NM STATE
UNIVERSITY

**College of Agricultural, Consumer
and Environmental Sciences**
Center of Excellence in Sustainable Food and
Agricultural Systems
MSC 3AG, New Mexico State University
P.O. Box 30003, Las Cruces, NM 88003-8003

Center of Excellence in Sustainable Food and Agricultural Systems (CESFAS)
Request for Proposals – FY26

CESFAS aims to build research capacity in agriculture value-added across the campus by supporting seed projects. Proposals should address agriculture and food system issues or challenges and produce tangible results that can lead to larger research initiatives, new intellectual property, improved industry performance, or new business investments. These projects encompass all phases of agricultural research and development. The awards seek to strengthen the research enterprise throughout New Mexico by fostering interdisciplinary teams focused on value-added research that contributes to the state's economic growth, sustainability, and community resilience in agricultural and food systems.

Funding Availability:
Funding is available annually based on the following award period (April 1st, 2026 – March 31^{st,} 2027). A total of $150,000-$200,000 in funding is available. Proposals may be submitted for amounts of $25,000 up to $50,000. Funds must be used within the award period, ending March 31st, 2027. No carry-over of funds will be permitted. Funding for operations, travel, non-capital equipment, supplies, software, data, printing, publication charges, and non-faculty personnel can be used. Course buyouts and summer salary for PIs are not eligible expenses.

Applicant Eligibility: All NMSU faculty affiliated with CESFAS are eligible to apply. Affiliation is easy and can be accomplished by registering here: https://acesnmsu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_b2UYaZGWHGVArlk. Proposals must include collaboration across at least two NMSU colleges, with interdisciplinary teams encouraged to include junior and senior faculty members.

Proposal Requirements:

Collaboration: Proposals must involve at least two NMSU colleges. Collaboration with external institutions or colleges is encouraged, provided they contribute additional resources or funding.

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Value-Added Research: Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the project will add economic, social, or environmental value to agricultural or food systems in New Mexico.

Stakeholder Involvement and Impact: The proposal must outline the involvement of relevant stakeholders from New Mexico's agricultural and food sectors, as well as the broader impact the project will have on these communities. This could include partnerships, advisory roles, or active participation in the project, ensuring the research addresses real-world needs and has the potential for broader regional or national significance.

CESFAS Mission Alignment: The project must align with the CESFAS mission by focusing on adding value to agricultural products and food systems in New Mexico. This includes efforts to enhance the economic competitiveness of local agricultural products, create new market opportunities, and improve product quality through innovation in processing, packaging, and distribution. Proposals should also address sustainability, resource efficiency, and the potential to contribute to long-term growth in the state's agricultural economy. Stakeholder collaboration is strongly recommended and can be demonstrated through letters of interest and or support.

Potential for External Funding: Projects should describe how results will position the research team for future external funding opportunities.

Previous and Current Support: CESFAS funding recipients who have previously or are currently receiving support are required to briefly summarize their prior CESFAS-funded activities, including clear outcomes such as publications, presentations, external funding leveraged, student mentorship, collaborations established, and other relevant impacts. This information will be used to assess the effectiveness and alignment of past support with CESFAS's strategic goals and to evaluate proposals for renewed or additional funding.

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Topics of Particular Interest
While all proposals related to value-added research in agricultural systems are welcome, in the FY26 funding call, CESFAS places special emphasis on research projects that focus on:

Topic Area 1 Pecan Industry: As New Mexico is one of the largest pecan-producing states in the U.S., CESFAS is particularly interested in research that explores innovative ways to utilize by-products or value-added products derived from pecan nuts. This includes finding sustainable, economically viable uses for shells, husks, and other residual materials, as well as enhancing economic returns through the extraction and commercialization of pecan oils, antioxidants, nut butters, and pecan flour. Potential areas of interest include bioenergy production, composting, biodegradable packaging materials, and nutraceutical extractions from pecan by-products; improving shelf-life stability; optimizing processing techniques; and developing strategic marketing approaches to elevate consumer acceptance of value-added pecan products.

