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Lotus Foods Receives Biodiversity Leadership Award from the Union for Ethical BioTrade (UEBT)

It is with great pride that Lotus Foods announces its selection as winner of the 2011 Leadership Award by the Union for Ethical BioTrade (UEBT) in their annual Biodiversity Award program. The award will be presented at a ceremony in Paris on November 29, as part of the Food Ingredients Europe trade show. The 2010 winners were Coop, the largest retail group in Switzerland, and Unilever, a company known for its numerous global food brands.

Rik Kutsch Lojenga, UEBT Executive Director, praised Lotus Foods in his award notification, saying, "Your initiative was highlighted as a leading approach that works towards the conservation of biodiversity, its sustainable use and the equitable sharing of benefits."

Most people are unaware of the tremendous number of rice varieties that exist. About 115,000 have been collected and characterized by the International Rice Genebank. However, since the 1960s rice diversity has been steadily replaced by large-scale cultivation of new varieties bred by scientists. According to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), some 7,000 varieties were cultivated in Indonesia before 1965; by 2004, over 85% of rice area harvested was cultivated to a small number of "modern" varieties. Today, rice biodiversity is largely maintained by the world's poorest farmers. To perform well, most "modern" varieties rely on large quantities of agrochemicals and irrigation water pumped from the ground, rivers and streams, to the detriment of many species. Current private and public sector investments in agriculture continue to displace locally evolved varieties. Yet recent research about the high anthocyanin (powerful antioxidants) content in black rice and red rice underscores the importance of investigating the as yet untapped health potential of traditional rices.



"We are grateful and honored by this award," said Caryl Levine, Lotus Foods co-founder. "Although we are a small company, we have successfully raised consumer awareness in North America about the existence and value of heirloom and specialty rice. And we are the only company dedicated exclusively to providing market opportunities and a fair price to family farmers who are preserving local rice varieties around the world. These varieties offer a tremendous array of agronomic and nutritional benefits, from high protein content to tolerance to drought or diseases, which can contribute to increased health and food production right now."

Lotus Foods was established in 1995 with the vision to support more sustainable agriculture by promoting production of traditional heirloom rice varieties, while enabling the small family rice farmer to earn an honorable living. Lotus Foods offers nine unique rice products, most of which are certified organic and fair trade. In 2009,

Lotus Foods introduced three varieties not previously sold in the US, from Cambodia, Indonesia and Madagascar. These traditional rices are grown using System of Rice Intensification methods that require less water and seed to increase yields. Lotus Foods rice products are available in retail grocery, natural and specialty stores, food service, and high-end restaurants nationwide.

The Union for Ethical BioTrade is a non-profit association that promotes the 'Sourcing with Respect' of ingredients that come from native biodiversity. Members commit to gradually ensuring that their sourcing practices promote the conservation of biodiversity, respect traditional knowledge, and assure the equitable sharing of benefits all along the supply chain. For more information, please contact: Union for Ethical BioTrade, Geneva, Switzerland. Tel: +41.22.566.1585; Email: katie@ethicalbiotrade.org; Web: www.ethicalbiotrade.org