

News Release



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For Immediate Release

Asmark Forms Institute for Ag Retailers

Owensboro, Kentucky, January 20, 2005 -- Asmark, Inc. today announced the formation of the Asmark Institute to assist retailers with state and federal regulatory compliance issues. The Institute will act as a resource center for compliance materials and services, continue to develop common sense solutions to new regulatory requirements, monitor enforcement activity for uniformity, and support industry efforts to ward off adverse regulation.

The Institute will be formed as a private, non-profit organization that provides a forum for national organizations, such as the Agricultural Retailers Association (ARA), The Fertilizer Institute (TFI) and CropLife America (CLA), to effectively collaborate with the state trade associations for the benefit of the nation's ag retailers. The Institute's goal is to streamline the various organizations' advocacy efforts to avoid duplication and preserve resources for an industry that has been hard hit by industry consolidation and increased regulatory pressure.

Working through an established network of participating state associations and national organizations, the Institute will offer compliance materials and services for a fee. Profits from the sales and marketing operations of the Institute will go towards developing compliance tools to address new regulatory requirements, sponsor industry advocacy programs, develop and support technical college programs for retail personnel or be distributed to the state and national organizations for services rendered.

"IFCA's relationship with Asmark has been tremendously beneficial not only to our members, but to our organization as a whole," said Jean Payne, President of the Illinois Fertilizer and Chemical Association. "Asmark's decision to expand its scope to assist us in improving our advocacy efforts will benefit each individual member and also the state associations by enhancing our communication efforts so that we are one industry focused on improving the business and regulatory climate for agricultural retailers across the United States."

Participating state associations will benefit through the ability to offer a host of new materials, services and technologies designed to help reinforce their membership efforts. ARA, TFI and CLA stand to benefit from savings by utilizing the Institute as a national resource to help administer industry programs and initiatives. Additionally, both the state and national organizations will benefit from GrassRoots™, a new database tool that will assist the agricultural industry's efforts in commenting on proposed regulatory and legislative activity.

ARA President and CEO Jack Eberspacher said, "ARA views the Institute as a great opportunity to provide a broader range of services and resources to retail members." "We look forward to building stronger state and national relationships through this initiative."

Asmark's owners, Allen and Susan Summers and Randy Lawrence, are donating their comprehensive program of products and services in order to form the new Institute. "The donation of Asmark's established system of compliance will allow the new Institute to hit the ground running on January 1, 2006," said Asmark President and founder Allen Summers.

Asmark currently provides retainer services to 985 retail farm centers in 34 states. “Our strategy has been to successfully tackle one regulatory requirement at a time and focus on developing state-of-the-art, common-sense solutions” said Randy Lawrence, Vice President of Asmark. “Combined, these tools come together to make a very powerful system of compliance which will now be available to benefit ag retailers across the country.”

“We’ve had several chances to commercialize Asmark on a national scale but the owners feel strongly that what has been created over the past 15 years presents a unique opportunity to benefit retailers in the future” said Summers. “The Institute will be a valuable resource to retailers and will support the state and national associations’ membership and grass roots efforts.”

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Asmark Institute:

The Asmark Institute is the leading resource center for agricultural retailers in the United States. Working exclusively through the state associations and in cooperation with the national organizations, the Institute acts as a resource center for compliance materials and services, develops common sense solutions to new regulatory requirements, monitors enforcement activity for uniformity, and supports industry efforts to ward off adverse regulation. The Institute is a private, non-profit organization that provides a forum for state and national organizations to effectively collaborate on issues for the benefit of the nation’s agricultural retailers.

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