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WHOLE FOODS MARKET® INTRODUCES LOAN PROGRAM TO FIVE ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION FARMS AND FOOD ARTISANS

Low-interest, long term program enables family farms and cottage industry regional producers to expand business, ensure more consistent supply to local consumers

Boulder, CO—April 4, 2007 – Cold climate residents can rejoice, with the inception of Whole Foods Market’s Rocky Mountain Region Local Producer Loan Program. The world’s leading natural and organic foods market has launched a \$10 million annual loan program designed, says co-founder and CEO John Mackey, “to support local agriculture all over the United States. We are going to ‘walk our talk’ with financial assistance for family farmers, ranchers, and food artisans located in close proximity to our stores. We believe this assistance can make a significant difference in helping local sustainable agriculture grow and flourish across the nation, as well as allowing our customers to enjoy an expanded and more consistent supply of local delicacies, organic meat, and produce.”

Recipients of the Rocky Mountain Region loans include Boulder’s Full Circle Farm, an organic producer of vegetables including regional crops that have been phased out due to commercial development. Farmer Dave Asbury is currently working on reviving heirloom melons and lettuce varieties to feed local consumers, using his loan to build a produce-packing shed to provide more efficient packaging and distribution to area restaurants, farmer’s markets, and retailers such as Whole Foods.

Other beneficiaries include Ft. Collins-based MouCo Cheese Company, and Boulder’s award-winning Haystack Mountain Goat Dairy. MouCo’s family-owned and -operated dairy produces four cow’s milk cheeses, including their new Affinity, a Whole Foods Market exclusive made from antibiotic-free milk from nearby La Luna Dairy. The loan will go to purchase new equipment to increase production and selection. Haystack Mountain’s loan will enable owner Jim Schott to expand his herd of 120 goats to 800, construct a closed nursery for young kids in order to provide stricter measures of disease control, upgrade the water system to a “closed system” that will recycle all waste water, and offset costs for the dairy’s pending applications for organic certification, and certification with Humane Farm Animal Care, a national sustainable livestock management and welfare organization.

Other food artisans receiving loans include Littleton, Colorado’s Golden Toad Gourmet Sauces & Spice Blends, a family-owned, eco-conscious company who will be increasing their product line and developing new products for Whole Foods Market, and New

Mexico's Desert Blends of Taos, which creates bath and body products infused with indigenous and locally-grown organic botanicals. The five-person company, created by herbalist Toni Spies, will use the loan to purchase filling machines so they will no longer have to outsource product production. As a result, Desert Blends can be made and packaged on-site, reducing the use of fossil fuels and creating a truly local product.

Says Regional Rocky Mountain President Will Paradise, "The launch of this loan program in a region with such a short growing season will provide more financial stability, business growth, and an expanded customer base for local farmers and producers who are working hard to promote and sustain regional crops and a traditional agrarian way of life. We're happy we can help them accomplish this, and pass on their mission to our shoppers.

Interested producers and consumers can learn more about the Local Producer Loan Program at the Whole Foods Market website, <http://www.wholefoodsmarket.com/products/locallygrown/lplp/index.html>.

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