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## Sustainable ag resource center in works

By MITCH LIES Oregon Staff Writer

Developing standards to steer sustainable agriculture production isn't easy. Just ask **Norpac** President and CEO Rick Jacobson.

Norpac, which recently launched a sustainable agriculture certification program, struggled for three years to develop the program. In doing so, the 240-member food processing cooperative utilized the state's top resources, including experts in integrated pest management from Oregon State University and the Oregon Department of Agriculture and Food Alliance auditors. The co-op also formed a task force of nine member-growers to ensure the standards would meet its criteria.

In the end, **Norpac** was able to finish developing a program that ensures crops produced under the **Norpac** sustainable banner are produced in an environmentally and socially responsible fashion. But the journey convinced Jacobson that a state resource was needed for growers looking to adopt sustainable practices.

Jacobson's vision is about to become a reality.

Under the umbrella of Oregon Solutions, a state office created by former Gov. John Kitzhaber and embraced by Gov. Ted Kulongoski, Oregon growers, researchers and state officials in the future can turn to the Oregon Sustainable Agriculture Resource Center to help them develop sustainable production systems.

Kim Travis, network manager for Oregon Solutions, said growers will be able to access information produced by the center on the Internet within a year. Travis said the center also hopes to produce printed material.

Peter Bloome, a development consultant and a retired Oregon State University extension administrator, said state officials and industry leaders hope to house the center at Oregon State University, but Travis said funds are not available at this time for an office. Bloome is the project's manager.

The center's development has been funded by **Norpac** and four state agencies: the Oregon Department of Agriculture, Oregon Water Resources Department, the Oregon Department of Energy and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

The center will serve several purposes, Travis said, including advising growers on sustainable standards, providing a clearinghouse for growers to access more information on sustainable agriculture and providing growers a list of organizations conducting sustainable certification.

Travis envisions a site beneficial to state agencies, researchers, extension agents and farmers.

For more information on the center, go to [orsolutions.org](http://orsolutions.org).