



*LERGP Crop Update
February 19, 2026*

*Special
Business Update Edition-
Available GRANTS*

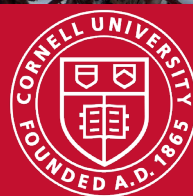
Photo credit-
Kim Knappenberger

Cornell Cooperative Extension
Lake Erie Regional Grape Program



PennState Extension

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In this copy:

Registration for 2026 Winter Grape Grower Conference is open! [REGISTER NOW!](#)

JUST ANNOUNCED: Assistance for Specialty Crop Farmers (ASCF) Program & new grant handout released- *Andrew Holden-* [page 5](#)

Available Grants Hand Out- [page 7](#)



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[Click here to
watch Podcasts](#)

The Lake Erie Regional Grape Program is a Cornell Cooperative Extension partnership between Cornell University and the Cornell Cooperative Extensions in Chautauqua, Erie and Niagara county NY and in Erie County PA.

2026 LERGP WINTER GRAPE GROWER CONFERENCE

**THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 2026
WILLIAM'S CENTER
SUNY FREDONIA COLLEGE
8:00am-4:30pm**

**Come spend a day with your LERGP team,
invited guest speakers and fellow growers.**

**Take a look at the full agenda and register by
clicking on or scanning the QR code.**

We look forward to seeing you!



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- Jim Joy, JM Joy Farms

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Business Management

Andrew Holden, Business Management Educator, Penn State University, LERGP

JUST ANNOUNCED: Assistance for Specialty Crop Farmers (ASCF) Program & new grant handout released

In a [press release](#) shared on February 13, 2026 the USDA announced “assistance for specialty crop farmers impacted by unfair market disruptions”. This program will provide \$1 billion for commodities not covered through the previously announced Farmer Bridge Assistance (FBA) program. This includes grapes and should be available to growers in our region. Payment rates for specialty crops will be announced at the end of March. Growers must make sure FSA has their 2025 acreage reports by March 13th. Most growers likely have this completed already due to previous FSA programs in the past year. If you are not sure, contact your local Farm Service Agency to confirm you are up to date on reporting.

New Grant Handout:

This program along with other currently available and future 2026 grants are included in my newly updated Grants Handout. Please see the handout attached below or view it on our website: [Grants and Programs Available for the Lake Erie Region Grape & Wine Industry](#).

Additional Assistance for Specialty Crop Farmers (ASCF) Program info:

USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) is providing \$1 billion through a one-time bridge payment for specialty crops, sugar, and commodities not covered through the previously announced Farm Bridge Assistance (FBA) program. These bridge payments are authorized under the Commodity Credit Corporation Charter Act. ASCF payments are based on reported 2025 planted acres.

Important Dates

March 13, 2026 (by 5 p.m. ET) – deadline to ensure 2025 crop acreage reports are factual and accurate for eligible ASCF crops.

End of March - commodity-specific payment rates will be released.



The advertisement is a horizontal banner for Java Farm Supply. It features three main images of vineyard equipment: a yellow Cima sprayer on the left, a red McCormick tractor in the center, and an orange Zinieri harrow on the right. Above each image is its respective brand logo. Below the images is a red oval with the text 'JAVA FARM SUPPLY'. At the bottom, contact information is provided: '8855 W Route 20 Westfield, NY 14787' on the left, a phone number '(716) 326-4666' on the right, and the website 'JavaFarmSupply.com' in the center. A tagline at the very bottom reads 'Meeting all of your Vineyard Equipment needs!'.

8855 W Route 20
Westfield, NY 14787

(716) 326-4666
JavaFarmSupply.com

Meeting all of your Vineyard Equipment needs!

Assistance for Specialty Crop Farmers (ASCF) Program

Eligible specialty crops include:

A

Almond, Apple, Apricot, Aronia berry, Artichoke, Asparagus, Avocado

M

Macadamia, Mango, Melon (All Types), Mushroom (Cultivated), Mustard and Other Greens

B

Banana, Bean (Snap or green; Lima; Dry edible), Beet (Table), Blackberry, Blueberry, Breadfruit, Broccoli (including Broccoli Raab), Brussels Sprouts

N

Nectarine

O

Okra
Olive
Onion
Opuntia

C

Cabbage (including Chinese), Cacao, Carrot, Cashew, Cauliflower, Celeriac, Celery, Cherimoya, Cherry, Chestnut (for Nuts), Chive, Citrus, Coconut, Coffee, Collards (including Kale), Cranberry, Cucumber, Currant

P

Papaya, Parsley, Parsnip, Passion Fruit, Pea (Garden; English or Edible Pod; Dry edible), Peach, Pear, Pecan, Pepper, Persimmon, Pineapple, Pistachio, Plum (including Prune), Pomegranate, Potato, Pumpkin

