

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Calling All Farmers Markets! Announcing the 2010 America's Favorite Farmers Markets Contest

Washington, D.C. - This summer, American Farmland Trust is organizing the second-annual contest for "America's Favorite Farmers Markets." This nationwide contest will give farmers market customers an opportunity to vote for their favorite markets and show support for their local food communities. The goal is to promote the connection between fresh and local food and the local farms and farmland that supply it. The 2010 America's Favorite Farmers Market contest is open for new farmers markets to register! This year American Farmland Trust is offering a host of new prizes for market managers and customers, more tools to get larger crowds out to support farmers markets, and will be making a bigger impact for local farms and food in America! Voting starts June 1st so get ready, get out and love your farmers market. Farmers Markets that are interested in participating can sign-up now at www.farmland.org/marketmanager.

When the 2010 America's Favorite Farmers Markets contest kicks off on June 1st, customers will be able to choose their favorite farmers markets online at www.farmland.org/vote. Voting will be open from June 1st until August 31st, when winners will be announced. One large, medium, small and boutique farmers market will win the title of America's Favorite Farmers Market for 2010. The four winning farmers markets will also each receive a prize worth over \$3,000 in promotional and marketing value from American Farmland Trust and its partners.

There are many new elements this year that are sure to make the contest better than ever for farmers markets and their patrons. New benefits for participating markets include access to the customizable, affordable and environmentally friendly printing services of, *igreenprint*, the official printing partner of the contest. As in last years contest, the winning markets will receive 500 No Farms No Food® totebags, along with other prizes including free printing services from *igreenprint* and free graphic design services from Virginia based design firm, *SQN Communications*. Additionally, there is a fourth new "boutique" category for markets that have 15 or fewer vendors.

Farmers markets provide a vital connection from town and city centers to surrounding local farms, providing fresh and healthy food and an experience that cannot be matched anywhere else. Farms near metropolitan areas produce 91% of the nation's market value of fruit, 78% of vegetables, and 67% of dairy products. Farmers markets have been surging in popularity in recent years – the 2008 U.S. Agricultural Census reports a 49% growth in direct sales from farms to consumers, representing \$1.2 billion that stayed in local communities. At the same time, however, every year America is losing more than one million acres of productive land to development – most of it around cities where there is

greatest demand for local food. The success of farmers markets is crucial to reversing this trend, ensuring that we will all have access to excellent food from local farms.

American Farmland Trust (AFT) is the leading national organization working with communities and individuals to protect the best farmland, to plan for the future of American agriculture, and to keep our environment healthy. The America's Favorite Farmers Contest is a part of AFT's No Farms No Food® campaign which is dedicated to bringing consumer support for farms up to the national level. The contest is a fun and engaging way for customers of farmers markets around the country to show their pride for their local farmers markets, and to directly support their local community.

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American Farmland Trust is a national nonprofit organization working with farmers and ranchers to protect the land, produce a healthier environment and build successful communities. As the nation's leading advocate for farm and ranch land conservation, AFT has ensured that more than a million acres of land stays bountiful and productive.

*AFT's national office is located in Washington, D.C. The phone number is 202-331-7300.
www.farmland.org*