Topic Area 2 New Mexico Specialty Crop Research: New Mexico is home to a wide range of unique specialty crops. CESFAS seeks research proposals that add value to these crops by improving post-harvest processing, developing new products, enhancing quality and safety, or expanding market opportunities. Projects that support the economic growth of these specialty crops through innovation in preservation techniques, novel packaging, or niche-market development are of particular interest. In addition to established specialty crops, CESFAS recognizes sotol (*Dasylirion spp.*) and yellowhorn (*Xanthoceras sorbifolium*) as emerging crops of significance to New Mexico and encourages research that advances their cultivation, post-harvest processing, value-added product development, and sustainable economic potential in the distillery, fiber, nut, and ornamental industries.

Topic Area 3: Resource-Efficient Post-Harvest and Value-Added Technologies
CESFAS seeks proposals that improve sustainability and profitability through resource-efficient post-harvest handling, processing, and value-added innovations. Emphasis is placed on technologies that reduce losses and optimize water, energy, and nutrient use, such as renewable-powered processing, precision storage and

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drying, automation for grading and packaging, and byproduct recovery into new products. Integration of digital tools (e.g., sensors, AI-driven quality control, decision-support platforms) to enhance efficiency and marketability is encouraged. Proposals should demonstrate scalability, cost-effectiveness, and direct benefits for producers in resource-limited regions.

Deliverables: A final project report (maximum five pages) detailing research accomplishments, outputs (publications, presentations, funding applications, etc.), impacts, and budget expenditures will be due by April 30th, 2027 (following the end of the award period). Additionally, an all-hands meeting will be scheduled to present and discuss the outcomes of the work. Results derived from these projects should serve as preliminary data for pursuing larger grant opportunities. In addition to the written report, project team members should be available throughout the duration for consultation on social media posts and collaborate with the communications team to develop at least one short video about the project's impacts at the end of the project.

Application Process: Submit proposals at: https://acesnmsu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bCq7fpKfa5dWPyu. Please submit a PDF of your complete proposal using the title format: CESFAS Value-Added Research Proposal_ [PI Last Name]. Incomplete proposals or those submitted past the deadline will not be considered.

Deadline: Proposals must be submitted by February 27th, 2026. Awards will be announced by March 20th, 2026.

CESFAS FY2026 Seed Funding Proposal Outline
Maximum Length: 8 Pages (excluding references, biosketch, current/pending support).

1. Project Title and Investigators (1 page)
Title of the proposed project: Names, titles, departments, and contact information of PI and co-PIs.

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2. Project Summary and Objectives (1 page)
Concise overview of the project. Specific objectives or research questions to be addressed.

3. Background and Justification (1 page)
Description of the problem or opportunity being addressed. Relevance to New Mexico agriculture and value-added systems: Justification for CESFAS support.

4. Research Plan and Methodology (2 pages)
Approach and technical description of the proposed work, Project timeline and milestones, Expected outcomes and deliverables.

5. Collaboration and CESFAS Mission Alignment (0.5 page)
Description of interdisciplinary team structure, how the project aligns with the CESFAS mission, description of collaboration across NMSU colleges, and any external institutions.

6. Stakeholder Engagement and Impact (0.5 page)
Identification of key stakeholders, how stakeholders will be involved, and anticipated economic, environmental, or social impacts.

7. Potential for External Funding (0.5 page)
Funding agencies and opportunities, the project will target how the results will support future grant applications.

8. Prior CESFAS Support (if applicable) (0.25 page)
Summary of outcomes from past CESFAS funding (publications, grants, partnerships, student training).

9. Budget Justification (1 page)
Brief breakdown of budget categories (personnel, supplies, travel, equipment, etc.) Justification for each major cost category. Note: No faculty salary or course buyouts allowed.

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Additional Required Documents (submitted separately, not counted in page limit) PI/Co-PI

1. SciENcv: Science Experts Network Style
   o NSF Biographical Sketch
   o NSF Current and Pending (Other) Support
2. CESFAS Seed Grant Budget Template
3. Letters of Support (if stakeholder collaboration is claimed)
4. *Relevant Social Media Accounts, where applicable (e.g., departmental X/Instagram feeds, LinkedIn accounts for project members, and social media for external partners, if available)

*Note: Social media information will help CESFAS share project outcomes with the public and clarify communication pathways from the start of the project.