



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 6, 2008

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**WISCONSIN CRANBERRY INDUSTRY HOSTS INTERNATIONAL TOUR
TO HELP INCREASE EXPORTS**

Cranberry marshes and facilities are training ground for Japanese marketers

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Export opportunity grows because of dried cranberries

WISCONSIN RAPIDS, WIS. – The Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association (WSCGA) today kicked off a two-day educational and experiential tour of Wisconsin’s cranberry industry for Japanese marketers and U.S. Cranberry Marketing Committee (CMC) representatives. The tour, in central Wisconsin, will highlight Wisconsin’s largest fruit crop, its history and harvesting processes to help marketers educate the Japanese about the cranberry, its health benefits and many product uses, and thus increase exports to the country.

“This is a great opportunity for Wisconsin to help tell Japan about the rich history and many health benefits of the cranberry in order to help increase demand for the fruit,” said Tom Lochner, executive director of WSCGA. “Today, there are approximately 200 cranberry products in the Japanese marketplace, but the opportunity is much greater.”

Japan-based marketing experts Izumi Amano and Yukiko Yasunari were recently hired by the CMC to reach Japanese consumers with important facts about cranberries, the many uses, recipes and products of cranberries, and to increase the country’s demand for the American favorite. Amano and Yasunari have successfully conducted similar export efforts for the USA poultry, egg, and potato industries.

“Health and wellness is paramount to the Japanese consumer and the cranberry has a great health story to tell,” said Dave Farrimond, executive director of the CMC. “Japan’s marketplace is fast-paced with constant consumer demand for new products and especially those with health and beauty benefits. Because of that, we want to step up efforts to communicate about the value of cranberries in products.”

During their Wisconsin tour, Izumi and Yukiko will hear from Wisconsin cranberry growers, workers and industry experts, as well as try harvesting, tour cranberry receiving and manufacturing facilities and sample an array of domestic cranberry products. They also will educate Wisconsin growers on the Japanese consumer and demonstrate the type of cranberry products currently popular in Japan.

Since 1999, the CMC has been instrumental in seeking to increase cranberry exports with a focus on Japan, Germany, France, Europe, Australia, South Korea, and Mexico. Those efforts have increased total exports of the fruit to represent approximately 27 percent of the U.S. cranberry crop and based on the most recent CMC report, worldwide demand for cranberries has increased 30 percent by value over last year. In 2007, approximately 1.6 million pounds of cranberries were exported to Japan.

“We want more and more consumers worldwide to learn about and try cranberries,” said Farrimond. “Right now the cranberry is really unknown in many countries, but with dried cranberries gaining popularity as an export ingredient, the world is the cranberry’s test kitchen.”

Following the October 6-7 Wisconsin tour, the group will tour Massachusetts cranberry marshes and facilities before returning to Japan. Massachusetts typically ranks second, behind Wisconsin, in the size of its cranberry harvest.

“As world demand for the fruit grows, so can and will its positive impact on Wisconsin,” said Lochner. “Worldwide consumer demand is at an all-time high for cranberries and as the nation’s leader in cranberry production, Wisconsin, its economy and workforce are the benefactors.”

WSCGA launched a cranberry marsh expansion effort in July 2008 to grow an additional 1.5 million barrels of cranberries in Wisconsin to help keep up with market demand. The State of Wisconsin, federal regulators, environmental groups and the cranberry industry have been working over the past several months to determine a marsh expansion permit review process to aid in quickly realizing the expansion opportunity. Based on a 2008 study by University of Wisconsin economists, such an expansion would result in approximately 1,115 new jobs and an annual increase of \$75 million to the state’s economy, in addition to a manufacturing boost that would follow. Evident of that growth potential, in late September 2008, Ocean Spray opened its expanded dried cranberries facility in Wisconsin Rapids, Wis., making it the largest such cranberry manufacturing facility in the country. Other cranberry companies also manufacture dried cranberries and other cranberry products like juice and sauce in Wisconsin and are considering new facilities if Wisconsin’s cranberry supply can grow.

Currently cranberries are grown by more than 250 state growers, on 18,000 acres in 19 Wisconsin counties. The 2008 cranberry crop is projected to be approximately 3.85 million barrels, according to USDA National Agricultural Statistical Services. The 2008 cranberry harvest began in late September and will conclude in late October on most marshes. For more information on Wisconsin cranberries and WSCGA, visit www.wiscran.org. For more information on the domestic and international marketing of cranberries visit, www.uscranberries.com. Health and research information on cranberries is available at www.cranberryinstitute.org.

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