

## **Sustainable food certification to improve water quality in Mississippi River basin**

*Food Alliance certification in Midwest now has over 20 certified agricultural operations*

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Sustainable food certifier Food Alliance said its partner, Cooperative Development Services (CDS), is working with farmers and food businesses in the the Midwest to improve water quality in the Mississippi River basin.

"By increasing demand for sustainably-raised foods and expanding environmentally responsible agricultural practices, CDS is pioneering market-led solutions to persistent ecological challenges," said Food Alliance.



Third-party certifier Food Alliance, based in Portland, Ore., has certified 384 farms, ranches and food processors in 27 states - raising beef, lamb, pork, dairy products, grains, legumes, and a wide variety of fruits and vegetables - for sustainable agricultural and production practices.

These include 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.

The certification requires continuous improvement in social and environmental management practices.

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.

Supported by the Minneapolis-based McKnight Foundation, Food Alliance certification in the Midwest has grown to more than 20 certified agricultural operations implementing sustainability practices.

CDS will focus on building demand for Food Alliance Certified products in the following ways:

- Collaborate with college foodservices to determine the size and makeup of their food expenditures, and then compute the 'farm share' and subsequent environmental footprint of each institution.
- Leverage current relationships with natural food cooperatives by engaging their deliberate sourcing of sustainably-produced food products. In the Midwest, these natural food cooperatives represent a sizeable market capable of supporting a diverse mix of sustainable foods.
- Provide outreach services to growers and others in the value chain about appropriate linkages.
- Explore the creation of a new business venture to aggregate local foods in cooperation with a conventional retail grocer.