

Partnership yields nearly half a mil' for organic fruit research, education

OFRF and Stretch Island put \$450,000 into organic fruit sector development

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The Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) said it will invest \$450,000 over the next three years in organic fruit research and education projects as a result of its new partnership with Stretch Island Fruit Co.



OFRF said it also plans to award a record quarter million dollars in general organic project grants in 2008, to which the Stretch Island Fruit Co., makers of FruitaBü organic fruit snacks, will also contribute.

The first deadline for the foundation's Request for Proposals for spring and fall 2008 organic research and education projects of up to \$15,000 a year is Dec. 17, with the following deadline July 15. Fruit projects can receive up to \$20,000 in funding and multi-year funding will also be considered.

"When we started looking for suppliers for our organic fruit snacks, we learned that existing U.S. organic fruit growers couldn't keep up with the rising demand for their products and others weren't transitioning fast enough," said John Henry Siedlecki, spokesperson for the Stretch Island Fruit Co.

"Good science-based information and access to it have been critical to my transition to organic and the ongoing success of our family farm," said OFRF president and organic fruit grower Steve Ela.

Over 15 years, OFRF said it has awarded 243 organic research and education grants totaling \$1.6 million.