



## SYSCO, Chipotle, and Chicago Public Schools Join FamilyFarmed.org and Illinois Growers to Source Local Food

Major institutional trade buyers joined 21 Illinois farmers and FamilyFarmed.org at a Wholesale Success workshop on March 14th in Central Illinois. Buyers from Sysco Central Illinois, Chartwells-Thompson Hospitality (Chicago Public Schools), and Chipotle Mexican Grill presented and shared their insights with producers interested in boosting their sales. The workshop included a presentation on the findings in the FamilyFarmed.org publication, *Wholesale Success: A Farmer's Guide to Selling, Post-harvest Handling and Packing Produce*. Three Illinois farmers also shared their experiences with food safety standards, proper post harvest handling, sorting, packing and shipping, and starting and building relationships with wholesale buyers.

"We recognize that the local food market is an underserved niche and we are committed to building our capacity to distribute local foods to our customers," says Robbie Roberts, President of SYSCO Central Illinois and the host of the event. "The Wholesale Success Training was a great opportunity to connect producers with the resources they need to know to sell into this market." To facilitate their local foods procurement and sales, SYSCO introduced an internet based farmers market that they will use this season to connect local farmers with their customers which include restaurants and institutional buyers.

"Currently people in Illinois purchase \$48 billion in food from supermarkets, restaurants, and other sources, yet less than 4% of that is grown in Illinois," says FamilyFarmed.org president, Jim Slama. "Programs like Wholesale Success are working to recruit new producers to sell into larger scale markets to meet the burgeoning demand for local food."