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FFVA HONORS ALDI AS MERCHANDISER OF THE YEAR

MAITLAND, Fla. (Sept. 20, 2011) – The Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association presented its Merchandiser of the Year Award to ALDI, a discount grocery chain headquartered in Batavia, Ill., for its emphasis on Florida-grown produce.

In nominating the company's Haines City division, Adam Lytch, grower development manager for eastern vegetables and melons for L&M Farms, said the division has experienced a great deal of growth. ALDI management and staff understand that their customers want low prices as well as locally grown items, he said.

“This year, they made the switch to Florida-grown products faster than in recent years,” Lytch said. “We also were able to work with them to get non-traditional Florida items into their stores.”

Plant City berry grower Gary Wishnatzki of Wish Farms also praised ALDI for its efforts in emphasizing Florida produce. “They stay in local deals in Florida as long as they can. ALDI is aggressive at retail and moves large amounts of Florida product relative to its size.”

ALDI opened its first store in Southeastern Iowa in 1976. Today, the chain operates more than 1,000 stores in 31 states from Kansas to the East Coast. ALDI stores carry about 1,400 regularly stocked items. The chain has about 50 stores in Florida.

The award was announced at FFVA's 68th Annual Convention Awards Luncheon at the Ritz-Carlton in Palm Beach. Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association is an agricultural trade organization representing Florida's producers of fruits, vegetables and other crops.

Digital photos are available by e-mailing barbara.wunder@ffva.com.