



December 7, 2007

Media Contact: Veronica Resa 312-744-5648
veronicaresa@cityofchicago.org

Producers and Growers Wanted for Chicago Farmers Markets

Due to the success of the Chicago Farmers Markets system the City of Chicago is actively seeking to recruit more farmers to serve the citywide system. The **Chicago Farm Forum is scheduled for Tuesday, February 5, 2008 at the Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences.** The workshop is designed to answer questions and inform new and existing farmers and producers --how they too, can participate in Chicago's well attended program. The City of Chicago is looking for farmers from Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin and Illinois. Some of the products in demand include organic fruit and vegetables, artisan cheeses and specialty foods that are a staple in the diet of Hispanics and the African-American Community.

The United States, the bread basket to the world is literally facing a farmer shortage. The inflated price of land, the hard work and income earned makes selling the local family farm more appealing than farming. For the past several years, the Mayor's Office of Special Events has joined forces with Chicago's Green City Market to promote farming and "coming to market" through this workshop.

The Chicago Farm Forum is designed help find solutions to their challenges. This year's keynote speaker is Chris Bedford. Bedford is co-founder and President of the Sweetwater Local Foods Market – Michigan's first farmers market that exclusively sells locally grown fruits and vegetables raised in a manner that enhances biological diversity and builds soil health. The meats, eggs, and cheese sold are from animals raised humanely without antibiotics or hormones. His film, "What Will We Eat?" will be shown and tells the story of a citizen's movement to build a healthy, local food supply.

From 2001-2004, he was the National Campaign Coordinator for Sustainable Agricultural Programs of The Humane Society of the United States. From 1998 to 2003, he served on the national Sierra Club's Water Committee, helping to design and implement a nationwide campaign against the destruction caused by industrial animal production. He is a nationally known advocacy film maker and strategic campaign consultant winning dozens of awards. He is currently President of the Center for Economic Security, a non-profit located in Montague, Michigan that develops education and organizing campaigns to bring ecological intelligence to governmental and commercial decision making.

The workshop will also cover the following topics: *Selling at Market in Chicago; Diversification of Your Farm Products; Weed Control; Trucking and Storage Options; and Grant Writing and Growing Your Farm.*

Farming is not a job but rather a lifestyle. The days are long and the work is physical and it can be difficult to financially provide for a family without going into debt. Educating consumers on "why they should buy local" is also a slow and necessary process. **Registration is required. For more information or to register call 312-744-9493 or email: chicagofarmforager@yahoo.com**



The Farmer Workshop is presented by the Mayor's Office of Special Events and Chicago's Green City Market.