



For Immediate Release

Contact: Kyla Garnett, 831-785-5936

kgarnett@naturipefarms.com

“First Pick” Marks the Start of the Michigan Blueberry Harvest Season

South Haven Mayor Bob Burr Visits Local Blueberry Farm

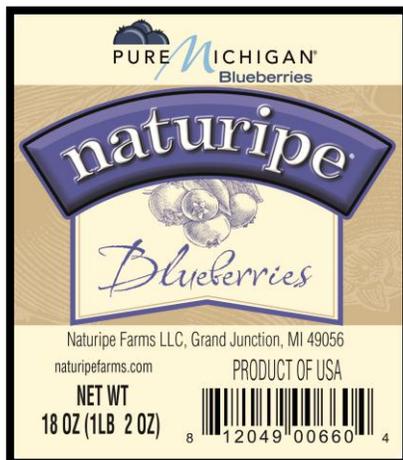
Grand Junction, MI – July 10, 2012 – The Michigan blueberry harvest is about to go into full swing and local growers are working long hours to ensure that the blueberries are picked, packed and distributed to retailers, restaurants and consumers throughout the country.

South Haven Mayor Bob Burr helped kick off the local harvest by visiting Michigan Blueberry Growers Association/MBG Marketing Board member Chris Hodgman and the Vice President of Product Management for Naturipe Farms Brian Bocock. The Michigan Blueberry Growers Association is a founding partner and part owner of Naturipe Farms, which manages the sales, marketing and distribution of the co-op’s blueberries.

“This is a crucial time of year for our family farmers and the communities,” stated Mayor Burr. “Our local and regional economies rely on a successful blueberry harvest season and it is a source of Michigan pride when we start to see our blueberries shipped throughout the country.”

Chris Hodgman gave Mayor Burr a tour of the 150 acre Hodgman family farm in Grand Junction, MI and discussed this year’s crop. The freezes late in the season impacted some of the plantings throughout the region and caused some fruit loss; however, overall most growers were able to protect their bushes with the use of irrigation water (which heats up the air and ground) to avoid extensive bloom damage.

“After freezing temperatures we had to contend with drought conditions in the region for the last few years,” said Chris Hodgman. “Luckily, the growers in the Michigan Blueberry Growers Association have invested in wells and irrigation systems that allow us to supply ample water for the growing crop. This year has had its share of challenges; however, the berries we are harvesting for the fresh market are ‘eating’ very well, and we remain optimistic about the balance to the season. We are seeing manageable volumes being harvested this week and the growers’ prices reflect strong market demand.”



To promote the health and great taste of blueberries, the Michigan Blueberry Growers Association and Naturipe Farms worked with the Michigan Ag Council to sponsor the Pure Michigan program. The program has developed a blueberry-specific logo that can be used by all Michigan blueberry growers.

“We will feature the Pure Michigan Blueberry logo on our labels so that the retailers in Michigan and the surrounding states can demonstrate their support of local blueberry growers,” said Brian Bocock. “In addition, we are getting requests from restaurant chains who also want to feature locally grown produce. It’s rewarding to get

the support locally, but also to see how well Michigan blueberries are recognized throughout the country and abroad.”

Michigan is the largest blueberry producing state, laying claim to over 100 million pounds of the health-boosting berries in 2010. The highbush blueberry is native to Michigan with 30 different varieties grown for fresh and frozen markets. Michigan Blueberry Growers Association/MBG Marketing represents a large portion of the approximately 600 family farms in Michigan that grow fresh blueberries.

Naturipe Farms LLC is a grower-owned producer and international marketer of healthy, best tasting, premium berries. With production primarily from multi generation family farms, located in the prime berry growing regions throughout North and South America. The diverse grower base ensures year-round availability of “locally grown” and “in-season global” conventional and organic berries. Naturipe Farms, formed in 2000, is a partnership between Hortifrut SA, MBG Marketing, Naturipe Berry Growers and Munger Farms. With sales and customer service offices located strategically throughout the USA – Salinas CA., Grand Junction MI., Estero FL., Boston MA., Wenatchee WA., Atlanta GA. For more information visit: www.naturipefarms.com or <https://www.facebook.com/Naturipe>

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