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NCAT Awards Biodiesel/Oilseed Innovation Grants to Montana Farmers

Seven farmers from almost every region of Montana have been awarded grants to test and develop oilseeds as rotational crops and sources of feed, food and fuel. The projects funded by these Innovation Grants are very diverse, ranging from on-farm testing of camelina, sunflower, canola and juncea production to engine performance testing of B20 biodiesel and straight vegetable oil to canola and camelina feeding trials.

Grants were awarded for:

- * Integrated camelina crop production, feeding camelina pressings to beef cattle, and on-farm oilseed crushing and biodiesel production tests. (Ken DeBoer, Ryegate)
- * Adding biodiesel processing capacity for use in a stationary irrigation pump engine that has been retrofitted to burn straight vegetable oil. (Zach Wirth, Wolf Creek)
- * Building local oilseed crushing capacity so farmers can test feeding camelina pressings to dairy cattle. (Chris Fritz, Flathead Biodiesel, Polson)
- * Testing nitrogen side band applications in canola production, and feeding canola pressings to beef cattle in both ranch and feedlot settings. (Kent Wasson, Whitewater)
- * Conducting comparative performance tests of straight vegetable oil and B20 in Kubota tractors. (Josh Slotnick, Missoula)
- * Testing sunflower and camelina production, and performance testing straight vegetable oil and biodiesel in large farm equipment. (Chuck Merja, Sun River)
- * Testing juncea (a member of the mustard family) production on dryland and irrigated farms in northeastern Montana. This project involves six farms. (Marc Cartwright, Miles City)

The Innovations Grants are part of the Oilseeds for Fuel Feed and the Future Project, a collaborative effort that aims to reduce risk and create new opportunities for Montana farmers who want to participate in, and benefit from, an emerging bio-based economy. The project combines educational opportunities with on-farm research and demonstration efforts to advance knowledge and action.

The Project partners include the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT), Montana Farmers Union, Montana Grain Growers Association, Montana Department of Agriculture, Alternative Energy Resources Organization, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Department of Environmental Quality's Air, Energy and Pollution Prevention Bureau.

The purpose of the grants program is to increase knowledge in three areas:

- Oilseed crops that can be used for a range of products (such as lubricants, culinary oils or biodiesel)

- On-farm production and/or personal use of biodiesel and its co-products, such as oilseed pressings for livestock feed.
- Oilseed markets and buyers' expectations for oilseed crops

Funding for this project comes from the NRCS Conservation Innovations Grant program, Stranie Ventures and the Bullitt Foundation, along with other cash and in-kind support from the project partners.

NCAT is a non-profit organization with headquarters in Butte, Montana. For more information about the Innovation grants, the Oilseeds for the Future Project or NCAT, contact Al Kurki at 406-449-0104 or alk@ncat.org .

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