



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 31, 2022

Media Contact: Caroline Stanley, cstanley@gracosway.com.au, +61 402 170 901

Leading Harvest Launches Australian Pilot to Advance Universal Agriculture Sustainability Standard

In partnership with Mutual Trust, Leading Harvest facilitates pilot program to implement its world-leading sustainability standard, partnering with organisations representing more than 420,000 hectares of farming across Australia

Sydney, Australia – Leading Harvest, a nonprofit who has developed and implemented a world-leading sustainability assurance program to advance sustainable agriculture and food production, has announced today that it is launching a pilot program in Australia. Leading Harvest provides farmers and agriculture customers with a universal certification through its unique [‘Farmland Management Standard’](#), which standardizes sustainability verification and reporting across the industry, resolving inefficiencies faced by farmers, producers, and customers in providing sustainability assurances that the market demands.

The pilot program aims to achieve 13 principles: Sustainable Agriculture; Soil Health and Conservation; Protection of Water Resources; Protection of Crops; Energy Use, Air Quality and Climate Change; Waste and Material Management; Conservation of Biodiversity; Protection of Special Sites; Local Communities; Employees and Farm Labor; Legal and Regulatory Compliance; Management Review and Continual Improvement; and Tenant-Operated Operations.

The Australian program is being facilitated by multi-family office [Mutual Trust](#), and already includes inaugural participants with more than 420,000 hectares and the potential for large scale growth and impact. Through the pilot program, Leading Harvest and the partners participating in the pilot will establish a ‘Farmland Management Standard’ unique to Australia that reflects the agronomic, regulatory, and operating realities of the region following the model pioneered in the U.S.

Kenny Fahey, Leading Harvest’s President and CEO said: “There is a pressing need in Australia’s agriculture industry for a standardized, sector-wide certification for sustainability. Leading Harvest’s innovative Farmland Management Standard was developed globally for this purpose - to harmonize sustainability reporting across the agriculture sector. The launch of our Australian pilot program is an exciting step forward for Australia’s agricultural industry, and will show that a harmonized, third-party audited approach to sustainability can unlock more value for the farming community.

“We are thrilled to work with partners and complementary initiatives in Australia to make sustainability reporting more efficient and scalable for farmers, landowners, and managers. In Australia, the demand for products that are produced sustainably is high and continuing to grow, and the industry is crying out for a standardized approach that will allow sustainable farming practices to become integral. The need is evident on the customer side too, with 87% of Australian consumers saying they are more likely to purchase products that are ethically and sustainably produced. We look

forward to creating a Farmland Management Standard unique to the Australian market and we're confident that the demand for an industry-wide certification like ours will be as strong in Queensland as it is in California."

Inaugural pilot program participants include Founding Members: Manulife Investment Management Agriculture Services (Australia), Canada's Public Sector Pension Investment Board (PSP Investments), RRG Capital Management, Warakirri Asset Management and Affiliate Members Accounting for Nature and Kilter Rural.

Phil Harkness, CEO of Mutual Trust said: "We are proud to partner with Leading Harvest to show that the agriculture community has a powerful role to play in meeting the rising demands for a more sustainable future, from climate change to the resilience of our soils. At Mutual Trust, our Purpose is helping our families achieve what matters most, and for 100 years, farming and land stewardship have been an important focus for the founding families and many of the clients of Mutual Trust. We believe that Leading Harvest's scalable, industry-wide solution will bring tremendous value to Australian agriculture and beyond."

Marc Drouin, Senior Managing Director, Real Assets and Global Head of Natural Resources Investments, PSP Investments, said: "Sustainability has long been a core consideration in all of our investment decisions around the world. We have been working diligently with our local partners to drive best-in-class sustainability and environmental practices, and this pilot will enhance this vital work, by allowing us to measure our success against widely accepted industry standards. Joining Leading Harvest in its efforts to build an independently audited universal sustainability standard that can be applied across all crops and geographies is perfectly aligned to PSP Investments' commitment to responsible investing. PSP Investments and our Australian operating partners are enthusiastic about this pilot program and the positive impact it will have on agriculture, food production and the farming community as a whole. We strongly believe it is another step toward unlocking a better future for the next generation."

The pilot follows a successful 20-month proof of concept in the U.S. where Leading Harvest enrolled 1.3 million acres (526,000 hectares) representing 90 different crop types in various regions across the country.

Leading Harvest's initial success is rooted in its flexible, farmer-first approach. The Standard focuses on positive outcomes, as opposed to prescribing methods to achieve results. By empowering farmers, landowners, and managers to determine the best method to achieve a desired outcome, the Standard encourages innovation and new operational efficiencies that can be adapted one crop row to the next, or one farm field to another.

The pilot program is anticipated to be completed within eight months, with Leading Harvest collaborating with local stakeholders and agricultural representatives to ensure the alignment between the principles of the Standard and the practical realities of farming in Australia. The pilot will look to involve all geographies and crop types as well as farmers from the corporate and family farm communities to ensure the Standard captures the breadth and depth of Australian agriculture.

Leading Harvest intends to formally launch the Standard in Australia when the pilot program concludes, making it widely available to growers and land managers across the continent. More information on Leading Harvest, its Farmland Management Standard, and its Australian initiative can be found at www.LeadingHarvest.org.

About Leading Harvest: Leading Harvest is a nonprofit organisation committed to increasing adoption of sustainability practices in agriculture. It was formally organized in 2020 by and for all stakeholders across the agricultural value chain—from farmland owners to companies to communities. The organisation provides assurance programs comprised of standards, audit procedures, training and education, and reporting and claim offerings that are optimized for flexibility, scalability, and impact.