

SUSTAINABLE VEGETABLE PROCESSING IN THE MIDWEST



A partnership of food processors and growers working together to ensure quality and sustainability from field to grocery shelf!

***Innovative Approach... Quality Products... Community Engagement...
Environmental Benefits... Economic stability***

Midwest growers and food processors are leading the nation in engaging the food processing industry in sustainability documentation and measurement. Sustainability data has been gathered from over 45,000 acres of sweet corn and green beans in the Upper Midwest—the leading production region in the US. Growers and food processors in Wisconsin, Minnesota and Illinois have worked together to assess the use of sustainable practices on farms and in processing facilities, to develop scorecards and to achieve industry advancement. The results presented are a baseline assessment of the industry in 2013.

GROWER ACHIEVEMENTS:

ENVIRONMENTAL: PROTECTING OUR NATURAL RESOURCES

■ **Water—using less to produce more!** Most growers have a soil and water conservation plan on their farm. When irrigation is needed, 92% use sophisticated scheduling tools to use water only when necessary.

■ **Nutrients—ensuring growth while optimizing efficiency!** Growers match nutrients to crop need with 90% using soil samples to determine needs, while 74% use research-based guidelines for applications.

■ **Soil—protecting the earth we grow on!** 86% of growers use conservation tillage practices to prevent soil erosion and 88% rotate crops at least every 2 years to reduce soil pest buildup. 89% manage pH to enhance soil health and 78% use practices to preserve soil structure.

■ **Biodiversity—preserving the ecosystem!** Growers value the ecosystem services provided by a rich diversity of species and 89% use practices that conserve native wildlife and biodiversity. Pollination and natural control are enhanced by biodiversity generated by windbreaks (60% of growers), buffer strips (71%) and managed field edges (45%).



GROWER ACHIEVEMENTS:

SOCIAL: ENHANCING RURAL COMMUNITIES

- **Quality of life in local communities!** 68% of growers are involved in community service organizations, with 79% actively working with neighbors on local land issues and 25% serving as leaders in rural communities.
- **Energy conservation and recycling!** 89% use practices to limit energy use while 65% have improved fuel efficiency on farm equipment and 79% have active recycling programs, providing cost savings and long-term energy conservation for all of us!
- **Quality jobs in rural communities!** 89% provide employees with opportunities for advancement and quality benefits.

ECONOMIC: ENSURING THE FUTURE

- **Stimulating rural economies!** Growers are essential economic drivers in rural areas with 93% purchasing machinery, inputs and services locally.
- **Economic stability through family farms!** 94% of processed vegetable farms are profitable and stable enterprises with 72% protected by federal crop insurance and 62% having succession plans in place that ensure the long term future of family farms in the Midwest.



PROCESSOR HIGHLIGHTS: DID YOU KNOW?

The processing companies are active partners with growers in the sustainable production of green beans and sweet corn. They are invested in sustainability in both the field and processing facility.

- **100%** of the industry can track specific cans back to individual fields—quality from field to can!
- **100%** use innovative mechanical practices in the field and in the processing facility to remove pests and impurities—ensuring safe, high quality products for all consumers!
- **100%** use disease tolerant varieties at planting, sophisticated technologies to predict pest arrival and trained staff to monitor crops throughout the year—protecting the environment and providing a safe food supply!

OUR INDUSTRY GIVES BACK!

In a nationally acclaimed partnership with Second Harvest of Southern WI, vegetable growers and processors have worked together to harvest and process crops that would otherwise go unused and distribute these to food pantries. Since 2011 Field to Foodbank has distributed over 1.5 million pounds of fresh canned vegetables to help feed those in need.

More details are found at:

<http://www.secondharvestmadison.org/HowWeHelp/FieldToFoodbank.aspx>

For more details about the sustainability effort or any of our innovative activities, contact the Midwest Food Processors Association at 608-255-9946 (www.mwfpa.org).



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