U.S. organic food industry trade group to launch climate change project

Sustainable Food Trade Association’s Climate Collaborative aims to harness power of natural food industry to reverse climate change

by Sustainable Food News
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Next month at the Natural Products Expo West trade show in Anaheim, Calif., the Sustainable Food Trade Association (SFTA) will launch Climate Collaborative, a project that leverages the strength of the natural products industry to reverse climate change.

Climate change is one of the biggest risks ever to face humankind. Despite more than 25 years worth of effort by some to mitigate that risk, the planet has not seen the progress necessary to stay below the critical 2°C threshold that scientists agree will trigger dire consequences.

"The scale of the response is not matching the threat posed by climate change. It’s not even close," SFTA said on its website. When recently polled about their company’s actions toward climate change, 78 percent of natural foods companies said the world had five years or less to act in order to avert disaster.

New Castle, Va.-based SFTA is a trade group formed in 2008 by several U.S. organic food companies in an effort to transition the organic food industry into more of a sustainable food system by measuring, analyzing, and reporting their sustainability activities.

The Climate Collaborative project - created by SFTA and OSC2 (One Step Closer to an Organic and Sustainable Community), a coalition of organic and natural food industry executive committed to bringing sustainable companies to the mass market - to increase organic business participation in meaningful actions that create scale and momentum within the natural products industry to reverse climate change.

How does Climate Collaborative work?

Companies can commit to one or more of nine sustainability commitment areas related to the natural products industry: agriculture, energy productivity, food waste, forests, packaging, policy, renewable energy, short-lived climate pollutants and transportation.

Once a company registers its commitment, the Climate Collaborative, working with NGOs, consultants and solution providers, will direct companies - manufacturers, retailers, brokers, distributors, suppliers, etc. - to specific resources and identify actions they can take to fulfill their commitments by working together to bring solutions to scale.

The goal is to secure 1,000 companies registering 3,000 commitments by 2020. The Climate Collaborative dovetails with the ongoing work and services provided by SFTA to its members, which can make commitments that align with their existing sustainability plans and reporting.

The Climate Collaborative will launch March 8 at Expo West's inaugural Climate Day. Climate change-related workshops will also take place at Expo West on March 8 and 10.

SFTA 2016 Annual Report published

In related news, SFTA has published its 2016 annual report, which highlights the activities and accomplishments of the association during the past year, as well as an overview of its plans for 2017.

The report showed that SFTA had 55 Full member companies, three Associate members and 16 "Friends of SFTA." SFTA requires "full" members to submit an annual sustainability report showing their progress. Read the annual sustainability reports here.

Meanwhile, SFTA said it has also re-elected Hansel New, The WhiteWave Foods Company's manager of corporate sustainability, as board president.

SFTA, which held its board and annual member meeting on Feb. 1 in Portland, Ore., said the board also selected Jonathan Reinbold of Organic Valley as vice president; Bri Saseen of Chico Natural Foods Co-op as treasurer; and Peter Golbitz of Agromeris, LLC as secretary. Jason Boyce of Nature's Path Foods rounds out the executive team.

Derek Singer, Stonyfield Farm's senior manager of sustainability, was newly elected to the board, while Saseen, Reinbold, and Hannah La Luzerne of Wholesum Harvest were re-elected. Continuing board members include New, Boyce, Golbitz, and Shauna Sadowski of General Mills, Inc.'s Annie's brand.

“The continuity in the executive team brings stability and strength to the association as it moves forward with projects like the Climate Collaborative and Measure What Matters that were initiated during their leadership,” said Katherine DiMatteo, SFTA executive director.

SFTA released in September its fourth Member Sustainability Progress Report, which contains aggregated data from reports submitted by 22 SFTA members in 2015 about their prior fiscal year activities, including 82 percent of them sourced products that are certified through fair trade organizations.

The report showed that 75 percent of SFTA's members' sales in 2015 were certified-organic. The report also shows that the volume of organic products purchased by the 22 members reporting data was more than two billion pounds.

SFTA's fifth member progress report for 2016 will be published in September, DiMatteo told Sustainable Food News. Check out SFTA's 2015 annual report.

VIDEO: Watch this video about SFTA