

Sustainable Industries

Food & Farms

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Food Alliance backs grass-fed status

[PORTLAND]

The Food Alliance in May 2009 announced a new endorsement for cattle, sheep and goat operations operating under Food Alliance certifications. The new endorsement certifies that “grass-fed” animals were not fed grain or grain byproducts or given hormone or antibiotic treatments of any kind.

“We believe fairly strongly that consumers don’t neatly disaggregate all the attributes of a product,” says Scott Exo, executive director of the Portland-based nonprofit. “If they’re buying a grass-fed product, they also want a product that is hormone- and antibiotic-free.”

Two ranches have already received the endorsement: Hearst Ranch Beef, a 150,000-acre, 3,500-head cattle ranching operation on California’s central coast, and the TomKat Ranch, a smaller, direct market beef producer in Pescadero, Calif. Another six are in the certification pipeline.

Getting the certification was a pragmatic step for Hearst, according to Brian Kenny, Hearst Ranch division manager for the Hearst Corp.

“Grass-fed production is the antithesis of efficient,” Kenny says, noting a major challenge. “Every time we do one of these audits we find things that help our processes and clarify our thinking.”