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Spada businesses get mark of green approval

By Cliff Newell

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It's not always easy being green.

But Ernie Spada Jr. of Lake Oswego believes it is well worth it for his family-owned farm products companies.

Going green has resulted recently in Pride Packing Co. of Yakima, Wash., received the Food Alliance Certification.

And just a year earlier, Spada's United Salad Co. and Duck Delivery companies received the same certificate, making them the first produce distributors in the United States to earn that distinction.



Ernie Spada Jr. has helped his family-owned farm products companies achieve the Food Alliance Certification for being green companies.

“It was a far cry from being a rubber stamp type of deal,” said Spada. “The Food Alliance Certification is an independent third party and a sustainability, non-profit organization. It took us a year to achieve the first certification, then it took us another year to earn the second one.

“We had to devise an in-depth plan that did a number of things –reduce pesticides and toxicity, promote soil conservation, reduce waste, protect wildlife, and establish programs with environmental goals.”

Being first is nice, but it was not easily achieved. The Spada-owned businesses have long been sustainability oriented and have won honors in such areas as recycling. Yet a full-blown formal plan is something different.

“Obviously, there is a cost equation,” Spada said. “It was a pretty big step. There is some financial commitment. Some people would look at the total package and they might balk.

“But I’ve always been a little green. We wouldn’t exist without the land, and it should be on the top of our list of concerns. Personally, I felt it was the right thing to do.”

Similar companies have noticed Spada’s action and have achieved their own FAC.

“We’re one of the leaders in the industry,” he said. “When they saw us following this line, some of our competitors jumped on board.”

The Spadas’ influence will be widespread, since their companies operate 50 farms in the Yakima area.

United Salad is a third- generation family company, founded nearly 70 years ago by Leo Spada. Today, Ernie Spada Sr. directs the farming business, while Ernie Jr. and his sisters run the distribution business.

A fourth generation of Spadas is coming. Ernie III, a former Lake Oswego High School basketball standout, is set to join the family business in two years when he graduates from Humboldt State University.

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