



FRESHFARM

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FRESHFARM Markets Names

Mike Koch New Executive Director

Food business advocate and innovator takes the helm

WASHINGTON, DC (MAY 27, 2015) – The FRESHFARM Markets board of directors announced today the appointment of Mike Koch, a recognized change maker and local food innovator, as its new Executive Director. Mike will take the place of Co-Founders and Co-Executive Directors Ann Harvey Yonkers and Bernadine Prince, who announced their retirement earlier this year. Yonkers and Prince will remain involved in the organization to ensure a smooth transition. Koch will start in June. A comprehensive national search took place attracting an accomplished and diverse set of applicants from around the country. The applicants were thoroughly vetted through a multi-step selection process headed by a special selection committee made up of members of the board of directors.

“We are excited to launch the next era at FRESHFARM Markets with one of our own food producers at the helm,” remarked board of directors Chairperson Susan Buffone. “Mike brings a wealth of business experience and extensive knowledge of our markets and programs. His leadership will ensure that the legacy of our founders and the mission of FRESHFARM Markets will continue to contribute to the economic health of the Chesapeake Bay region bringing fresh local foods to a wide range of consumers.”

A local food advocate and award-winning entrepreneur with a distinguished track record of innovation, Koch has a depth and breadth of more than two decades of experience. As an agribusiness leader, he created a successful, highly touted artisanal cheese business grounded in unprecedented partnerships with farmers and has spearheaded advocacy and economic development efforts to support agriculture based businesses. He has also diplomatically lead change and growth for growing organizations and has demonstrated expertise in strategic marketing and communications, as well as fiscal acumen honed over two decades in leadership roles in the financial services industry.

Prior to being named as FRESHFARM Markets new Executive Director, Koch served in the Garrett County Maryland Government leading its community and economic development teams. While there he developed the infrastructure to support business growth and expansion including Maryland’s first and largest FoodHub: Garrett Growers Cooperative. He also oversaw securing more than \$3 million in grant funding for county infrastructure



projects. Under his leadership, his own highly regarded hand-made cheese business, FireFly Farms, has won over 75 national and international awards, including the United States Chamber of Commerce Dream Big Small Business Award. Additionally, his pioneering and progressive approach to building relationships with local milk producers created a compensation structure based on milk composition and quality, as opposed to the traditional volume-only model. He has been the president/owner of FireFly Farms since 2000. Additionally, he has participated in the National Leadership Institute at the University of Maryland and has served on numerous boards and leadership councils. He has been a respected member of the FRESHFARM Markets board of directors since 2010 and has served as treasurer and executive committee member.

“I am thrilled by the opportunity to continue to serve the FRESHFARM Markets mission as Executive Director, and am humbled to follow in the food steps of its founders and leaders, Ann Yonkers and Bernie Prince,” said Koch. “Their leadership has altered the landscape of agribusiness and local food in our region, creating the environment necessary for a thriving group of viable food businesses and brands. I am committed to continuing their work, committed to ensuring that our regional and national food systems are diverse and sustainable.”

ABOUT FRESHFARM MARKETS

FRESHFARM Markets is a non-profit organization whose mission is to provide economic opportunities for local food producers and entrepreneurs, ensuring a collaborative food distribution system to support them. They bring together vibrant communities of local-food consumers in the Chesapeake Bay watershed via 13 community-centered farmers markets that link their network of Farmers, Producers and Food Entrepreneurs to shoppers. These farmers markets include more than 150 agri-businesses from five states that collectively farm more than 20,000 acres. The markets attract over 470,000 shoppers annually in the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia. FRESHFARM Markets is the leading voice for farmers markets in the Chesapeake Bay region and a national leader in the local food movement.

For more information and high resolution images, please contact:

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