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*For Immediate Release*

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## **Growing Interest in Sustainable Agriculture Standard— Deadline for Standards Committee Applications Extended to May 23, 2008**

**Madison, WI – April 1, 2008** – Since September 2007, Leonardo Academy has been promoting awareness of the development process of the Draft American National Standard for Trail Use for Sustainable Agriculture Practice, intended for subsequent approval as an American National Standard. National meetings have been held in Berkeley, California and Arlington, Virginia, in addition to three national teleconferences, to inform interested parties and stakeholders about this standard development process. Due to increasing interest in the development of this standard following the February 29, 2008 meeting in Arlington, Leonardo Academy has decided to extend the deadline for applications for the standard development committee to May 23, 2008. This extension has been implemented based on numerous requests to allow time for additional stakeholders to submit applications to participate on the standard development committee and/or supporting subcommittees.

### **Purpose of Developing a Standard for Sustainable Agriculture Practice**

The Sustainable Agriculture Practice Standard is being developed in response to rising interest in practicing, defining, standardizing, and certifying sustainable agriculture. Establishing a national standard for sustainable agriculture practices has the opportunity to serve many purposes, including:

- Defining sustainability practices and indicators throughout the supply chain on a life-cycle basis
- Distinguishing best practices in crop production and handling
- Guiding producers and handlers through stages of incremental improvement
- Providing a common set of metrics to gauge sustainability progress—whether in a private supply chain, an industry sector, or on a state/regional/national scale
- Setting a reference benchmark for private sustainability efforts

All interested stakeholders have a role to play in shaping the final standard, working within the open consensus process. Within this setting, the standard can be developed and enhanced for the public good.

### **The Draft American Standard for Trial Use: Sustainable Agriculture Practice for Food Fiber and Biofuel Crop Producers and Agricultural Product Handlers and Processors (SCS-001)**

This draft standard for trial use was announced in the spring of 2007. Within the ANSI process, a draft standard for trial use represents a beginning, not an end. It serves as a starting point from which stakeholder discussions can ensue and is intended to stimulate dialogue on key issues, such as the multiple interpretations of sustainability as it applies to agriculture, which must be addressed in order to establish a finalized American National Standard for Sustainable Agriculture Practice.

The Standards Committee can change any component of the draft standard in the process to establish a final draft standard, which will be subject to public review and comment by other materially affected parties. The Standards Committee will decide how to define sustainable agriculture practices within the scope of this standard, as well as



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how to address both the general and sector-specific needs of multiple agricultural crop sectors. Ultimately, the Standards Committee will decide what is in the final standard that will be submitted for approval as an American National Standard. For this reason, all interested parties and stakeholders are invited to participate in the development process of this standard by serving on the Standards Committee or a non-voting advisory subcommittee.

### **Call for Standards Committee Applications**

All parties and stakeholders interested in the standard development process are invited to apply to participate on the Standards Committee or one of the advisory subcommittees. Applications will be reviewed in full in order to achieve a balanced dispersion of qualifications and expertise on the Standards Committee. The committee application form can be found on the Leonardo Academy website: <http://www.leonardoacademy.org/Projects/SustainAgStdDevelopment.htm>.

Applications for participation should be submitted by or before **Friday, May 23, 2008**. All applicants will be informed of their committee status on **Monday, June 16, 2008**.

### **More about the Draft Standard**

Interest in standardizing sustainable agriculture has grown dramatically around the world in the past decade. This increasing interest has been fueled by a range of critical environmental and social concerns, such as global warming, water shortages, species extinction, dangerous working conditions, unfair labor practices, and disregard for local communities. In response, dozens of sustainability initiatives and programs have emerged. This national standardization initiative has been launched to provide a forum for discussing and vetting differences over what sustainability means within the agricultural sector and to capture the collective wisdom of individuals and organizations that have been leading the way in defining and establishing sustainable practices. More information about the standardization initiative, including documents and presentations from the stakeholder meeting held October 29-30, 2007 and February 29, 2008, as well as a copy of the draft standard for trial use, can be downloaded from the Leonardo website: <http://www.leonardoacademy.org/Projects/SustainAgStdDevelopment.htm>.

### **Funding**

Leonardo Academy is seeking financial assistance from foundations, companies and organizations with an interest in sustainability issues to aid in the development of this standard, to provide small farmers with financial and technical assistance in testing the Sustainable Agriculture Draft Standard for Trial Use and to provide financial assistance to non-profits to cover the costs of their participation. If you are interested in donating financial resources to support this project, please contact the Leonardo Academy.

### **About The Leonardo Academy**

Leonardo Academy is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded in 1997 with a vision of advancing sustainability and putting the competitive market to work on improving the environment.

### **For Additional Information**

Please visit the Sustainable Agriculture Practice Draft Standard for Trial Use web page: <http://www.leonardoacademy.org/Projects/SustainAgStdDevelopment.htm>.

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