***Lesson 1: Introduction to Specialty Crops- Teacher’s Guide***

**Estimated Time for Completion- 90 minutes**

**Student Learning Objectives:**

* As a result of this lesson the student will…
	+ Become familiarized with various value-added specialty crops.
	+ Identify local examples of specialty crop producers.

**Purpose:** Depending on where you are from, or your background in agriculture, it may be difficult to think of more than just a few main crops commonly grown in your area. For example, in corn belt area, it is uncommon to see crops other than corn, soybeans, and maybe some oats or alfalfa being grown. Yet even in this area, there are in fact other crops grown. Many of these crops serve very unique purposes and are classified as specialty crops.

**Directions:** Access the commodities and products tab on the AgMRC website (<http://www.agmrc.org>) and find the link to Specialty Crops. Utilize information located here to answer the questions below:

1. What are some of the possible health benefits associated with amaranth? Who could this crop be marketed towards?
* First, select the Commodities and Products link.
* Second, select the Specialty crops link.
* Third, select the amaranth link.
* Fourth, use the information on the amaranth page as well as the links at the bottom to answer the question.
1. What is chufa? How is it primarily used? How could it be used in a value-added agriculture setting?
* First, select the Commodities and Products link.
* Second, select the Specialty crops link.
* Third, select the chufa link.
* Fourth, use this page and the links at the bottom to answer the question.
1. What are the only two maple syrup producing countries? What are their ranks?
* First, select the Commodities and Products link.
* Second, select the Specialty crops link.
* Third, select the maple sugar link.
* Fourth, use the information on this page as well as the links at the bottom to answer the question.
1. List 6 value-added products made from mushrooms. Where are they primarily sold?
* First, select the Commodities and Products link.
* Second, select the Specialty crops link.
* Third, select the mushrooms link.
* Fourth, use the information on this page as well as the links at the bottom to answer the question.
1. What 2 pieces of US legislation have increased the demand for prairie grasses and wildflowers?
* First, select the Commodities and Products link.
* Second, select the specialty crops link.
* Third, select the prairie grasses and wildflowers link.
* Fourth, use the information on this page to answer the question.
1. Using the Market Maker link find a specialty crop producer in your area. What does the producer sell? What are their methods of sale? What forms does the product come in?
* First, click on the Food Industry Market Maker tab.
* Second, chose a state. If your state isn’t highlighted, have students pick a nearby state.
* Third, using the Find a Business area select “Find a farmer/rancher”
* Fourth, select Specialty Products from the choices.
* Fifth, select Specialty Product type from the menu.
* Sixth, select a category.
* Seventh, use the information given to answer the question.

**Reinforcement activity: What is your specialty?**

Using the FOODMARKETMAKER.COM link, find a specialty crop producer in your area. Once you have located one of these specialty crop producers, find the answers to the following questions. Feel free to research using books, websites, or by contacting the producer.

What does the producer sell?

What are their methods of sale?

What forms does the product come in?

Who makes up the customer base?

Is this specialty crop confined to a certain geographical region/ climate? Why?

What is the growing season for the specialty crop?

How labor intensive is the specialty crop?