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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Local Branding Keeps Food Dollars Here
Appalachian Grown Sales Exceed 10 Million in 2007

ASHEVILLE, NC (February 11, 2008) – Consumers seeking local meat, honey, or produce can look for the Appalachian Grown™ logo in stores like Poppies Gourmet Market in Brevard. The logo was developed by Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP) in 2006 to identify products grown on family farms within a 100 mile radius of Asheville, North Carolina.

For 2007, the retail value of farm goods identified as Appalachian Grown was over \$10 million. Charlie Jackson, Executive Director of ASAP, believes that this is just the beginning, “our research shows that potential sales could be many times the current amount.” Jackson points to the *Growing Local* report released last year by ASAP that found very high demand for locally grown food in Western North Carolina. “Money spent on local food is farmland preservation. If farmers have good markets they will continue farming.”

There are currently 140 farms and 80 retail partners certified as Appalachian Grown and eligible to use the logo. Certified retail partners include Poppies Gourmet Market, Earth Fare, Greenlife, Ingles, the French Broad Food Coop, along with locally-owned restaurants and other food businesses. ASAP has also worked closely with Mountain Food Products, a company distributing fresh produce to over 200 restaurants, to create a year-round local availability list with Appalachian Grown produce clearly identified. “We’ve sold more local food this year than ever before” says owner Ron Ainspan. “ASAP and Appalachian Grown have been a big part of that.”

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Consumers can learn more about local farmers from the farmer profile posters in the produce and meat departments of retail partners. Brittany Whitmire, a certified Appalachian Grown farmer featured at Poppies, thinks the logo and profiles have made a difference. “The Appalachian Grown marketing materials help to tell our story,” she says. “I think customers are seeking a connection to the farmers who grow their food.”

Thanks to continued funding from the North Carolina Golden LEAF Fund, the local branding effort looks to expand in the coming year. Sunburst Trout, Madison Farms, and Farside Farms are just a few of the many farms that will be using the logo directly on their packaging in 2008.

“People want local food,” notes Jackson. “We are working hard to make sure that the logo is on the package so that consumers can be sure they are getting food that comes from local farms.”

To learn more about the Appalachian Grown logo or how your farm can become certified, contact ASAP at (828) 236-1282 or visit www.asapconnections.org.

ABOUT THE APPALACHIAN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE PROJECT

ASAP is strengthening the economy and preserving mountain heritage by creating and expanding a food system that is locally owned and controlled in Western North Carolina and the Southern Appalachians. The loss of Appalachian family farms threatens rural heritage, weakens the regional economy, and prevents development of a sustainable local food system.

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