

For Immediate Release

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Tilth Producers of Washington Hosts First State-level Symposium to Discuss Organic Foods Industry and Ways to Market Washington Organic Products

Organic growers, buyers and broad section of the industry come together for first time discuss specific issues facing the organic foods industry in Washington state

Seattle, Washington, October 9, 2007 – For the first time Washington organic growers, buyers and broad section of the industry will come together on Friday, November 9, 2007 at the Yakima Convention Center, to discuss consumer trends, Washington's organic production, the nutritional aspects of organic food, what retailers want, new trends in processing, grain production, and the dairy and meat industries. Tilth Producers of Washington is hosting this first state-level symposium, titled Organics in a Changing Marketplace, to create a forum where individuals can connect with and learn from the many people who are contributing to the growth of organic foods in Washington state. Keynote speaker, Lori Demeritt from The Hartman Group will talk about "The Current Organic Consumer: Who Are They and What Do They Want?" And many well-known speakers will present throughout the day including Chuck Benbrook from The Organic Center, David Granatstein from Washington State University, Center for Sustaining Agriculture & Natural Resources and Tom Mello from Amy's Kitchen.

"Washington state has been a national leader in the organic revolution so it important that we come together as a community to discuss the issues we are facing," said Diane Dempster, a Tilth Producers board member and representative of Farmer's Own, one of the symposium's sponsors and a division of Charlie's Produce. "This is an opportunity for us to learn more about the industry and connect growers and buyers so that we can continue to grow Washington state's commitment to providing the marketplace with Washington organic foods."

The organic industry has grown tremendously in the last five years. The Washington State Department of Agriculture now certifies nearly 1,000 organic growers and new organic products are born every day. With the demand for organics now exceeding supply, many growers are determining which options to pursue and the best ways to make sure marketers can find them.

Facts about Washington's Organic Industry:

- Washington is the number one producer of organic apples, pears and cherries in the nation and, is second only to California in acres producing organic vegetables.
- The organic certification program instituted by the Washington State Department of Agriculture in 1988 is one of the oldest and most respected in the nation.
- This year, Washington State University was the first university in the nation to establish an organic farming major and has been a leader for years in the soil sciences, which are critical to organic agriculture.
- In 2006 alone, organic acreage in Washington increased by 40%; and in just five years the number of organic dairies in the state has jumped from two to an expected 50 this year.

About Tilth Producers of Washington

Tilth Producers of Washington, a Chapter of Washington Tilth Association, is the premier organic farming and sustainable agriculture organization of Washington State. A membership organization of over 400 Washington growers, Tilth Producers fosters and promotes ecologically sound, sustainable agriculture in the interest of environmental preservation, human health and social equity. For more information, materials, or for a list of expert contacts, contact Jen Lamson, 206-369-3122 or Kristin Hyde, 206-491-0773.

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