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CONTACT PERSON: Thomas Roufos, MRPC, [troufos@mrpc.org](mailto:troufos@mrpc.org) (978) 345-7376 x318; Maleah Gustafson, Advisory Board Member, Central Mass Grown, [maleah@gusweb.com](mailto:maleah@gusweb.com), (740-624-0846)

FOR INTERVIEW: Trish Settles (Principal Planner), CMRPC, [tsettles@cmrpc.org](mailto:tsettles@cmrpc.org) (508) 459-3320

### **Central Mass Grown Launch + Directory**

*Now Enrolling Founding Members Until Nov. 15*

*Standard Membership from Nov. 16*

Worcester, MA – Central Mass Grown is now accepting memberships from farms, producers, nurseries, retail establishments, restaurants, organizations, and individuals for our inaugural year Central Mass Grown Farm Product Directory. Membership enrollments received by November 15 will be designated as Founding Members, and receive special discounts on membership rates.

Working with Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) and Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC), Central Mass Grown is developing a database of farmers, local produce markets, restaurants, and other institutional consumers, to promote and build awareness of the local providers and establishments that choose to support them through publication of a print and website directory in April 2015.

Memberships received by December 31 will be included in the Central Mass Grown Farm Product Directory, and those received by November 15, 2014 will be designated as Founding Members. For more information and to enroll as a member, please visit our website at [www.centralmassgrown.org](http://www.centralmassgrown.org), where you will be able to fill in an enrollment form. We accept checks at this time, and in the near future will be able to accept both PayPal and major credit cards.

As part of the initiative, Central Mass Grown is also gathering information from farmers, retailers and consumers in the region. There is currently a farm survey and a retail/consumer survey available on the website. The farm survey seeks to better understand the produce that is grown in the area, as well as the challenges that are faced by farmers trying to get their produce to various consumer outlets. The retail/consumer survey is interested in the movement of various food items through the population, as well as the needs of consumers and institutions. Please take a moment to visit the website and [complete a survey](#) if you have not already.

This new organization **Central Mass Grown: Growing the Core of the Commonwealth** has emerged after several month of collaborative community discussion about the need to create a “Buy Local” organization in Central Massachusetts.

Regional Buy Local Groups connect farmers to their surrounding communities and vice versa. Eight (8) Buy Local groups currently exist to promote the purchase of local agricultural products across the state. However, until now, there was not a Buy Local organization focused on Central Mass. Our organization is focused on the mission to promote the purchase of local agricultural products and to foster education about the benefits to health, community, economy, and environment. Specifically:

1. To promote the sale and purchase of agricultural products grown in Central Massachusetts to local markets, restaurants, retailers, aggregator, distributors, general consumers and others;
2. To support the advancement of knowledge and understanding of farms and farming and their benefits and relationship to the environmental, economic, nutritional and social well-being of persons within central Massachusetts and surrounding areas; and
3. To educate farmers, consumers, and the general public on issues about and related to farming.

In 2012, Worcester County ranked 6<sup>th</sup> among counties nationwide in direct to market food sales. Locally grown food is the Country’s fastest growing food sector; sales of local food increased by ten percent in 2013, compared to a five percent increase in total food sales. Agriculture is a major component of the regional economy, and building this connection between consumer and producer is essential to continuing to meet the growing demand for locally produced and sustainably grown products.

*Central Mass Grown, Inc. is in the process of applying for non-profit status, and shall be operated exclusively for educational and charitable purposes within the meaning of Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, or the corresponding section of any future Federal tax code.*

Please visit our website at [www.centralmassgrown.org](http://www.centralmassgrown.org) for news, events, and upcoming meetings. Members of the community are invited to attend!

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