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-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-

**First Annual Pennsylvania Organic FarmFest a Huge Success!**

Hot and humid weather was no deterrent for over 2000 visitors who attended the two-day First Annual Pennsylvania Organic FarmFest on August 3rd and 4th at the Centre County Grange Fair Grounds in Centre Hall. The event was planned and sponsored by Pennsylvania Certified Organic, a non-profit, USDA-accredited organic certifying agency. Local food vendors, exhibitors, and educational workshops on organic farming and gardening highlighted the festival, and a full slate of talented bands provided entertainment in the afternoon to well into each evening.

“There was good energy here,” notes Lee Rinehart, Pennsylvania Certified Organic’s Director of Education. “Vendors and exhibitors were busy and many asked to be a part of next year’s FarmFest, and that is a huge measure of success, especially for a first year event.” Educational workshops were presented by Rodale Institute researchers, Penn State agriculture researchers, and various agriculture organizations and businesses including; the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA), Women in Agriculture Network (WAgN), and Nature’s Best Organic Feeds. Participants, who included farmers, landowners, and backyard gardeners, engaged in interactive workshops on weed identification, use of cover crops, soil health, integrated pest management, as well as hands-on sessions on building cold frames and green houses, and preserving the harvest.

Many partners and sponsors collaborated with PCO to make this year’s FarmFest a success. Organic Unlimited, PASA, Lady Moon Farms, Rodale Institute, Organic Valley, Purdue Agribusiness, the National Center for Appropriate Technology, Horizon Organic, Pennsylvania Natural Resources and Conservation Services (NRCS), and many more provided excellent support and showcased their organizations in a full and often bustling exhibit hall. Despite the heat, visitors toured the hall and afterward, lounged under the trees in the Homegrown Café, where local food businesses provided organic pulled pork, fresh fudge, and many other delightful foods raised here in central PA.

The Organic Kids Triangle was resplendent with children of all ages, visiting the petting zoo or face-painting booth, singing along to the children’s concert, or crafting fruit and veggie crowns. These activities culminated in an energetic kids parade that toured the entire grounds, lending to the family atmosphere and setting the stage for the afternoon festivities.

A wonderful capstone to the daily activities was provided by several local, and not so local musical artists. From the bandstand, an eclectic combination of Appalachian rural music, encompassing fiddle, bass, banjo, and great sounds enchanted the audience. Grace Askew, Chicken Tractor Deluxe, Mountain Minstrelsy, Tyne & the Fastlyne, Pure Cane Sugar, Hoots & Hellmouth, and Cabinet provided just the right kind of atmosphere to top off the FarmFest.

This year’s FarmFest lived up to its high expectations, where the community could come together to learn and celebrate the bounty and beauty of sustainable lifestyles that promote harmony with the good earth. Ag businesses and organizations are encouraged to contact PCO at (814) 422-0251 or farmfest@paorganic.org for information on next year’s FarmFest, including sponsorship and exhibiting opportunities.

Pennsylvania Certified Organic is a non-profit organization that educates and certifies organic growers and handlers in Pennsylvania and the surrounding region. PCO certifies more than 500 farming and food production operations, including produce, field crops, herbs, wild crops, dairy products, poultry products, value-added products, livestock, mushrooms, maple, snack foods, coffee, tea, cosmetics, and more.

To learn more about PCO or to apply for organic certification, call 814-422-0251 or visit our website at www.paorganic.org.

Photo 1: Entertainment for children of all ages.

Photo 2: Exhibitors engaged visitors both days of 2012 FarmFest.

Photo 3: The Kids Parade was a highlight of Saturday’s activities.