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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**12 STATE AGRICULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM PRORAMS TO RECEIVE  
'FIRE UP GRANT' FUNDING FOR SPECIAL PROJECTS**

The National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization (NAITCO) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA/NIFA) announce that 12 state Agriculture in the Classroom projects have been selected for funding as part of a new competitive grants program called 'Fire-Up Grants' to support the growth of agricultural literacy in K-12 classrooms across the country.

The purpose of the Fire Up Grants program is to strengthen new and existing state Agriculture in the Classroom programs with additional funding. Projects range from developing a year-round, indoor school gardening and teacher workshop program in Alaska to creation of virtual reality classroom farm tours using an online map of Oregon. The projects are expected to reach about 700,000 teachers and informal educators and more than 1 million students in kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade across the United States with the message of the importance of agriculture.

"Thanks to the support of USDA/NIFA we're able to provide grant funding in support of our state Agriculture in the Classroom programs," said Chris Fleming, president of NAITCO and associate director of Tennessee Farm Bureau's Agriculture in the Classroom program.

"USDA/NIFAS's mission is to provide leadership and funding for programs that advance agriculture-related activities and the Fire Up Grants supporting state AITC programs does exactly that," said Dr. Victoria LeBeaux, USDA/NIFA's National Program Leader for Agriculture in the Classroom.

Projects selected for funding are:

**Start Up Grants** (up to \$15,000 each)

1. **Alaska Agriculture in the Classroom** – A statewide, year-round, indoor school garden program in which trained facilitators will hold teacher workshops to demonstrate lessons that tie the school garden to core subject areas (math, science, reading, writing etc.)
2. **Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation** – An online, interactive map of Oregon agriculture featuring integrated virtual reality video experiences allowing students to see, hear and witness first-hand a wide variety of agricultural topics.
3. **Oklahoma Agriculture in the Classroom** - A poster set that's part of a two-part, comprehensive, agriculture-based, nutritional education toolkit. The posters will be designed for use by educators and school cafeterias to increase child nutrition and agricultural literacy knowledge related to Oklahoma agricultural commodities and will build on knowledge garnered through previous "Harvest of the Month" Specialty Crop Poster sets.

**Scale Up Grants** (up to \$10,000 each)

1. **Virginia Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom** – A new lesson book filled with hands-on, across-the-curriculum lessons (with focuses on science, math, language arts, mathematics and STEM) for K-5 beginning educators. The guide would include basic facts about Virginia's agricultural relevance, geographic impact on agriculture, facts about top commodities, and address misconceptions regarding agricultural terms and practices, which are frequently asked questions among aspiring teachers.
2. **Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation's Agriculture in the Classroom** - A new workshop training program that will equip high school FFA students with tools to educate elementary students and the public about the importance of agriculture.

3. **Florida Agriculture in the Classroom** – Updating and reprinting on jump drives of the first in its popular series of school garden curriculum *Gardening for Grades*, which provides K-8 teachers with lessons to teach reading, writing, math, science and more using school gardens.
4. **New Jersey Agricultural Society** - Expansion of its popular school garden grant and teacher workshop program into low income schools in the urban areas of Clifton, Newark, Passaic, East Orange and Trenton.

**Jump Up Grants (up to \$7,500 each)**

1. **Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom** – A new program called ‘Breakout Boxes,’ portable versions of breakout rooms, that use agriculture-related lessons, games and activities to teach 4<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students reading, writing, math, science and more. Grant funds will be used to develop these agriculture-themed boxes and instruct teachers on how to use them in their classrooms.
2. **Iowa Foundation for Agriculture Literacy** – Professional development workshops for K-12 teachers using lessons that educate them and their students about water quality and how it impacts agriculture in the Midwest. The project will address the need for educators to understand nitrogen management, cropping systems and related water quality issues associated with Iowa crop production.
3. **Arizona Agriculture in the Classroom/University of Arizona College of Agriculture and Life Sciences** – A summer Agriculture Institute session bringing back K-12 teachers who have been through it in the past to develop and submit new lessons and evaluate existing lessons and outreach to make the program better.
4. **Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom** – Development of a new evaluation tool to measure the effectiveness of its popular AgMag series of student activity newspapers featuring different Minnesota commodities.
5. **California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom** – Increase the number of popular ‘What’s Growin’ On?’ student activity newspapers printed featuring different California commodities and natural resources to reach more students in this heavily populated state.

NAITCO is a non-profit organization representing most of the 50 state Agriculture in the Classroom programs around the country. Its mission is to educate K-12 teachers and students about the importance of agriculture by providing them with web-based materials, workshops and awards programs that demonstrate how agriculture can be used to effectively teach core subject areas.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT NAITCO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LISA GASKALLA at (352) 745-0246 or [info@naitco.org](mailto:info@naitco.org)**