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STATE OF ALABAMA  
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## **“BUY FRESH, BUY LOCAL” CONNECTS FARMERS AND CONSUMERS**

The sign that made taste buds tingle gathered a huge following its first year in the state, and producers are hoping Alabama’s “Buy Fresh, Buy Local” campaign will harvest even more fans this year - translating into more profits for farmers.

Reminiscent of an antique seed packet, the “Buy Fresh, Buy Local” logo guarantees Alabama consumers are getting the freshest fruits and vegetables possible, and nothing tastes better than fresh. “Buy Fresh, Buy Local” is a joint venture of the Alabama Farmers Market Authority and Alabama Farmers Federation and this year will cover the entire state.

The program’s website, [BuyLocalAlabama.com](http://BuyLocalAlabama.com), has been a tremendous success as well, according to State Farmers Market Authority Administrator Don Wambles. It helps connect consumers with farmers markets and roadside stands in their area, he said.

“Farms that participate in the ‘Buy Fresh, Buy Local’ campaign through the Alabama Farmers Market Authority range in size from an acre to several hundred acres,” Wambles said. “But they all have one thing in common – they’re owned by Alabama farmers.”

Brian Hardin, director of the Alabama Farmers Federation’s Horticulture Division, said “Buy Fresh, Buy Local” gave the state’s fruit and vegetable industry a noticeable boost last year. He believes the trend will increase this year.

“Farmers were so excited to see a wonderful campaign that they could connect with,” Hardin said. “Consumers loved it, too. It reminds them of where their food comes from, and it gives them an opportunity, in many cases, to meet and talk with the person who actually grew the food they’re buying.”

Mobile County farmer Art Sessions grows a variety of fruits and vegetables. He said “Buy Fresh, Buy Local” was a great success in his area of the state and received a lot of positive reaction from farmers, market managers and customers.

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On the other end of the state, Wes Isom grows peaches, apples and vegetables on his farm in Limestone County near Athens. He has a “Buy Fresh, Buy Local” sign posted in his roadside stand at Isom’s Orchard. “

“‘Buy Fresh, Buy Local’ makes people aware of the produce that’s grown here, and they know a local farmer grew it,” Isom said. “Buying from a local farmer helps everyone – the farmer, the consumer and the local economy.”

The interest in farmers markets is growing, according to Wambles. In addition to a more nutritious product, the best thing about fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables is the taste.

Henry Williams of Thorsby agrees. He grows strawberries, peaches and sod on his farm in Chilton County.

“The biggest difference between what you buy from me and what you might buy at a grocery store is fresh taste,” he said. “Fruits and vegetables in a grocery store or other outlets have to be picked while they’re still green just to make the journey from the farm – sometimes across the country. You just can’t get any better than fresh, and the only way to really get fresh – other than grow it yourself is to buy it from a local farmer.”

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For a list of farmers markets, roadside stands and U-pick operations in your area, visit [www.BuyLocalAlabama.com](http://www.BuyLocalAlabama.com).