

# MAGEN **TZEDEK**



*Hekhsher Tzedek is a joint project of the Rabbinical Assembly  
and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism.  
Seed funding is provided by the Nathan Cummings Foundation.*



# Magen Tzedek

## Connecting Kashrut to Social Justice

“You shall not abuse a needy and destitute laborer,  
whether a fellow countryman or a stranger.”

— Deuteronomy 24:14-15



**TZEDEK**

[www.magentzedek.org](http://www.magentzedek.org)

# The Issue and the Vision

The exposure of poor working conditions at Agriprocessors plant in Iowa brought up questions of adherence to the rituals of kashrut without respect for Jewish rules regarding worker treatment.

The **Magen Tzedek** seal is an opportunity to combine the rabbinic tradition of kashrut with the ideals of social justice.

[www.magentzedek.org](http://www.magentzedek.org)

# The Goal

The Magen Tzedek seal will be a widely recognized symbol of the best possible Jewish ethics. It will improve our consciousness, understanding and practice of kashrut by extending the definition beyond ritual to reflect ethical, environmental and social concerns.

The Magen Tzedek seal will be a trusted certification that consumers seek and producers value.

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# The Magen Tzedek Seal

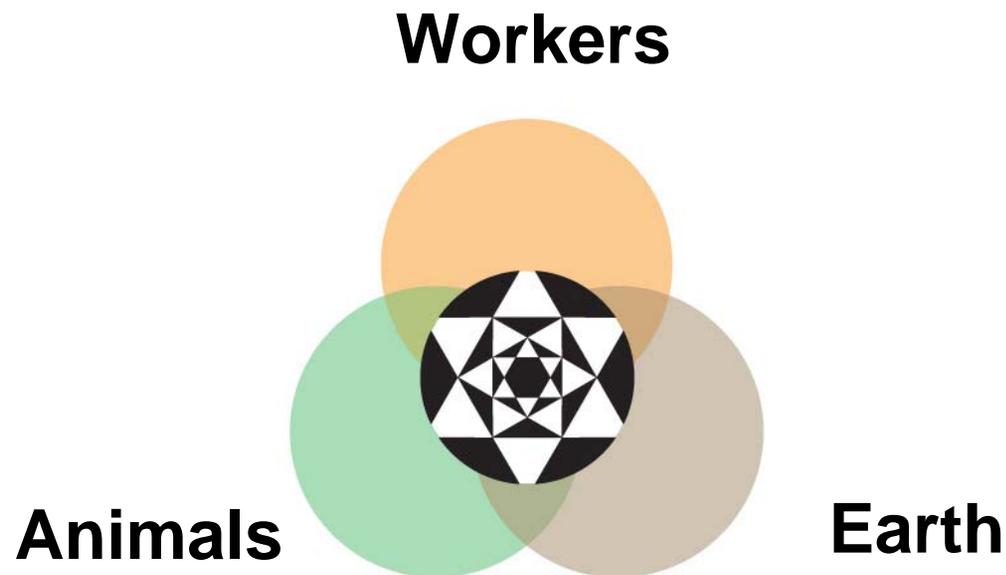
- Objective and verifiable certification process according to uniform standards for environmental impact, animal welfare, treatment of workers, corporate transparency and product traceability
- Supplement—not replacement—for existing rabbinical kosher seals

# Scope of Magen Tzedek Concerns

- Labor Issues: wages and benefits
- Fair pay, health care, sick leave, a safe workplace
- Animal welfare
- Humane treatment of animals and product traceability
- Environmental impact
- Recycling and energy consumption
- Carbon and water footprint
- Food safety and corporate transparency

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# The Ethical Standards



"Whoever keeps the salary from a worker is as if taking his/her life..."

— *Shulhan Arukh (Hoshen Mishpat 339:2)*

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# The Ethical Eating Movement

Many consumers are choosing dietary lifestyles and food products that reflect their concern for animal treatment, worker welfare, environmental sustainability and personal health.

*Organic*

*Fair trade*

*Vegetarian*

*Free range*

*Local food*

*Vegan*

# The Ethical Eating Movement

Certification will allow consumers to voice their support for ethical standards regarding *workers*, *animals* and the *earth* while keeping kosher.

