

Food Alliance certifies two West Coast shellfish growers as sustainable

Hog Island Oyster Company, Taylor Shellfish Farms can now label menu, retail offerings as sustainable

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Sustainable food certifier Food Alliance said Friday two shellfish producers on the West Coast are the first to qualify under new standards for fish and wildlife conservation, environmental protection, and safe and fair working conditions.

Hog Island Oyster Company of Tomales Bay, Calif., and Taylor Shellfish Farms of Shelton, Wash., can now label their products on menus and seafood counters with the Food Alliance seal, which verifies sustainable practices.

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.



"To protect this incredible resource we all have in Marin County, we must have minimal impact, both on the land and in the water," said Terry Sawyer, co-founder, Hog Island. "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."

The program does not cover wild-harvested shellfish.

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.

"The shellfish industry represents family businesses whose growers have followed in the footsteps of their parents and grandparents," said 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.

“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.