

A news release from the Maryland Department of Agriculture

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Sue duPont, 410-841-5889 or Julie Oberg, 410-841-5888

Now Available: 2010 Maryland Farmers' Market Directory

ANNAPOLIS, MD (May 6, 2010) – The 2010 Maryland Farmers' Market Directory listing locations and hours of each of the state's markets is now available through the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) website at [www.mda.state.md.us](http://www.mda.state.md.us). This year, some 112 markets will be open with at least one in every county and Baltimore City. Many of the farmers' markets in the state are already open and offering early season produce and plants such as kale, salad greens, spinach, asparagus, strawberries, hanging flower baskets, bedding plants and garden seedlings.

"At farmers' markets across the state, customers can purchase a wide variety of locally-grown and -produced products including fruits, vegetables, herbs, flowers, plants, eggs, meats, baked goods and cheeses," said Agriculture Secretary Buddy Hance. "Customers can enjoy some of the freshest and best tasting local products, and in turn will directly support our family farmers, our environment, economy, and the health of our families. Every dollar spent on local agricultural products contributes to the economic health of the community, keeps our land in farming, and helps to support a smart, green and growing future for Maryland agriculture."

Farmers' markets provide an important source of income for farmers and also provide the community with a meeting place where residents can catch up with each other while purchasing farm-fresh, nutritious, local products. Customers have the opportunity to ask farmers how their products are grown or produced, how to prepare fresh produce and how to incorporate local products into their home-cooked meals, gardens, and landscaping.

Farmers' Markets have become more and more popular as interest in purchasing fresh, local food and connecting directly with the farmers who grow the food has risen. In 1991, there were only 20 markets, there were 88 in 2008, 103 last year and 110 this year. In a telephone survey of 800 Marylanders last year, 78 percent of Marylanders said they are more likely to buy produce that is identified as having been grown by a Maryland farmer.

Approximately 300 farmers will participate in the farmers' market nutrition program (FMNP) initiative which provides an additional source of income to farmers. More than \$900,000 in checks will be available for eligible women, infants, children (WIC – FMNP) through the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's local WIC offices and seniors (SFMNP) through the Maryland Department of Aging's local senior centers to purchase fresh fruits,

vegetables, and cut herbs at farmers' markets during the 2010 season. The program is made possible by a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and is administered by MDA in partnership with the Maryland Departments of Aging and Health and Mental Hygiene.

The 2010 Maryland Farmers' Market Directory print version will be available in mid May from MDA's Marketing Division at 50 Harry S. Truman Parkway in Annapolis, 410-841-5770.