USDA Agricultural Marketing Service
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# Seed Sower

Welcome to *Seed Sower: News from the Seed Liaison*, a new newsletter from the Farmer Seed Liaison team at USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). In this issue, readers will find updates on seed-related actions and opportunities for public engagement, including upcoming events, regulatory changes, and interagency efforts that support a competitive and resilient seed system for American growers and the industries they serve. Thank you for forwarding this newsletter to anyone who may find it useful.

**New Seed Liaison Resources**

On July 19, 2023, President Biden and Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and the White House Competition Council announced the official launch of the Farmer Seed Liaison initiative. Since then, the Farmer Seed Liaison has made new resources available on the AMS website, including streamlined access to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office's pending docket of plant patents and plant breeding-related utility patents. By offering this new way to find USPTO information, we hope to help growers, breeders and others working in agriculture to navigate the intellectual property system pertaining to seeds more easily. Check out the new Seed Liaison webpages and resources.

**New Weekly List of Pending Patents**

Every Thursday, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office publishes new pending patents to its online Patent Public Search tool. Published patent applications help the public learn about the state of the art in particular industries. The public is also invited to file third party preissuance submissions of prior art to pending applications for examiners to consider when reviewing new patent claims. Subscribers to this newsletter will receive a weekly digest of

pending patent applications related to new, seed-bearing plants and non-transgenic processes for obtaining them.

**The FTC and DOJ Update Merger Guidelines**

Antitrust regulators have completed a comprehensive update to their merger guidelines, which describe and guide the agencies' review of mergers and acquisitions to determine their compliance with federal antitrust laws. In the coming months, the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) will finalize these guidelines based on recently collected public input. To learn more about the guidelines, watch a recent event held by the DOJ and the FTC that explains the proposed changes.

**Where Do I Report Seed Violations?**

USDA recently updated its contact information for seed-related complaints and violations under the Federal Seed Act. The public is encouraged to report complaints related to competition and consumer protection in the seed market, such as variety labeling issues, advertising concerns, and other anticompetitive practices to seedcomplaints@usda.gov.

**Seed Variety Labeling**

AMS is committed to enforcing the Federal Seed Act, which includes variety labeling provisions described in a notice published March 6, 2023. The Seed Liaison team is working to communicate the importance of these labeling rules to seed companies, farmers, and the markets they serve. Learn more about how these provisions support transparency in the seed system.

**Public Plant Breeding Investments**

AMS recently announced $72.9 million in Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) investments. These grant awards enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops growers through marketing, education, and research, including by funding the development of new plant varieties. The recent awards bring the total invested through SCBGP to over $1 billion since funding began in 2006. In addition, USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture announced $16.2 million in plant-breeding investments as part of its Agriculture and Food Research Initiative. Public plant breeding investments are critical to furthering innovative research and plant varieties that help American growers thrive.

**Plant Varieties Featured in the People's Garden**

The USDA's People's Garden, located on the corner of Jefferson Drive and 12th Street S.W. in Washington, D.C., educates the public about sustainable gardening practices and the

importance of gardening for resilient local food systems. This year’s garden featured several plant varieties developed by independent and small-scale breeders. Read more about featured breeders and their varieties.