



For Immediate Release

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Standards Committee Officers Selected to Lead Progress of National Sustainable Agriculture Standard

Madison, WI – November 3, 2008 – The Standards Committee that is spearheading the development of a national standard for sustainable agriculture took a major step forward this week with the election of its leadership. Marty Matlock, Director of the Center of Agricultural and Rural Sustainability at the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, was elected to serve as Chairman of the Committee, while Ronald Moore, Moore Farms and American Soybean Association, will serve as Vice-Chair. Will Healy, Research and Technical Manager at Ball Innovations, will serve as Secretary; and Grace Gershuny, representing the Organic Trade Association (OTA), will hold the seat of Vice-Secretary.

The Standards Committee Officers were elected by members of the Standards Committee and appointed by Leonardo Academy, the neutral, third-party ANSI-accredited organization facilitating the development process for the SCS-001 sustainable agriculture standard.

“Leonardo Academy is very pleased that such a diverse group of individuals has been elected to lead the workings of the Standards Committee,” said Michael Army, President of Leonardo Academy. “This leadership exemplifies the depth of agricultural expertise and range of viewpoints represented on the Committee. We look forward to working with the Committee’s leadership as it guides the discussion and consensus-building on the many issues that need to be addressed as the standard development process moves forward.”

As Chairman of the Standards Committee, Matlock will work with the Committee to identify and deliberate the issues that will be considered for inclusion in the sustainable agriculture standard, as well as to assign tasks to Committee members and subcommittees to foster progress on issues under consideration. Among Matlock’s more challenging responsibilities will be to guide the Committee in identifying which issues can be agreed upon at the outset and to help steer a path of consensus on the more difficult issues raised by Committee members and stakeholders.

“Sustainable production of agricultural food, fiber and fuel is one of the most challenging issues our generation faces. There may be as many as 9.5 billion people coming to dinner by 2050. The decisions we make today will determine how we feed them and their children, how we eat tomorrow and throughout the 21st century,” Matlock said.

Ronald Moore, Standards Committee Vice-Chair, stressed the importance of a sustainability standard in meeting this challenge. “It is vitally important that production agriculture from the Midwest is represented during the process of developing a standard for sustainable agriculture,” he noted. “The farmers that I represent are the environmental stewards of millions of acres of land, so it is an advantage for all stakeholders to have farmer input and leadership on this committee. All sectors of agriculture must work



together on a final standard that is socially responsible, environmentally sound, and economically viable today—and in the future—for the production of low cost, high quality food, feed, fiber, and fuel.”

Will Healy, Committee Secretary, believes that defining sustainability is crucial to the industry of agriculture. “The problem today is that the agricultural heritage of America is being lost,” he said. “There are a lot of misunderstandings, misconceptions and misinformation generated about what we as growers do and how this impacts consumers. Identifying a framework and set of indicators for sustainability will provide us all with a target to move toward, improve our production systems and enhance our products in ways that are not only better for the environment but for growers and consumers also.”

Committee Vice-Secretary Grace Gershuny noted that the theory and practice of organic agriculture has been at the leading edge of the concept of sustainability from its inception. “Many of us believe organic should be recognized as the foundation of this current discussion around standards for Sustainable Agriculture,” she said. “I believe that it is important for OTA, which has the mission to ‘promote and protect the growth of organic trade, to benefit the environment, farmers, the public and the economy,’ to actively engage in this discussion.”

One of the most distinguishing aspects of this open consensus process for developing a national standard is that it provides a forum for discussing and vetting differences in opinion over what sustainability means across all sectors of agriculture. While ideas vary on a number of issues, Healy stresses that, “We are all concerned about water consumption, land use, chemical inputs. This process allows us to come together as a group and to send a common message that the agricultural industry is concerned about sustainable production and that we want to move forward in a positive way.”

For Additional Information

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<http://www.leonardoacademy.org/Projects/SustainAgStdDevelopment.htm>

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