

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## ONEIDA ORCHARD WILL NOT OPEN FOR 2024 PICK YOUR OWN SEASON

August 28, 2024- Regrettably, the Oneida Orchard will not open for Pick Your Own operations this 2024 season. As you will recall, we experienced a very obscure year of weather that began in Fall 2023 and persisted into the summer. The winter season was abnormally warm, which triggered an early bud break in our trees, or a “false spring”. Temperatures recorded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for February 2024 were the warmest on record for Wisconsin. When bud break occurs early like this, the trees are at a great risk of losing substantial crop due to freezing temperatures during pollination. It is almost a guarantee in some regions that freezing temperatures or frost will return after an early bud break. If frost occurs during flowering, the flowers are killed and there can be significant crop loss. Unfortunately, with a late frost we experienced in April, this is exactly what happened.

Varieties that did flower in a decent time window continued to experience adverse conditions during pollination and fruit set, including fluctuating temperatures from cold to warm, along with wet conditions. As a result, many apple varieties that did survive the last frost then aborted, or dropped, their fruit. This is a survival mechanism of the trees that occurs during levels of high stress. In addition, high humidity persisted into the summer along with excessive and continuous rainfall, which created perfect conditions for relentless disease pressure on the remaining fruit.

With this, the majority of our trees failed to produce. As we have assessed our Orchard and yield, there is simply not enough of a crop to allow for Pick Your Own. The minimal produce that we will harvest will be prioritized to internal programming.

These concerning weather patterns will continue to impact our communities, not just our food systems. It is imperative that we take a deep look at how we can prepare ourselves to be more climate resilient. The regenerative practices that we are committed to in the Orchard will greatly improve the resiliency of our operations. Because the trees are not producing this season, we are hopeful next season we will see an abundant harvest.

Communication will be forthcoming regarding limited retail store hours that will be offered.

If there are any questions, please contact:

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