



MEDIA RELEASE

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
MARKET DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

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ANNUAL FARMERS MARKET FORUM PART OF TENNESSEE HORTICULTURAL EXPO ON 29TH

NASHVILLE – The 5th annual Tennessee Farmers Market Forum is slated for Thursday, Jan. 29th at the Airport Marriott in Nashville. The forum will kick off a first-ever comprehensive Tennessee Horticultural Expo. This year's forum features industry leaders from the California Farmers Market Association and a panel discussion led by Dr. Bill Morris, The University of Tennessee, and John Sanford, Tennessee Department of Agriculture Regulatory Services.

"So many aspects of the agriculture industry overlap each other; it just made sense to combine what have traditionally been separate meetings," says Laura Fortune, agricultural marketing specialist with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. "This year, Tennessee producers will get an 'all in one' experience, for one price, in one weekend."

Other organizations and industries convening as part of the Tennessee Horticultural Expo in addition to the Tennessee Farmers Market Association (TFMA) include the Tennessee Fruit and Vegetable Association (TFVA); the Tennessee Flower Grower Association (TFGA); the Tennessee Viticultural and Oenological Society (TVOS); the Tennessee Farm Winegrowers Association (TFWA); and the American Wine Society (AWS). The event is a cooperative effort by The University of Tennessee Extension and the Tennessee Department of Agriculture.

"This is an important time for farmers and farmers market managers to come together to learn about the latest marketing trends and practices," says Fortune. "The economy may well be challenging for everyone, but with every challenge will come some opportunities for these who are aware and ready. Locally grown, fresh, trackable foods and other farm products – and therefore farmers markets – may become an even more attractive option for consumers. The farmers market forum and subsequent expo events will help participants position themselves, through marketing and production practices, to get the most out of whatever the future brings."

MORE

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“For instance, demand for natural beef is booming, and this year’s forum will have a session on this growing consumer interest, plus how to meet that demand thorough farmers markets and farm-direct sales,” says Fortune.

Other topics offered during the expo weekend include cover crops, soil health, insect control, soil acidification, soil testing, honey bee decline, tree fruit, vegetable crops, organic production, top performance annuals, perennials, herbs, and tropical plants, trees, and shrubs. For grape growers and others involved in Tennessee’s wine industry, a number of association events and classes will be held throughout. An agricultural trade show is also planned as a part of the expo.

One registration fee covers attendance to all classes throughout the expo, which begins with Thursday’s forum. Advance registration is \$50.

“The Farmers Market Forum on Thursday will help producers and markets promote themselves in the most effective way,” says Fortune. “Then, the Friday and Saturday classes at the Horticultural Expo will give them the information they need to be sure their crop yields will be big enough to meet all that new demand!”

Details for the 2009 Farmers Market Forum and for the Tennessee Horticultural Expo are available online at www.picktnproducts.org. For more information, contact Fortune at laura.fortune@tn.gov or call 615-837-5349.

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