

Seafood

PR Pacific Shellfish Sustainability Practices Earn New Food Alliance Certification

by Food Alliance

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PORTLAND, Ore. -- Shellfish lovers who care about what goes into nurturing and harvesting their favorite bivalves can now look for products on menus and seafood counters that bear Food Alliance certification verifying sustainable practices.

Two shellfish producers, Hog Island Oyster Company of Tomales Bay, California, and Taylor Shellfish Farms of Shelton, Washington, are the first to qualify under the new standards, which set benchmark practices for fish and wildlife conservation, environmental protection, and safe and fair working conditions. The certification criteria applies to North American shellfish producers growing shellfish from seed to harvest in a defined area and with clear ownership of the shellfish being cultured. The program does not cover wild harvest.

"The shellfish industry represents family businesses whose growers have followed in the footsteps of their parents and grandparents," says Margaret Pilaro Barrette, Executive Director of the Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers Association. "Food Alliance certification captures the essence of this multi-generational industry. The standards and criteria honor previous generations of growers and set forward-thinking expectations for future generations."

Hog Island, which was certified for clam and oyster production, and Taylor Shellfish, which gained certification for its mussel farms, expect certification to meet increased demand from wholesale, restaurant and retail customers for verified sustainability-focused practices.

Food Alliance launched its third-party verified certification program for clam, oysters, geoducks in fall 2010. The organization has been providing similar certification for farms and ranches since 1997, and processors and wholesalers since 2006. Meeting consumer demand for sustainability, transparency and traceability in seafood, Food Alliance applies many years of sustainability certification experience and independent auditing for certifying socially and environmentally responsible management practices.

"Just as in land-based agriculture, independent certification brings added credibility to products and brands, helping companies distinguish themselves through thoughtful, active marketing that highlights their practices," said Scott Exo, executive director of Food Alliance.

"Shellfish help maintain the health of local estuaries and provide an ongoing incentive for clean water," says Betsy Peabody, Executive Director of the Puget Sound Restoration Fund. "We applaud Food Alliance for establishing sustainability standards for shellfish aquaculture. The new standards build on the industry's environmental code of practices and complement the global standards for aquaculture that the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has developed. These new sustainability standards will raise the bar for social and environmental performance. This is good news for Puget Sound."

"We are so proud, and so lucky to be a part of this amazing community of oyster farmers in this beautiful bay," says Terry Sawyer, Co-Founder, Hog Island Oyster Co. "To protect this incredible resource we all have in Marin County, we must have minimal impact, both on the land and in the water. I think this should be the goal of every single grower and rancher in West Marin. Food Alliance certification

helps us tell that story to our customers."

About Food Alliance

Food Alliance is a non-profit organization that certifies farms, ranches, food processors and distributors for sustainable agriculture and business practices. Companies that meet Food Alliance's standards, as determined by a third-party site inspection, use certification to make credible claims for social and environmental responsibility, differentiating their products and strengthening their brands. There are more than 300 Food Alliance certified farms and ranches in United States, Canada, and Mexico. These producers manage more than six million acres of range and farmland, raising beef, lamb, pork, poultry, dairy, wheat, and a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. Learn more about Food Alliance Certification for shellfish online at: www.foodalliance.org/shellfish.

Source: Food Alliance