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CONSUMER ALERT

For Immediate Release

- There is NOT a “mold problem” with Christmas trees as some overzealous news outlets are reporting. What some farmers with true fir species in low-lying areas of their farm are dealing with is phytophthora, a type of soil fungus.
- Fungi are microorganisms that include yeasts and molds as well as the more familiar mushrooms. Many plants, including many grown on farms (from soybeans, to iceberg lettuce, to conifer trees), can have their health and vitality inhibited when the phytophthora fungus is present in the soil and get a condition known as root rot.
- Root rot is not a new thing. What’s new is that a multi-university team of scientists have a grant from the Specialty Crop Research Initiative of the USDA to study phytophthora and how growers can deal with it.
- Phytophthora, among many other pathogens and insects, are something that farms must deal with all the time ever since the invention of agriculture thousands of years ago.
- The Christmas trees harvested and sent to market are not affected by root rot, so consumers would NOT notice any difference this year or any year.
- Christmas trees are somewhat unique in that it takes a number of years from planting until they are of a size that can be harvested and sold (anywhere from 3 feet tall to 14 feet or more).
- Phytophthora will NOT have any impact on tree prices, so if a Christmas tree retailer tells you the price of a tree is higher “because of root rot” we suggest you shop for a tree somewhere else.

ABOUT NCTA

The National Christmas Tree Association (NCTA) is the national trade association representing the farm-grown Christmas tree industry. NCTA represents more than 700 active member farms, 29 state and regional associations, and more than 4,000 affiliated businesses that grow and sell Christmas trees or provide related supplies and services. It is estimated that those affiliated with the NCTA produce roughly three-quarters of the farm-raised Christmas trees in the United States. To learn more about the NCTA, visit www.realchristmastrees.org, or call 636/449.5070.