



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Innovative Non-Profit Partnership Brings Sustainable Agriculture Certification to Pennsylvania**

*New Markets for Farmers, More Socially and Environmentally Responsible Products for Consumers*

**Millheim, PA – February 2, 2009:** The Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA), a leading advocate for reconnecting farmers and consumers to improve human and environmental health, today launched a new effort to create more traceability, transparency and accountability in the regional food system. PASA has formed a partnership with the national non-profit Food Alliance to certify farmers, ranchers, and food packers, processors and distributors in Pennsylvania and surrounding states for sustainable agricultural and business practices.

Food Alliance certification standards address a wide range of consumer concerns for food products including: safe and fair working conditions, healthy and humane treatment of animals, reduction of pesticide use and toxicity, soil and water conservation, and protection of wildlife habitat. The standards specifically prohibit genetically modified crops or livestock, and the use of hormones or non-therapeutic antibiotics. They require vegetarian feeds for animals, with the exception of milk and milk by-products.

“For consumers to make free and informed choices about what kinds of foods support the health and well-being of our communities and the environment, they need a basis for evaluating marketing claims,” says PASA director Brian Snyder. “They may be able make more informed decisions about local foods when they have met the farmer in the farmers market and had a conversation about how that farm was managed. That opportunity usually doesn’t exist in a retail or restaurant setting. We want to give our regional farmers a tool to differentiate their products in that retail or food service setting. And we want to give citizens a better means to separate the marketing of food from the reality of production practices.”

“A growing number of companies are marketing ‘natural’ or ‘green’ products – but when you look closely, there’s not much behind it,” says Food Alliance director Scott Exo. “Consumers know that game and they are increasingly cynical. Third-party certification verifies and substantiates marketing claims. There is an objective and meaningful standard for performance. There is a credible inspection process to ensure the standard has been met. With third-party certification, you know where the product comes from and you know how it was produced. That transparency creates trust and loyalty.”

### **About the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture**

*PASA is the only statewide, member-based, sustainable farming organization in Pennsylvania and is one of the largest in the nation. Through its history, membership in the organization has grown steadily, reaching approximately 1,000 at the ten-year point, and now almost 5,000. Consistently, about two-thirds of PASA members are farmers. Its mission is “to promote profitable farms that produce healthy food for all people while respecting the natural environment.”*

### **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 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 farmland, raising beef, lamb, pork, poultry, dairy, wheat, and a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. Food Alliance has offices in Oregon, Minnesota and California.*



### **For Further Information:**

#### **PASA**

Allison Shauger  
(814) 349-9856, ext. 206  
[allison@pasafarming.org](mailto:allison@pasafarming.org)  
[www.pasafarming.org](http://www.pasafarming.org)

#### **Food Alliance**

John Harrington  
(503) 493-1066, ext. 24  
[john@foodalliance.org](mailto:john@foodalliance.org)  
[www.foodalliance.org](http://www.foodalliance.org)

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