D

Date,
Dry Edible Beans & Peas*

E

Edamame
Eggplant
Endive

Q

Quince

R

Radish (All Types)
Raspberry
Rhubarb
Rutabaga

F

Feijou
Fig
Filbert (Hazelnut)

G

Garlic
Gooseberry
Grape (including Raisin)
Guava

S

Salsify, Spinach, Squash (Summer and Winter), Strawberry, Suriname Cherry, Sweet Corn, Sweet Potato, Swiss Chard

H

Horseradish

K

Kiwi, Kohlrabi

T

Taro, Tomato (including Tomatillo), Turnip

L

Leek, Lettuce, Litchi

W

Walnut, Watermelon

*Dry edible beans and peas covered by FBA will not be eligible for ASCF.

What I'm reading:

- [Trump Signs Order Protecting Glyphosate, Phosphorus Production](#)
- [Number of U.S. Farms Shrank by 15,000 in 2025](#)

My contact information:

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Email: AZH6192@psu.edu

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February 2026

Grants and Programs

Available for the Lake Erie Region

Grape & Wine Industry



PennState Extension

Cornell Cooperative Extension
Lake Erie Regional Grape Program

Please review each grant's Request for Proposals (RFP) before applying to understand all program details and what is required of the applicant. Contact Andrew Holden, Business Management Educator, with any questions at azh6192@psu.edu or by calling 716-640-2656. If you know of a grant that wasn't listed and would benefit the industry, please contact Andrew. Grant information was compiled in February of 2026 and is subject to change.

Grant:	Value Added Producer Grants in New York & Pennsylvania
State:	NY & PA
Funder:	USDA
Details:	The Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program helps U.S. agricultural producers enter into value-added activities that: - Generate new products from raw agricultural commodities - Create and expand marketing opportunities - Increase producer income through enhanced product value and market reach These grants support either: - Planning activities (e.g., feasibility studies, business and marketing plans) - Working capital needs (processing, packaging, advertising, inventory, and salaries)
Amount:	Planning Grants: Up to \$50,000 Working Capital Grants: Up to \$200,000 Matching Requirement: 1:1 match (100% of the grant amount), which may include cash or eligible in-kind contributions
For:	Agricultural producers (including harvesters and steering committees) Agricultural producer groups Farmer- or rancher-cooperatives
Availability:	Opens January 15, 2026 Program Application Period: Electronic applications will be accepted via the VAPG application portal until 1:00 p.m. Eastern Time on April 15, 2026.
More Info:	https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/value-added-producer-grants/ny
Grant:	Environmental Quality Incentives Program
State:	NY & PA
Funder:	USDA, NRCS
Details:	EQIP provides technical and financial assistance to agricultural producers and forest landowners to address natural resource concerns, such as: Improved water and air quality; Conserved ground and surface water; Increased soil health ; Reduced soil erosion and sedimentation; Improved or created wildlife habitat; and Mitigation against drought and increasing weather volatility.
Amount:	
For:	Growers
Availability:	Ongoing
More Info:	https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/eqip-environmental-quality-incentives

Grant:	Assistance for Specialty Crop Farmers (ASCF) Program
State:	NY & PA
Funder:	Farm Service Agency
Details:	USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is providing \$1 billion through a one-time bridge payment for specialty crops, sugar, and commodities not covered through the previously announced Farm Bridge Assistance (FBA) program. These bridge payments are authorized under the Commodity Credit Corporation Charter Act. ASCF payments are based on reported 2025 planted acres.
Amount:	End of March - commodity-specific payment rates will be released.
For:	Most specialty crops including grapes.
Availability:	Deadline to ensure 2025 crop acreage reports are factual and accurate for eligible ASCF crops.
More Info:	https://www.fsa.usda.gov/resources/programs/farmer-bridge-assistance-fba-program
Grant:	Round Two: NYS Beginning Farmer Competitive Grant Program
State:	NY
Funder:	NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets/The New York Farm Viability Institute
Details:	Farmers who have not operated a farm for more than 10 years and who will materially and substantially participate in operating the farm within the State are eligible to submit proposals. It is expected that all applicants will have a serious interest in building a financially sustainable, independent, commercial agricultural enterprise.
Amount:	\$5,000 - \$250,000
For:	Growers (Less than 10 years in business)
Availability:	NYFVI anticipates launching Round Two, which will award \$1.7 million early in 2026
More Info:	https://nyfvi.org/bfcg-program-2/
Grant:	NYS Grown & Certified ITRD Grant Program
State:	NY
Funder:	NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets/The New York Farm Viability Institute
Details:	If a farm or food system business is eligible for NYS G&C certification of a food and/or beverage product, they are eligible for this program. The NYS G&C program has worked hard to develop certification opportunities for a wide range of farms and food system businesses.
Amount:	Grant sizes will range from \$20,000 to \$250,000 for infrastructure and technology projects. A 10% match (cash, grant, loan) will be required for all projects
For:	Growers, Wineries
Availability:	The next Infrastructure & Technology RFP is expected to be released in early 2026
More Info:	https://nyfvi.org/new-york-state-grown-certified-itrd-grant-program-october-2025/

