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Leading Harvest announces inaugural Founders' Award recipients: The Conservation Fund & its CEO Larry Selzer

May 2020

Leading Harvest announced it has awarded The Conservation Fund and its President and CEO Larry Selzer with the inaugural Founders' Award. The award recognizes The Conservation Fund and its leader, Mr. Selzer, for years-long work in advancing sustainable agriculture. The award was presented at Leading Harvest's board meeting, which was held virtually due to the ongoing pandemic.

In announcing the award, Leading Harvest noted that The Conservation Fund and Mr. Selzer were instrumental in convening a broad group of agricultural stakeholders as the Sustainable Ag Working Group – including representatives from farming, labor, academia, scientists, environmentalists and conservationists, asset managers, and food suppliers – to build consensus, develop and implement the first-of-its-kind Leading Harvest Farmland Management Standard.

“Leading Harvest’s achievement of cracking the code of agricultural sustainability by developing a universal, certifiable standard that can be applied across regions, crop types and scales of operation would not have been possible without the leadership of Larry and the staff of The Conservation Fund,” said Oliver S. Williams, IV, Global Head of Agricultural Investments for Hancock Natural Resource Group and Leading Harvest Board Chairman. “Larry and The Conservation Fund possessed the credibility, leadership and vision to build consensus, encourage stakeholders to challenge the status quo and embrace adaptable yet certifiable metrics that will change lives and improve livelihoods.”



The Founders' Award is presented at the discretion of Leading Harvest's Board of Directors to recognize exceptional contributions to the advancement of Leading Harvest and/or sustainable agriculture. The award is named to recognize the significant contributions by the founders of Leading Harvest, both the members of the Sustainable Ag Working Group and the inaugural Leading Harvest board of directors.

For more than three years prior to Leading Harvest's formal launch in April 2020, Selzer and The Conservation Fund guided agricultural stakeholders as they researched best practices, field



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tested a Standard's application across regions and crop types, sought input from local producers and developed certifiable metrics to measure positive sustainability outcomes.

"I am humbled and honored to be the recipient – along with The Conservation Fund – of the inaugural Leading Harvest Founders' Award. Our goal in developing Leading Harvest's Standard was to launch an agricultural standard that would break down the silos of sustainability while encouraging adoption by empowering farmers – the original conservationists – to achieve desired outcomes through means that made the most sense for their individual operations," said Larry Selzer, President and CEO of The Conservation Fund. "With over 50 percent of Earth's habitable surface in agricultural production and nearly 1 billion people globally working in an agricultural-related field, Leading Harvest is helping ensure everyone has access to healthy soil, food and water for generations to come."

Leading Harvest's Farmland Management Standard is made up of 13 sustainability principles ranging from clean water and air to labor relations and community engagement. To date, Leading Harvest has enrolled over 1.1 million acres in its Standard across 29 states and accounting for 90 different crop types.