



Pete Ricketts
Governor

Department of Agriculture
Greg Ibach
Director
P.O. Box 94947
Lincoln, NE 68509-4947
(402) 471-2341
Fax: (402) 471-6876
www.nda.nebraska.gov

**NEWS RELEASE
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Contact: Christin Kamm
(402) 471-6856

**NEBRASKA MARKS NATIONAL FARMERS’ MARKET WEEK
WITH 100-MARKET MILESTONE**
NDA website a resource for markets, produce vendor information

LINCOLN – Nebraska Agriculture Director Greg Ibach is promoting the celebration of National Farmers’ Market Week in the state, set for Aug. 2-8, by noting a new fresh produce milestone. The Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) recently registered its 100th farmers’ market in the state.

“The growing demand for locally-produced fruits and vegetables has been a positive driving force for farmers’ markets in Nebraska,” Ibach said. “This sector continues to grow and add diversification to the state’s overall agricultural economy.”

Growth of farmers’ markets in Nebraska is occurring in rural, as well as urban, communities. Since 2000, Nebraska farmers’ markets listed with NDA has increased 257 percent, according to NDA Ag Promotion Coordinator Casey Foster. As demand has increased, some communities have begun holding markets on more days with longer hours. In addition, many of the vendors have begun offering a wider variety of produce, he said.

To facilitate access to market information, NDA earlier this year launched a new web page that provides details on locations, days and times of farmers’ markets across the state. Produce farmers also are given the opportunity to list locations where they sell from, as well as the types of produce they sell.

“There definitely has been a need to have all the pertinent information regarding the state’s farmers’ markets in one recognizable location,” said Foster, who is the farmers’ market coordinator for NDA. “We provide access to the site to registered farmers so they can list all their pertinent information as well as keep it up-to-date. We also have an easy search function to make the page user-friendly for consumers wanting to find market and grower information at specific locations.”

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The farmers' market page can be accessed through the NDA website at www.nda.nebraska.gov. The page lists the 100 farmers' markets, as well as over 400 produce growers. Foster said market managers, as well as individual growers, can contact him to be added to the database by calling NDA at 800-422-6692.

In addition to coordinating farmers' market programs, Foster also manages several federally-funded specialty crop programs. The Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program and the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program both are designed to increase sales for produce growers by encouraging the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables among qualified senior citizens and individuals in the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Supplemental Nutrition Program.

Foster is working with program officials in Omaha to host two cooking demonstrations for WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program participants during National Farmers' Market Week. Those sites are:

- Wed., Aug. 5 – Midtown WIC – 1:00 p.m., 2:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.
- Thurs., Aug. 6 – One World WIC – 2:00 p.m., 3:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m.

“National Farmers' Market Week provides the perfect platform for us to hold cooking demonstrations that encourage program participants to properly use the fresh fruits and vegetables they receive,” said Foster. “This allows us to promote healthier lifestyles for WIC participants, while at the same time creating greater awareness of farmers' markets in Nebraska.”

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