



Shelf-stable food maker wins 2nd sustainable certification

Locally-grown pumpkins from Stahlbush Farms are among first products in new foodservice push

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Certified-sustainable food manufacturer, Truitt Bros., Inc., said Monday its Oregon-based Special Products processing plant was certified as sustainable from Food Alliance, a national eco-labeling program.

Salem, Ore.-based Truitt's Special Products division produces shelf-stable meals, side dishes, sauces and soups for foodservice customers nationwide.

The certification is the food producer's second from Food Alliance. The company's cannery operations were the first to be certified as sustainable by Food Alliance in 2006.

Portland, Ore.-based Food Alliance certifies farms, ranches and food processors for sustainable agricultural and production practices.

These include safe and fair working conditions, reduction of pesticide use and toxicity, healthy and humane care for livestock, no genetically modified crops or livestock and no hormones or non-therapeutic antibiotics.

Certified operations are able to use the Food Alliance seal on products. Sales of Food Alliance certified products surpassed \$110 million in 2008, with cumulative sales exceeding \$450 million since 1997.

"Being awarded the Food Alliance certification continues our focus on quality, innovation, and sustainability, which we are very proud of," said Peter Truitt, president and co-founder. "We are finding that there is a tremendous amount of demand for sustainably produced food in the foodservice sector, and that an independent third-party audit and certification authenticates and legitimizes practices more compellingly than self proclamation."

As a case in point, Northwest-based fast food restaurant Burgerville has selected Truitt Bros. to supply its fresh pumpkin puree for their fall seasonal Pumpkin Milkshakes and Smoothies.

Burgerville was equally interested in procuring local, sustainably produced pumpkin for its signature shakes.

Truitt Bros. developed a pumpkin puree that contains pumpkins sourced from Food Alliance certified grower Stahlbush Island Farms – also Food Alliance certified – and located just down the road from Truitt's processing facility.

VIDEO: [Click here to watch a video of a sustainable supply chain in action between Stahlbush Island Farms, Truitt Bros. and Burgerville.](#)

“Our guests share our values, which include supporting local farmers and using the freshest, seasonal ingredients,” said Alison Dennis, director of supply chain, Burgerville. “Having a Food Alliance certified supply chain means we can track our pumpkin puree from our pantry back to the field where that pumpkin was grown. That’s important to us.”

Truitt Brothers also produces seasonal canned fruit and Blue Lake green beans, product lines include shelf-stable entrees, side dishes, base sauces and desserts.

There are 320 Food Alliance certified farms and ranches in 23 U.S. states, Canada and Mexico, managing 5.6 million acres, raising beef, lamb, pork, poultry, dairy products, mushrooms, wheat, legumes, and a wide variety of fruits and vegetables.

Food Alliance has also certified 24 food handling facilities, including six regional distribution facilities and 18 food processors offering a variety of frozen and canned fruits and vegetables, dried beans and lentils, cheeses, wine, and other products.

In May, Truitt Brothers said it was the first company to evaluate the environmental impact of producing and packaging a food product.

The Salem, Ore.-based processor’s beef chili with beans became the first food product to earn the Earth Sure eco-label.

The Institute for Environmental Research and Education (IERE) introduced the Earth Sure eco-label earlier this year to recognize products that have undergone a holistic, cradle- to-plate evaluation.

The Earth Sure certification verifies that a food product has undergone a life cycle assessment, which investigates and discloses the environmental impacts caused or necessitated by its existence.

The assessment incorporates issues such as climate change, soil loss and ecotoxicity caused by energy use in transport and manufacturing, and materials used in production and disposal.

The LCA results of a single-serving tray of Truitt Brothers beef chili show that the impacts are primarily driven by the on-farm impacts, followed by transportation.

The actual processing of the beef chili and shelf-stable tray packaging tied for third place as sources of life cycle impacts.

Shelf-stable processing avoids the environmental impacts associated with freezers or refrigeration, two energy intensive storage methods.

[Click here to see the LCA results.](#)

"Although single-serving products tend to have more packaging, they also keep food losses to a minimum. Losses in manufacturing Truitt Brother’s chili were less than four percent, while typical food losses in the home are more than 15 percent," said Rita Schenck, executive director of the IERE, in Vashon, Wash. "A bit more packaging actually leads to less overall environmental impact over the product life cycle."

Schenck sees a day in the near future when all food packaging features an environmental impact statement next to the nutrition label, a practice mandated for all consumer products in France by the end of next year.

"It's a manufacturer's responsibility to inform its customers about the environmental impact of a product," said Schenck. "The food industry is cluttered with enough claims and empty phrases that are confusing buyers. We felt it was time to apply a holistic and scientific process as a basis for measureable impacts."