

FLATHEAD LAKE CHERRY GROWERS™

A Montana Agricultural Cooperative

July 19, 2011

Montana's Flathead Cherries Available Soon in Local Stores

Montana's famous Flathead Lake cherries will be available this season throughout Montana and neighboring states in quantities appropriate for smaller markets that have been difficult to access in the past. Flathead Lake Growers, Inc. (FLCG) will continue its packing and sorting arrangement with Monson Fruit Company, with marketing by Domex, Inc. (both of Yakima). The group will partner with Charlie's Produce of Spokane to include FLCG's cherries in Charlie's distribution routes to grocery stores in Montana, and areas of North and South Dakota, Idaho and Wyoming.

With distribution by Charlie's Produce, retailers in smaller, local markets will finally receive fresh, hydro-cooled, attractively packaged, first quality cherries. In the last 15 years, Montana cherries have been sold primarily to major commercial markets all over the world. The smaller regional grocery stores were often last in line to receive Montana cherries, and if they did locate sources, the fruit generally was not hydro-cooled or commercially handled and packaged, and often of lesser quality by the time it reached the store. Dale Nelson, President of FLCG, stated that, "Most of our buyers are stores like Costco and Sam's Club, buyers who can purchase semi-loads at a time. This doesn't work for the regional grocery store. With Charlie's Produce distribution in place, we'll now have over 270 grocery stores in Montana alone that can receive our fruit."

FLCG is proud to participate in the "buy local" program and with the high regard for goods and business practices offered by Charlie's Produce, FLCG's quality cherries are finally going to be enjoyed by Montanans and consumers in neighboring states. The partnership with Charlie's came about through a study funded by grants from the Montana Department of Agriculture. The study enabled FLCG to determine market demand and a method to reach regional grocery stores.

FLCG is a Montana Agricultural Cooperative consisting of approximately 100 cherry growers in the Flathead Lake Valley, dedicated to growing quality fruit through up-to-date horticultural practices. Developing brand name awareness of the unique Montana Flathead Lake cherry industry is a goal of the co-op. Visit www.montanacherries.com for detailed information on Montana cherries and the FLCG co-op.