



975 East Tower  
1300 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20005

T 202.271.0004  
F 202.589.0433

3935 Two Union Square  
601 Union Street  
Seattle, WA 98101

T 206.903.0600  
F 206.903.6222

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### The Food Partners Advises Harp's Food Stores in ESOP Sale

August 24, 2001, Washington, D.C. - The Food Partners (TFP), a national investment banking firm focusing exclusively on the food chain, announced today that it advised Arkansas-based Harp's Food Stores, Inc. in connection with the company's recent ESOP sale to its employees.

The transaction, which closed today, also calls for Harp's to partner with its long-time supplier, Associated Wholesale Grocers, Inc. (AWG), Kansas City, KS, in an arrangement that provides Harp's with capital, strategic support and other services from AWG, including a long-term agreement to supply Harp's stores.

Roger Collins, President and CEO of Harp's, said that he could not be happier with TFP's work. "By marrying a 100-percent ESOP company that can elect subchapter S status with a limited liability company, capitalized by a partner as solid as AWG, TFP helped structure a transaction that maximized value for the exiting shareholders while creating a solid foundation for the new employee-owners to continue to grow this business."

"This was a very innovative and complex transaction and we could not have completed it without TFP. They were actively involved in all aspects of the transaction and added substantial value to the deal," he added.

Harp's Food Stores, Inc., headquartered in Springdale, Arkansas, is a privately held company with 42 grocery stores under the banners of Harp's and Price Cutter and a convenience store called Pennzmart. A family owned company founded in 1930, Harp's employs more than 2,500 employees in Arkansas, Oklahoma and Missouri.

AWG is a \$3.8 billion retailer-owned cooperative with 342 members operating 850 stores in ten states. AWG has been Harp's primary supplier for the past 20 years.

The Food Partners, with offices in Washington, DC, and Seattle, WA, is a national investment banking firm focusing exclusively on the food chain. With nearly 80 years of collective investment banking experience, TFP provides merger, acquisition, divestiture, capital raising and strategic advisory services to the food industry. Clients served by TFP span the entire food chain and include privately and publicly held companies and cooperatives. TFP's website can be found at: [www.thefoodpartners.com](http://www.thefoodpartners.com).

###