

Foods has been ranked in the top 100 best companies to work for by *Fortune* magazine every year since the inception of the ranking in 1998.

In addition to its flat organization structure (few layers of management between associates and top managers) and decentralized decision making (e.g., selection of new associates), the company believes that each employee should feel a stake in the success of the company. In fact, this is communicated in its "Declaration of Interdependence." The Declaration of Interdependence suggests that the company has eight core values. They are listed in Table 1.

The company attempts to support team member excellence and happiness through its empowering work environment in which team members work together to create the results. In such an environment, they try to create a motivated work team that achieves the highest possible productivity. There is an emphasis on individuals taking responsibility for their success and failure and seeing both as opportunities for personal and organizational growth.

The company develops self-directed work teams and gives them significant decision-making authority to resolve problems and build a department and product line to satisfy and delight the customers. The company believes in providing open and timely information and in being highly transparent in all of its operations. It also focuses on achieving progress by continuously allowing associates to apply their collective creativity and intellectual capabilities to build a highly competitive and successful organization. Finally, the company emphasizes a shared fate among all stakeholders. This is why there are no special privileges given to anyone, not even to top managers. It is assumed that everybody works together to achieve success.

**TABLE 1** Whole Foods' Declaration of Interdependence (Eight Core Values)

1. Selling the highest-quality natural and organic products available.
2. Satisfying, delighting and nourishing customers.
3. Supporting team member excellence and happiness.
4. Creating wealth through profits and growth.
5. Serving and supporting local and global communities.
6. Practicing and advancing environmental stewardship.
7. Creating ongoing win-win partnerships with suppliers.
8. Promoting the health of stakeholders through healthy eating education.

#### SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITIES

Whole Foods Market takes pride in being a responsible member of its community and of society. For example, it emphasizes the importance of sustainable agriculture. In particular, the firm tries to support organic farmers, growers, and the environment by a commitment to using sustainable agriculture and expanding the market for organic products. In this regard, the Whole Foods Market launched a program to loan approximately \$10 million annually to help independent local producers around the country to expand. It holds seminars and teaches producers how to move their products onto grocery shelves and how to command and receive premium prices for their products. These seminars and related activities have been quite popular. Overall, the Whole Foods Market does business with more than 2,400 independent growers.

Whole Foods Market also supports its local communities in other ways. For example, the company promotes active involvement in local communities by giving a minimum of 5 percent of its profits each year to a variety of community and nonprofit organizations. These actions encourage philanthropy and outreach in the communities that Whole Foods serves.

Whole Foods Market also tries to promote positive environmental

practices. The company emphasizes the importance of recycling and reusing products and reducing waste wherever possible. Furthermore, Whole Foods was the first retailer to build a supermarket that met environmental standards of the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Green Building Rating System (LEED). It offsets 100 percent of its energy use with wind credits. Finally, Whole Foods announced a new initiative a few years ago to create an animal compassion standard that emphasizes the firm's belief in the needs of animals. The company developed standards for each of the species that are used for foods and sold through their supermarkets (concern for human treatment and animal welfare). In 2012, the company produced its first Green Mission Report that reports on all of its areas related to environmental sustainability.

Whole Foods launched a program to encourage higher wages and prices paid to farmers in poor countries, while simultaneously promoting environmentally safe practices. In fact, the company donates a portion of its proceeds to its Whole Planet Foundation, which in turn provides microloans to entrepreneurs in developing countries.

Finally, Whole Foods has become a champion for healthy eating. It engages in healthy eating education to promote more healthy