

## Sustainable Agriculture Certification Program Expands into California

**Davis, CA – Tuesday, April 17, 2007**—The non-profit organization Food Alliance announced today that it has opened an office in California to certify farms, ranches, food processors and distributors in the state for sustainable practices.

Food Alliance has hired David Visher to represent its program in California. Visher brings broad experience to the position, having been a farmer, managed a produce company, been an educator with University of California Cooperative Extension, and consulted to agricultural businesses on management and regulatory compliance issues. “I’m really pleased to be able to support the next wave in sustainable agriculture in California,” said Visher. “Consumer and market expectations are only going up. I think there are real opportunities for growers and processors that can meet Food Alliance standards.”

The move by Food Alliance will also create opportunities for retail and food service companies. “Food Alliance has been very valuable for our operations in the Northwest as they move to source more sustainably grown products,” said Culinary Support and Development Director Marc Zammit of Bon Appétit Management Company, “We look forward to working with Food Alliance in California as well.”

Food Alliance certification standards for farmers and ranchers include:

- Safe and fair working conditions
- Healthy and humane care for livestock
- No hormones or non-therapeutic antibiotics
- No genetically modified crops or livestock
- Reduction of pesticide use and toxicity
- Conservation of soil and water resources
- Protection of wildlife habitat
- Planning for continuous improvement

Certification standards for “handlers,” including food processors and distributors, address:

- Handling of Food Alliance certified products
- Safe and fair working conditions
- Conservation of energy
- Conservation of water
- Responsible solid waste management
- Reduction of toxic and hazardous materials
- Quality control and food safety
- Planning for continuous improvement

Businesses that meet Food Alliance’s standards, as determined through a third-party site inspection, use the certification to make credible claims for social and environmental responsibility, in order to differentiate products and to protect and strengthen brands.

Food Alliance launched its certification program in 1998 in Portland, Oregon, with a single apple grower selling in three area grocery stores. Today, there are over 270 Food Alliance certified farms and ranches managing over 4.3 million acres of range and farm land, and raising beef, lamb, pork, dairy products, mushrooms, dried beans and lentils, wheat, and a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. Food Alliance has also certified 13 handling operations, including 9 fruit/vegetable processors, a cheesemaker, and three units of a mainline produce distributor.

Food Alliance’s expansion into California has been funded by the Environmental Protection Agency, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Cedar Tree Foundation. Food Alliance Certified businesses in California currently include the Hearst Ranch and pear processor Alex R. Thomas & Co. “We’re looking forward to building a strong presence in California,” said Food Alliance Executive Director Scott Exo, “And to helping more farmers, ranchers, and food processors add value to their products with verified claims for social and environmental responsibility.”

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