



MEDIA RELEASE

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
MARKET DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

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FARMERS MARKETS FULL OF "SUMMER" PRODUCE THIS FALL

NASHVILLE, Tenn. - "Zucchini doesn't know it's fall. Neither does watermelon."

Rob Beets sometimes wishes produce didn't have the designations of "summer" and "fall." "What we really have are cool weather and warm weather crops," says Beets, produce specialist with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, "and a lot of what we think of as 'summer' produce really belongs in the cool weather category. That means that for people who live in areas with long springs and falls like we have here in Tennessee, we get two seasons for cool weather crops."

"Yellow squash, zucchini, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, spinach, cabbage, eggplant, cilantro – all sorts of vegetables and herbs are as plentiful now as they were in June," says Beets. "Farmers markets are chocked full. Additionally, since this was such a cool, wet summer, lots of the warm weather crops got a late start, so we're also seeing watermelons showing up again this week. The last corn crop for the year is ready; peppers are everywhere, and so are tomatoes."

Not everything has benefited from all the recent overcast and rainy days, however; okra needs the heat and sunshine of deep summer, and has been hard to find in many areas of the state, according to Beets.

Beets says that the state's produce growers typically start the fall season's planting in late July and will be picking fresh vegetables right up until the first serious frost. "It's a shame that so many people give up on finding local produce once they flip their calendar pages to October, when they still could be enjoying fresh vegetables, plus canning or freezing anything they didn't get quite enough of earlier in the year."

The specialist points out that regular autumn favorites, from sweet potatoes and turnip greens to hard squashes and pumpkins, are filling produce bins at farmers markets across the state.

"This truly is the most abundant time of year," says Beets. "It's a great time to visit the farmers market and get the best of summer before Jack Frost lets plants know what time of year it really is."

Visit www.picktnproducts.org to find local farmers markets, farms, orchards and other outlets for Tennessee farm products.

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