



Social Accountability Accreditation Services (SAAS)

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FOR RELEASE

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Social Accountability Accreditation Services (SAAS) Sign Contract to Implement Magen Tzedek Ethical Certification

NEW YORK, NY -- SAAS is pleased to announce the signing of a contract with the Hekhsher Tzedek Commission for a joint project to implement the Magen Tzedek ethical certification for kosher-certified producers.

Starting in 2011, Magen Tzedek ethical certification—literally a seal of justice-- will be able to be earned by kosher-certified producers that additionally demonstrate good labor, environmental and animal welfare performance. SAAS will work with the commission to develop policies and procedures needed for sustainable implementation of the Magen Tzedek standards. SAAS will work with the developers of these standards to design and implement an effective system for verifying that practices are just and sustainable. The organizations share the goals of improving working conditions, environmental practices, and protecting animal welfare, and are eager to move forward.

Launched in 2007, the Magen Tzedek project is a joint project of the Hekhsher Tzedek Commission of the Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. The basic principle of Magen Tzedek is that the ethical underpinning of kashrut, the Jewish dietary laws, is inextricable from the ritual observance and thus carries moral weight and requirements. Drafting of the Magen Tzedek standards was led by Dr. Joe Regenstein, Professor of Food Science at Cornell University, under the supervision of Rabbis Michael Siegel and Morris Allen.

SAAS and Social Accountability International [SAI], having worked around the world with certification of social standards since 1997, and best known for the SA8000 workplace standard, are delighted to be working with the developers of these standards to implement an effective system for verifying that practices indeed are just and sustainable. "We look forward to helping to make Magen Tzedek certification available to ethical producers who will offer this assurance to ethical consumers, said Rochelle Zaid, Executive Director of SAAS

"[SAI and SAAS] boasts over a dozen years of experience building socially responsible audit programs, such as the one that Magen Tzedek has drafted. The firm is qualified to help build the principles of Magen Tzedek into a well structured, sustainable audit program. Engaging this experienced organization will enable us to deliver Magen Tzedek to the marketplace and place our social justice mark on kosher products in 2011" stated Rabbi Iris Richman, Project Manager for the Hekhsher Tzedek Commission and an attorney.

SAI will leverage its expertise as a standards organization, and work with SAAS in developing the metrics and criteria for certification. As the world's first Jewish ethical certification seal, Magen Tzedek's work with SAI and SAAS will help to assure consumers that kosher food products are produced in keeping with the highest possible Jewish ethical values and ideals for social justice in the area of labor concerns, animal welfare, environmental impact, consumer issues and corporate integrity. Designed to coexist with the traditional rabbinic kosher certification seals, field tests will take place this year and the first certification is expected in 2011.

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SAAS is an independent, not-for-profit accreditation agency which accredits and monitors organizations as certifiers of compliance with social standards. It is affiliated with Social Accountability International, a non-governmental, multi-stakeholder organization established to advance the human rights of workers and the health of enterprises by promoting decent work conditions, labor rights, and corporate social responsibility through voluntary standards that serve as tools to meet ILO and UN conventions. SAI is among the world's leading social compliance training organizations, and has provided training to over 20,000 people.