

## The Leadership Circle: Development and Launch

The Leadership Circle is a platform for engaging institutions—universities, schools, corporations, and community organizations—to commit to purchasing certified higher-welfare meat, eggs, and dairy products for their dining services. These institutions have tremendous purchasing power, and therefore wield outsized economic influence on the producers of animal products. They also influence the way millions of people eat on a daily basis. The Leadership Circle is made up of institutions that are leaders in ethical dining who are making the switch to higher-welfare animal products that carry a trusted animal welfare certification. In order to be accepted to the Leadership Circle, an institution must commit to transition their purchasing to certified higher-welfare animal products within two years. Farm Forward will continuously investigate products with an animal welfare certification to make sure that the products being purchased come from animals who were raised in conditions that are a meaningful improvement over standard industry practices. Farm Forward will develop an ongoing relationship with Leadership Circle members to ensure that they seek continuous improvement and ultimately seek highest-welfare products.

The timing for this project is perfect. Universities and progressive companies are anxious to respond to the increasing demand from their students and employees to know what they are eating and where it comes from. Progressive universities and businesses want to attract and retain the best employees and students, and demonstrating their commitment to health and ethics through their food services is an effective way to do so. Existing campaigns like the student-led movement, *The Real Food Challenge*, are mobilizing students around the country to pressure their universities to source sustainable foods for their dining services. Meanwhile, campaigns focused on broiler welfare, like The Humane League’s campaign against Aramark are creating pressure on large food services to source poultry products that meet standards that align with the Leadership Circle.

The Leadership Circle makes it easy for institutions to meet these demands by educating their food service providers about best practices and standards in farmed animal welfare, connecting them to suppliers of certified higher-welfare products, and by creating plans to help them make the transition to higher-welfare products. The Leadership Circle also serves as a vehicle for convincing institutions that making the shift to certified higher-welfare meat, eggs, and dairy is a smart and profitable business practice. By focusing our recruitment on high-profile institutions we intend to create positive pressure to motivate other institutions that fail to meet this new standard for excellence.

## Objectives and Impact

Our objective, during this project period, is to influence 35 or more institutions to commit to purchasing only certified higher-welfare poultry or egg products. We estimate conservatively that by reaching this objective, **the Leadership Circle will directly impact approximately 1.5 million animals per year.**<sup>1</sup> During the first two years we will focus our recruitment efforts on high profile businesses and universities that are seen as leaders in their respective fields.

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<sup>1</sup> We’ve based this calculation on the number based on the volume of animal products purchased by in the University of California system. We then calculated the number of animals impacted based on the volume of animal products consumed to come up with an average number of animals impacted per school. If we succeed in getting all 10 of the U of C schools to switch to higher-welfare chickens and eggs (and we’ve already made significant inroads towards this goal), we will impact approximately 250,000 birds per year.

Based on our impact and projected budget we estimate that the Leadership Circle will spend between \$0.05 and \$0.10 per animal directly impacted. However, the indirect impact of this investment—lifelong changes in student and employee eating habits and systemic changes to food supply chains that affect untold numbers of institutions, is potentially immense.

Farm Forward's success so far demonstrates that large institutions are, with the right incentives and support, enthusiastic to make the switch to certified higher-welfare animal products! In its brief pilot phase, the Leadership Circle has already secured commitments from:

- **University of California Office of Presidents**, which has committed to purchase from a certified higher-welfare egg producer for 8 of 10 UC system schools.
- **The University of California, Berkley**, which US News ranked the 20<sup>th</sup> best university in the country, with over 27,000 students enrolled, and which serves over 5 million meals annually, has committed to purchase 100 percent of their beef and lamb from pasture-raised and grass-fed sources, 100 percent of their chicken from GAP certified producers, and 100 percent of their eggs from Certified Humane producers. UC Berkeley has also expressed willingness to source highest-welfare heritage poultry and is currently negotiating with a California farmer to source heritage eggs.
- **Airbnb Portland Office**, which employs 400 people, has committed to serving certified higher-welfare poultry, eggs and meat. Airbnb has also committed to sourcing highest-welfare heritage poultry and is currently evaluating several options.
- **University of California, Santa Barbara**, which is ranked #37 by US News, with over 20,000 students enrolled, has committed to using certified higher-welfare eggs and certified higher-welfare chicken for their catering and retail dining operations.
- **Occidental College**, Los Angeles, recently switched to 100 percent certified liquid eggs and is transition to grassfed, grass finished beef. As part of the contract the cattle ranch has agreed to seek a certification from Animal Welfare Approved.

