U.S. sustainable food trade group reports drop in organic purchases

Just 31% of Sustainable Food Trade Association's members report drop in GHG emissions

by Sustainable Food News
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The Sustainable Food Trade Association (SFTA) said Tuesday that 75 percent of its reporting members' sales in 2016 were certified-organic.

The New Castle, Va.-based trade group's just-released 2017 Sustainability Progress Report, which contains aggregated data from reports submitted by 39 SFTA members about their accomplishments in 2015-2016, also shows that 84 percent of the 39 members reported sourcing fair-trade certified products.

The 2017 report also shows that the volume of organic products purchased by the 39 members reporting data was more than 1.8 billion pounds. That compares to more than 2 billion pounds of organic products being purchased by 22 SFTA reporting members in last year's report.

All of last year's 22 members were included in this year's group of 39 SFTA reporting members (see list below), except Guayaki and PCC Natural Markets.

Despite the addition of organic food giants DanoneWave and United Natural Foods, Inc. in this year's pool of 39 members, SFTA Executive Director Katherine DiMatteo told Sustainable Food News that "PCC and Guayaki not reporting had a large impact on the total [volume of organic food purchased]."

From the 2017 Sustainability Progress Report infographic

SFTA members have signed a Declaration of Sustainability committing to working toward improvement in 11 action areas including organics, climate change, energy, distribution, labor, packaging, water, waste, animal care, education, and governance/employee relations.

Read SFTA members' annual sustainability reports here.

Highlights of the 2017 progress report include:

- 83 percent of members' waste was diverted from landfills - 42 percent via recycling; 24 percent by composting; and 17 percent from reusing/repurposing. This is the fourth year in a row SFTA members have increased the percentage of waste diverted from landfills
- 31 percent of reporting members cite a decrease in overall greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions as a result of setting GHG reduction targets, and 66 percent of members monitor and record GHG emissions
- 77 percent of electricity members used came from renewable energy sources, with 56 percent of reporting members generating a portion of their renewable energy on-site such as through the use of solar panels
- 78 percent of members screen their major suppliers for positive practices such as organic and fair trade, beyond what is required by regulation such as food safety
- 58 percent have a formal Code of Conduct policy that specifically holds their suppliers, distributors, or retailers accountable for social and environmental performance

SFTA case study series debuts

SFTA said it is also releasing a case study series to highlight the approaches its members take to achieve sustainability goals. The case studies will be released every six weeks on the SFTA website and Facebook.


Pacific Foods said 85 percent of its $218 million in annual sales are from certified-organic products. The company annually brought in over $140,000 in profits from the sale of recovered materials, and avoided over $600,000 of landfill tipping fees. Pacific Foods said it also kept more than 6,000 tons of waste from the landfill each year - avoiding 1,200 tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually.

The 39 SFTA reporting members that filed reports for the 2017 progress report included: Amy's Kitchen; Annie's, Inc.; Apex Mfg. Solutions; Ashland Food Co-op; Awe Sum Organics; Bay Baby Produce; Bridge’s Organic Produce; Chico Natural Food Co-op; Ciranda; Clif Bar; Coconut Bliss; Community Food Co-op; DanoneWave; Drink Eat Well - Hilary’s; Earl’s Organic Produce; Equal Exchange; Fruit d’Or, Inc.; GloryBee Foods; GoMacro, LLC; Hummingbird Wholesale; LifeSource Natural Foods; Lundberg Family Farms; MOM’s Organic Market; Mountain Rose Herbs; Nature’s Path Foods; North Coast Co-op; Nutiva; Organic Valley; Organically Grown Company; Outpost Natural Foods; Pacific Foods; Port Townsend Coop; Purity Organic; So Delicious Dairy Free; Straus Family Creamery; Traditional Medicinals; UNFI; Viva Tierra; and Wholesum Harvest.

**VIDEO:** Learn more about SFTA