



WASHINGTON, D.C. – On Aug. 8, U.S. Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich announced that New Mexico State University will receive more than \$4.4 million to support research on pecan genetics and breeding that will help New Mexico pecan farmers improve the sustainability and profitability of their crops.

The funding was awarded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture Specialty Crop Research Initiative, authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill, which Udall and Heinrich supported.

The funded research will allow for the development of genetic tools that will help farmers select varieties of trees that will thrive in the varying growing conditions of different regions.

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“This significant investment in research at New Mexico State University to support the pecan industry will help pecan farmers in New Mexico and across the country expand their production and increase the yield and quality of their crops,” Udall said.

Both Udall and Heinrich noted that New Mexico is one of main pecan-producing states in the U.S. The industry is “is critical to local economies in Southern New Mexico, but our state’s climate and weather pose unique challenges for farmers. This research will help pecan farmers select the varieties of crops that will thrive and be most profitable,” Udall said.

Udall plans to “continue to push for investments in cutting-edge research at our universities that supports local economic development.”

“I was proud to support the Farm Bill, which included the Specialty Crop Research Initiative,” Heinrich said. “These funds will further position New Mexico State University as a leading agricultural research center. Many growers in New Mexico come from families that have cultivated land for generations. However, challenges today such as long-term drought has made farming difficult. This research will help ensure that the pecan industry can continue to thrive.”

The funded project, Coordinated Development of Genetic Tools for Pecan, is a multi-institutional collaboration between NMSU, the University of Georgia, the University of Arizona, the Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation, and the USDA Agricultural Research Service.

The project seeks to identify the genetic elements of crops that control traits, such as nutrient uptake, drought tolerance and nut quality, and to identify trees that will yield the largest and best quality crops in specific environments, yet require less input by growers.

The \$4,404,284 grant awarded to NMSU was one of 19 grants totaling \$36.5 million awarded nationally through the Specialty Crop Research Initiative. The awarded grants fund research and extension to support farmers throughout the country growing fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture and nursery crops.

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The program seeks to address the critical needs of the specialty crop industry through grants that address challenges in sustaining all components of food and agriculture.