

Whole Foods Market® announces enhanced standards for fresh produce and flowers



Ratings strengthen company's quality standards, help shoppers make conscious choices

AUSTIN, Texas (Sept. 26, 2013) – In fall 2014, Whole Foods Market will launch a comprehensive rating system for produce and flowers sold in its stores to help shoppers make more informed purchases. The company unveiled the rating system today to suppliers.

"We are driven by our core values and are always looking at ways to enrich our customers' experience, improve our communities and support our supplier partners," said Edmund LaMacchia, global vice president of perishables for Whole Foods Market. "The new produce ratings will provide deeper transparency to our shoppers, helping them make conscious choices while also celebrating the great work and responsible practices of growers beyond their organic and local efforts."

In September 2014, Whole Foods Market will present customers with a three-tier rating system and begin displaying ratings of "good," "better" and "best" throughout produce and floral departments.

With the help of sustainable agriculture experts and with considerable input from suppliers, Whole Foods Market developed a science-based index to measure performance on important sustainable farming topics, including:

- Pest management, including prohibited and restricted pesticides
- Farmworker welfare
- Pollinator protection
- Water conservation and protection
- Soil health
- Ecosystems
- Biodiversity
- Waste, recycling and packaging
- Energy
- Climate

The program will recognize organic growers for the investment and achievement represented by organic certification while highlighting additional responsible practices, including farmworker welfare and resource conservation. The ratings will also reward suppliers for certification by a number of leading social and environmental standards including: Fair Trade, Rainforest Alliance, Protected Harvest, and Demeter Biodynamic certification.

"For years, we've maintained organic and Fair Trade certifications and the new produce rating system will validate the worth of these programs. It also rewards those growers who go beyond requirements not because they have to, but because they want to," said John Musser, owner of Tropic Trade.

Pollinators

Whole Foods Market has worked with its supplier partners for many years to protect and support pollinators, while also raising customer awareness on this issue. The ratings will recognize growers who take action to protect pollinators through specific pesticide practices, habitat restoration, and by controlling the impact of managed hives on farms.

"The new Whole Foods Market produce rating system addresses the primary threats facing pollinators today. Adopting the quality standards provides an immediate, meaningful, and long term framework for protecting both crop yields and biodiversity," said Eric Mader, assistant pollinator program director for The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation.

Pesticides

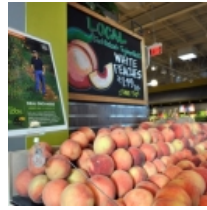
With these enhanced standards, Whole Foods Market is committed to ensuring its suppliers reduce pesticide use and its risks to consumers, farmworkers, wildlife and the environment. The ratings provide an industry-leading approach that eliminates or restricts the most toxic pesticides from the nation's food supply and provide incentive for growers to measure and reduce other pesticide use.

"I applaud Whole Foods Market for its focus on reducing the use of pesticides that are harmful to farmworkers and consumers, especially children. This is a game changer that I hope will have a ripple effect throughout the grocery industry," said Dr. Chuck Benbrook, research professor and program leader for the Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Washington State University.

The ratings also will recognize and celebrate growers whose practices surpass Whole Foods Market's base standards for produce and flowers, which address GMO transparency, food safety and traceability.

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Experts



Edmund LaMacchia

Vice President of Procurement – Perishables

Edmund LaMacchia joined Whole Foods Market in 1990, bringing a personal commitment to environmental change through the progress of organic agriculture.
