**Richmond Times-Dispatch**

**APPALACHIAN SPRING Environmental endowment promotes sound development**

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The Associated Press story headlined “Appalachian nonprofit links small farmers with big grocers” explained how a plucky organization is making a big difference. The piece, which appeared in the April 26 Times-Dispatch, described Appalachian Harvest as a “standout success in a distressed region where economic development efforts come and go.”

As its name suggests, Appalachian Harvest focuses on agriculture — i.e., the process of moving edible products from fields to store shelves to home tables. It helps farmers market their produce and maintains an active warehouse. Its trucks deliver goods to grocery hubs.

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Appalachian Sustainable Development serves as Appalachian Harvest’s parent organization. The parent has enjoyed support from the Virginia Environmental Endowment. According to information supplied to The Times-Dispatch by the VEE, the agency has awarded several grants to Appalachian Sustainable Development since 1996. Several of the grants mentioned the Harvest project.

"By 2007, they had 50 farmers (most of them former tobacco growers) growing certified organic produce sold to over 600 supermarkets in Virginia, Tennessee, Maryland, Georgia and the Carolinas,” the VEE says.

“The VEE gave $39,000 that year in continued support to expand their initiatives.”

In 1977, federal Judge Robert Merhige Jr. fined Allied Chemical Corp. $13.2 million for contaminating the James with Kepone. A portion of the fine went into what would become the VEE, which has promoted responsible stewardship of the environment. Although vilified for his school busing decision, Merhige qualified as a visionary jurist. He may have been ahead of times regarding the schools, too.