

Cascadia Scorecard Weblog

Northwest Environment Watch's take on the news that really matters

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Oregon Food Processor Labels Itself

Good news from the *Capital Press* for northwesterners who like their food without a side of pesticides and unfair trade. The 240 farms that make up Norpac, Oregon's largest fruit and vegetable processor, have contracted with a third party to certify that their production practices are sustainable.

The certification standards were developed by Norpac growers, with help from University of Oregon scientists and the Food Alliance—an Oregon nonprofit with a highly rated certification program—and include environmental and social standards in areas such as pest and disease management, treatment of farmworkers, soil and water conservation, and wildlife impacts. Growers will be recertified every three years.

For consumers, this means that eventually we'll see a seal on products that have met Norpac's standards. While some might sigh about another label to contend with—see this *Wall Street Journal* article (pdf) on the bumper crop of beyond-organic labels—it's still noteworthy that a company as large as Norpac is buying into certification. (Perhaps the boycott of its products in the 1990s made PR more of a priority.)

"This is market-driven," said Rick Jacobson, president and CEO of Norpac. "Our growers realize what a tough market this is. We have to find a way to distinguish ourselves."

P.S. Ecolabels.org is a good source on how labels stack up, gives the Food Alliance label a high rating, but notes that it's been criticized for copyrighting its label (Norpac's label is also proprietary).

Posted by Elisa Murray | [Permalink](#)