

## ***For Immediate Release***

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# **VeriFlora™ Sustainability Certification Program Sees Growth in Customers and Profile**

## ***Six Growers Recently Certified and More to be Announced***

Emeryville, CA – April 11, 2006 – Six prominent floral growers recently were certified for the first time under the VeriFlora sustainability certification program for fresh cut flowers and potted plants. Three of the newly certified floral operations are located in Ecuador, one is in Colombia, and two are in the United States in California.

VeriFlora certification is conducted by Scientific Certification Systems (SCS), a leader in independent third party verification and sustainable agriculture, fisheries and forestry standards development.

Increased demand by retailers and consumers for VeriFlora certified flowers has been fueled by a number of factors, including increased interest in sustainability, growing awareness of the availability of certified flowers, and recent praise for the VeriFlora program by leading industry representatives and independent observers. VeriFlora flowers are available in outlets such as Safeway, Trader Joe's, Kroger, Bristol Farms, and numerous independent retailers.

"The floral industry is undergoing significant change," observed Ted Howes, Vice President, Social Responsibility, Scientific Certification Systems. "An increasing number of growers have been greatly reducing their use of pesticides and replacing them with sustainable agricultural practices. And VeriFlora is helping to drive that change."

"Sustainable agriculture" is a broad concept encompassing farming practices that promote environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and economic viability. The VeriFlora standard has served as a template for a new *Draft American National Standard for Trial Use (SCS-001) for Sustainable Agriculture*, which was developed by SCS and is being filed with the American National Standards Institute (ANSI).

For floral growers, VeriFlora certification can apply to their entire production facility or to one or more specific farms within that facility. The six newly certified farming operations are:

- Denmar, which specializes in roses and spray roses, with three certified farms located in Tubacundo, Ecuador. An emphasis on state-of-the-art growing practices has lead Denmar to achieve superior quality products for the worldwide marketplace. Approximately 45 million stems a year are certified.
- CI HOSA LTDA. ("HOSA"), with five certified farms located in and around Bogotá, Colombia. The cultivars are roses, spray roses, minicarnations, alstroemerias, campanulas, and lilies. More than 150 million stems are certified.

*Xavier Serrano, President of Denmar and Hosa Group, stated, "Rigorous sustainability standards have been a point of main importance in our farms and something we have worked towards for many years. We are excited about the Veriflora certification; its key principles, people, environment, and quality go hand in hand with our beliefs."*

- Ecoroses S.A. of Ecuador, with one certified rose farm located near the town of Machachi. Approximately 10 million stems are certified.

*Esteban Chiriboga, owner and president of Ecoroses, stated, "We strongly believe in growing our roses in a sustainable manner that is good for the environment, healthy for the soil, and safe for our workers. The values and goals of the VeriFlora program are very consistent with ours."*

- RosaPrima Cia Ltda., in Ecuador, which specializes in premium quality fresh cut roses for the high end market, with one certified farm located in the beautiful region of Guachala, near the city of Cayambe. Approximately 15 million stems are certified.

*Ross Johnson, CEO, RosaPrima, said, "As RosaPrima continues to grow and expand, so does our commitment to being a responsible corporate citizen. Our business flourishes thanks to the richness and generosity of the land, the hard work of our employees, and the valued recognition of our customers. As such, we take our responsibility to society and the environment seriously and conduct our business with integrity."*

- Ascus Nursery ("Ascus"), a specialty nursery that creates finished living gifts such as miniature fruit trees and flowering gift plants, which has one certified farm in California's beautiful Sonoma County.

*"We have a growing business with both retailers and consumers," remarked owner Keith Pratt. "One of the requirements for VeriFlora certification is timely shipping with built-in quality control mechanisms, which is extremely important to us and something that we emphasize to our customers as a core value."*

- Resendiz Brothers Protea Growers, with one certified farm located in Fallbrook in Southern California. The certified cultivars are Protea, Pincushions ("Leucospermum"), Leucadendron, Banksia, and filler flowers.

*"Resendiz Brothers is a family-run operation with low employee turnover because we treat our workers well," said Office Manager Diana Roy. "Part of this includes the fact that we use very few agrochemicals. With the support of the VeriFlora program, we've also recently been able to reduce soil erosion."*

With encouragement from forward-thinking floral industry leaders in North America, SCS in 2004 created the *Sustainable Agriculture Practice Standard for Cut Floral Products and Potted Plants*, which includes rigorous, comprehensive requirements to ensure that the most environmentally sustainable, socially responsible, and quality-oriented practices have been used. The VeriFlora™ name and trademark were created as the certification label for floral products complying with this standard.

Currently, 13 growers in South America with a total of 32 farms are either certified or soon to be certified by VeriFlora. In the U.S., six growers and a total of 18 farms are certified or soon to be certified, including industry leader Sun Valley Group. In addition, certified handlers include two of the largest floral distributors in North America, Delaware Valley Floral Group and Sierra Flower Trading, Ltd. A total of some 521 million stems currently are VeriFlora certified. SCS will soon announce another three growers that have been officially certified.

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### **About Scientific Certification Systems (SCS)**

SCS is an independent certifier of environmental, sustainability, food quality and food purity claims. Over two decades, SCS has developed internationally recognized standards and certification programs aimed at spurring the highest level of environmental improvements, social accountability and product performance. Its programs span a wide cross-section of the economy, recognizing accomplishments in agricultural production, food processing and handling, forestry, fisheries, flowers and plants, energy, green building, consumer and business product manufacturing, and retail. For more information about VeriFlora and SCS, visit [www.VeriFlora.com](http://www.VeriFlora.com) or call 510-452-8000.