

# Peoples Company's Commitment to Leading Harvest Sustainability Standard

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At Peoples Company, we strive to be a leader in advancing sustainability on the farm. It not only aligns with our company philosophy, but it is also [what landowners are seeking](#). More and more landowners are wanting to make the connection to the sustainably sourced products they purchase in the store and their farmland.

The challenge becomes: How do we provide consumer assurance on a broad list of crops in various geographies entering the supply chain? How do we connect farmer – processor – distributor – retailer – and ultimately consumer with sustainability and transparency at each touchpoint?

Enter the Leading Harvest sustainability standard. Leading Harvest is an assurance program at the farm gate with a 13-principle standard and rigorous auditing process. The standard was developed to cover every type of farmland operation in the United States.

Public and private leaders from conservation, investment, agriculture, and research came to the table to consider all aspects of a universal standard. Key to the standard is its design to be flexible, scalable, and

outcome based. Landowners, managers, and farm operators are not mandated to follow certain practices but allowed to develop best management practices tailored to each unique farm.

Over the past ten years, we have honed our management system to focus on drainage, fertility, conservation, and farm history. On each farm, we work to maximize production on the most productive acres while protecting the environmentally sensitive areas. Experience has taught us that we can often solve economic problems through an environmental solution.

All our managed acres are enrolled in the standard. Earlier this year, we conducted a readiness review to determine any gaps we might have for our first audit next year. Our readiness review with the agriculture consulting and auditing firm, [K-Coe Isom](#), evidenced the strong foundation already built in our management model. The review included document sharing, manager interviews, touring farms, and follow-up with those farm's tenants.

The review showed we were more than prepared on the agronomic aspects. Further, as we constantly strive to improve what we do, we are going beyond what is commonplace in the industry to better document:

- Potential at-risk, threatened, and endangered species on each property.
- Historical land use with specific notation of any special sites.
- Biodiversity on each property.
- Waste management practices for each tenant.
- Fair employment practices of farm labor.

The work has been a significant investment in time and resources and stretched us to improve our sustainable practices. We are committed to helping landowners achieve the full potential of their investment and leave a lasting legacy for future generations.

Last month, Leading Harvest [announced funding for farmers](#) in the Upper Mississippi River Watershed for education and training for farmland certification. It is also expected to help remove financial barriers for many farmers to participate in the standard. The Walton Family Foundation awarded the grant to Leading Harvest. We look forward to participating in this and future initiatives to further the adoption of the standard.



*Peter Isaacson, Peoples Company Land Manager, holding up a turnip planted as a cover crop in an Iowa cornfield. This root crop from the Brassica family will work to scavenge/hold nutrients in the soil for next year's crop as well as tackle*

*field compaction. Successful annual cover crops play a significant role in soil health, a key component of the Leading Harvest standard.*

More about the standard can be found at [www.LeadingHarvest.com](http://www.LeadingHarvest.com).

Farm operators and non-farming landowners interested in learning more about Leading Harvest are encouraged to contact Peoples Company Land Management Team at [LandManagement@PeoplesCompany.com](mailto:LandManagement@PeoplesCompany.com) or call 855.800.5263.