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## MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### RETURN TO NEWSROOM

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## Ag Diversification Cost Share Gets Boost in State Funding

### *Farmers Can Invest in New, Expanding Areas of Agriculture*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Farmers interested in growing grapes, attracting farm tourists or going organic will get their chance with a major boost in state dollars for the Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program (TAEP).

“The \$21 million increase in Governor Bredesen’s budget for the Ag Enhancement program will help make more cost share assistance available to farmers wanting to expand or transition to new and emerging areas of agriculture,” said state Agriculture Commissioner Ken Givens. “Thanks to the support of the Tennessee General Assembly, we’ll be able to help encourage more diversification and innovation on Tennessee farms.”

The goal of the Tennessee Agricultural Growth (diversification) cost share initiative is to build farm income by helping farmers expand or improve their operations through production of diversified agricultural products. Diversified agricultural products include agritourism, aquaculture, bees, fruits and vegetables, horticulture, goats and sheep, organics, value-added products, grapes and others as approved by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture.

Tennessee farmers can apply for reimbursement at a 35 percent cost share up to \$10,000 for farm infrastructure, specialty equipment purchases and marketing activities. New for this year, farmers can apply for 50 percent cost share up to \$15,000 for investments in priority areas. Priority areas include agritourism, goats and sheep, organics and grapes of certain varieties.

“If you have a good idea for making more money farming, then we want to help make it a reality,” said Ag Growth coordinator Jan Keyser. “There are opportunities for all types and sizes of operations within this cost share program.

“In the first two years of the program, we were able to fund 352 projects totaling nearly \$1.5 million,” added Keyser. “With the availability of more funding this year, we want to partner with as many farmers as possible in projects that have a real chance to make a return on investment.”

Applicants must be Tennessee residents and operate a farm located in the state. Producers with livestock must first register their premises with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture for the National Animal Identification Program in order to complete the application requirements.

Applications are now available through the Tennessee Department of Agriculture Market Development office and may be downloaded and printed from the department’s Web site at

[www.picktnproducts.org](http://www.picktnproducts.org).

Applications will be accepted from July 2 – Aug. 31. Applications will be evaluated on a competitive basis by industry sector. Only projects that are approved in advance by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture will be eligible for cost share assistance. All approved projects will be announced Oct. 1. Producers will have until June 30, 2008 to complete approved activities.

“This program is more than just helping Tennessee farmers grow their business, it’s about growing our rural economy as agriculture is foundational to our state’s economy,” said Givens. “This cost share program allows us to be a good partner to those Tennessee farmers willing to invest themselves and in the future of Tennessee’s rural communities.

“These are substantial grants,” said Givens. “We want Tennessee farmers to know we mean business when we say we want to help them do business for a long time into the future.”

For more information, contact Keyser at the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 40627, Nashville, TN 37204, (615) 837-5346, or via e-mail at [Ag.Growth@state.tn.us](mailto:Ag.Growth@state.tn.us).

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