



For Immediate Release

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

South Haven Mayor Bob Burr Visits Local Blueberry Farm



Grand Junction, MI – July 17, 2013 – The Michigan blueberry harvest is in full swing and with one eye on the weather; 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 local blueberry grower Tom Bodtke, Bob Hawk, CEO / President of Michigan Blueberry Growers (*MBG Marketing*, a Grower-Owned Cooperative) and Brian Bocock, Vice President of Product Management for Naturipe Farms, LLC. MBG Marketing,

also known as The Blueberry People™, is a founding partner of Naturipe Farms, which manages the sales, marketing and distribution of the co-op’s blueberries.

“The weather earlier this year was excellent, with moderate temperatures in the spring that resulted in strong growth of our blueberry bushes” said Tom Bodtke. “The growing conditions were ideal during the flowering stage with an active bee population, resulting in a good crop set and large individual berries.” Tom went on to say, “The next few weeks will be the most critical as we enter the peak of the harvest. We would like to avoid the high temperatures and extended rainy days; we will have to depend on Mother Nature to help us through the end of the harvest.”

Mayor Burr received the ceremonial first picked fruit while conducting a tour of one of the fields owned by Tom Bodtke and his family. “I drive by these blueberry fields every day and it’s easy to forget that it takes the hard work of growers like Tom and their employees, all year long in order to have a successful harvest season. Seeing all of the harvest activity in and around the fields and in our communities reminds us how important blueberries are to our local economies.”

According to Brian Bocock, VP of Product Management for Naturipe Farms, “All of our operations are focused on moving this year’s crop from our Michigan family farms to the consumers table as quickly as possible. There is a tremendous amount of coordination between the growers, our sales teams, packaging suppliers, processing facilities, warehouses and fruit coolers, truckers and the various support functions to keep our local industry thriving.”

MBG Marketing, based in Grand Junction, has prepared their packing and shipping facilities throughout Michigan for this year’s expected large crop. Bob Hawk, the co-op’s CEO, said “In addition to our existing facilities we recently opened a new (IQF) frozen blueberry plant in Bloomingdale. This “state of the art” processing plant will allow us to provide a higher standard of premium frozen blueberries. The response

from the market has been very exciting and orders for this upcoming crop are already coming into the Naturipe sales office. Our Michigan grown frozen blueberries will be used by our domestic and international clients to make various baked goods, yogurts, cereals, ice creams, smoothies, fruit juices, concentrates, purees and bagged frozen blueberries sold to retailers and restaurants.”



MBG Marketing and Naturipe Farms continue to work with the Michigan Ag Council to sponsor the Pure Michigan program which promotes the health and great taste of blueberries. Michigan is the largest blueberry producing state, laying claim to over 100 million pounds of the health-boosting berries annually. The highbush blueberry is native to Michigan with 30 different varieties grown for fresh and frozen markets. Michigan Blueberry Growers / 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 fresh and value added 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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