

For Immediate Release

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## **CCOF Achieves Half Million Acres of Certified Organic Production**

(March 28, 2008) Santa Cruz, CA – CCOF, one of North America's oldest and largest organic certifiers, this month surpassed a half million organic acres in its certification program. This is a major milestone for the organization that was started in 1973 by a small group of organic farmers.

CCOF experienced a 129% growth in certified organic acreage over the last two years, along with a phenomenal 141,317 acre increase in 2007, representing a 40.7% single-year acreage growth. CCOF's 501,066 organic acres is split roughly evenly between livestock and produce operations. Certified pasture and field acreage has risen from just 38,611 in 2004 to 241,511, reflecting the growth in the organic dairy and livestock sector. CCOF now has 62 certified members producing milk. The main areas of growth in crops have been oats, rice, wine and table grapes, wheat, and alfalfa. Certified organic oat acreage increased by 51.6% in 2007, rice acreage by 49.3%, and table grape acreage by 39.3%.

Another interesting trend is the number of small to medium sized growers who are expanding their operations to include post-harvest activities, such as organic processing, handling or packaging, as means of adding value to their produce. "Much of our current growth is attributed to existing members adding acreage, facilities and products", states Peggy Miars, CCOF Executive Director. "We're excited that many CCOF members are experiencing growth and progress, and we support their continued success."

In 2007, CCOF completed more than 2,300 on-site inspections of land and facilities to ensure their compliance with the standards of the National Organic Program. "That means we are overseeing on average 10 inspections per work day", says Jake Lewin, Certification Services Director. "It's evidence of the dedication and commitment of our staff to serve and support the efforts of our clients out there in the fields, growing the organic market."

The organization also expanded its geographic reach. CCOF certifies acreage in 29 different states as well as five foreign countries. And, its growing Global Market Access Program assists CCOF certified operations looking to export their produce worldwide.

CCOF's growth is reflective of the organic sector as a whole that has seen growth in organic sales revenue jump to \$17 billion in 2006 from just \$13 billion one year earlier.

### About CCOF

*CCOF (California Certified Organic Farmers), a nonprofit organization, was founded in 1973 and is one of the nation's oldest and largest third-party organic certifying agencies. CCOF certifies, educates, advocates and promotes organic in California and elsewhere through:*

- *A premier organic certification program for growers, processors, handlers, and retailers.*
- *Programs to increase awareness of and demand for certified organic product and to expand public*

*support for organic agriculture.*

- *Advocacy for governmental policies that protect and encourage organic agriculture.*

*For further information on CCOF visit: [www.ccof.org](http://www.ccof.org)*

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