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NW FARMERS AND CHEFS MATCHED UP AT CONFERENCE Farmer-Chef Connection Brings Partners to Table to Promote Local Food Economy

PORTLAND, Ore. – *February 15, 2006* – Ecotrust’s Food and Farms Program, working to bridge the rural-urban gap by bringing together the people who grow food with those that cook and sell it, will partner with the Portland Chapter of Chefs Collaborative to host a daylong Farmer-Chef Connection conference in Canby, Ore. Acting as a matchmaker of sorts, the conference offers fast-paced “speed dating” networking sessions, where, instead of trading personal stats, local growers share with potential buyers their list of produce, meats, grains, herbs and other products. If both parties are amenable, a business match is made.

The Farmer-Chef Connection will be held at the Clackamas County Fairgrounds in Canby, Ore., on Monday, March 6, from 8:00 a.m. to 4 p.m. There is no cost to participants, yet space is limited, so register early at www.ecotrust.org/foodfarms/farmerchef.html

Now in its 6th year, the Farmer-Chef Connection set out with a goal of strengthening the local and seasonal food network. To meet that end the program has forged enduring working relationships between local buyers and growers.

Organizers expect a capacity crowd of 200 – ranchers, farmers, growers, as well as chefs, retailers and food buyers – all brought together by a shared passion for local food. The varied menu of networking, education and resource sharing provides ample chances to make matches that will outlast the growing season.

In addition to creating market connections, the program will feature keynote speaker, Joel Salatin, a Virginia farmer and author, who is a well-respected proponent of diversified farming, relationship marketing and grass-based livestock production systems. He has written several books that promote principles of sustainable agriculture, including *You Can Farm: The Entrepreneur’s Guide to Starting and Succeeding in a Farming Enterprise*, *Family Friendly Farming* and *Salad Bar Beef* (Polyface Publishing).

Attendees can also attend a variety of workshops, which include: Butchering: Breaking down a Lamb; Large Scale Purchasing; Cold Calls: How to get the most out of the Guide to Local and Sustainable Products.

About Ecotrust’s Food and Farms Program

One of five major program areas of the Portland, Ore.-based nonprofit Ecotrust, the Food and Farms Program is building a vision for a sustainable food system. A system which provides abundant, accessible food, supports the health of eaters and farm communities, promotes production practices that enhance the environment, strengthens regional food economies and develops a constituency of eaters and voters that supports these efforts by facilitating direct marketing opportunities and addressing market barriers for small farms.

About Chefs Collaborative

Chefs Collaborative is a national network of more than 1,000 members of the food community who promote sustainable cuisine by celebrating the joys of cooking local, seasonal and artisan foods. While celebrating the pleasures of food, Collaborative members recognize the impact of food in our lives, on the well-being of our communities, and on the integrity of the global environment. Founded in 1993, Chefs Collaborative is the only culinary organization that provides its members with tools for running economically healthy, sustainable food service businesses and making environmentally sound purchasing decisions.

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