

# Stewardship Leaders in Agriculture

## Environmental and Humane Leaders

### Foster Farms

Founded in 1939 as an 80-acre farm by Max and Verda Foster, Foster Farms is now a fourth generation, family owned and operated, poultry operation working with approximately 140 ranches located in California and the Pacific Northwest. With more than 10,000 employees, Foster Farms is one on the largest poultry producers in the nation. Headquartered in Livingston, California, Foster Farms runs hatcheries, ranches, feed mills, processing plants and refrigerated delivery trucks. Foster Farms encourages a strong ethic of social and environmental responsibility at all levels of the company. Environmental initiatives that promote recycling and reuse, increase energy efficiency, reduce and eliminate waste, and improve air quality are overseen by environmental specialists who regularly ensure that all facilities meet or exceed industry standards and government mandates. As of 2013, all Foster Farms fresh chicken is certified by the American Humane Association (AHA), the oldest welfare organization in the country.

### Environmental Stewardship

An innovative organic waste disposal and power generation program implemented in 2005 has won multiple awards at the state level (including California's highest environmental honor from the Governor's Office) and converts Foster Farms' organic waste into energy through a partnership with the East Bay Municipal Utility District. A 2007 third-party pollution prevention audit has allowed for continued improvement of management practices, reduced pollutants, and ensured that all environmental policy is being met. In 2009, Foster Farms' innovative and environmentally-friendly solid waste recycling programs and policies received acclaim from the California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB), part of the California Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The following year, a water recycling project at the company's Livingston Complex reduced water usage by 500,000 to 1,000,000 gallons per day.



From left to right; American Humane Association President and CEO Robin Ganzert, U.S. Congressman Jim Costa, Foster Farms CEO Ron Foster, Fresno State President John D. Welty, California Secretary of Agriculture Karen Ross and Dean of Fresno State's Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences Dr. Charles Boyer

### ACHIEVEMENTS

- First major broiler chicken producer in the Western United States to be certified by the American Humane Association
- Recipient of the 2009 Waste Reduction Award Program award
- Recipient of the 2005 Governor's Environmental and Economic Leadership Award for Environmental and Economic Partnership
- Recipient of the POWER award from Public Officials for Water and Environmental Reform



*“Since our founding as a small family farm in 1939, Foster Farms has remained dedicated to our land, people and surrounding communities.”*  
– Foster Farms’  
Environmental Stewardship  
Statement

## PROJECT PARTNERS

American Humane Association  
California Department of Food and  
Agriculture  
California Department of Resources,  
Recycling, and Recovery  
California Environmental Protection  
Agency  
California State University, Fresno  
East Bay Municipal Utility District  
National Chicken Council  
Public Officials for Water and  
Environmental Reform



## American Humane Association Certification

Founded in 1877, the American Humane Association (AHA) has been at the leading edge of efforts to protect children, pets and farm animals from abuse and neglect. AHA’s American Humane Certified program provides third-party independent verification that certifies producers’ care and handling of farm animals meet the science-based animal welfare standards of the American Humane Association. The comprehensive certification audit involves 200 separate items covering all aspects of the animals’ lives, diets, and natural behaviors. The standards are based on the “Five Freedoms of Animal Welfare” created by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, as well as input from internationally recognized animal-science experts, veterinarians and other animal husbandry specialists. In 2013, Foster Farms became the first major poultry producer in the Western United States to be American Humane Certified. Driven by increasing consumer desire for humanely raised poultry, Foster Farms’ formalized its animal welfare program and now all fresh Foster Farms chicken products are American Humane Certified and meet the AHA standards. Farmers and producers looking to be humane certified may begin by filling out an online application and scheduling a time for an audit to be conducted by an independent third party auditor.

## PROJECT DETAILS

### WASTE DISPOSAL PROGRAM

Through a public-private partnership, the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) and Foster Farms, along with the California Department of Food and Agriculture, collaborated to use an existing process already in place for the disposal of waste in the public sector and applied it to organic waste material from the private sector. In an 18-month long collaboration involving numerous agencies, Foster Farms was able to successfully implement an environmentally benign waste management program that serves as a model for new private and public partnerships. The program, led by Bill Ghiglia the Director of By-Products at Foster Farms, has the EBMUD process 5.4 million pounds of Foster Farms poultry by-product monthly. Previously, this by-product underwent an energy-intensive drying process. Now, the by-product is processed at EBMUD in an anaerobic digestion facility producing clean burning methane gas that is used to generate electricity. This new process creates 24 million kilowatt hours of energy per year, enough energy to power 4,000 households. This collaboration allows EBMUD’s anaerobic digester to operate at capacity and solves Foster Farms’ waste disposal problems in an environmentally conscious way.

### AMERICAN HUMANE ASSOCIATION CERTIFICATION

Foster Farms’ chickens are raised cage-free in spacious poultry barns in biologically secure environment that are temperature controlled and ventilated with fresh air. The barns offer protection from environmental extremes, predators, and disease carrying wildlife. In conjunction with rigorous standards set forth by the American Humane Association, Foster Farms follows the animal welfare guidelines of the National Chicken Council. To ensure that these standards are met at all times, Foster Farms has designated employees at each facility who reports to the company’s animal welfare officer. The company’s hatcheries, live production facilities, and growing facilities are all audited by independent third party experts. For the first time ever, an education and research facility, the Foster Farms Poultry Education and Research Facility at Fresno State’s Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology also received certification from the AHA. The state of the art facility will allow faculty and students to conduct research in the areas of poultry nutrition, animal welfare and improved environmental practices.