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Sustainable Industries

Washington Tilth sells local organic

by Charles Redell - 8.28.09

SEATTLE

This summer's annual Tilth Producers of Washington campaign to convince consumers to purchase local, organic produce is doing well despite the economy, says its president, Diane Dempster. The campaign usually costs between \$30,000 and \$60,000 to reach about 250,000 people. Tilth's spending is on the lower end this year but sales are not down, she says.

"Interest in health and well-being is as strong as ever, even if choices might have changed," she says. For example, consumers are eating out less which means they are spending more on groceries. Local, organic producers want consumers to know their products offer more value for the dollar, Dempster says.

The Seattle-based organization says consumers' support of local, organic products is vital for its farmers. California farmers can grow almost year round while in Washington, one crop per plot is the norm. Farmers' annual livelihoods are based on four months of income. "If everyone bought only on price, we would be hard pressed to have local agriculture," Dempster says.

Even during the recession, she says she thinks consumers are deeply interested in where their food comes from. By coupling this interest with information about the high nutritional content of local—and thus fresher—organic foods, Tilth is holding market share for its local organic farmers, according to Dempster.

"It's harder this year to get new people interested in organic than it has been in the past," she says. "Those interested in eating healthy haven't changed that."



Studies show organically grown foods have more nutrients, including vitamin C, and contain higher concentrations of disease fighting antioxidants.



Good news brought to you by the 500 members of Tilth Producers of Washington who are committed to ecologically sound and socially equitable farming practices.

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