

Food distributor receives sustainable certification

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United Salad/Duck Delivery is the first food product distributor in the United States certified for sustainable business practices.

The business passed its third-party audit for sustainable practices at its Portland and Seattle area facilities, according to the Food Alliance, an organization that certifies farms, ranches and food processors for sustainable agricultural and production practices.

The audit covered a variety of industry and consumer concerns, including:

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

United Salad is the first food product distributor to request that its facilities and practices be evaluated under the Food Alliance program. "Sustainability may start with the farmer," said Ernie Spada, vice president of United Salad, "but it doesn't end there. Distributors play an important role in getting more sustainably grown products to market. We also want the opportunity to demonstrate our company's commitment to sustainable practices."

United Salad is a family-owned and -operated wholesaler founded in 1940. United Salad sells all varieties of fruits, vegetables, herbs, and specialty and processed produce, serving over 1,000 retail customers a week in Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Alaska. United Salad also owns Duck Delivery which caters to the food service market. Together, United Salad and Duck Delivery constitute one of the largest produce houses in the West.

Awareness of market trends led United Salad to evaluate its social and environmental impact, and ultimately to apply for Food Alliance certification. "I believe that we have an obligation to help keep our customers up to date with market trends and new product offerings," said Spada. "It's clear to me that consumers are increasingly concerned with where their food comes from and how it is produced. Food Alliance certification offers answers to a lot of the questions people are asking."

"We're really pleased to see United Salad extending their definition of quality and service to include social and environmental performance," said Food Alliance Executive Director Scott Exo. "That adds value for a growing number of commercial food buyers and for consumers. With an independent inspection of United Salad's facilities and practices, and clear chain of custody for certified products, those customers can also trust that they are getting the real deal."

United Salad is hoping to distinguish itself as the go-to source for Food Alliance Certified products. "There's a lot of interest in this program, but supply is frankly a challenge now," said Spada. "We want to help grow this program and promote the certification to our farmer suppliers, so that we can meet the needs of our retail and food service customers."

United Salad has implemented a comprehensive HACCP program to ensure food safety in its processing and warehouse facilities, and in transit.

In addition to offering Food Alliance Certified products, United Salad is also a full service organic distributor.