

Produce firm first in nation to have vertically integrated ops certified sustainable

United Salad provides complete transparency for sustainable supply, process, and distribution chain

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Sorting sustainable apples at United Salad's certified Pride Packing Co.'s facility

One of the largest produce companies in the Pacific Northwest, United Salad Co., has become the first food company in the United States certified for sustainable business practices throughout its entire supply, process, and distribution chain.

The Portland, Ore.-based has achieved complete transparency from the orchard, to the packing house and throughout its distribution system after having its growing and packing operations, operating under its Pride Packing Co. subsidiary, recently certified as sustainable by third-party certifier Food Alliance.

United Salad's Pride Packing subsidiary owns and harvests more than 3,000 acres of apple, cherry, pear, and soft fruit orchards in eastern Washington's Yakima Valley. It grows and packs more than 2.5 million cases of fruit annually.

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.

Businesses that meet Food Alliance's standards, as determined by a third-party site inspection, are allowed to use the non-profit's green eco-label to claim social and environmental responsibility, which differentiates products and can strength brands.

"Certification is a great tool and helps us communicate our commitment to our customers," said United Salad President Ernie Spada, Sr. "We keep up with research and innovation in our industry and take a progressive approach to managing our orchards. We look closely at pest management and cultural practices and ways to be better environmental stewards. With Food Alliance certification, people have more than just our word. They have un-biased proof."



A privately owned company, United Salad, through its subsidiaries Duck Delivery Produce, Inc., and Pride Packing, grows and sells fruits, vegetables, herbs, specialty produce, and processed produce to over 1,000 retail customers every week throughout the Pacific Northwest and Alaska.

Duck Delivery caters to the foodservice market in Oregon under Duck Delivery Produce, Inc., and Duck Delivery of Washington, Inc. delivers to customers in that state.

In an earlier interview with **Sustainable Food News**, Spada declined to provide a specific annual sales figure but did say it was "over hundreds of millions of dollars."

Just over a year-and-a-half ago, United Salad, and its Duck Delivery subsidiary became the first food distributors in the country to be Food Alliance Certified.

The 75-year-old, family-owned and operated wholesaler passed a third-party audit for sustainable business practices at its 140,000-square-foot facility in Portland, Ore., and at its 125,000-square-foot warehouse in Seattle, which operates as Duck Delivery of Washington, Inc.

Citing the increased demand from institutional foodservice entities such as hospitals, schools and colleges, Spada said at the time that Food Alliance certification is a "dead fit" with his customers.

The recent certification at Pride Packing Co. by Food Alliance included the apricot, nectarine, and peach orchards and the 60,000-square-foot fruit packing facility.

Pride Packing said it is actively seeking additional certification for its pear, apple and cherry orchards and plans to be certified for all its fruit by next year.

Over 300 farms and ranches in 23 U.S. states, Canada and Mexico are certified as sustainable by Food Alliance. These producers manage over 5.6 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 Food Alliance's comprehensive eco-labeling program hit \$100 million in 2007, and cumulative sales of Food Alliance-certified products reached \$350 million since the group's inception in 1998.

Last month, Food Alliance unveiled comprehensive national standards for sustainable sheep and goat production with strict criteria for raising and treating the animals.

In September, Food Services of America (FSA) said it has become the first broadline foodservice distributor in the United States certified for sustainable business practices.

FSA, the nation's sixth largest broadline foodservice distributor serving customers in 15 western and mid-western states, had the first of its nine regional distribution facilities, located in Woodburn, Ore., passing the third-party audit by Food Alliance.