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VeriPrime Certified Traceable Food Provides Cornerstone of Food Safety

New program to improve industry best practices and increase overall food safety.

VeriPrime, a member-owned federation of cooperatives including producers, processors and retailers, announced today that it will introduce the VeriPrime Traceability Assurance System (VTAS), to provide safer and Certified Traceable food products to American consumers. Certified Traceable food products are tracked from "farm to fork" to ensure accountability throughout the food chain. Food retailers electing to offer consumers Certified Traceable products can immediately start the process to begin delivering Certified Traceable foods to consumers.

The VTAS was introduced as a new industry best practice for farmers, ranchers, food processors and retailers. VTAS is the nation's first and only feed and food chain traceability program via an accredited USDA certifying body. Certified Traceable food will be identified by a VeriPrime seal of approval (or label). The system is certified by Agri Food Certification.

"For the first time consumers can be assured at a glance that the food they are purchasing is traceable to its source," said Dr. Scott Crain, DVM, CEO of VeriPrime. "Certified Traceable food is the first and best step to safer food. Although America's food supply is one of the safest in the world, VeriPrime Certified Traceable food will make our food safer from farm to fork."

"The need for food traceability is clear. One in four Americans suffers from foodborne illnesses and nearly 5,000 die every year from the food they eat," explained Dr. Crain. "Traceability is the cornerstone of food safety and the VTAS, as the prerequisite for all other food safety programs, ensures that everyone is accountable along each step of the food chain."

More than one foodborne illness outbreak is reported and investigated by local or state agencies each day and nearly 1,000 Americans are hospitalized every day due to foodborne illnesses. The food chain is complex with over two million farmers and 200,000 retailers in the United States. VTAS ensures food tracking efforts will hence be consolidated under the single label, namely VeriPrime Certified Traceable.

The USDA accredited Agri Food Certification of Meade, KS, as the certifying agent for the VTAS program on December 18, 2006. Agri Food is responsible for extending certification to all elements of the food chain compliant to the USDA ISO Guide 65 Program. This means that Agri-Food operates a third-party certification system in a consistent and reliable manner based on internationally recognized methods, which facilitates their acceptance on a national and international basis.

"Agri Food Certification is pleased to have earned USDA accreditation as certifying body for this new industry best practice for traceable products," Agri Food Certification Director David Farnum, DVM, said. "Application of ISO certification guidelines to the VeriPrime Traceability Assurance System is a natural and logical fit. This program derives its strength and credibility from independent third-party audit. We are committed to scrupulous review and enforcement."

About VeriPrime

VeriPrime is a member-owned federation of cooperatives including producers, processors and retailers. Working together, these links in the food chain have established a "food safety utility" capable of providing an essential public service. VeriPrime's goal is to develop and maintain a program with viable, credible, monitored standards for traceability that provide members, governmental and non-governmental purchasing organizations and consumers the assurance that livestock, produce and food products that have been certified as complying with the applicable standards are traceable to their point of origin. The VeriPrime Traceability Assurance Standard (VTAS) is designed to provide a standard process to deliver Certified Traceable food from "farm to fork."

About Agri Food Certification

Agri Food Certification is a certifying body accredited by the USDA-AMS for Certified Traceable feed and food under its ISO Guide 65 program. Agri Food Certification holds an exclusive agreement with VeriPrime to administer VTAS. Agri Food Certification is dedicated to maintaining a disciplined system that is responsive to customer feedback, regulatory requirements and the needs of the public for traceability-assured food.