

OHIO FRUIT GROWERS SOCIETY SAYS BERRY CROP AHEAD OF SCHEDULE

COLUMBUS, OHIO – MAY 24, 2001 – “Ohio’s berry crop is underway and running ahead of schedule,” announced John Wargowsky, executive director of the Ohio Fruit Growers Society. “Strawberry harvest began as early as late April on one farm in southern Ohio, is currently active in the middle part of Ohio and will start early June in northern Ohio,” Wargowsky added.

According to Ohio Agricultural Statistics Service, Ohio's strawberry growers produced an estimated 4.4 million pounds of strawberries in 2000, up 10 percent from 1999. Harvested acres in 2000 remained unchanged at 1,000 acres. Berry growers are projecting good yields and high quality berries for their 2001 crops.

According to Sandy Kuhn, Berry Coordinator for Ohio State University Extension, scientific studies are consistently reporting new information on the nutraceutical and phytochemical properties of berries. Nutraceutical is a term coined to describe the growing link between nutrition and health. New investigations into the role of phytochemicals have shown that eating foods high in elements such as antioxidants may provide greater health benefits. Phytochemicals, from the Greek root ‘phyto’ meaning plant, are naturally occurring compounds that plants use to fight off disease. When consumed by humans, in the form of food, research show that they offer protection from the diseases associated with aging such as heart disease, diabetes, cancer and hypertension and may forestall mental aging and perhaps fight off Alzheimer’s Disease.

Berries are cholesterol free, fat free, good sources of fiber and good to excellent sources of the antioxidant Vitamin C. More information about the nutritional and health benefits of berries, along with healthful berry recipes can be found at <www.aboutproduce.com>.

As the strawberry season closes, summer raspberries, blueberries and blackberries follow. Berry customers may purchase pre-picked berries or take advantage of pick-your-own operations. “Contact your local berry grower to verify when local crops are ready,” Wargowsky said. “Berry growers have taken great care in growing their delicious, healthful crops and look forward to returning and new customers,” Wargowsky concluded.

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For more information or assistance in contacting local growers contact: Sandy Kuhn, Ohio State University Centers at Piketon at 1-800-297-2072 or kuhn.37@osu.edu. Visit <www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~prec/hort/berry/strawberry.htm> for more information on berries