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Online Resource Helps Food Businesses Navigate Food Safety and Regulatory Issues

LAKESWOOD, Colo. – A new website has been developed to familiarize Colorado food producers and food product manufacturers with federal, state and local food licensing regulations and to help ensure that the path food travels from farm to fork is safe. The website, www.cofarmtomarket.com, is for farmers' market vendors, farmers' market managers, ag producers, food product manufacturers and others targeting direct markets such as farm to school, restaurants, retail stores, and institutions.

“Marketing and selling food products can be one of the most challenging aspects to a farm enterprise or food entrepreneur, especially when direct sales are involved,” said Wendy White, marketing specialist for the Colorado Department of Agriculture. “We hope this website helps food businesses develop and expand their products and marketing channels.”

Consumers nationwide are looking to buy fresh, local food from producers whom they can talk in person, ask questions, and establish relationships. These new market opportunities such as roadside stands, farmers' markets, community supported agriculture programs (CSAs), and cooperatives with restaurants and institutions, require expertise not only in marketing and management, but also in safe

food production and handling. Selling clean, wholesome food is a primary part of creating and maintaining customer confidence.

The website helps businesses understand how to ensure the safety and quality of fresh produce and food products, while gaining satisfaction from working and building relationships with community members. The site also includes information regarding the Cottage Foods Act which was signed into law in March 2012.

“We hope that the Cottage Foods Act checklist will help new food businesses better prepare for direct market sales, as well as help farmers’ market managers organize the required and recommended information from vendors proposing cottage food sales in their markets,” said Martha Sullins of Colorado State University Extension. “In the coming months, additional interpretation, guidance and recommendations will be posted to this web site, so we are encouraging people to visit the site often.”

The website was created by the Colorado Department of Agriculture, Colorado State University Extension and the Colorado Farmers’ Market Association with support from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

For more information contact the Colorado Department of Agriculture Markets Division at (303) 239-4119 or visit www.cofarptomarket.com.

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