

HONEYBEAR COMMUNICATIONS

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Local Apple Grower Launches Program to Protect Minnesota Orchards, Farmers and Fruit

Honeybear Brands Unveils TruEarth™



Elgin, Minnesota, July 14, 2015 – Thanks to the climate and resident insects that call Minnesota home, it is not possible to grow commercially viable organic apples in local orchards. But one Minnesota apple grower and varietal developer, Honeybear Brands, has come up with the next best thing. Called TruEarth™, the program promises consumers' healthy apples and the peace of mind that their purchase is helping to protect local orchards and farmers' livelihoods.

“We started as a local orchard in the 1970s and even though we’ve grown to become a major apple variety developer, we’re still a local company,” says Fred Wescott. “We eat the same fruit our growers grow and our retailers sell to their customers. So every improvement in the way we grow our produce really hits home. TruEarth is the latest step in our ongoing quest to do best by the land, our growers and apple lovers everywhere.”

Created in conjunction with the Integrated Pest Management Institute (IPM) of North America, TruEarth is a thoughtful and conscious approach to farming that is good for the land, good for consumers, and enables local apple growers to offer a higher quality of fruit from their orchards and so make a more consistent living. While not organic, the

TruEarth growing process encompasses:

- Apples Free of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO)
- Comprehensive monitoring protocols to identify pests and prescribe specific treatment
- Prohibition of high toxicity pesticides
- Use of clean water by reducing soil erosion
- Energy conservation
- Water conservation in orchards and the packing facilities
- Ongoing recycling of all waste
- Protection of biodiversity of local insects and wildlife

The TruEarth program is focused on helping all Honeybear growers farm as much within nature and natural processes as possible while still employing modern technologies to solve on-farm problems and produce a commercially viable crop. Protocols assist growers in their efforts to develop balanced nutrient profile, improve soil fertility, and to develop improved orchard conditions to encourage and sustain the beneficial insects used as a natural pest control strategy.

Participating TruEarth growers undergo a comprehensive farming assessment to determine areas of potential improvement and to incorporate non-chemical growing techniques to manage pests where and when possible. In addition, land management practices are reviewed and enhanced to protect pollinators and wildlife. Annual audits are conducted as a means to maintain the program and also share new advances made in technology to monitor orchards and share sustainable farming practices learned from other TruEarth certified growers.

TruEarth protocols are also currently helping protect the natural habitat of the threatened honeybee. Honeybear growers work to mitigate the use of pesticides that are toxic to the bee population before or during bloom. Growers are monitoring and surveying bee populations for abundance and diversity in an ongoing effort to create best practices and habitat diversification for bee protection.

For more information about TruEarth visit www.truearth.net

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About TruEarth (www.truearth.com)

TruEarth is a conscious, thoughtful way of farming for the good of the land, grower communities and consumers. Developed in conjunction with the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Institute of North America, it is a set of protocols and best practices that hold growers to the highest standards and guarantee peace of mind to retailers and consumers that all Honeybear fruit carrying the TruEarth label has been grown responsibly.

About Honeybear Brands (www.honeybearbrands.com)

Honeybear Marketing is the marketing arm for, and a wholly owned subsidiary of Wescott Agri Products. Honeybear is a leading grower and developer of premium apple varieties. The company started as Wescott Agri Products, a family run apple orchard in the early 1970s. From that early start several generations ago, today Honeybear still employs the same hands-on, personal attention to each and every apple variety produced through the Honeybear Apple Varietal Development Program. Honeybear is

the leading provider of Honeycrisp apples in the Northwest region and offers complete domestic and global apply supply integration from varietal development to growing, packing, shipping and retailer support.