



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **New Federal Conservation Program and Regional Sustainable Marketing Venture Form Basis for Innovative Partnership**

Portland, OR - USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Food Alliance, a national non-profit headquartered in Portland, have embarked on an innovative public-private partnership that combines federal payments and market incentives for farmers and ranchers who are true conservation stewards.

NRCS administers the Conservation Security Program (CSP), a new US Department of Agriculture Program that financially rewards private land managers who are taking care of their land at the highest stewardship levels. Producers whose applications are selected for CSP enter into 5-10 year contracts that provide financial rewards for enhancing soil, water, and wildlife habitat, along with other conservation work. In Oregon last year, producers received over \$5 million from CSP contracts.

Food Alliance certifies farmers and ranchers who produce food in environmentally friendly and socially responsible ways. Food Alliance certification enables farmers and ranchers to leverage profitable niche marketing opportunities for sustainable food products.

"In surveys, Food Alliance certified farmers and ranchers report positive customer feedback, increased sales, new markets, and even price premiums," says Food Alliance Executive Director Scott Exo.

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) has reviewed Food Alliance's natural resource certification standards. Food Alliance certified farms and ranches are managed by individuals who are committed to the highest level of conservation stewardship, and are very likely to be eligible for payments under the Conservation Security Program, according to the NRCS.

"We want to encourage all certified farmers and ranchers in the target watersheds to apply for the Conservation Security Program," says NRCS State Conservationist Bob Graham. "In addition, we encourage all farmers and ranchers who participate in CSP to seek out sustainable niche market opportunities like those offered through the Food Alliance."

"CSP is a great fit for Food Alliance certified farms and ranches, whose track record of conservation is proven through our certification process," says Exo. "Market rewards through Food Alliance certification and financial rewards through CSP are a potent combination of incentives for today's stewardship-minded farmer or rancher."

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While NRCS can not guarantee at this time that any individual farm or ranch will receive CSP payments, Food Alliance certified farms and ranches have already met many of the program's eligibility requirements. Every Food Alliance certified farm or ranch should apply.

For additional information, contact:

Oregon NRCS  
503-414-3200  
[www.or.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.or.nrcs.usda.gov)

Food Alliance  
503-493-1066  
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