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NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Governor Bob Riley Proclaims National Farmers Market Week for Alabama

Montgomery, Alabama – U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns proclaimed August 7-13 as “National Farmers Market Week”. The Farmers Market Authority today joined Governor Bob Riley in recognizing August 7-13 as “National Farmers Market Week” in Alabama.

The number of farmers markets in the United States has grown dramatically in recent years, prompting local, regional, and national advocates of local farming to designate a week each year to take note of their benefits. The U.S. Department of Agriculture reports over 3,700 farmers markets currently operate throughout the nation – a record number, up from the initial count in 1994 of 1,755. Sales generated by farmers markets have been estimated to exceed \$1 billion a year, with most of the money going directly to small family farmers.

Alabama has seen an increase in the number of farmers markets during the same period, from 17 to 82.

“The vitality of small- and medium-sized farms across Alabama is good for local economies, good for consumers, and good for Alabama citizens,” said Don Wambles, from the Alabama Farmers Market Authority. The Alabama Farmers Market Authority is developing numerous initiatives to increase farmers and consumers awareness of the convenience and value of farmers markets.

Don Wambles said that Alabama’s Farmers Market Authority and USDA are working together to increase the development of farmers markets, and in the last decade the federal-state partnership has emphasized a critical need to help small farmers and to provide consumers access to fresh fruits and vegetables. “In addition to administering the Farmers Market Nutrition Programs which have revitalized many older markets and created new markets, the Farmers Market Authority initiated the *Buy Fresh, Buy Local* campaign and developed the new *Farmers Market Trail*, where the ambiance of our farmers markets creates a nostalgic atmosphere where you can socialize, learn about good and healthy food, and talk with local farmers who bring their goods to the market.” said Don Wambles.

USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service works with states to encourage market growth, while its Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services helps needy families gain access to healthy produce. A very positive result of this is that more than 27,000 recipients of the federal Women, Infants, and Children’s assistance program and more than 61,000 senior Alabamians are shopping at Alabama’s farmers markets across the state.

Information on Alabama’s farmers markets is available at www.BuyLocalAlabama.com or by calling 1-877-774-9519.