



Media Contact: Jake Lewin
Director of Marketing, CCOF Inc.
(831) 423-2263, Ext 21
jake@ccof.org

Going Organic Program Fact Sheet

Santa Cruz, CA, October 21, 2005 - After completing a successful pilot project, the California State Water Board has renewed funding for CCOF's Going Organic Program. Going Organic's primary objective is to aid farmers converting to organic methods by pairing them with experienced organic farmers.

The Going Organic Program includes:

- Farmer-to-farmer mentoring to overcome barriers to organic farm conversion
- Organic certification assistance
- Organic marketing information
- Educational events for farmers, policy makers, and educators
- Organic farm tours
- An expected 5% organic acreage increase through converting 40 conventional farms in California's Central Valley, San Joaquin Valley, and the Napa and Sonoma regions
- Sponsored by the California State Water Board
- Organic farming watershed research by The San Francisco Estuary Institute (SFEI), www.sfei.org

Project Background

The Going Organic (GO) program was started in 2003 by the CCOF Foundation to protect the environment and promote human health through the production and consumption of nutritious organic food. With the initial pilot funding from the Clarence E. Heller Foundation, three CCOF Chapters (Fresno/Tulare, North Coast, and North Valley) held meetings, selected mentors, solicited trainee farmers, and completed surveys exploring the barriers to organic farming.

In 2004-2005 the pilot chapters held five meetings, including four GO kickoff meetings to solicit and link trainee farmers with experienced mentors. In all, 15 new organic farmers were linked with 9 mentors who hosted the trainees on their farms. The mentors have both large and small farms and grow a variety of crops including almonds, winegrapes, market gardens, olives, and flowers.

In 2005 the CCOF Foundation was awarded a two-and-a-half year grant by the California State Water Board to expand the Going Organic project to the North Coast Chapter and all CCOF Chapters in the Central Valley (Fresno/Tulare, North Valley, Yolo, Sierra Gold, and Kern). This effectively continues the project in the three original pilot chapters and expands to four new ones. The Water Board recognizes the "use of organic farming practices" as a management practice to improve water quality and therefore has supported this landmark program.

Plans for 2005-2006

The expanded program will provide funding for up to 25 mentors to help 40 non-organic farmers learn about organic farming and certification. Through a series of regional seminars and local on-farm meetings, the mentors, trainees, CCOF chapter members, non-organic farmers, advisors, and agricultural neighbors will be given information about the benefits and challenges of organic farming, helping to

overcome the perceived and real barriers to farming organically. Speakers will discuss fertility, compost, cover cropping, wildlife habitat, natural pest control, the certification process, erosion control, marketing, Organic System Plan (OSP) development, federal cost-sharing incentive applications, and more.

Additionally, The San Francisco Estuary Institute (SFEI), www.sfei.org, will conduct watershed health assessments. Farm watersheds will be selected to give a representative assessment of organic farming practices compared to similar non-organic farming run off sites and regional monitoring stations.

Schedule of Events

Fall 2005: A series of fall meetings will ‘kick off’ Going Organic in both the continuing and new chapters. Pilot watershed assessment and monitoring will begin and continue on a regular schedule for two years based upon initial assessment results.

Spring 2006: In each of the seven chapters, five mentors will be paired with seven new trainee farmers and visit each other’s farms. Local meetings will be held at mentors’ ranches and other locations to provide information and training for all farmers, land managers, educators, advisors, agencies, policy makers, and agricultural commissioners on organic farming.

Fall 2006: After harvest, the first trainees will complete their first year, and some new trainees may be accepted. New mentors will be selected based upon interests, time, and crops of the previous year’s mentors. A series of winter seminars and additional Going Organic kick-off meetings will expand outreach to the new trainees and the local farm community.

Upcoming Meetings

November 3, 2005. 1 – 4:30 PM	Big Valley (Madera County)	Okuye Farms, 10029 West Olive Ave, Livingston, CA.	Water, Money and Power. Going Organic Program Information.	Cindy Lashbrook, 209-761-0081, livingfarms@fire2wire.com
November 12, 2005. 8:30 AM-4:00 PM	North Valley (Chico/Butte County)	CSU, Chico, BMU, Room 210	3rd Annual Organic Farming and Food Conference. Chapter Kickoff Meeting.	Fred Thomas, 530-891-6958, fred@cerusconsulting.com
November 16, 2005. 8 AM-Noon	Sierra Gold Chapter (Placer County, etc.)	Bethell-Delfino Agriculture Bldg, 311 Fair Lane, Placerville, CA	Going Organic Workshop	Steve Bird, 530-647-0690 celticgardens@netzero.com

For Further Information and to apply:

Visit the Going Organic program online at: www.ccof.org/programs.php