Grant:	NYS Food and Fiber Processing Grant Program
State:	NY
Funder:	New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets
Details:	The Food and Fiber Processing Grant Program, administered by the Farm and Food Growth Fund (FFGF) on behalf of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, supports the scaling of existing and new products produced and harvested in New York State. Funding is available for the construction and renovation of facilities, as well as the purchase and installation of equipment. Priority will be given to projects that expand processing for fruits, vegetables, grains and beans for human consumption; pla and animal fibers.
Amount:	Eligible applicants may apply for awards ranging from \$250,000 to \$2.5 million.
For:	For-profit businesses Grower/Producer Cooperatives Nonprofit organizations
Availability:	Application deadline: April 28, 2026, 5:00 pm EST
More Info:	https://www.ffgrowthfund.org/food-and-fiber
Grant:	PAVinES
State:	PA
Funder:	Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection
Details:	PA VinES (Vested in Environmental Sustainability) is a voluntary program that promotes sustainable viticulture practices through a grower self-assessment workbook. The work-book looks at the economic and environmental impacts of grape production on each operation and serves as an educational resource for growers.
Amount:	The PA VinES Program pays up to 85% of installing conservation practices like: Stream bank Stabilization, Stabilized Access Roads, Stream Crossings/Culverts, Grassed Water ways, Blind Inlets/Drop Boxes, Riparian Buffers, Diversions, & Cover Crops
For:	Growers
Availability:	Ongoing
More Info:	https://www.erieconservation.com/pavines
Grant:	Farm Vitality Planning Grant
State:	PA
Funder:	Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture
Details:	Grants may be used for expenses related to the following projects: - Creating or obtaining business plans or management strategies, plans for the transition of ownership and operation, plans to diversify an existing agricultural operation, plans for a farm expansion, or plans to maintain the long-term economic viability and protect the investment of public funds in preserving farms.
Amount:	The maximum grant amount is \$7,500 and is limited to 75% of project costs. This is a reimbursement grant. The amount of reimbursement is based on eligible costs submitted by an approved applicant for an approved project during the fiscal year in which the grant is offered. Grants will be awarded on a funds-available basis. In-kind support will not be counted toward an applicant's matching contribution.
For:	Growers
Availability:	Ongoing



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Jan. 27-28 at Mid-Atlantic Fruit & Vegetable (MAFVC)— Hershey, PA

Feb. 3 at Penn State Crops Conference— Lebanon, PA

Feb. 11 at Winter Tree Fruit School— North East, PA (Erie)

Feb. 12 at Winter Tree Fruit School— Wexford, PA (Allegheny)

Feb. 16 at Winter Tree Fruit School— Biglerville, PA (Adams)

Feb. 19 at Winter Tree Fruit School— Leesport, PA (Berks)

Feb. 25 at PA Wine and Grape Conference— State College, PA

Mar. 12 at Penn State Vegetable Grower meeting— Wexford, PA

Jun. 18 at Phipps Conservatory — Pittsburgh, PA

For more details, contact: stw5035@psu.edu or 814-863-9606 or

visit: extension.psu.edu/upcoming-respirator-fit-test-sessions



Photo: Garo Goodrow, Penn State Extension

*Participants **must** bring their respirator(s) and be clean shaven.

The Penn State Pesticide Education Program has partnered with third-party vendors to provide FREE respirator fit testing and medical evaluations! A 30-minute respirator training will be offered at each event. The events assist individuals in satisfying the EPA's Worker Protection Standard (WPS) respirator regulations.



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Upcoming Events and Mark Your Calendar Days

Thursday, March 19, 2026-Winter Grape Grower Conference- [register today!](#)

Wednesday, April 8, 2026-How to Certified Course-NYSDEC

Wednesday, April 15, 2026- NYSDEC Pesticide Applicator Exam at CLEREL

**Stop in to the CLEREL office to pick up
your 2026 LERGP Planning calendar
anytime!**

Links of Interest:

Cornell Cooperative Extension:

<https://cals.cornell.edu/cornell-cooperative-extension>

Efficient Vineyard:

<https://www.efficientvineyard.com/>

LERGP:

<https://lergp.cce.cornell.edu/>

<https://lergp.com/>

NYSIPM:

<https://cals.cornell.edu/new-york-state-integrated-pest-management>

Veraison to Harvest:

<https://cals.cornell.edu/viticulture-enology/research-extension/veraison-harvest>

Spotted Lanternfly Pocket Guide:

<https://lergp.com/spotted-lanternfly>