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New 'Grassfed' Certification Program for Cattle, Sheep and Goats

Assures Consumers Animals are Raised on Pasture/Range, Treated Humanely, No Grain, No Hormones, No Antibiotics

Portland, Oregon: The non-profit Food Alliance today announced that two California ranches have been certified under the organization's newly published national certification standard for grassfed cattle, sheep and goats. The standard requires that animals be raised on pasture or range, where they can browse on an exclusive diet of grass and forage plants. Animals may not be fed grain or grain by-products, or receive hormone or antibiotic treatments of any kind. In addition, producers must also meet the organization's signature standards for humane animal care, safe and fair working conditions, soil and water conservation, and protection of wildlife habitat.

The two newly certified beef operations are Hearst Ranch Beef, a sprawling 150,000 acre ranching operation on California's central coast, and the TomKat Ranch, a smaller, direct market beef producer in Pescadero, California. "Whether you're serving local markets or trying to build a national brand, it comes down to trust," says the team at TomKat Ranch. "It's one thing to make claims about your products but quite another to have those claims audited by a credible, third-party organization like Food Alliance. The claims we make have been independently verified and we hope other producers will follow suit to achieve Food Alliance certification."

"We looked at a variety of certification options and recognized Food Alliance's comprehensive approach," says Hearst Ranch Beef division manager, Brian Kenny. "Raising free-range grassfed beef isn't just about what animals eat. Food Alliance is the only certification program that covers the feed issue, labor conditions, humane animal care, and environmental concerns. There's nobody like Food Alliance. We're raising cattle on a working landscape, a large part of which is under conservation easement. We think Food Alliance certification is a credible way to communicate our commitment to responsibly manage our entire operation, and provide customers a product with the highest quality and integrity possible."

"Consumer interest in grassfed meats will only continue to grow," says Food Alliance executive director, Scott Exo. "Food Alliance grassfed certification offers a practical solution for farmers and ranchers at all scales who want to access that market. Buyers of grassfed products want to know that animals have been treated humanely, that they have grazed freely on grass and forage plants, and that range and pasture have been managed to produce the best possible environmental outcome."

In addition to the two California ranches, Food Alliance is processing applications for grassfed certification from farms in New York, Pennsylvania and other states. "We're seeing rapidly growing interest in developing certified grassfed products," says Exo, "and producers who have been doing things right want a tool that can make their products stand apart from those bearing unsubstantiated marketing claims."

Food Alliance's new grassfed certification standards and related audit protocols have been reviewed by the US Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service, and were found to meet or exceed USDA requirements for labeling of grassfed meat.

About Food Alliance

Food Alliance is a non-profit organization founded in 1997 that certifies farms, ranches, food processors and distributors for sustainable agriculture and production practices. Businesses 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 over 320 Food Alliance certified farms and ranches in 23 United States, Canada, and Mexico. These producers manage over 5.6 million acres of range and farm land, raising beef, lamb, pork, dairy products, wheat, and a wide variety of fruits and vegetables.

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