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NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE

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USDA Launches First-Ever Local Foods Survey *Study will Provide New Data on Locally Grown and Sold Foods*

WASHINGTON, April 7, 2016 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced the 2015 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey as part of its continued support of local and regional food systems. USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is conducting this first-time survey to produce official benchmark data on the local food sector in the United States.

“USDA launched the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Initiative in 2009 to support the growing demand for local and regional food systems, and local food has been part of Federal, state, and local government policy discussions as consumer interest and demand has grown,” said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. “The information NASS collects in this survey is vital to providing data to understand the benefits of local and regional food systems.”

The Local Food Marketing Practices Survey will ask producers for information on their production and local marketing of foods during the 2015 calendar year. Information includes the value of food sales by marketing channel (i.e. farmers markets, community supported agriculture (CSA) arrangements, restaurants, roadside stands, food hubs, and more), value of crop and livestock sales, marketing practices, expenses, Federal farm program participation, and more.

“More than 160,000 farms have direct and intermediated sales and industry estimates suggest the value of the local foods market was nearly \$12 billion in 2014,” said Vilsack. “This is important information that was used to inform support for local and regional food systems in the Agricultural Act of 2014. Now as communities are using these programs to help grow the local food sector, this new survey will help show where the sector is today and help identify future needs.”

Local foods are linked to many USDA priorities – including enhancing the rural economy, the environment, food access and nutrition, and strengthening agricultural producers and markets. USDA stakeholders, including farmers and ranchers, various levels of government, and related businesses and organizations, will all benefit from the new information, which will be published in December 2016. The data will be used for decisions and programs that support local and regional food systems, including:

- USDA Agricultural Marketing Service’s Farmers Market Promotion Program, Local Food Promotion Program, Specialty Crop Block Grants Program.
- USDA Farm Service Agency’s Microloan Program.
- USDA Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentives Program, a collaboration between USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture and USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service
- USDA Food and Nutrition Service’s efforts to expand EBT availability at farmers markets
- State and local agencies’ support and promotion of local food markets
- Farmers’ and ag organizations’ business and marketing strategies
- Researchers’, extension’s and university members’ local foods research

Producers who receive the 2015 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey from NASS are strongly encouraged to respond. Farmers and ranchers can fill out the survey online via a secure website, www.agcounts.usda.gov, or return their form by mail.

For more information about the 2015 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey, visit www.agcensus.usda.gov.

The Local Foods Marketing Practices Survey was mailed to a random sample of producers that grow and sell foods locally. Response to the survey is vital as the information gathered will be used to account for all farmers involved in the local and regional food system. NASS is also preparing for the 2017 Census of Agriculture, a complete count once every five years of all U.S. farms and ranches and the people who operate them. If a producer did not receive the last Census of Agriculture in 2012, they are encouraged to sign up at www.nass.usda.gov/Online_Response/Be_Counted/.

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