



## **Sustainable agriculture program expands into California**

DAVIS

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- **David Visher hired to run state program**
- **Seen as a way to differentiate companies**

California farms, ranches, food processors and distributors will be able to be certified for sustainable practices by the non-profit organization Food Alliance that has opened an office in Davis.

David Visher has been hired to run the office as the program expands into across the state.

"I think there are real opportunities for growers and processors that can meet Food Alliance standards," says Mr. Visher.

Food Alliance certification standards for farmers and ranchers range from safe and fair working conditions and humane care for livestock to a pledge to not raise genetically modified crops or livestock.

Certification standards for food processors and distributors include conservation of water, "responsible" solid waste management and reduction of toxic and hazardous materials.

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

Food Alliance launched its certification program in 1998 in Portland, Ore., with a single apple grower selling in three area grocery stores. Today, the organization says 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 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.

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