



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Tuesday, February 22, 2022

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Leading Harvest Taps Conservation, Business and Government Experts to Provide Independent Review of Its Agriculture Sustainability Program

Panel will ensure transparency and accountability of universal management standard

(ARLINGTON, VA, Tuesday, February 22, 2022) – Leading Harvest, a U.S. nonprofit advancing sustainable agriculture and food production through its unique universal [Farmland Management Standard](#), announced today the formation of an Independent Review Panel to provide ongoing assessment of and reporting on the assurance programs established by the organization. The panel is comprised of experts from a variety of sectors, including conservation, business and government.

“The Independent Review Panel is a critical component of Leading Harvest’s mission of continuous improvement, offering an extra layer of transparency and accountability to the supply chain, consumers, growers, and landowners,” said **Kenny Fahey, president and CEO of Leading Harvest**. “We believe that the most effective sustainability programs are those whose success both in the field and in the marketplace are vigorously and independently reviewed.”

The Panel will review Leading Harvest’s standards, auditing procedures, training, and education to ensure continued success. Panelists will issue an annual report detailing their findings, reviewing outcomes, and offering relevant recommendations.

Initial Panelist of the Independent Review Panel include:

- **Will Stelle**, President, Board of Directors and Senior Advisor at Washington Water Trust (Independent Review Panel Chairman)
- **Ann Bartuska**, former Chief Scientist of the United States Department of Agriculture
- **Kenny Johnson**, Co-Founder, TopYield Ag
- **Sally Ericsson**, Natural resource conservation and climate policy consultant
- **Carl Evers**, Director of Sustainability, AgIS Capital
- **T.C. Richmond**, Partner, Van Ness Feldman LLP

“Leading Harvest’s commitment to accountability and continuous improvement is second to none, and I’m proud to lead this panel of independent experts who will be measuring the success and transparency of their work,” said **Will Stelle, President, Board of Directors and Senior Advisor at Washington Water Trust and Independent Review Panel Chairman**. “The depth and breadth of experience assembled on this panel adds a layer of assurance to consumers and the food supply chain that Leading Harvest’s sustainability efforts are rooted in science and focused on achieving what we all care most about – positive outcomes for our environment and communities.”

Panelists of the Independent Review Panel are not compensated by Leading Harvest for their work. Leading Harvest's Board of Directors appointed Stelle the Chairman of the Independent Review Panel, providing him the autonomy to assemble a group of qualified experts with both technical and organizational experience.

Individuals interested in serving on the Independent Review Panel may reach out to seek appointment by contacting Leading Harvest [here](#).

Bios of Independent Review Panel panelist can be found [here](#). For more information on Leading Harvest, please visit www.LeadngHarvest.org.

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About Leading Harvest: Leading Harvest is a nonprofit organization 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 organization provides assurance programs comprised of standards, audit procedures, training and education, and reporting and claim offerings that are optimized for flexibility, scalability, and impact.