Madison, WI, November 17, 2011 – Leonardo Academy hosted the fall quarterly meeting of the multi-stakeholder Sustainable Agriculture Standards Committee by webinar on Friday, October 21. A new website dedicated to the standard development process was also announced at the meeting. The new website www.sustainableagstandard.org was released for public use as part of a new communications platform. It includes social media tools, such as Facebook and Twitter, to aid in getting the word out that the first draft standard is progressing towards completion. Those who are interested can participate by joining us on these social media sites as they can add value at the subcommittee level.

As was highlighted at the meeting, the Draft Standard for Sustainable Agriculture (LEO-4000) is gearing up for public comment and subsequent pilot testing in the spring of 2012. Leonardo Academy is seeking producers, manufactures, retailers, consumers and end-user representatives to participate in the pilot testing of this standard. At the meeting, the Committee completed the second of three phases of drafting specific criteria, metrics and outlined clear achievement levels in the development process.

New Members Acquired

The Standards Committee announced and welcomed new members David Groenfeldt and Tim Galarneau at the Quarterly Standards Committee Meeting.

Anthropologist Dr. Groenfeldt is adjunct Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of New Mexico, and founder and director of the Water-Culture Institute, which explores how cultural values can contribute to sustainable water and agricultural management. Among the Institute’s initiatives are a "Water Ethics Network" to encourage research and action into the values underlying water policies, and an agricultural visioning program to empower traditional farming communities in meeting both economic and cultural goals.

Tim Galarneau is a professor at the University of California Santa Cruz and a representative of the Center for Agro Ecology & Sustainable Food Systems serving on behalf of AASHE. He is one of the members who is implementing the STARS rating system. He is the co-founder of the Real Food Challenge and serves as an advisor to their efforts. He aided in the development of the UC Sustainable Food Service Policy standards. He was a consultant to the Agricultural Justice Project's domestic fair trade certification.
Increase in Participation Noted

Committee Chairman Brian McElroy, Organic Supply Manager of Driscoll's Strawberry Associates, said, “I am pleased to say that Leonardo Academy held a successful meeting with overwhelming participation. The Environmental, Economic and Social Sustainability Subcommittees are on track or ahead in reaching their goal of having the draft standard ready for consideration by the whole committee by spring. Now is the time for all those interested in sustainable agriculture to get involved. There are many different opportunities to make a contribution on the subcommittees.”

Leonardo Academy President Michael Arny added, “This was a very productive meeting due to the hard work of the Coordinating Committee and Subcommittee members since the April 2011 Standards Committee Meeting. As Chairman Brian McElroy said, ‘now is the time to get involved’ and many are responding. We continue to work toward finishing a draft standard for public review by April 2012. We encourage more people to join and support this process either by contributing their time, signing up to pilot the standard upon completion, comment on current work or by making a charitable donation.”

Funding

The development of the Sustainable Agriculture Standard is wholly funded through grants and donations, both monetary and in-kind. Leonardo Academy welcomes donations to support this standard development process. To make a tax deductible donation to support the development process, go to: http://www.leonardoacademy.org/programs/standards/agstandard/donate.html.

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Opportunities to Participate in Developing the Sustainable Agriculture Standard
You can participate in the Sustainable Agriculture Standard development process as a subcommittee member, and an observer or reviewer of the draft standard once it is opened up for public comment or apply to participate as a committee member.

Subcommittees - Subcommittees are open to membership by all interested parties. Current subcommittees are: 1) Economic Criteria Development, 2) Environmental Criteria Development, 3) Social Criteria Development, 4) Structure and Process, 5) Reference Library and Information and 6) Fundraising and Communications. If you are interested please submit an application.

Observers - Observers are invited to participate in the standard development process. Observers may attend in-person Standards Committee meetings on a first-come, first-serve basis, subject to the availability of space, and may also participate in all Standards Committee and Subcommittee teleconferences. If you are interested please submit an application.

Public Review and Comment - Once the Standards Committee reaches agreement on a draft Sustainable Agriculture Standard, it will be posted for public comment. The public review and comment period provides all stakeholders with an additional opportunity to participate in the standard development process. At the end of the public comment period, the Standards Committee will address all of the comments received prior to submitting the final standard to ANSI for approval as an American National Standard. If you are interested, you can review and submit your comments when the draft standard is rereleased for public comment.

The Standards Committee
There are 60 seats on the Standards Committee to accommodate a broad range of perspectives. The Standards Committee is working to develop a national standard for sustainable agriculture under the rules of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). The Standards Committee consists of a skilled, diverse membership representing a broad range of perspectives from across all areas of agriculture, including commodity and specialty crop producers; agricultural product processors and distributors; food retailers; environmental, labor, and development organizations; NGOs; trade associations; government representatives; academics; regulators and certifiers.

How to Apply to Participate To receive an application for membership on a subcommittee, observer status or on the Standards Committee, contact Jennifer Trucks at Leonardo Academy:
About Leonardo Academy

Mission Statement
Leonardo Academy is a charitable 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing sustainability by leveraging innovative tools and information to motivate the competitive market. By utilizing an interdisciplinary approach to sustainability strategies, education and implementation, we strive to make sustainability practical for everyone. We develop integrative sustainability solutions designed to enhance the environmental stewardship, social responsibility and economic prosperity of organizations, corporations and individuals. We see a world filled with sustainable opportunities that can transform the way we live today and ensure the prosperity of future generations.

Programs and Services
Leonardo Academy works on a broad range of sustainability issues and provides comprehensive sustainability programs and services to help companies, organizations, families and individuals implement sustainability. Our programs and services include: organizational sustainability assessments and implementation; emissions footprints, reduction strategies and offsets; event emissions footprints, sustainability assessments and implementation; sustainable event certification through our Cleaner and Greener® Program; LEED® assessments, implementation and certification application preparation; sustainable land management; sustainability training; and sustainability standards development.

Join Our Work
Individuals, organizations and companies are invited to join in Leonardo Academy’s work on advancing sustainability. One important way to join in our work is by making a charitable donation to support these efforts. Online donations can be made at: www.leonardoacademy.org.

For More Information about Leonardo Academy
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