

News Release

Food Alliance Honors Sustainable Farmers and Ranchers

Contact

Scott Exo 503.493.1066

For Immediate Release

Portland, OR (March 1, 2005) – At its Sixth Annual Recognition Dinner Food Alliance recently honored three farming businesses for their commitment to environmentally friendly and socially responsible agricultural practices. Food Alliance presented its Keeper of the Vision Awards to Oregon-based Yamhill County Mushrooms and Peter Kenagy Family Farms, and Minnesota-based Pastureland dairy.

The dinner was sponsored by over 30 local, regional and national food businesses and supporting institutions and attended by over 300 supporters of sustainable agriculture at Portland's Multnomah Athletic Club (MAC). The dinner featured foods provided by local producers and was prepared by chefs Paul Beppler of the MAC and Joseph McGarry of Bon Appétit.

All three operations who received the awards have met Food Alliance's certification standards. Scott Exo, executive director for Food Alliance, said, "These three awardees have shown remarkable leadership in advancing the principles of sustainable agriculture, as environmental stewards, employers and examples to their peers. We applaud and thank them for bringing us good food for a healthy future."

Yamhill County Mushrooms

Yamhill County Mushrooms received the Keeper of the Vision award for their innovations in composting, worker incentive and quality of life programs and runoff containment systems. Owner Bob Darm developed an innovative system to keep insects and pathogens out of his production facility. The result was a 75% decrease in the use of pesticides, which Bob says is better for his workers and his bottom line. Yamhill County Mushrooms currently has 65 permanent employees, many from Mexico. They receive profit sharing bonuses based on the overall success of the farm, job specific bonuses based on quality of work and safety, and can take extended vacations without fear of losing their jobs. Yamhill County Mushrooms has also demonstrated its commitment to the environment by building a catchment pond to contain runoff from the composting and mushroom production facilities and protect a stream running through the property.

Peter Kenagy, Kenagy Family Farms

Food Alliance awarded Peter Kenagy the Keeper of the Vision award for his leadership in land stewardship. Peter and his family manage a 475 acre farm in the Willamette Valley that includes fields, forests, wetlands and river frontage. Peter has been described as a "one-man agricultural experiment station," and is credited with several innovations in cover-cropping, conservation tillage, and riparian buffers. He also grows seed for plants native to the Willamette Valley for wetland mitigation, upland prairie restoration and revegetation on public lands. Peter is a member of NORPAC Foods and serves on the cooperative's Stewardship Committee, which worked with Food Alliance recently to develop a set of sustainable agricultural production guidelines for member farms.

PastureLand

PastureLand dairy received the Keeper of the Vision award for their commitment to sustainable agriculture. PastureLand is a cooperative of three family farms in Southeastern Minnesota. Family owned since the 1930's and 40's, they decided in the 10890's to switch to management intensive rotational grazing, allowing their cows to get most of their nutrition from perennial forage plants. PastureLand's member Dan French describes their approach this way, "Our job is to manage solar energy. We harvest it in the form of grass using animals. The healthier the system is, the healthier the product is going to be." Pastureland cows, grazing on rye grass, alfalfa and clover, produce rich milk with a high percentage of butterfat. Pastureland began marketing its own line of butter and cheeses in 2000, working in partnership with a local creamery and a craft cheesemaker, and now sells in retail grocery stores in five states and online (www.pastureland.coop). Pastureland won top honors for both salted and unsalted butters at the prestigious American Cheese Society competition in 2004.

For additional information, contact:

Yamhill County Mushrooms
Bob Darm
(503) 662-4131

PastureLand
Jean Andreasen
612-331-9115
jandreas@bitstream.net

Peter Kenagy
Kenagy Family Farm, Inc.
(541) 926-8038
kenagy@proaxis.com

About Food Alliance

Food Alliance is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the use of sustainable agricultural practices through market-based incentives. Food Alliance operates one of the nation's leading certification programs for environmentally friendly and socially responsible agricultural practices, and actively develops new markets for certified products. To date, Food Alliance has certified over 200 different agricultural products on farms and ranches in 16 states, including fruits, vegetables, wheat, wine, livestock and dairy. Food Alliance is a national non-profit organization based in Portland, Oregon and has an affiliate office in St. Paul, Minnesota.

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