

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The U.S. Department of Agriculture on Friday announced a series of grants through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act designed to spur job creation in rural areas. The Monterey County Vintners and Growers Association was one of 44 recipients and will receive \$98,500.

"The stimulus that was signed into law last February is still funneling much-needed federal funds into our communities to spur job growth," said Congressman Sam Farr (D-Carmel). "While the unemployment rate remains far too high, the policies put in place by Congress and President Obama over the past year have saved us from a far more severe downturn, and in fact we're beginning to see clear signs of recovery."

The grants to the Monterey County Vintners and Growers Association and others like it around the country will allow businesses to access critical capital that will help with start-up and working capital loans, building and plant renovations, transportation improvements, project planning and other business needs.

"These Recovery Act grants are part of the Obama Administration's ongoing effort to promote job development by ensuring that strategic investments are made in rural America," said USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack. "Small businesses drive community revitalization by providing products and services to local residents. This funding will help spur important economic development and strengthen communities around the country."

The grants are being provided by the Recovery Act through USDA Rural Development's Rural Business Enterprise Grant Program (RBEG), which helps finance new and existing businesses as well as employment-related adult education programs.

Additional information on the RBEG program may be found at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/busp/rbeg.htm>

###