Farm forward is currently in conversation with another dozen colleges and universities and the nation's leading Jewish environmental organization, Hazon, which are on the path to joining the Leadership Circle and committing to higher-welfare food purchasing.

### **Budget**

The total budget for the first two years of the Leadership Circle project is \$175,000. We have already secured \$75,000 in funds and are seeking an additional \$100,000 to fully fund the project. Because we are developing and launching a brand new project, most of the cost of this 2-year budget will be for one-time outputs, such as research, creating resources and marketing materials, and establishing processes that will be used by the Leadership Circle in perpetuity. The first two years of the project is crucial for building the relationships and track-record that will make the Leadership Circle financially sustainable beyond this phase and will allow us to scale up and expand the kinds of animals and the number of institutions served. As the Leadership Circle grows, so will its economy of scale, leading to a greater impact, per dollar, on the number of animals affected.

## Strategy

### *Continuous Improvement to Welfare Goals*

Leadership Circle institutions want to be the best at what they offer for their students, employees, or customers, and that means we can get them to commit to higher standards of welfare in their purchasing than other kinds of consumers. The Leadership Circle asks institutions to switch to 100 percent certified higher-welfare products and asks them to invest in the highest-welfare products. By encouraging institutions to source the highest welfare animal products we do two important things: 1) we make future farmed animal welfare campaigns more effective, and 2) we create a network of institutions committed to using their influence to rebuild highest-welfare agricultural systems.

Historically, farmed animal welfare campaigns have focused on either eliminating egregious practices (such as battery cages) or incrementally improving standard industry practices. This approach is effective and important, but leads to slow improvements. Typically, once a campaign to eliminate a particular practice is won—for example, the campaign to eliminate hens raised in cages—a new target has to be set and institutions have to be educated about why the last gain was not enough and the next target is necessary. Each time a new campaign begins, education and outreach to consumers and supporters must begin anew, even if it is for only a modest improvement. While this effort has led to major gains for animals within the factory farm system, we have yet to build a strong market for the highest levels of welfare, such as products completely disconnected from factory farm practices.

Leadership Circle’s approach is aimed to leap these campaigns forward: by getting a few institutions to invest in the highest welfare products—ones that supplant the factory farm system altogether—we make it easier for campaigns to fight for bigger incremental improvements.

For example, as large universities commit to purchasing heritage eggs and poultry – poultry from hens with traditional genetics that have not been bred for fast growth and factory farm conditions – they will need to make financial investments into local hatcheries that supply slow-growth hens who can only be raised in higher welfare non-factory farms. This increases the capacity of slow-growth poultry suppliers, allowing them to increase their supply. Meanwhile, students learn about the health and welfare benefits of heritage poultry, increasing consumer demand. We are working with UC Berkeley to source slow-growth genetics eggs for their campus restaurant for precisely this purpose.

By getting large institutions – and our experience shows that we can – to commit to purchasing not just *incrementally* better animal products, but the *best, highest-welfare*, products, we establish a vision for sustainable, high-welfare, *non-factory* farming and spread that vision to a large number of consumers and institutions. This, in turn, means that organizations like the Humane League and HSUS can leap-frog past incremental improvements in their campaign targets, pursuing more ambitious targets, such as slower-growth genetics.

### *Platform Built on Certifications*

The Leadership Circle will direct the market toward products with a trusted animal welfare certification. Establishing animal welfare certifications as the baseline for conscientious consumerism has many advantages. Certifications create transparency for both consumers and advocates. More importantly by requiring certified products we gain more influence over the types of products institutions buy. If for example, Leadership Circle members commit to buying GAP Step 2 products, as GAP standards improve over time, institutions will be incentivized to continue to buy products that achieve the Step 2 standards. Since animal welfare organizations, including Farm Forward, directly influence the standards of the two largest animal welfare certifications (GAP and Certified Humane) we have every expectation that the standards of those programs will improve over time. Just this year, Farm Forward played the lead role in getting GAP to increase its top tier welfare standards to functionally require slow-growth genetics—a leap forward in welfare standards—which we believe played a vital role in GAP’s recent commitment to

incorporate genetic improvements throughout all their tiers, improving the health and welfare of 270 million broiler chickens in the US.<sup>2</sup>

