

Changing of the guard at Food Alliance

Midwest Director takes top position at National Catholic Rural Life Conference

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Jim Ennis moves
on from Food
Alliance

Sustainable food certifier Food Alliance said it is bidding farewell to its Midwest Director, Jim Ennis, who has taken a position as the executive director of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference (NCRLC).

“Throughout his tenure as director of Food Alliance Midwest, Jim brought sincere commitment, a keen strategic mind and a ready sense of humor to the work,” Food Alliance Executive Director Scott Exo said. “We’ll miss him, but I know he’s following his heart in this new position, and we wish him well.”

The NCRLC is a faith-based organization that provides spiritual, educational and advocacy assistance to people in rural communities.

Portland, Ore.-based Food Alliance certifies farms, ranches and food processors for sustainable agricultural and production practices such as safe and fair working conditions, reduction of pesticide use and toxicity, healthy and humane care for livestock, no genetically modified crops or livestock and no hormones or non-therapeutic antibiotics.

Over 275 farms and ranches in 17 U.S. states, Canada and Mexico are certified as sustainable by Food Alliance. These producers manage over 5.1 million acres of range and farm land, raising beef, lamb, pork, dairy products, mushrooms, dried beans and lentils, wheat, and a wide variety of fruits and vegetables.

Annual sales of products certified under its comprehensive eco-labeling program hit \$100 million in 2007.

“NCRLC will continue to be involved in sustainable agriculture through our support of rural communities throughout the country,” Ennis said. “Although I will miss working with my Food Alliance colleagues and the Food Alliance-certified growers and processors on a daily basis, I know there will be many opportunities for our work to intersect through our respective efforts to create a more just and humane food system that helps sustain rural families and communities.”

Bob Olson, who has been with Food Alliance Midwest for three years, most recently as business development manager, has been named interim director.

Taking the position of executive director of NCRLC represents a return to roots for Jim, who was active in

ministry for six years, as a college student and as a missionary assistant in Zambia, before starting a professional career in food products marketing.

Ennis was hired in 1999 to direct a program called Food Choices, developed and supported by Cooperative Development Services, Land Stewardship Project, Organic Alliance and other organizations.

Food Choices was intended to help create a Midwest food system based on sustainably produced, regional foods.

Ennis is credited with merging Food Choices and Food Alliance, which was then gaining momentum in the Pacific Northwest, and having the vision of an organization that not only promotes local and regional food systems but steward of a standard for sustainable agriculture that applied nationwide.