***Lesson: Introduction to Specialty Crops***

**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?
2. What are the only two maple syrup producing countries? What are their ranks?
3. List 6 value-added products made from mushrooms. Where are they primarily sold?
4. What 2 pieces of US legislation have increased the demand for prairie grasses and wildflowers?
5. 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?

**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?