

AMERICAN GRASSFED ASSOCIATION

American Grassfed Association Rejects New USDA Grassfed Label
Partners with Food Alliance for More Rigorous Standard and Certification Program

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The American Grassfed Association (AGA), representing more than 300 grassfed livestock producers, today rejected standards for grassfed claims announced by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), protesting rules that allow confinement of animals and the use of hormones and antibiotics.

"The USDA rules for grassfed claims don't serve consumers or farmers well," said AGA director Carrie Balkcom. "Consumers of grassfed products want animals raised on pasture without growth hormones or antibiotics. Farmers need a standard that will preserve consumer trust in grassfed claims and protect the value of this important niche market. By focusing exclusively on feed, the USDA standard leaves the door open for an industrial model of agriculture that absolutely goes against public expectations for grassfed products. The USDA standard simply doesn't go far enough to make a meaningful and marketable grassfed label. This will confuse consumers and it will hurt the farmers and ranchers who pioneered grassfed." Among other concerns, AGA noted that the USDA standard only required that animals have access to pasture during the growing season meaning animals could be kept in confinement for long periods, and that it allowed incidental supplementation of the forage diet to ensure the animal's welfare meaning animals could be fed grain and still marketed as grassfed. New USDA Standards Conflict with Consumer Demands This rejection by AGA comes on the heels of a grassroots campaign in 2006 that generated over 19,000 comments on an initial draft of the USDA grassfed standard. Those comments -- primarily from consumers who support more rigorous standards for grassfed claims, including requirements that animals be raised on pasture and prohibitions on hormone and antibiotic treatments -- were ignored by the USDA. AGA Turns to Food Alliance for Certification AGA also announced today that it is partnering with Food Alliance, a national nonprofit certification organization, to promote a separate standard and certification program for grassfed livestock. The new program will blend criteria from Food Alliance's existing sustainable agriculture certification, which addresses labor conditions, humane animal care, and environmental stewardship, with grassfed criteria developed by AGA. "AGA has worked with producers, forage specialists and other researchers to develop our own grassfed criteria," said Balkcom. "With 10 years of certification experience, Food Alliance has a well respected program and brings the broader issue coverage necessary to meet consumer expectations for social and environmental responsibility." "This is going to be an important tool for grassfed meat producers, helping them differentiate and add value to their products," said Food Alliance director Scott Exo. "Grassfed evokes an image of well-treated animals grazing on green pastures. Certification provides transparency about practices so that consumers can trust there is more to that image than marketing hype."

Food Alliance will start accepting applications for grassfed certification later this year. Standards will be posted to www.FoodAlliance.org and www.americangrassfed.org Grassfed meat producers who pass the audit will be able to apply the names and seals of both the American Grassfed Association and Food Alliance. About the American Grassfed Association

The American Grassfed Association was founded in 2003 in response to a proposed United States Department of Agriculture standard which would have allowed meats to be labeled grassfed with animals receiving only 80% of their diet from grass and other forage plants. AGA has grown since to represent over 300 grassfed producers, with members also representing the research and food retail communities. Today the American Grassfed Association protects and promotes true grassfed producers & grassfed products through national communication, education, research and marketing efforts. About Food Alliance

Food Alliance is a nonprofit organization that certifies farms, ranches, and food handlers (including processors and distributors) for sustainable agricultural and production practices. Businesses that meet Food Alliance's standards, as determined by a third-party site inspection, use certification to make credible claims for social and environmental responsibility, differentiating their products and strengthening their

brands. The certification standards are available at www.foodalliance.org. Food Alliance launched its certification program in 1998 in Portland, Ore., with a single apple grower selling in three area grocery stores. Today, there are more than 270 Food Alliance certified farms and ranches in 17 U.S. states, Canada and Mexico. These producers manage more than 5.1 million acres of range and farm land, raising beef, lamb, pork, dairy products, mushrooms, wheat, legumes, and a wide variety of fresh market fruits and vegetables. Food Alliance has also certified 3 distribution facilities and 12 processors offering cheeses, dried beans and lentils, and frozen and canned fruits and vegetables. Food Alliance has offices in Oregon, Minnesota and California.