



MEDIA RELEASE

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
MARKET DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 13, 2012

CONTACT: Tammy Algood
615-837-5347
Tammy.Algood@TN.gov

State Strawberry Crop Looks Strong Despite Recent Frosts

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Thanks to a mild winter and a warm, sunny spring, Tennessee’s famous strawberry crop looks good despite the recent frosts.

“We had a pretty good frost in many areas of the state,” says Tammy Algood, fruit and vegetable marketing specialist with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. “However, temperatures in many places did not get as low as was predicted. The actual temperatures will vary depending on air drainage, ground cover and topography, but it’s fairly certain that some sites saw temperatures below freezing.”

“Our strawberry growers have ‘close calls’ every year, though,” says the specialist, “so they are set up and can react to cold events.”

One benefit of having such warm temperatures earlier in the year, according to Algood, is that the closer the fruit is to being ripe, the more tolerance it might have to cold, due probably to the increasing sugar levels in the fruit.

“We didn’t experience any winter damage to the state’s crops that stay in the ground year round, like strawberries,” says Algood. “Warm early spring temperatures pushed development, bloom, and fruit set far sooner than we normally see in Tennessee. It still looks like we’re going to have the best fresh strawberry season we’ve seen in years.”

Tennessee’s strawberries are anticipated with high expectations and anxiety. Tennessee has a long, famous history with strawberries – in fact, Tennessee was at one time the strawberry capitol of the world – but wide-ranging temperature variations keep strawberry farmers and customers wary until the last chance of a hard freeze has passed. Depending on the location in Tennessee, that date could range from mid March in the southwestern tip of the state to mid May at the northeastern end.

Weather conditions, locations and varieties of strawberries combine to create a Tennessee strawberry season that can stretch from the last week or two of April all the way to the first part of June, according to Algood. “That’s why there is no substitute for calling ahead to a strawberry patch before visiting. There are so many variables. A patch filled with ripe berries on Friday could be picked clean by Saturday afternoon, then ready for another crowd by Tuesday morning,” says the specialist.

-MORE-

ELLINGTON AGRICULTURAL CENTER
BOX 40627, NASHVILLE, TN 37204
www.picktnproducts.org

State Strawberry Crop Looks Strong

2 - 2 - 2 - 2 - 2 - 2

Strawberry lovers can find a directory of Tennessee farms with strawberry patches and farmers markets with strawberries at www.picktnproducts.org. Each farm or farmers market listed includes complete contact information. Seasonal recipes for strawberries are also available at the Pick Tennessee Products website.

Pick Tennessee Products is the statewide campaign developed by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture to help consumers find Tennessee farms, farm products and foods processed in Tennessee. More than 1,600 farmers and about 7,000 products, services and events are currently listed at the site.

As Pick Tennessee Products spokesperson and author of *The Complete Southern Cookbook* and *Farm Fresh Southern Cooking*, Algood creates seasonal recipes featuring products grown and processed in Tennessee. A collection of Algood's recipes are posted at the Pick Tennessee Products website, www.picktnproducts.org.

Visit www.picktnproducts.org to find more seasonal recipes, farms, farmers markets, farm-direct products and other locally grown and processed foods. Pick Tennessee Products is also available on Facebook and Twitter.

###