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East Coast Suppliers Finding Market for Broccoli Economic and Production Issues Create Opportunity

Elizabethtown, Penn; March 21, 2011 – For years, California has held the dominant position as the nation's broccoli producer, but the influence of locally grown and the high cost of fuel have East Coast producers hoping to get a piece of the action.

In consumer surveys, Fresh Trends 2011 recently reported broccoli as a top 10 vegetable with nearly 60% of all consumers purchasing broccoli – with the heaviest users being reported in the Northeast states.

To meet these consumption demands, recent efforts by public universities, private breeding companies and seed distributors have placed renewed emphasis on developing broccoli varieties that meet the unique growing conditions of East Coast states. What's emerging is a handful of new broccoli varieties that are creating opportunities for year round production.

SEEDWAY®, a leading vegetable seed distributor in the Northeast reports that they have experienced double digit increases in seed distribution during the last few years due to production increases. Dean Cotton, a Product Manager for SEEDWAY remarked, "The production interest in broccoli is as high as its been in 15 years. Growers are looking for not only good varieties, but sound information. " Cotton continued, "We have five seed trials throughout the East Coast planned during the upcoming growing seasons. Our goal is to help producers identify appropriate varieties for their growing region and season to assist them in planning for a year-round market."

The recent research and production efforts also extend to a Cornell University research project that is part of a collaborative effort to develop a sustainable market for east coast broccoli, funded by a \$3.2 million USDA grant and an additional \$1.7 million in matching private contributions. The project includes a collection of seven universities and 11 companies working together under the leadership of Cornell University. The goal of the project is to continue to develop new broccoli varieties that are more tolerant to high heat and high humidity as well as mildew and late season flowering.

Cotton concluded, "In just the last year, I've seen significant new production in FL and GA. I believe we will see the East Coast broccoli industry triple in the next five years."