



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **New Farmers' Market Facilities Planned for Hartford Regional Market**

**Hartford, CT** – The Connecticut Department of Agriculture (DoAG) has exciting news for early-birds who thrive on locating outstanding CT Grown products at great prices while their neighbors are still fast asleep: DoAG is planning a new farmers' market facility for the site of the [Hartford Regional Market](#) (HRM).

The HRM is the largest perishable food distribution facility between Boston and New York. It is operated by DoAG as a self-sustaining, non-profit venture funded through operational fees. The Connecticut Marketing Authority oversees its operation and planning.

A seasonal farmers' market operates on the grounds of the Regional Market under a 170' x 50' open-air pavilion covering 28 stalls. This farmers' market attracts an average of 10,000 customers each year. The greatest activity occurs in spring, when flashlight-toting, wagon-pulling consumers turn out by the hundreds in the wee hours of the morning to purchase CT Grown trees, shrubs, perennials, and bedding plants. Later in the summer, fruits and vegetables are available along with an assortment of other CT Grown products such as cut flowers, honey, and maple syrup.

DoAG has been granted \$116,865 through the USDA [Agricultural Marketing Service](#)'s [Specialty Crop Block Grant Program](#) to design a larger, enclosed facility that would accommodate more specialty crop producers, products, and customers, and would allow this popular farmers' market to operate year-round. The number of stalls would be increased from 28 to 80, allowing up to 52 more farmers to participate on any given day.

The current facilities are open to the elements, restricting customer traffic and sales to a seasonal basis. CT Grown crops such as honey, maple syrup, and greenhouse plants, however, offer year-round availability. The new facility would allow the farmers' market to operate throughout the entire year, thus strengthening the state's specialty crop industry.

According to Bob Pellegrino, Executive Director of the HRM and Marketing Director for DoAG, the project includes design of indoor restrooms, increased parking, and improved traffic flow, along with the larger, protected enclosure.

"This exciting project will provide greater comfort for all who attend," Mr. Pellegrino said. "These improvements will serve to attract more customers and, as a result, enhance sales and competitiveness of CT Grown specialty crops at the farmers' market."

Consumer awareness of and demand for CT Grown products have been steadily increasing over the past two decades, while the popularity of farmers' markets has exploded. Seasonal farmers' markets in the state have increased from a total of 22 in 1986 to 114 in 2008.

Last year, approximately 360 farmers participated in the state's 114 seasonal farmers' markets. The proposed new facility would provide those farmers—and any of the state's other 4,500 farms—to participate in a larger, year-round farmers' market that has the potential to draw from most of Connecticut's 3.5 million residents (877,000 of which live right in Hartford County). The HRM's location, right off I-91 and just north of the state's center, makes it a reasonable drive from nearly anywhere in Connecticut.

The target date for construction completion is July 1, 2011.

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