



Money set to train farmers

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Some new and prospective farmers in the West will get some help as a result of federal grant funds recently given to Washington State University and a pair of California organizations.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture awarded \$17 million to farmer and rancher training programs nationwide, including more than \$1.2 million to WSU's small farms program for disadvantaged farmers.

The Salinas, Calif.-based Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association, or ALBA, was given \$515,862 and California FarmLink in Sebastopol, Calif., received \$525,000.

The funding was the latest in the USDA's "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" campaign, which aims to connect consumers with their local producers.

"For ALBA, it's really crucial, core support for our most basic programs of business development for beginning farmers," said Gary Peterson, the organization's deputy director. "Of course we've been part of USDA grants in the past, but this new beginning farmer and rancher program is crucial because it allows a direct focus on beginning farmer education."

ALBA works to help Hispanic farmworkers become independent farm business owner-operators, leveraging the participants' agrarian knowledge with business and financial literacy.

Similarly, FarmLink will focus on farmers and ranchers who have solid production skills but lack financial, management or legal knowledge.

"We're going to build on the work we've been doing for the last 10 years," said Steve Schwartz, FarmLink's executive director. The organization plans to hold farm finance workshops throughout the state and a farm family succession conference in Fresno, Schwartz said.