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Media contact: Amy Brown

amyb@seed-pr.com

503.341.3795

FOODHUB MEMBERSHIP FEE WAIVED THROUGH MAY 1st

All Northwest Food Producers and Buyers Offered Risk-Free Opportunity to Join Online Marketplace and Benefit from the Demand for Local Food

PORTLAND, Ore. – *February 2, 2011* – FoodHub, the online marketplace where Northwest wholesale food buyers and sellers connect and conduct business, turns one-years-old today. Recognizing that this dynamic platform’s ability to catalyze and facilitate connections rests on critical mass and active engagement among members, [Ecotrust](#), the creator of [FoodHub](#), is waiving the \$100 annual membership now through May 1st with an aim to rapidly build its active user base.

“During our first year we recruited nearly 800 users, and through their experience and feedback we’ve refined and improved the FoodHub business model and service offerings,” said Deborah Kane, vice president of Ecotrust’s Food and Farms program. “Most importantly, we learned that the annual registration fee was a barrier. By testing a three-month ‘free membership’ we hope to add hundreds, if not thousands, of new farmers, chefs, ranchers, restaurateurs, fishers, foodservice directors, and professional food buyers and sellers of all kinds to our current database.”

A survey of FoodHub users conducted by Ecotrust in the fall of 2010 showed that 83 percent of the buyers are extremely committed to buying locally. Eighty-five percent stated that they joined FoodHub to source more products locally and have become aware of local suppliers they did not know existed before using FoodHub. According to the same survey, sellers who made connections to new buyers estimated the total dollar value generated from new FoodHub connections to be as much as \$10,000.

At this time of year, food buyers are actively soliciting interest in forward contracts with growers. Farmers who take advantage of the free FoodHub membership offer and become active users can find buyers for their crop before their seeds go into the ground. Chefs and grocers lining up suppliers for seasonal menus and specials can build relationships with farmers and food processors.

Also launching today is a third category of FoodHub membership. The existing Buyer and Seller membership categories will be joined by an Associate category, which will accommodate the vast community of practitioners, government agencies and service providers who are integral to the regional food economy. The new Associate membership category, also free, will welcome all Northwest commodity commissions, trade associations, seed producers, farmers markets, extension offices, nonprofits and service suppliers.

“As an Associate member, farmers market managers can use FoodHub to recruit vendors for this year’s market season, an agricultural irrigation company can introduce its services to a targeted list of

farmers and ranchers, and a mobile bottler can promote its rates and equipment to small Northwest wineries,” said Kane. “This new membership category demonstrates how FoodHub is becoming a go-to resource for everyone in the Northwest food community, from seed to plate. Now is the time to join.”

More Features and Services Added to FoodHub throughout 2011

Later this year, the free membership drive will be followed with the introduction of new customized search and find features and the enhancement of the site as a marketing platform. For example, upgraded membership levels will offer added benefits including the ability to enhance a profile page with photos and video; and preferential searches can be used to optimize a seller’s profile based on specific search criteria. There will also be more opportunities for FoodHub members to connect in person, and a program for members interested in advertising on the site.

About Ecotrust’s Food & Farms Program

FoodHub (www.food-hub.org) is an Ecotrust project made possible by the generous support and contributions of many. Ecotrust’s mission is to inspire fresh thinking that creates social equity, economic opportunity, and environmental well-being. With regard to our Food & Farms program, we improve public understanding of agriculture and the challenges it faces and increase the market share of locally grown, processed, and manufactured foods. Whether by introducing a farmer to a chef or a food processor to an institutional buyer, Ecotrust is a trusted “benevolent broker” that has been making connections between food buyers and sellers in the Pacific Northwest for more than a decade. Learn more at ecotrust.org.

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