### **Development Phase: Poultry**

We are seeking to fund the 2-year development phase of the Leadership Circle, which will focus on poultry products. The Leadership Circle builds on the success of BuyingPoultry.com, which established a rating system for poultry products. BuyingPoultry.com complements the Leadership Circle, and its rating system and database of higher-welfare suppliers is a valuable resource for institutional buyers who, like consumers, struggle to identify higher-welfare practices and products. During the 2-year development phase, Farm Forward will develop, test, and perfect its methodologies, build and implement the Leadership Circle's brand, web presence, and marketing strategy, and conduct rigorous outreach to institutions. We strive to provide exemplary support to our pioneering Leadership Circle members during this period, as they will serve as our ambassadors to other institutions when the Leadership Circle scales up after the development phase. We will also build relationships and financial resources necessary to sustain the Leadership Circle upon completion of the development phase. At the end of this time we plan to utilize the skills and methodologies developed while focusing on poultry to scale up the Leadership Circle to include other animal products (dairy, beef, and pork) and a broader range and larger number of institutions.

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<sup>2</sup> While the highest tiers of welfare certifications still affect a relatively small number of animals in the US, these standards influence how international producers choose to invest in farming methods, and that can have a staggering impact in the long-run. In India and China, for example, more than half of poultry production still takes place on non-factory farms with genetically traditional birds. If powerful US institutions send the message that the top-end of welfare is slow-growth genetics, and that consumers want that, we encourage international farmers and policy-makers to pursue high-welfare versions of agricultural development. If modernization in India and China takes the form of western-style factory farming, it means tens of billion animals per year subjected to the horrific conditions of US animals. However, if policymakers and food industry leaders in India and China see a market for high-welfare, non-factory, meat - as indicated by welfare certifications in the US and Europe - it could lead to the development of more humane systems of animal farming, impacting billions of animals per year.

## About Farm Forward

Incorporated in 2007, Farm Forward is a new kind of nonprofit advocacy and consulting group at the forefront of pragmatic efforts to transform the way our nation eats and farms. Our vision is encapsulated in the critically acclaimed international bestseller *Eating Animals* by Farm Forward board member Jonathan Safran Foer, and our executive staff and board have been working on behalf of farmed animals since the early 1990s. This accumulated expertise informs Farm Forward’s unique role as the first centrist organization where disparate interests opposed to the abuse of animals on factory farms can unite in coordinated and effective ways. Our projects include:

- [Eating Animals](#) – Farm Forward consulted in the creation of *Eating Animals* and developed educational resources to accompany it that have been used at nearly 100 educational institutions around the world, reaching more than 11,000 students. We are currently creating an educational platform, “Eating Animals University,” to accompany the upcoming documentary film.
- [Buyingpoultry.com](#) – Farm Forward created this free online buying guide that takes the guesswork out of finding alternatives to factory farming. BuyingPoultry ranks every poultry brand and product in the US, so you know how they treat their animals.
- [The Jewish Initiative for Animals](#) (JIFA) – Supported entirely by grants from Jewish communal organizations, JIFA is the most developed part of Farm Forward’s religious outreach work. Through partnerships with more than 50 leading Jewish institutions, JIFA’s three-person, fulltime team is putting animals—especially farmed animals—on the Jewish agenda and directly working with producers to increase the supply of higher-welfare kosher animal products.
- [Global Animal Partnership](#) Board and Animal Welfare Certification – Even before Farm Forward was founded, our leadership was involved in the creation of GAP, now the nation’s largest animal welfare certification with more than 300 million animals in its purview. Advocating for improved animal welfare certification through GAP, BuyingPoultry.com, and other vehicles is some of our most important work.
- Consulting Services for leading farmers and animal welfare organizations including:
  - [Good Shepherd Poultry Ranch](#) – Farm Forward helped support the growth of this network of heritage poultry farms that serves as a model for animal welfare standards.
  - ASPCA – We helped ASPCA develop their new farmed animal welfare policies, and we helped launch their *first-ever* campaign against factory farming, the “[Truth About Chicken](#)” Campaign.
  - Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) – We have helped expand their faith outreach work and are now utilizing JIFA to expand HSUS’s reach into the heart of Jewish communal life.
  - Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) – We drafted content for their new US-focused website about farmed animals.