                   | 57 |
| Obtained business expertise or assistance            | 50 |
| Improved product quality and safety                  | 50 |
| Created and/or developed a new food or farm business | 29 |

Beyond individual business impacts, the program contributed to stronger regional value chains by improving the infrastructure and market connections needed to move grains, pulses and pseudocereals from farms into local and regional markets.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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