



MEDIA RELEASE

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First National Sustainable Agriculture Standard Setting Initiative Moves Into High Gear

Industry, NGOs, Academia and Government Representatives Agree on First Steps Toward Building a National Consensus Standard

Madison, WI (September 29, 2008) — The first successful steps toward developing a national consensus standard for sustainable agriculture in the United States have now been taken by a diverse, multi-stakeholder committee selected to lead this endeavor.

At an unprecedented opening session, more than 50 representatives of U.S. agricultural production, food and clothing manufacturing, retail, government, environmental and labor organizations, academia and certification launched historic negotiations over what should be considered “sustainable agriculture”. The representatives were selected from a pool of nearly 200 individuals who applied to serve on the Standards Committee, the guiding body for development of the standard.

During the meeting held last week, committee members identified some of the difficult issues that are likely to dominate the discussions to come, such as: 1) the relationship between organic, mainstream and sustainable agriculture; 2) the place of genetically engineered crops in sustainable agriculture; 3) the degree to which sustainable agriculture standards should establish a path for continuous improvement; 4) inclusiveness of small and mid-size farms, as well as mainstream and conventional agriculture; 5) the sequestration of carbon in soils and the role of agriculture in the global fight against climate change; 6) the strength of labor protections; 7) the intersection of product safety and sustainability; and 8) whether the scope of the standard should extend beyond plant agriculture to include livestock and other sectors of agriculture.

“The issues involved in sustainable agriculture are complex,” said Dr. James Barrett, Environmental Horticulture Department professor at the University of Florida, who served as interim chairman at the Standards Committee’s inaugural meeting. “As a result, there are many diverse, valid points of view that will need to be articulated and considered as this process unfolds.”

The entire standard setting process is being conducted under the rules of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), the national voluntary standards body that has overseen the development of thousands of guidelines in nearly every business sector. Leonardo Academy, a non-profit organization that specializes in



using market-based incentives to advance sustainability and improve the environment, is facilitating the current process as an ANSI accredited standard developer.

“We were impressed not only by the depth of knowledge and understanding reflected in the thoughtful comments and deliberations of the Committee but also by the level of respect for one another’s viewpoints and concerns, and the willingness at this early stage to seek common ground,” said Michael Arny, Leonardo Academy president. “The tone set here in Madison bodes well for the success of the process moving forward.”

Among the actions taken by the Standards Committee was an agreement to form work groups charged with the following tasks:

1. Conduct a needs assessment for the sustainability standard, including potential market and agricultural applications
2. Review and articulate the mission, principles and scope of work ahead
3. Collect reference documents to inform the standard setting process
4. Report on potential methodologies and indicators for measuring various aspects of environmental, social and economic sustainability;
5. Identify potential funding sources to support full stakeholder participation in the process
6. Outline outreach opportunities for soliciting involvement from all affected stakeholders

In addition, the Standards Committee acknowledged “the extensive effort and hard work of SCS to initiate the discussion on sustainability.” The Committee further agreed to recognize and set aside the Draft Standard for Trial Use (SCS-001), published by Scientific Certification Systems (SCS) as a vehicle for initiating the broader standard-setting dialogue, as one of several reference documents expected to be used in its future standards development deliberations,

“We appreciate the acknowledgement of the Committee and are delighted that the draft standard has helped to stimulate this national dialogue and to get the ball rolling toward the development of a consensus standard,” said Linda Brown, Executive Vice President of Scientific Certification Systems and Standards Committee member. “Looking ahead, the draft standard will continue to inform the process, both as a reference document and through real world examples of companies who are already meeting its requirements and adopting new sustainability practices in accordance with its provisions.”

According to Michael Arny, ANSI rules allow all interested stakeholders to participate in subcommittee deliberations as the standard development process moves forward. In addition, ANSI gives the public an opportunity to weigh in through a formal public review process before the draft final standard is submitted to ANSI for promulgation as an American National Standard.

Leonardo Academy is currently seeking charitable contributions to fund its work on this standard development initiative and to support active participation by the full range of stakeholders in the process. For more information, please contact Amanda Raster at Leonardo Academy (608-280-0255, amanda@leonardoacademy.org).

For more information on the first Standards Committee meeting, including the approved motions and a list of Standards Committee members, visit: <http://www.leonardoacademy.org/Projects/SustainAgStdDevelopment.htm>.



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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. Leonardo Academy is a Think and Do Tank that develops and distributes strategies, guidance, metrics, standards, and education focused on increasing sustainability. Leonardo Academy helps companies, organizations, families, and individuals successfully promote, encourage, and implement environmental improvement through a wide range of sustainability services, including sustainability assessments and strategy development, LEED® and LEED-EB implementation and certification, emissions footprint analysis and emission reduction and offset strategies, sustainable land management, sustainability education and training.