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****Media Advisory ****

New Mexico Economic Development Department and Luna County to Announce Preferred Produce Expanding, Nearly Doubling Workforce

Luna County - Today, the New Mexico Economic Development Department (NMEDD) will announce that Preferred Produce, Inc., a certified organic produce supplier for local markets and Whole Foods throughout the Southwest, will construct 45,000 new square feet of greenhouse space. This new expansion will grow Preferred Produce's production capability and nearly double its workforce with up to 10 new jobs in rural Luna County. EDD Cabinet Secretary Jon Barela, Matthew Stong, Ph.D., founder and president of Preferred Produce, and Luna County officials will attend the announcement.

"LEDA has been an invaluable tool for diversifying our private sector by helping small, local New Mexico businesses grow in addition to recruiting new businesses to our state," said Secretary Jon Barela. "Preferred Produce is another New Mexico-based exporter that has benefited from LEDA and in turn will create new jobs, grow the tax base and bring new dollars into our state."

NMEDD will provide Luna County \$135,000 in state Local Economic Development Act (LEDA) funds to assist Preferred Produce with the construction of its new greenhouse space. Preferred Produce recently negotiated a 20-year contract with a large East Coast produce and specialty food distributor. The expansion will help Preferred Produce fulfill that contract entirely from New Mexico instead of releasing part of it to partner facilities in Maryland and California.

"Value-added food production is an important part of New Mexico's economy," said Secretary Barela. "Jobs in the food industry complement our state's long agricultural history and help continue to spur rural economic development."

Preferred Produce currently employs 13 workers at its facility outside of Deming. The business launched in 2010 and specializes in innovative, high-tech growing techniques and fast-to-market produce delivery.

"We are thrilled to be expanding once again in New Mexico with the help of Gov. Martinez, Sec. Barela and the LEDA program," said Dr. Strong. "We are proud to be a partner in growing nutritious produce we provide both in and out of state and also in helping grow the state's private-sector economy."

When: 2:00 p.m. Friday January 9, 2015

Where: Preferred Produce EcoFarms
Luna County, NM

Directions: From Deming, take US-11 south for 22 miles (or 9 miles north of US route 9 in Columbus). Then take a left at County Road B-011 east. In 1.6 miles, turn right onto County Road B-010 which will take you directly into Preferred Produce.

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