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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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“CalFresh Accepted at Local Farms ”

By: Erin Derden-Little, Humboldt County Regional Food Systems Specialist, Community Alliance with Family Farmers

With help from the Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF), a growing number of farmers now accept CalFresh (formerly known as food stamps) directly at their farms. CalFresh recipients will be able to use their Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards to purchase Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares and/or shop for produce at farms stands at the following locations:

- DeepSeeded Community Farm, Arcata (CSA)
 - (707) 825-8033, www.arcatacsa.com
- Organic Matters Ranch, Eureka (CSA and Farm Stand)
 - (707) 407-3276
- Redwood Roots Farm in Bayside (CSA and Farm Stand):
 - (707) 826-0261, www.redwoodrootsfarm.com
- Shakefork Community Farm in Carlotta (CSA)
 - (707) 498-3546, www.shakeforkcommunityfarm.com

EBT is already welcomed at most of Humboldt County’s farmers markets but was not yet a payment option at local CSA farms or farm stands until now. CAFF learned last year that eligible direct market farmers could apply to receive a free wireless EBT machine (valued at \$1,000) and began reaching out to farms about the opportunity. CAFF also helped the farmers prepare and submit the required information to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the CA Department of Social Services.

Redwood Roots Farm in Bayside was the first to go through the process, and farmer Janet Czarnecki welcomed her first CalFresh customers into her U-Pick CSA this winter. The other three farms have been authorized by the USDA and should receive their machines and be up and running this spring.

In a typical CSA arrangement, customers make a commitment to a farm for a whole growing season and pay in advance of receiving any food. The farmer then provides each member with a weekly distribution of fresh produce. CalFresh recipients can use their benefits to participate in a CSA but federal regulations state that they can only pay for up to two weeks of food in advance.

This means that CSA farms must be willing to be flexible with payment systems if they are going to accept EBT. So far this has not been a concern.

According to Eddie Tanner, owner and farmer at DeepSeeded Community Farm, he had already been receiving inquiries about his CSA and whether he accepts CalFresh. “The option to pay with EBT is a great addition to my farm, and I value the opportunity to make it even easier for families to buy my produce, regardless of income level.”

This is great news for the farmers and for CalFresh recipients alike. By becoming EBT accessible, these farms are increasing low-income access to fresh fruits and vegetables in Humboldt County while also growing their customer base. Food For People, the county’s food bank, estimates that up to \$2.5 million in CalFresh benefits come into the county on a monthly basis.

“Food For People’s CalFresh outreach staff works hard to connect individuals and families to the nutritional benefits of CalFresh and help people learn new ways to stretch their food budget and prepare healthy meals. The work of community partners like CAFF is critical to make sure that EBT access points for healthy foods grow in number. We are very excited to let our clients know about these farms,” said Heidi McHugh, Community Education and Outreach Coordinator at Food For People.

CAFF expects to assist a few more farms through the application process this year and looks forward to expanding EBT access points to farms in Del Norte County as well as eastern and southern Humboldt. An updated list will be available on the Redwood Coast CAFF Facebook page as well as the Humboldt County CalFresh Task Force web site.

For more information about EBT access at local farms, please contact Erin Derden-Little at (707) 826-0233 or erin@caff.org.

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