

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE --

Is it Sustainable? Free Web Tool Allows Farmers to Evaluate Farm Management Practices

Wednesday, March 7, 2007

Portland, OR – Farmers now have a free online tool available that allows them to compare their current management practices with “best practices” for sustainable agriculture. Developed by Food Alliance, a non-profit certification organization, through a partnership with Oregon State University and Washington State University, and with support from USDA Risk Management Agency, the tool offers information and resources to help farmers identify and implement strategies to manage production, environmental, human resource and other risks.

The online self-assessment tool looks at safe and fair working conditions, integrated pest management, soil and water conservation, and wildlife habitat conservation. In each of these areas, the tool provides background information on issues and risk management strategies, and links to resources and incentives to help farmers improve their management practices.

Farmers who enter information on their operation and practices can also receive an assessment of whether they would qualify for Food Alliance certification, or whether their management practices might support other “values-added” marketing opportunities. All information entered is kept strictly confidential.

“Years of work by university and agency researchers, and by representatives of labor and environmental organizations have gone into developing Food Alliance’s certification standards for sustainable agriculture,” said Food Alliance Executive Director Scott Exo. “This self assessment tool gives us a means to share that work with a broader farmer audience. The market for sustainably-grown agricultural products is growing rapidly. This tool should help farmers get a better sense of the requirements and how difficult or easy it might be to tap that market.”

Interested farmers should visit <http://sat.foodalliance.org> for more information.

About Food Alliance:

Food Alliance is a non-profit organization that certifies farms, ranches and food processors for sustainable agricultural 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.

About USDA Risk Management Agency:

RMA's mission is to promote, support, and regulate sound risk management solutions to preserve and strengthen the economic stability of America's agricultural producers.