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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE SECRETARY SONNY PERDUE VISITS MUSHROOM CAPITAL OF THE WORLD
Mushroom Industry Leaders Participate in Roundtable Discussion with the Secretary

Avondale, PA, May 30, 2019 – Mushroom farmers and their communities rolled out the red carpet today to host the U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, who sat down with mushroom industry leaders and other agricultural sectors to discuss issues affecting their operations, American Mushroom Institute (AMI) announced today.

The Secretary came to Kennett Square, PA, to participate in a roundtable discussion, and focused on his commitment to passing the United States Mexico Canada Trade Agreement, promising it will benefit farmers. Farmers at the roundtable from AMI and the PA Farm Bureau concentrated on the importance of a legal agricultural workforce.

“We were honored to host the Secretary today,” said Rachel Roberts, AMI Executive Director. “It’s not every day that a member of the U.S. President’s cabinet reaches out to our industry, and we welcomed very much the opportunity to directly make our case to the Secretary for competitive trade and especially labor policies that would allow our U.S. mushroom industry to meet the unprecedented demand for mushrooms.”

Mushrooms are grown year-round and do not qualify for the seasonal H2-A guestworker program. Each day, there is a 20% to 25% gap in the harvesting workforce, which limits mushroom businesses from expanding capacity, and leaves the U.S. market open for imported mushrooms to meet growing demand.

“The issue of agricultural labor was not a new topic for the Secretary, and he noted that in his expansive travels across the country – he just recently completed a two-year, 50-state tour – the issue of a reliable, legal agricultural workforce was a top issue for all agriculture producers. U.S. House of Representative Chrissy Houlahan (PA-6) also participated in the roundtable, as well as Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Deputy Secretary for Market Development Cheryl Cook. In addition to the roundtable discussion, the group toured Phillips Mushroom Farms, a fourth generation, nearly 100-year old operation whose farms range from still functioning original buildings to state-of-the-art modern facilities.

Last year, U.S. mushroom farms produced 917 million pounds of mushrooms. Pennsylvania — and specifically southeastern PA — produced nearly two-thirds of these mushrooms, with value of $575 million.

About AMI
The American Mushroom Institute (AMI), headquartered in Avondale, Pennsylvania, is a national voluntary trade association representing the growers, processors and marketers of cultivated mushrooms in the United States and industry suppliers worldwide. For more information, visit www.americanmushroom.org.