

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE ANNOUNCES VIDEO CONTEST FOR STUDENTS: Maryland Farm to School YouTube Video Contest Encourages Students to Think about Locally-Grown Foods

ANNAPOLIS, MD (August 10, 2010) – The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) has launched a YouTube video contest asking students what buying local means to them. In a video lasting no longer than three minutes, students must thoughtfully and creatively answer the question, “What does ‘local food’ mean to you?” The first place winner(s) will receive an Apple iPod Touch, a Maryland State Park Pass, and a school lunchtime visit from MDA Secretary Buddy Hance.

“Our goal is to engage students about the origins of their food in a way that is both meaningful and fun,” said Agriculture Secretary Hance. “It’s important to teach students that food doesn’t come from a grocery store – it comes from a farmer. This contest aims to educate students about where their food comes from and all of the benefits of buying local.”

This contest is part of the Jane Lawton Farm-to-School Program, which was established to bring more locally grown food to Maryland schools and to educate students about the importance of local agriculture. It was created in 2008, along with “Homegrown School Lunch Week,” which takes place this year from September 13-17 and promotes Maryland agriculture through local products in school lunches, educational programs about local agriculture, and interactions between students and farmers.

As most students are well-familiar and connected with YouTube, the contest provides a way for students to socialize and have fun, while also learning about and promoting an important issue. They are encouraged to visit local Maryland farms and to consider the implications of buying or not buying local products.

The demand for Maryland-grown food is growing. Buying locally is a key to ensuring a smart, green and growing future for Maryland families. It preserves farmland, protects the environment, bolsters local economies, and promotes healthy adults and children by providing wholesome, nutritious, great-tasting fresh food.

Both public and private Maryland school students K-12, ages 5-18 are invited to participate in the YouTube contest. The contest will run until September 8, 2010, ending right before Maryland Homegrown School Lunch Week, which runs September 13-17, 2010. More details and the Official Contest Rules may be found at www.marylandfarmtoschool.org.