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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

2008 Cork Harvest Yields 10 Percent Larger Crop **Improved Farming, Harvest Practices Deliver Higher Quality**

Benicia, CA, September 26, 2008 – The 2008 global cork harvest, though late in coming, yielded 240,000 metric tons of raw cork, a 10 percent jump over the previous year, according to Jochen Michalski, president of Cork Supply, a leading global supplier of premium natural cork wine stoppers.

“In Portugal, the world’s largest producer of renewable cork wood, the harvest delivered an exceptional yield of 165,000 metric tons,” said Michalski. “This was a very strong finish, after late spring rains delayed harvest by three weeks and extended a normally mid-June close to very late mid-August.”

“In addition to being a larger harvest than last year, enhancements in farming and harvesting practices are providing improved cork wood quality,” said Frederico Mayer, director of Cork Supply’s raw material department. “The innovative partnership Cork Supply has forged with forest growers enables us to work in the forest throughout the year to improve the overall forest habitat, which translates into visible quality improvements in cork.”

As evidence of Cork Supply’s increasingly direct involvement in the forest, Mayer points out that 40 percent of Cork Supply’s 2008 cork wood purchases was harvested directly by Cork Supply trained and contracted staff. “That forest owners permit us to have such a dominant role in their operations is evidence of the trust we’ve built. Such close involvement enables us to provide a superior level of technical support and supervision, which ensures protection of the trees and greater emphasis on quality.”

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“Cork Supply is committed to ensuring quality and traceability at every step from forest to bottle. This year, as the pioneer of vertical integration in the cork industry, we instituted strategic advancements in cork forest management and harvesting practices together with a €10 million investment in new state-of-the-art cork preparation and production facilities, and achieved certification by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC),” said Michalski. “The demand for premium and FSC-certified natural corks is continuing to grow, especially as more and more wineries seek to reduce their carbon footprint and bring more sustainably produced and packaged wines to market.”

Produced from the bark of the *quercus suber* tree, cork is an all natural, fully renewable, 100 percent biodegradable and completely recyclable and sustainable resource. Cork trees live for an average of 200 years, and their bark can be harvested as cork wood every nine to ten years. The very highest quality cork, about 15 percent of the harvest, is reserved for the production of wine corks, with the remainder used for a variety of commercial products.

Cork forests provide a sustainable habitat for wildlife biodiversity, reduce carbon from the atmosphere, act as a barrier against desertification, and support the livelihood and communities of indigenous families. Recognized worldwide by environmental and governmental organizations as playing a vital social, economic and environmental role, cork forests are protected by the Portuguese government, and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) preservation programs support their expansion. The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) now certifies wood from select cork forests that practice responsible forestry management.

With companies spanning Europe, North America, South America, Australia and Africa, Cork Supply Group specializes in the production and distribution of premium quality winemaking and wine packaging products. Among the forested products Cork Supply manufactures and/or distributes are: natural, technical and champagne corks, French and American oak barrels and alternatives, and award-winning designer printed paper labels. As one of the first companies to gain FSC-certification of their global cork production facilities in Portugal, Cork Supply Group is committed to responsible forest management and responsible forest product purchasing.

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Note to Editors: Photos are available upon request