As a recognizable national standard, Magen Tzedek will demonstrate that ritual and ethical commandments hold an equal place at the table.

# The Impact

For the Jewish community, Magen Tzedek certification will provide another way to connect to the spiritual meaning of kashrut.

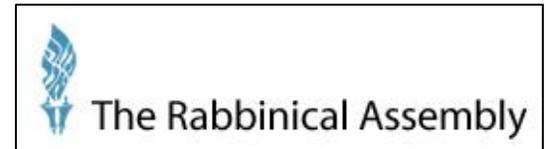
Consumer demand will create incentives for food producers to adhere to ethical standards for workers, animals and the earth.

The seal can become an important consideration for ethically-conscious consumers beyond the “traditional” Jewish market, who already account for 80 percent of all kosher food sales.

Source: Mintel Market Research, “Kosher Food Market – US Report”

# What We've Done

- Established Hekhsher Tzedek Board of Directors, a joint project of the Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
- Drafted detailed certification criteria
- Established business advisory group
- Developed Magen Tzedek seal
- Established website ([www.magentzedek.org](http://www.magentzedek.org))



# In the Media

Hekhsher Tzedek has sparked a national conversation among Jews about the contemporary meaning of Kosher.

— *CNN AC 360 blog* 9/29/08

The Hekhsher Tzedek campaign has broadened its ambitions beyond Agriprocessors, hoping to see its “God Housekeeping Seal” adopted by kosher food producers nationwide.

— *The New York Times* 8/23/08

The rabbis pushing this agenda might be compared, in secular terms, with Supreme Court justices like Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen Breyer who seek to interpret old legal doctrines through a modern lens.

— *The Wall Street Journal* 2/5/09

# What's Next

- Bringing the Magen Tzedek seal to market, working with food producers to get the seal on qualified food products
- Building partnerships and interest among consumers, social justice organizations, labor unions and producers
- Expanding education and advocacy efforts to create consumer demand
- Marketing, public relations and advertising

# Leadership and Expertise

- Expert Reviewers for Evaluation Criteria
- Manufacturers Advisory Board
- Business Advisory Committee
- Hekhsher Tzedek Board of Directors

# Financial and In-Kind Support

## **Nathan Cummings Foundation**

- Second year of support, with \$100,000 for 2009

Professionals providing over \$500,000 in pro bono services

- Legal counsel
- Market research, public relations
- Evaluation criteria and metric development

# The Role of Philanthropy

Additional funding will enable Hekhsher Tzedek to:

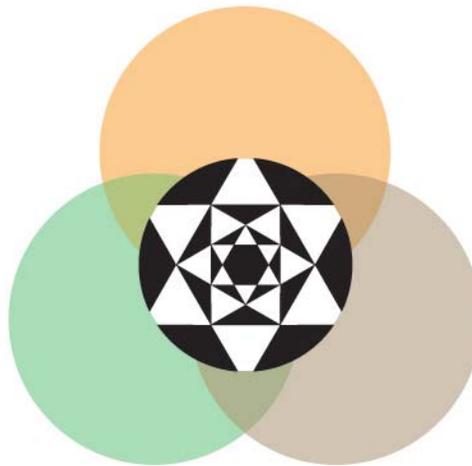
- Complete development of certification standards
- Expand education and advocacy programs to build awareness of Magen Tzedek principles
- Enhance public relations, marketing and advertising
- Develop organizational infrastructure to support implementation of the certification process

# Thank You

**Workers**

**Animals**

**Earth**



# Appendix: Management and Commission Members

Rabbi Morris Allen, Program Director

Kimberly Miller Rubenfeld, Program Manager

## Hekhsher Tzedek Board Members

- Jerold L. Jacobs, Esq., Co-Chair
- Rabbi Michael Siegel, Co-Chair
- Rabbi Paul Drazen (representing USCJ)
- Rabbi Julie Schonfeld (representing RA)
- Gerald Kobell, Esq.
- Marilyn Wind, PhD.
- Rabbi Avram Reisner
- Steven Silk

For more information, [www.magentzedek.org](http://www.magentzedek.org)