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-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-

Pennsylvania Organic FarmFest 2013
August event has fun, food and education for everyone

Farmfest is a fun, free, community-building event that fosters knowledge of organic agriculture and sustainable living through educational opportunities, local foods, lively entertainment, and interactive family activities. In its 2012 inaugural year FarmFest drew over 2000 participants. Planning for FarmFest 2013, which will take place August 2 and 3 in Centre Hall, PA., is coming on strong, and there's still time for individuals and organizations to be a part of it.

Innovative speakers and agriculturists will provide keynotes and lead workshops on a variety of agricultural and sustainable living topics. This year, keynote speakers are Gary Zimmer and Jerry Brunetti.

Gary Zimmer is a farmer, agri-businessman, author and educator. Dedicated to improving farming through restoring and balancing soils, this passionate advocate for biological and organic farming has spoken to and worked with farmers across the U.S. and in Canada, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, China, and South Africa.

Gary has evaluated farming practices as a consultant, on his family's southwestern Wisconsin farm, and as president of Midwestern BioAg, a biological farming consulting and products company. The Zimmer family's organic farms utilize the ideas Gary has gleaned over a lifetime spent studying agriculture. Otter Creek Organic Farms include an organic dairy, pastured beef and a variety of crops on 1,000 acres.

Gary's keynote address will focus on raising the bar on land care and quality food production. Caring for the land and raising quality food go hand in hand—healthy, mineralized soils provide the nutrients that plants need to reach their potential for quality and quantity. It all starts with understanding that the soil is a living system, and that we can sustain and enhance that system. What production practices can improve food quality and flavor? What does it take to maintain healthy, pest-free, good tasting food? Biological and organic farmer Gary Zimmer will present practical tips and advice from both his own farming experiences and from farmers/farms he's observed around the world.

Jerry Brunetti is a highly demanded lecturer and speaker, both nationally and internationally, on topics that include soil fertility, animal nutrition and livestock health. As a result of healing himself of a life threatening episode of cancer utilizing holistic

modalities, he is often speaking to audiences about the relationship of “Food as Medicine” and “Farm as Pharmacy.” Jerry bridges natural and scientific understandings of plant and animal “ecosystems” and teaches a “connect-the-dots” systems approach to help farmers understand how the health of people and their communities are intimately linked to healthy land.

Jerry’s keynote talk goes beyond resilience, and asks us to consider how we can build the aggregate of ecology, economy & healthy families. Natural systems do not behave with a Neo-Darwinian model of “winner-take-all”, or as an example, monoculture being prevalent only because diversity is eradicated. Rather, healthy systems, be they organisms, entrepreneurial economies or ecological landscapes thrive only because they collaborate for the greater good, i.e. the community that comprises the organism. Such an organic arrangement is not only robust; it actually becomes self-strengthening and self-repairing over time, yielding authentic health and prosperity.

Topping off this year’s special presentation is an informative call to action from Brian Snyder and Susan Beal; Executive Director and Agricultural Science Advisor, respectively, with the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA). Join their discussion to learn the intricacies of the Food Safety Modernization Act and what you can do to protect diversified family farms and ensure that locally-grown foods remain viable. In addition, PASA staff and members will be on hand throughout the event as we kick off Centre County Local Foods Week, August 3rd to 10th. This week-long celebration features a number of opportunities for community members and visitors to get out and enjoy what our area farms and agrarian landscape have to offer. Events are scheduled throughout the week where participants can engage with the local food system by shopping at farmers markets and dining at restaurants that purchase from local farmers. Be sure to stop by the PASA booth to learn about other opportunities such as PASA’S Bike Fresh Bike Local Centre County (Sunday, August 4th) and PASA’S 8th Annual Farm Tour, scheduled 12:30PM-5PM, Saturday, August 10th.

Workshops for gardeners, farmers

Two educational tracks will also be offered for farmers and homeowners.

NCAT-ATTRA Agriculture Track:

Cultivating Tool and Equipment Efficiencies for Organic Crop Production, by Andy Pressman, a farmer and NCAT agricultural specialist

Planting for Profit in Small-scale Intensive Vegetable Systems, by Andy Pressman

High Tunnels and Hoop Houses to Extend the Growing Season, by Christopher Lent, NCAT agriculture program specialist working out of NCAT’s Pennsylvania office

Spring Creek Homesteading Sustainable Living Track:

Gardening for Pollinators and Native Bee Conservation, by Justin Wheeler, a Penn State Extension Master Gardener

Preserving Summer Fruits, by Josh Lambert, President of the Board of Directors of Spring Creek Homesteading Fund

Using Cover Crops in Your Backyard Garden, by Gene Bazan and Tania Slawecki (www.neo-terra.org)

Backyard Chickens by Nellie Bhattarai, a horticultural therapist and board member for the Harris Township Community Garden.

Also included at FarmFest are a children's area, where kids and families can visit the petting zoo, get wild with face painting, and participate in crafts. The kid's activities finish off with the 2nd Annual Kids Parade that winds its way throughout the fairgrounds.

Bring your running shoes on Saturday morning, where we offer the first FarmFest 5K Fun Run and Walk. Registration for the 5K is at 7:30 Saturday morning and is a sure-fire way to get warmed up for the day's events.

Visit the Homemade and Homegrown Market and Food Court with local artisans and food vendors, and an exhibit hall featuring organizations dedicated to local, organic, and sustainable food and cutting edge ecological technologies. Be sure to stop by the Silent Auction to bid on that special FarmFest gift!

Music is a great way to end a busy day, and this year FarmFest headliners are Ted McCloskey & the HiFis and Mountain Minstrelsy. Various bands will also be playing throughout the day and in the evenings on the Main Stage and the Homegrown Market Stage. Come see talents such as Gary Gyekis, Robot Mouth, Three Kitties, Hot Mamas, Rounders, and Vinegar Creek Constituency.

For more information visit the website at <http://farmfest.paorganic.org/>, or call Kathryn Tokarz at (814) 422-0251. We look forward to seeing you and your family there!

Pennsylvania Certified Organic is a non-profit organization that educates and certifies organic growers and handlers in Pennsylvania and the surrounding region. PCO certifies more than 600 farming and food production operations, including produce, field crops, herbs, wild crops, dairy products, poultry products, value-added products, livestock, mushrooms, maple, snack foods, coffee, tea, cosmetics, and more.

To learn more about Pennsylvania Certified Organic, or to apply for organic certification, call 814-422-0251 or visit our website at www.paorganic.org.

Leslie Zuck 1/28/14 11:42 AM

Comment [1]: Include links to Farm Fest.

To find out how your organization can be a part of 2014 PA Organic Farm Fest, a fun, free, community-building event that fosters knowledge of organic agriculture and sustainable living through educational opportunities, local foods, lively entertainment, and interactive family activities.

Leslie Zuck 1/28/14 11:42 AM

Comment [2]: Add the link and phone number in here somewhere. For Farm Fest