



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 19, 2008

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:
Kris Naidl – (414) 276-6237 / (414) 614-6208
Tom Lochner – (715) 423-2070 / (715) 459-2343

WISCONSIN PROJECTED AS NATIONAL CRANBERRY CROP LEADER AS INDUSTRY SEEKS TO FURTHER EXPAND IN STATE

WISCONSIN'S EXTREME WINTER BENEFITS CROP, NOW COOPERATION FROM MOTHER NATURE IS KEY

Wisconsin's Niche Crop in High Demand Worldwide

WISCONSIN RAPIDS, Wis. – The Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association (WSCGA) today announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) projects that Wisconsin will yield 3.85 million barrels of cranberries during the 2008 fall harvest. That is approximately a 4 percent increase over Wisconsin's 2007 harvest of 3.71 million barrels. Based on the USDA 2008 projections and with cooperation from Mother Nature during the next four to six weeks, this crop will be Wisconsin's second largest cranberry crop ever and Wisconsin will be the top cranberry-producing state for the 14th consecutive year. The USDA projections come on the heels of a recently announced expansion effort by Wisconsin growers to add new cranberry acreage to help meet high demand for cranberries in the United States and worldwide.

“Wisconsin continues to lead the nation in cranberry crop production and if we have good weather for the remainder of the growing season, it will be a very good year,” said Tom Lochner, executive director of WSCGA. “A good crop from Wisconsin is crucial for the industry as the demand for cranberries is running high. We simply can't meet all the needs for the berry that are out there right now. A large 2008 crop from Wisconsin and other growing states, as well as our concerted efforts to expand the industry in Wisconsin now, are both key for the industry's future.”

The USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service announced crop projections for the other top cranberry producing states. Those projections are: Massachusetts at 1.9 million barrels, New Jersey at 500,000 barrels, Oregon at 490,000 barrels and Washington at 145,000 barrels. Cranberries are also being increasingly grown in Canada and Chile. The largest single cranberry crop was in Wisconsin in 2006 when more than 3.94 million barrels of cranberries were grown and harvested.

According to Lochner, the record breaking cold and snowy Wisconsin winter was beneficial to the 2008 cranberry crop as it provided significant ice on the vines to protect them. The ice blankets the vines and creates an insulated barrier to help protect them from harsh winter conditions. He added that the spring floods that so many Wisconsin communities had to endure, in most cases missed the cranberry growing areas of the state.

“Weather impacts agriculture in so many ways and Mother Nature was rough on many other crops,” said Lochner. “Fortunately, the cranberry industry came through the extreme Wisconsin weather conditions so far. We now hope for warm weather through August and cooling temperatures heading into fall to help the berries ripen and turn red for harvest.”

The high demand for cranberries also translates into higher returns for the growers in Wisconsin and elsewhere. According to the Cranberry Marketing Committee (CMC), total sales of cranberry products worldwide are up 36 percent over last year.

Such demand, an interest from state growers to invest in more acreage, and a desire by cranberry product companies to bring more manufacturing facilities to the state if it can produce more berries, led WSCGA to launch an expansion effort in July 2008. As part of that effort, the industry has been working closely with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, industry leaders, environmental groups and state leaders to properly and quickly expand the crop so the economic benefits can be brought to Wisconsin rather than go elsewhere.

Wisconsin’s cranberry industry currently has an annual economic impact of \$350 million and supports 7,200 jobs from its 18,000 acres of cranberries grown in 19 counties in central and northern Wisconsin. If the industry realizes its expansion goal of adding 5,000 more acres, it will help bring more than 1,115 new jobs to the state and an additional \$75 million of economic activity each year. Lochner added that those figures do not even include the manufacturing jobs and income that would follow.

“There is no question new cranberry acreage will be planted in the U.S., Canada or elsewhere and it’s that fruit that drives the additional investment in and jobs at the receiving, processing and manufacturing facilities,” said Ed Sabey, board president of WSCGA.

According to the Cranberry Marketing Committee, the growing demand for cranberries is attributed to several efforts including an aggressive international marketing effort that began in 1999 and has increased cranberry exports to approximately 27 percent of the crop. Other factors contributing to the increased demand include research that demonstrates the cranberry’s health benefits and disease fighting and prevention abilities, and creativity by manufacturers to introduce cranberries and sweetened dried cranberries into products. There are currently more than 1,000 cranberry products on the market.

Wisconsin’s annual cranberry harvest will begin in late September or early October. Cranberries have been harvested in Wisconsin since the 1830s, even before Wisconsin was a state.

WSCGA was founded in 1887 and is committed to developing and implementing programs that will assist growers in doing a better job of growing cranberries and strengthen the public support for the industry in Wisconsin. For more information, visit www.wiscran.org. Also, for more information on the domestic and international marketing of cranberries visit, www.uscranberries.com and health and research information on cranberries is available at www.cranberryinstitute.org.

###

EDITOR’S NOTE: For high-resolution photos of the cranberry harvest, vines or berries, or cranberry products, please contact knaidl@zeppos.com or call 414-276-6237.