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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GROWMARK Announces 2016 Essay Contest Theme

The theme for the 2016 GROWMARK Essay Contest is: "What can young people do to ensure the sustainability of agriculture?" The contest is open to all high school FFA members in Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, and Wisconsin.

This is the 23rd year for the program, sponsored by the GROWMARK System and FS member cooperatives, in conjunction with state FFA leaders, to help young people develop their writing skills, learn about current issues affecting agriculture, and understand the unique role of cooperatives.

This year, students will create a working definition of sustainability, and offer suggestions for ways their generation can ensure agriculture remains strong well into the future.

Essays should be approximately 500 words, typed and double-spaced. The postmarked entry deadline for all essays is March 1, 2016. Additional program details have been sent to agriculture teachers and are online at www.growmark.com/company/youth-young-farmers/pages/essay-contest.aspx

"Sustainability is an important topic, and there are many definitions out there," said Karen Jones, GROWMARK youth and cooperative education specialist. "I look forward to reading about the ideas students have for keeping our industry viable and growing."

Each state's winner earns a \$500 award and the winner's FFA chapter receives a \$300 award. Four runners-up per state each win \$125 awards.

The program is offered each year and many agriculture teachers use it as part of their class curriculum. Past topics have included renewable fuels, biotechnology, and the cooperative principles.

About GROWMARK

GROWMARK is a regional cooperative with annual sales of \$8.8 billion (FY 2015 data) providing agronomy, energy, facility planning, and logistics products and services, as well as grain marketing and risk management services in more than 40 states and Ontario, Canada. GROWMARK owns the FS trademark, which is used by affiliated member cooperatives. More information is available at www.growmark.com