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#### Notes to Editors

According to a survey of BBC Good Food magazine readers - published August 2005, which showed that 32% of those surveyed visit a farmers market at least once a month and many would wish to, if there was one nearby.

NWFTI warns that although there are nearly 500 farmers markets in England, less than half of these have been verified as genuine. There are four within Cumbria that have been independently accredited, these being held at Orton, Pooley Bridge, Brough and Penrith. In Lancashire there are accredited markets at Ashton Under Lyne and Colne, whilst the Real McCoy can also be found at Abbey Leys, Congleton and Vale Royal, Kelsall, within Cheshire.

To be accredited means that there is a guarantee of high quality food from producers who specialise in doing things in a traditional way - slowly, in small quantities and by hand. Animals are reared humanely and no genetically modified organisms are knowingly sold. 85% of the produce has to locally reared, grown, baked, pickled, brewed or baked. Also, no middlemen are allowed - the consumer deals directly with the farmer or producer.

#### A THIRD OF BRITS POP DOWN THE LOCAL FOR A SWIFT HALF

Around a third of Brits are regularly popping down the local for a swift half and many more of us say we would like to do this given a glimmer of an opportunity \*.

The North West Farm Tourism Initiative (NWFTI) says the number of people visiting their local has tripled since 2001 and word is fast getting round about the enjoyment that can be derived from this. The local in question isn't 'The Dirty Duck', but the local Farmers' Market - regular regional gatherings of farm-based food producers selling their wares directly to local residents and tourists alike.

This, claims the NWFTI, is becoming a force to be reckoned with within the British food sector, as consumers clamour for organic and fresher food, that has travelled fewer 'miles' and which, above all, can be trusted in a world where additives have destroyed our faith in our food.

Jane Brook of Orton Farmers Market, the 'National Farmers Market of the Year 2005', based in the heart of Cumbria, says the 'half' can be anything from half a kilo of fresh river trout or organic cheese, to half a kilo of Cumberland sausage. Washed down with half a litre of real ale of damson gin, this is real foodie heaven for a growing number of consumers, who are increasingly flocking to buy the wares of the 40 local farmers, growers, producers and artisan craftsmen.

Delights such as duck eggs, real ale, ewe's milk ice cream and plum chutneys are being sampled by many shoppers for the first time, as they explore the world of fresh farm produce that is often rooted in our farming traditions.

The growth in the popularity of farmers markets is one factor that is helping the farming community diversify into tourist-focused activities. Farmers markets are now becoming tourist destinations, as well as retail meccas, a trend highly welcomed by NWFTI's Project Manager Katie Read, herself a staunch advocate of organic food, fresh from the farm.

She says: "In the North West we boast the finest and very first

accredited Farmers Market in Britain, at Orton. However, we also have a number of other first-class markets at which our farming community is demonstrating its ability to produce the best quality British food, which looks, tastes and is absolutely real.

"Fast food producers need to be on the hop now, because the British public is going back to its roots and realising that processed, packaged and plastic are the three Ps of British food production that are being replaced by the three Rs - Rural, Real and Rare."

One of the stars of the Orton Farmers Market, John Noble, whose flavour-filled sausage won the Market's recent Sausage Sizzle challenge, adds: "Farmers markets are packing a punch, making a significant impact not only on the retail sector, but also the world of farm tourism. We are making food sizzle, in more ways than one."

Those wishing to grab their own swift half at the award-winning Orton Farmers Market can pay a visit on the second Sa4&3