



## NEWS RELEASE

**Contact:**

Jeffrey A. Conrad, CFA  
President and Founder  
617 350.9891 (direct)  
[jconrad@agiscapital.com](mailto:jconrad@agiscapital.com)

## AgIS Announces Participation in Leading Harvest

### *Non-Profit to Provide Universal Standard for Agricultural Sustainability*

*Boston, MA – April 22, 2020:* AgIS Capital announced today that it is among a group of investment firms, farmers, conservationists, land owners, and farm managers that led a process that has now resulted in the launch of Leading Harvest, a non-profit that will strive to remove barriers to the sustainable management of agricultural assets in the United States by empowering food producers to innovate around a set of uniform standards.

Leading Harvest, whose inaugural participants currently oversee more than two million acres of agricultural assets, will be the first scalable, sector-wide solution to urgent issues relating to the production of agricultural commodities, including climate change, biodiversity, food security and the resilience of croplands and farm communities. (See the Leading Harvest News Release – <https://www.leadingharvest.org/news>)

"We are pleased and excited to be involved in the launch of Leading Harvest because we believe it is essential for those of us who produce farm products to hold ourselves to a high standard of performance around issues of sustainability and public responsibility," said Jeff Conrad, President and Founder of AgIS Capital. "It is especially appropriate that we are announcing the establishment of Leading Harvest on Earth Day – and during the COVID-19 global pandemic, which highlights the degree to which we share an inter-dependency for addressing environmental, social and economic issues that have the potential to influence all of us – regardless of where we live and work."

Based in Arlington, Virginia and launched under the auspices of The Conservation Fund, one of the world's leading land conservation organizations, Leading Harvest will provide those involved in the production of agricultural products with a consistent framework for managing farm assets in accordance with high standards of sustainability performance.

Leading Harvest was conceived as a solution to a long-standing challenge faced by those that produce agricultural commodities. According to the organization, historically, farmers and others that contribute along the food supply-chain have had to accommodate a complex stew of sustainability standards, each using different data measurement tools, methodologies and metrics to address single crops, issue areas, or matters of stakeholder interest. This inconsistent approach has discouraged greater participation in critical sustainability efforts by those involved in the sector. It also has produced results that do not meet the expectations of consumers, who are increasingly seeking tangible assurances that those who produce their food are doing so by practicing responsible stewardship.

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For those that participate, Leading Harvest will endorse, promote and enforce a comprehensive standard of best practices for overcoming these stubborn barriers to sustainability. The standard will be applicable across crop types and geographies while also addressing a broad spectrum of societal interests that are unique to the U.S. agricultural sector. The standard was developed the help of producers and agricultural specialist who have deep experience in the practical realities of farming. According to representatives of Leading Harvest, this "ground-up" approach will set the stage for more widespread adoption of the standard across the agricultural landscape.

“We at Leading Harvest recognize that the outcomes we care most about – clean air and water, climate, and resilient communities – are consistent, whether we are looking at a bushel of corn from Iowa or at wine grapes from California,” said board member Larry Selzer, President and CEO of The Conservation Fund. “That’s why the Leading Harvest standard is outcomes-based. That means that while we establish the benchmarks, farmers are empowered to design their own plans on how best to meet them, given their unique geographies and operating environments.”

Participation in Leading Harvest requires that independent, third-party experts audit all aspects of a program participant's operations to ensure that required outcomes are being met. Each program participant's performance is measured against the standard based on its efforts to preserve, protect and restore soil health and to optimize energy usage, including employing clean energy solutions. Participants also are assessed on the degrees to which they focus on protecting air and water quality and strive to reduce the climate change impacts of their activities. Finally, the standard provides measures for a participant's efforts to comply with applicable labor laws and regulations and to willingly address the needs and interests of communities and other stakeholders. Summarized audit reports will be made available publicly for entities that choose to communicate about their certification status under the Leading Harvest standard.

"We are optimistic that the Leading Harvest standard will have a real and enduring influence on how food is produced for the world's 10 billion people," concluded Conrad of AgIS Capital. "We also expect that the existence and acceptance of the standard will increasingly build confidence among consumers that the agricultural commodities they purchase have been produced to high standards of environmental sustainability and social responsibility."

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**About AgIS Capital LLC**

*AgIS Capital is a Boston-based private equity firm that invests in farmland and agricultural assets and operating companies. The principals of the firm have decades of experience in the farmland investment sector and have completed billions of dollars of transactions during the last 20-plus years. The firm focuses on \$10 to \$100 million transactions in the United States and other mature markets. For further information, please visit the firm's web site at [www.agiscapital.com](http://www.agiscapital.com).*

**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. More information on Leading Harvest, the sustainability standard, and its inaugural board of directors, can be found at [www.LeadingHarvest.org](http://www.LeadingHarvest.org). For media inquiries, please contact the Leading Harvest Press Team at [Media@LeadingHarvest.org](mailto:Media@LeadingHarvest.org)*

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