



Crossroads Resource Center

7415 Humboldt Ave. S. / Minneapolis, Minnesota 55423 / 612.869.8664
kmeter@crcworks.org www.crcworks.org

PRESS RELEASE

Immediate release — February 4, 2009

Contact: Ken Meter
Crossroads Resource Center
kmeter@crcworks.org
(612) 869-8664

Direct farm sales rising dramatically, new Agriculture Census data show

Direct sales of farm products increased dramatically from 2002 to 2007, reflecting rapidly growing consumer interest in “food with the farmer’s face on it.”

Data released today by the USDA Agricultural Census show that direct food sales — sold by farmers directly to household consumers — rose 49% to \$1.2 billion in 2007 from \$812 million in 2002. Once adjusted for inflation, the increase is slightly lower, 30%.

The number of farms selling direct also increased from 116,733 to 136,817 over the same period, a gain of 17%.

“In the current economic climate, people are rapidly turning to farmers they trust,” said Ken Meter of Crossroads Resource Center, who consults with community foods initiatives in 19 states. “When I am invited to make presentations, I often speak to crowds that are double the size that organizers planned.” Moreover, he added, the movement has matured since the late 1990s, by establishing a solid base of customer loyalty that means sales now increase more rapidly.

Direct sales of food make up a very small share of farm commodity sales, totaling only 0.4% of the \$300 billion of farm sales in 2007. Still, they serve as a key indicator of the emergence of the community foods movement. Direct sales have been strongest in New England, New York, California, the Pacific Northwest, and near major metro areas such as Denver, Minneapolis, Madison, Chicago, and Atlanta.

Key items sold directly include farmstand, farmers’ market, internet, or other sales of fruit, vegetables, meats, and many other foods. Direct sales data were first reported by USDA in 1997, when 110,630 farms sold \$592 million of foods directly [\$758 million of sales once adjusted for inflation].

— end —