



Rural Development • Rural Business & Cooperative Programs • Value-Added Producer Grant

## USDA Assists Local Honey Producer to Expand Operations and Economic Impact

Sweet Mountain Farm, LLC, a honey producer, custom beehive builder, and honeybee breeder on Washington Island, Wis. Washington Island is a 35 square foot island located 7 miles from the northern tip of Wisconsin's Door County mainland.

Since the island is set apart from customary shipping routes, it does not afford producers on the island adequate market access.

A \$10,000 Value- Added Producer Grant (VAPG) from USDA Rural Development will help Sweet Mountain Farm address this challenge. Grant funds will enable the Farm to expand operations, increase its customer base, achieve product certification and branding, and to create local jobs; while respecting the environment and contributing to the local economy.

Sweet Mountain Farm is more than a honeybee apiary; the farm produces maple syrup, builds custom northern white cedar beehives, and breeds Russian honeybees. To grow that apiary, Sweet Mountain Farm uses a hive sponsorship program. Hive sponsorship is similar to the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm model, whereby sponsors purchase a market basket early in the season and at the end of the season receive honey and maple syrup in individual gift boxes. The hive sponsorship program adds one new beehive to the apiary per sponsorship purchased. The VAPG will also help Sweet Mountain Farm to promote the sponsorship program to clients.

In addition, Sweet Mountain Farm is an educational resource, helping to establish new beekeepers and provide new equipment to raise bees. The Farm works to develop and implement solutions to address the declining honeybee populations that are disappearing at alarming rates. With the absence of large farms on the Island, it also reduces the likelihood that the bees will pollinate on potentially toxic fields. Sweet Mountain Farm documents the bee yard operations with hopes of opening up the bee yard for entomological research to further analyze the declining population solutions and the pollination of toxic fields.



*Sue Dompke, owner of Sweet Mountain Farm and Beekeeper, with two custom beehives on Sweet Mountain Farm on Washington Island, Wis.*

**Obligation Amount:** \$10,000

**Date of Obligation:** August 2014

**Congressional District:** Ribble, District 8; Senators Johnson and Baldwin

**Partners:**

**Demographics:** Washington Island - 660 residents

**Impact:** Brand and market organic honey to a new customer demographic; for labor, packaging, labeling, certification, and promotional expenses.