



MEDIA RELEASE

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
MARKET DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

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CONTACT: Pamela Bartholomew
615-837-5348
Pamela.Bartholomew@TN.gov
**Audio Clip Attached*

MORE OPTIONS MAKE BUYING PRODUCE, EATING WELL EASIER THAN EVER

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – “Options for getting fresh, local produce are sprouting up faster than – well, sprouts. Many places and groups who previously had a hard time getting access to healthy foods now have a fresh source,” says Pamela Bartholomew, agritourism coordinator for the Tennessee Department of Agriculture.

“Farmers markets. Pick-your-own farms. Urban farmers. Community supported agriculture. Neighborhood farm-direct drop-off and pick-up sites – the list keeps growing. Just this week I read about a man who converted an old school bus to create a farmers market on wheels,” says Bartholomew. “Farmers who bring their harvests straight to eager and grateful customers are starting to support oases of ideal, farm direct foods in ‘food deserts’.”

“The best way to keep up to date about emerging opportunities in your area is to visit the Pick Tennessee Products website,” says Bartholomew. “It’s an excellent tool to locate fresh fruits and vegetables, especially throughout Tennessee’s long summer, when all sorts of produce are abundant.” The website is part of the longstanding Pick Tennessee Products promotion led by TDA, a program developed to connect farmers with customers and to help customers recognize and choose locally grown and produced foods.

“Thirty years ago, the idea of convenient, ready-made and fast foods seemed like a great idea,” says Bartholomew. “Corn dogs took the place of corn on the cob, and potato chips from the Quicky Mart took the place of green beans and boiled potatoes from the dinner table. Turns out that wasn’t such a great idea, after all. We found out that people can actually be obese and malnourished at the same time and that eating convenient foods can have real consequences.”

As the nation started trying to turn back the clock to a healthier time, another modern problem became clear. The long term lack of interest in fresh, unprocessed foods led to large swaths of urban, suburban and even rural areas where true grocery stores died out, leaving many residents without access to fresh foods of any sort.

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

More Options Make Buying Produce, Eating Well Easier

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“At the Pick Tennessee Products site, you can click on photos of seasonal fruits and vegetables to find those items near you. You also can go straight from the home page to a directory of farmers markets across the state, or click on ‘Food’ to get to a whole menu of fresh foods. The website leads you to the farms and farm-direct locations in your area.”

“Ten years ago, the concept of community supported agriculture didn’t exist. Ten years before that, the idea of having a ‘pick-your-own’ orchard or vegetable farm was cutting edge in this part of the country,” says Bartholomew. “Now you can go to a website, find a farm that delivers produce, then give them a call to find out when and where they’ll be in your area.

“Finding fresh produce may not be quite as convenient as the Quicky Mart yet,” says Bartholomew, “but the Pick Tennessee Products website makes it easier – and the produce you find there will be a lot better for you!”

Visit www.picktnproducts.org or call the Tennessee Department of Agriculture Market Development Division 616-837-5160 to find local farms, farmers markets and farm direct foods.

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