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Prairie Heritage Beef First in Canada to Earn Food Alliance Certification

Cooperative will now market sustainably-produced beef in Canada and beyond

Alberta, Canada–February 13, 2009: Prairie Heritage Producers is the first company in Canada to meet standards for social and environmental responsibility established by the non-profit Food Alliance.

Food Alliance certification addresses a full range of consumer concerns, with standards that include: 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 do not permit the use of hormone treatments or non-therapeutic antibiotics, or certification of genetically modified crops or livestock.

Prairie Heritage Producers is a cooperative of 20 family ranches managing approximately 250,000 acres in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Beef produced by the cooperative is currently available for retail sale in Alberta and British Columbia at Thrifty Foods, Quality Foods, Rowe Farms, and Whole Foods Market in Vancouver. Prairie Heritage Beef is also featured at Canadian Mountain Holiday Lodges and at Hero Burgers, a Toronto-based restaurant chain.

“If you want to talk about sustainable beef-raising, you have to look at the health of the land, the well-being of the animals, and the commitment of the people who stand behind the product,” says Prairie Heritage founder Christoph Weder. “With Food Alliance certification, Prairie Heritage Producers is offering our customers traceability, transparency and accountability. There are no secrets. You know where the beef comes from. You know how it was raised. And you know the names of the ranchers.”

Food Alliance director Scott Exo sees certification as an increasingly important tool to credibly back marketing claims. “A lot of companies market ‘natural’ and ‘green’ products – but when you look closely, there’s not often much behind it. With third-party certification, though, there are independent standards and a regular inspection process to ensure the standards have been met. That level of transparency creates loyalty and trust.”

Prairie Heritage Producers was attracted to the comprehensive nature of Food Alliance’s standards. Weder explains, “Our customers expect value - but they also want a product that represents their values. They are concerned about the environment, animal welfare, and how workers are treated. Food Alliance covers all those bases with a single certification, and they’ve been doing it for over a decade. I also like the fact that Food Alliance focuses on continual improvement. I think that’s critical to the idea of sustainability. We always want to be thinking about how to improve our management.”

“It’s a pleasure to be able to recognize a truly progressive group of ranchers like Prairie Heritage Producers,” says Scott Exo. “They set a great example for their industry, not just in terms of environmental performance, but also in reconnecting the producer and the consumer. With certification, they’ve taken a big step to differentiate and add value to their product to meet the needs of their customers.”

About Food Alliance

Food Alliance is a non-profit organization 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. Food Alliance was founded in 1997, and has offices in Oregon, Minnesota and California.

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