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USDA Pledges \$1 Billion for Healthy Food & Food Banks

The U.S Department of Agriculture (USDA) pledges an investment of up to \$1 billion in The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) which aims to support emergency food networks.

In the coming months, USDA will partner with state and local entities to purchase locally produced food and invest in infrastructure that allows organizations to aid disadvantaged communities. This investment will include:

\$500 Million for Emergency Food Assistance

Through The Emergency Food Assistance Program, USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service plans to purchase \$500 million of healthy, domestically produced food for food bank networks. This investment will help to connect underserved communities with nutritious food and provide opportunities for women-owned, minority-owned, veteran-owned, and other small businesses.

\$400 Million for Local, Regional, and Socially Disadvantaged Farmers

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service will enter into agreements with state and local entities to purchase food for food banks from local and socially disadvantaged producers. Through these agreements, the Agricultural Marketing Service hopes to ensure relationships between farmers, producers, and local food systems.

\$100 Million for Infrastructure to Expand Capacity for Food Banks and Reach into Underserved Communities

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service will administer a new grant

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Grower Spotlight: Sunblossom Orchard

Located in Leelanau County in beautiful Northern Michigan, Sunblossom Orchard is owned and operated by Jim and Toddy Nugent. Sunblossom Orchard has grown Montmorency tart cherries solely for Graceland Fruit for over 40 years now.

Jim's brother, Don Nugent, was the driving force behind the establishment of Graceland Fruit and also served as CEO of the company for many years. Jim played an intricate role serving on the Graceland Fruit Board of Directors, including several years as chairman.

What started as a small cherry orchard has blossomed into a thriving, family-owned operation that leads the innovation of dried fruit ingredients while delivering delight and nutrition.

We are proud to have Sunblossom Orchard as one of our growers.

program that seeks to help food assistance organizations reach TEFAP requirements, improve infrastructure, and extend their reach to low-income and socially disadvantaged communities. This grant program will help state and local organizations participate in emergency food networks and help pantries increase storage capacity.

This investment will be the first under the **Build Back Better** initiative, which strives to improve access to nutritious food, solve racial injustices, provide support for producers, and create a more resilient food system. More information can be found [here](#).

Outdoor Activities & Infused Dried Fruits

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the way we live. We can no longer go to public workout facilities without a face covering or excessively wiping down equipment. For a few months, we were not even able to enter public gyms. With restrictions starting to lift and the weather getting warmer, more and more people are getting active outside.

According to Mintel, 24% of 16 to 24 year-olds are avid walkers, an increase from 16% in 2018. Strava, an exercise tracking app, also indicated that walking became a top activity for cyclists between April and June last year, with uploads of walks increasing by a third in 2020.

One of the best snacks for outdoor walking, hiking, and cycling is **infused dried fruit**. Infused dried fruit is a favorite of outdoor activity enthusiasts because of its resistance to heat and longer shelf life. Infused dried fruit also retains many of the nutrients found in fresh fruit and can be mixed with nuts and seeds for a high-energy trail mix. Dried fruit is compactable and easily stored in a backpack, making it the ideal snack for any outdoor activity.



Nutrition News: Cranberries Increase in Recognition and Popularity Among Chinese Consumers

Cranberries are a growing global superfruit! Consumers want healthy food options that offer health benefits and boost immunity.

According to Nielsen, an international market research firm, consumers in China have recognized cranberries for their **health benefits**. In January 2021, it was announced that the awareness rate of cranberries reached a record high of 71%, increasing from 66% in previous years.

When cranberries were introduced to the Chinese market, the only product available was dried cranberries. More recently with the pandemic, the boom in popularity and awareness has caused cranberries to be used in more **applications**, foods, drinks, and meals. Chinese “foodies” have begun to explore the possibilities of cranberries in Chinese dishes. **29% of consumers stated they use cranberries as a side dish for all three meals.** Since the pandemic, there has also been an increase in home cooking. With more time in the kitchen, consumers are able to experiment with new ingredients, including cranberries. This year, 43% of consumers who bought cranberries included them in their cooking/baking. Dried cranberries have increased significantly in popularity as consumers want them for quick-and-easy baking recipes, such as biscuits, muffins, and cookies.

Cranberry products are becoming increasingly diverse from simple straight packs of dried cranberries to cranberry meal replacement bars and probiotics. One of the most popular cranberry products is **cranberry juice**. The purchase rate of cranberry juice in the Chinese market has increased to 25% and cranberry cold snacks and beverages have peaked at 35% and 39%, respectively.

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Ingredient Spotlight: Cranberries

Also referred to as the global superfruit, cranberries are one of three fruits native to North America and are deeply rooted in American history.

At first glance, cranberries might look like any other fruit, but a closer look at the superfruit would reveal numerous health benefits that only a cranberry can provide. What started as a holiday staple is now a globally recognized superfruit thanks to research supporting the health benefits of cranberries. Some of which include:

- A Good Source of Fiber
 - Naturally Fat Free
 - Cholesterol Free
 - Sodium Free
 - Immune Boosting
 - Reduces Inflammation
 - Supports Digestive Health
 - Promotes Urinary Tract Health
 - Supports Oral Health
- *More information on the nutrition and health benefits of our infused dried cranberries can be found [HERE!](#)





According to data from the 2020 China Fruit and Vegetable Juice Industry Summit, the number of new products using **cranberry juice concentrate** has increased by an alarming 48% over five years, with cranberry puree showing a 30-40% increase.

With growing concerns of health and immunity as the pandemic continues, cranberries are one of the best fruits we can consume.

The Sign Says it All - We're Hiring!

It takes exceptional people to make exceptional ingredients. \$750 sign on bonus, full-time, year-round employment, competitive wages, full benefits, 401K match **and more!**



Affinity Group Canada Joins the Graceland Team

We are thrilled to announce our new partnership with Affinity Group Canada as they join our extended sales team helping to serve customers in Canada with coast-to-coast coverage.

Operating six office locations across Canada, Affinity Group Canada is a family-owned business with over 30 years of experience. They specialize in the sale and marketing of food products, and they achieve this through an experienced sales and culinary force dedicated to their customers and the brands they represent. Combining culinary talent, market knowledge, and sales expertise in the industry, they pride themselves on successfully developing their customer's businesses.

At Graceland Fruit, our goal is to partner with exceptional food ingredient professionals such as Affinity Group Canada. They are a seamless extension of our in-house team, providing personalized sales, service, culinary development, and technical support directly to our customers.

Proactive. Responsive. Agile. Innovative. Problem Solvers. We deliver delight™ through exceptional ingredient and service performance. **Talk to one of our experts now!**



We deliver *delight*.

Graceland Fruit, Inc. is a leading producer and global distributor of premium quality dried fruit ingredients for the food industry. Our exceptional product and service performance make it easy for innovative food manufacturers and providers to create delicious, on-trend products to surprise and delight their consumers.

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