

media release

Colorado Department of Agriculture

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Contact: Christi Lightcap, (303) 239-4190, Christi.Lightcap@state.co.us

Colorado Department of Agriculture Receives Marketing Award for 2012 Rocky Ford Cantaloupe Revitalization Campaign

LAKEWOOD, Colo. – The Colorado Department of Agriculture received the “*Award of Agricultural Marketing Excellence*” at the annual North American Agricultural Marketing Officials (NAAMO) conference in Alexandria, VA. The prestigious, national marketing award is in recognition for the campaign following the 2011 listeria tragedy.

Following the 2011 listeria outbreak, the Colorado Department of Agriculture and the families in the Rocky Ford growing region developed a quick, proactive and collaborative response. With the help of private local marketing and branding companies Mulligan&Co., LLC and BrandWerks Group, the public relations campaign addressed the crisis and provided the public with accurate reliable information about Rocky Ford cantaloupes.

The NAAMO Marketing Excellence Award was launched in 2006 to annually recognize and award innovative and effective agricultural marketing projects by states and provinces in North America. The award serves to share knowledge about innovative and effective projects with other regions for their study and use.

“Farmers and ranchers strive to provide safe, nutritional food to their own families and friends as well as the consumer. This tragedy was an example of the importance of food safety and its significance to us all,” added Commissioner of Agriculture, John Salazar. “The tragedy could have spelled the end for Rocky Ford cantaloupe; that would have been a loss not only to their families after generations of farming, but to the people of Colorado who have enjoyed this local product for 126 years, and look forward to these cantaloupes every summer.”

The Rocky Ford Growers Association™ was formed in 2011. To label melons as Rocky Ford Cantaloupe™ a grower must be a member of this association and produce melons within the growing region, which is now defined as Otero and Crowley Counties, south of the Colorado Canal. Rocky Ford Cantaloupe™ has a perfect safety record for the past 126 years. RFGA’s packer, Hiramata Farms, built a new state-of-the-art packing facility with high output air coolers to quickly cool the field-heated melons to reduce condensation and potential bio problems. An advanced washing sanitation system includes a microbial soap shower with chlorine oxide and soap rinse. Water quality is monitored hourly. Trailers only carry Rocky Ford Cantaloupe™, watermelon and pumpkins. No animals or other produce is carried in these trailers. Additionally, RFGA hired a full-time food safety manager to insure requirements are being met and monitored. Every grower member has agreed to a risk assessment and/or audit review of their farms, including strict adherence to USDA Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP). RFGA also follows FDA food safety (FSMA) rules. Visit www.rockyfordgrowersassociation.com for more information. *Rocky Ford cantaloupes will be in grocery stores and farmers’ markets statewide through early September.*

About the North American Agricultural Marketing Officials (NAAMO)

NAAMO is an international organization of government agricultural marketing officials who provide marketing services to the agricultural and food industries in their states and provinces. Members share the common interests of market development, market information and communication and in market organization and cooperation. Visit www.naamo.org for more information.

About the Colorado Department of Agriculture

The mission of the state Department of Agriculture is to strengthen and advance Colorado's agriculture industry; promote a safe, high quality and sustainable food supply; and protect consumers, the environment, and natural resources. Visit www.colorado.gov/ag for more information.

About Mulligan&Co.,LLC

Headquartered in Denver, Colorado since 2009, Mulligan&Co.,LLC offers a full range of strategic communications services, from media training and coaching to 24/7 media spokesperson services and long-term public relations and brand management plans. Visit www.mulliganandco.com for more information.

About BrandWerks Group

The Golden, Colorado based marketing firm is a team of professionals who have launched businesses, managed global ventures, and researched, created, designed and marketed many successful brands. More information can be found at www.brandwerksgroup.com.

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