

FRESH PICKS ANNOUNCES LAUNCH OF THE FRESH PICKS FARMER ALLIANCE FOR THE 2018 SEASON: EXPANDING DELIVERY OF LOCAL ORGANIC FOODS TO WHOLESALE BUYERS AND CONSUMERS

FreshPicks.com/FarmerAlliance - Dedicated to Supporting Local and Organic Produce, Meat, and Dairy Farms

Chicago, IL – March 23, 2018 – Three new rural food hubs have been established in Wisconsin and Illinois as part of the new Fresh Picks Farmer Alliance, ***a growing alliance of farmers interested and ready to sell wholesale into the Chicagoland market.*** The three on-farm hubs at Springdale Farm, PrairiErth Farm and All Grass Farms are aggregating crops from surrounding farms to send to the Chicago area distribution hub at Irv & Shelly's Fresh Picks.

"We've been able to take the food hub concept to a whole new level by creating a network of connected hubs both rural and urban." says Irv Cernauskas, President of Irv & Shelly's Fresh Picks and Board Member of the Fresh Picks Farmer Alliance. The efforts of the Alliance are creating efficiencies in post-harvest handling, transportation, distribution and traceability to connect Chicago-area households with the best farms in the region.

The Farmer Alliance is a Food to Market Challenge Finalist (a project of Food: Land: Opportunity) resulting in a grant from the Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust as well as an award recipient of the USDA, receiving over \$500,000 to launch and grow The Alliance. ***"The funding support has been a critical component*** for the upgrading of cold storage and packing facilities at our on-farm hubs." says Cliff McConville of All Grass Farms, Board President of the Fresh Picks Farmer Alliance. The Alliance Board also includes the Angelic Organics Learning Center, bringing expertise in growing small farms.

Another key component to building a successful food hub network is maintaining ***strong relationships between farmer and buyer***, based on shared interests and common goals. Hans Bishop of PrairiErth Farm and Board Member of the Alliance believes that the success of his central Illinois aggregation hub is directly tied to "a commitment to local farms by Irv & Shelly's Fresh Picks with its urban hub, sales, marketing and distribution functions as well as a commitment by me and other participating local farmers to grow great products and maintain excellent post-harvest handling practices with the use of our new hub facilities."

The idea of providing security to farmers, is one of Irv's personal goals. With that in mind, Irv has been a tireless proponent of the "Food Hub" method of crop distribution. "Our Alliance Hub Program will help dozens of small, independent farms in places like southern Wisconsin and central Illinois get their produce to Chicago more efficiently and affordably, leaving them with more time to expand and grow more crops."

Consumers can expect to see Farmer Alliance products on restaurant menus, in grocers such as Dill Pickle, Sugar Beet and Plum Market and as part of the home delivery offerings at Irv and Shelly's Fresh Picks (<https://www.freshpicks.com>) for the 2018 season.

The Fresh Picks Farmer Alliance

Website: <https://www.freshpicks.com/farmeralliance>

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