

Declaration of Sustainability in the Organic Food Trade

As growers, processors, handlers, brokers, distributors and retailers in the organic food trade, we are deeply concerned about the unprecedented scale and speed of environmental pollution and degradation, climate change, and depletion of natural and human resources that our business practices may cause. We believe urgent actions are needed to address these fundamental problems and reverse these trends.

Vision

Our vision is to conduct our businesses in a way that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. We recognize that ecology, human communities and economy are interwoven into a seamless net of causes and effects. Therefore we embrace the challenge to move our operations and actions toward sustainable models where the management of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of development, and the evolution of the organic food trade becomes consistent with the principles of sustainability.

Principles

We will endeavor to establish a culture of sustainability where the following four "systems conditions" will be standard throughout the organic food trade (The Natural Step):

1. Our companies will endeavor systematically to reduce and eventually eliminate their economic dependence on substances extracted from the earth's crust, such as heavy metals and fossil fuels.
2. Our companies will endeavor systematically to reduce and eventually eliminate their economic dependence on synthetic and bio-accumulating toxic substances produced by humans, such as fossil-fuel based plastics, synthetic pesticides/herbicides and soil amendments, manufacturing and building materials, other synthetic toxic materials as well as growth hormones and genetically modified organisms.
3. Our companies will endeavor systematically to reduce and eventually eliminate their dependence on materials and processes that degrade the 'stocks' and 'flows' of 'natural capital' such as soil, air, water, plants, habitat etc. harvested in environmentally damaging ways and quantities.
4. Our companies will endeavor to systematically reduce and eventually eliminate their economic dependence on actions that increase inequity in the way resources are distributed. Companies must implement active approaches that guarantee all workers in our industry access to fair wages, sufficient benefits and quality work conditions.

We, therefore, agree to strive for continuous progressive improvement and to practice transparency in annually auditing our organizations in the following areas:

Organic—We recognize the many benefits of organic farming for the health of the soil, water resources, plant, animal and human communities. We will strive to source the food products we vend from farms using organic methods. Furthermore, we will strive to source all agriculturally derived products (fiber, bio-based fuels and packaging, company meals, etc) we use in our operations from farms and supply sources using organic methods and offering organically grown product lines. We recognize the importance of independent third-party certification as an assurance that organic methods are being followed and will endeavor to verify all organic claims before vending a product.

Distribution—We will strive to produce, pack, transport, and distribute products from field to market using the most efficient means possible with the most environmentally responsible renewable fuel sources. We will systematically improve our energy efficiency, reduce our energy consumption, and reduce food-miles whenever possible.

Energy—We will strive to store, process, distribute and vend our products using energy resources in the most resourceful means possible with energy efficiency best management practices. We will utilize the most environmentally responsible renewable energy opportunities whenever possible such as solar, wind, hydro, and geothermal.

Climate Change—We will strive to actively reduce all production, storage, processing, and retail practices that create the greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change. We will measure the carbon footprint of our operations and strive for achieving carbon-neutrality in all of our business practices.

Water— We will strive to reduce our use of fresh water and to optimize our operations to be so that all water use is as efficient as possible. We will raise awareness of regional and local water issues through education and information sharing. We commit to managing our water resources with the realization that multiple water stressors exist today, creating a situation where water is an increasingly scarce resource.

Waste—We will strive to reduce waste at the source and treat waste in a way that sustains all living systems, through reusing, donating, recycling, and composting. When necessary we will utilize environmentally sound disposal systems. We will continually redesign our operations so that eventually “waste” will be eliminated because all material will become the raw material for new products and uses.

Packaging— We will strive to implement a zero-waste approach to packaging. This will entail: 1) reducing the amount of packaging we use, 2) actively participating in the development of packaging that is reusable, recyclable, and/or biodegradable; 3) considering packaging material contents when making all purchasing decisions, and 4) collaborating with buyers and suppliers on creative solutions which eliminate unsustainable packaging throughout the value chain.

Labor—We acknowledge that those communities which protect and work the land are particularly vulnerable and must be treated fairly. We will strive to ensure that growers and handlers of food products collaborate to guarantee basic labor rights and verifiable improvements in the lives of farm workers and their communities. We will work to ensure that all workers are given the opportunity to give feedback about their needs and wants. We will develop and implement company policies, procedures, training and internal reporting structures to ensure commitment to good labor practices throughout our organization. These labor practices will include ensuring that we compensate our employees to enable them to meet at least their basic needs and provide the opportunity to improve their skill and capability in order to raise their social and economic opportunities, promoting equal opportunity for our employees at all levels of the company, and provide a safe and healthy workplace.

Animal Care—We will strive to ensure that livestock have access to clean and sufficient food and water; that their environment is not dangerous to their health; that they have sufficient protection from weather elements; that they have sufficient space allowance in order for them to move naturally including access to pasture; and other features to ensure the safety, health and comfort of the animal. In addition, that managers and caretakers be thoroughly trained, skilled and competent in animal husbandry and welfare, and have good working knowledge of their system and the livestock in their care.

Consumer Education— We will strive to provide consumers, employees, our communities, and the media accurate, useful and timely information about all of the areas listed in this document.

Governance—We will strive to review our progress toward these goals on a regular basis by conducting self audits and being transparent with all employees and the public with the results. We will actively engage in communication across the trade to solve sustainability related challenges and will facilitate dialogue regarding action.

SIGNATORY FORM

As a grower, processor, handler, broker, distributor and/or retailer in the organic food trade, we are deeply concerned about the unprecedented scale and speed of environmental pollution and degradation, climate change, and depletion of natural and human resources. We believe urgent actions are needed to address these fundamental problems and reverse these trends. We endorse this Declaration of Sustainability and agree to strive for continuous progressive improvement and to practice transparency in annually auditing our organizations in accordance with these principles.

Declaration of Sustainability Signatory

Organization

President, Chief Operating Officer, Executive Director and/ or General Manager

Name

Signature

Primary Representative active in FTSL Association

Name

Signature

Date