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Photos available upon request.

Wisconsin Potato Growers, World Wildlife Fund & University of Wisconsin Collaboration Celebrate 10th Anniversary

Madison, WI – When Wisconsin Potato Growers, World Wildlife Fund and University of Wisconsin researchers come together, good things happen. This year, they’re coming together on November 8th to **celebrate a decade of collaboration, innovation and progress**. The result: a new way of growing potatoes – **Wisconsin Healthy Grown Potatoes™**.

“It began when I was asked to speak on a panel about our farming practices,” states Nick Somers, a Healthy Grown potato grower from Stevens Point, WI. “I spoke about how we keep records and track what we put on all our crops; only using what’s necessary to produce a healthy crop and protect the land.”

What Mr. Somers didn’t realize was that same panel was going to include one of the largest environmental organizations in the world, World Wildlife Fund. “We were on the panel to speak about how World Wildlife Fund wanted to accelerate adoption of environmentally friendly farming practices in order to protect our environment,” recalls Sarah Lynch from the Center for Conservation Innovation, World Wildlife Fund. “We discovered Wisconsin Potato Growers were already taking important measures to lessen their impact on the environment - **we had common goals and needed to work together.**”

It was from that chance meeting in early 1997 that the Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association, World Wildlife Fund and University of Wisconsin researchers set out to **develop strict, transparent, verifiable standards** that would lead to a **new way of farming**.

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“The grower’s have made significant progress over the past decade,” adds Deana Knuteson, PhD. and BioIPM Coordinator for the Collaboration. “Not only have they been instrumental in executing integrated pest management practices, to quantifiably reduce the impact their practices have on the land, but for 2006, they have helped develop and implement an eco-system restoration component – to protect Wisconsin’s native landscapes, such as prairie lands, and rare species like the Karner Blue Butterfly.

The unique partnership between production agriculture, environmental groups and researchers has caught the attention of others – notably the **International Crane Foundation**, a partner since the beginning, and the **Defenders of Wildlife**; both key in the development of the recently introduced eco-system restoration standards and measurement tools.

“We’re very proud of the monumental occasion,” Mike Carter, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association comments. “One of the great things about this project is the result of Wisconsin Healthy Grown Potatoes™. Only potatoes that have met ambitious environmental standards, and are third party certified, can be labeled as Healthy Grown. **We hope that through this brand, consumers will take the opportunity to support our growers’ efforts and buy Wisconsin Healthy Grown Potatoes™.**”

Eight to twelve growers have produced “Healthy Grown” certified potatoes over the past six years of certification. Meanwhile, since the beginning of the collaboration (in 1997) the entire Wisconsin Potato Industry has made progress towards increasing integrated pest management practices and reducing crop inputs – to protect the environment. In 2005, 4,000 acres were certified as “Wisconsin Healthy Grown Potatoes™” according to Protected Harvest, the group’s third party certification organization.

Wisconsin Healthy Grown Potatoes™ are a result of a collaboration with the Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association, World Wildlife Fund and University of Wisconsin. They are produced under strict, transparent and verifiable standards and are third-party certified by Protected Harvest. To learn more, or learn where Healthy Grown Potatoes are available, visit www.healthygrown.com.