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INSIDE LOOK

Funding California's Next Generation of Organic

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Opportunity for Farmers and Ranchers



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CERTIFIED Organic



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Funding California's Next Generation of Organic

"In a state where the average farmer is approaching 60 years of age ... we need programs for the newcomers."

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"Without a succession plan, many family-run farms are likely to go out of business..."

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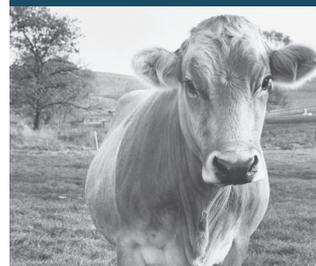
WE ARE ONE. WE ARE MANY. AND IT'S TIME WE SHARED OUR INDIVIDUAL VOICES AS WE GROW OUR ORGANIC FUTURE.

It's time we all talked about our organic future. The Organic Trade Association, a membership association representing 6,500 certified operations, is facilitating a discussion about a cooperative research and marketing program. What do you think?

STAY ENGAGED IN THE DIALOG AND SIGN UP FOR A NEWSLETTER AT
UnitedForMoreOrganic.org

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first
WORDS

By the time you read this, the federal government will have either gone over the fiscal cliff, or averted the plunge. Meanwhile, take heart in knowing that in some places, like at the USDA California Farm Services Agency, good folks are showing that it is possible to come up with practical solutions to big challenges. In this issue, California Farm Services Agency Director Val Dolcini tells us how he and his agency are working to transform the agricultural "lender of last resort" into the "lender of first opportunity."

In California, where the average farmer's age nears 60, the Farm Service Agency is targeting nearly half of its lending capital to assist beginning farmers and ranchers, working through a network of 30 county offices and promoting its newest financial tool: Microloans of up to \$35,000 (at a current interest rate of 1.25%). These loans are designed to address the "capital crunch" for newcomers in a direct and citizen-friendly way, according to Dolcini, with minimum paperwork and red tape.

The decline in numbers of U.S. farmers is entering its third decade. Dolcini reports that the greatest challenges named by those who want to stay or get into farming are access to land and access to capital.

New farmers are key to California's continued success as one of the world's largest suppliers of food and agricultural commodities. The state's bounty of fruits, vegetables, nuts, and grains is also celebrated today by renewed interest in local food systems and the growing popularity of farmers' markets, farm stands, Community Supported Agriculture, and agritourism.

It was only a couple of years ago that USDA replaced the infamous food pyramid with "MyPlate," emphasizing the importance of eating fresh fruits and vegetables. It's good to see a strong, combined focus on supporting our farmers. Let's applaud the Farm Services Agency and its work at keeping farmers in the business of helping us to eat well while securing our food supply for generations to come.



Cathy

Cathy Calfo
 CCOF Executive Director

Organic Farmers Now & For The Future

SHARE & LEARN AMONG OUR GROWING NETWORK OF FARMERS & ORGANIZATIONS THAT ARE CO-DESIGNING SOLUTIONS FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL.



- How can we decrease the steep learning curve to becoming a new, successful farmer?
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- How can we transfer wisdom from the older generation to the next generation, and fast?

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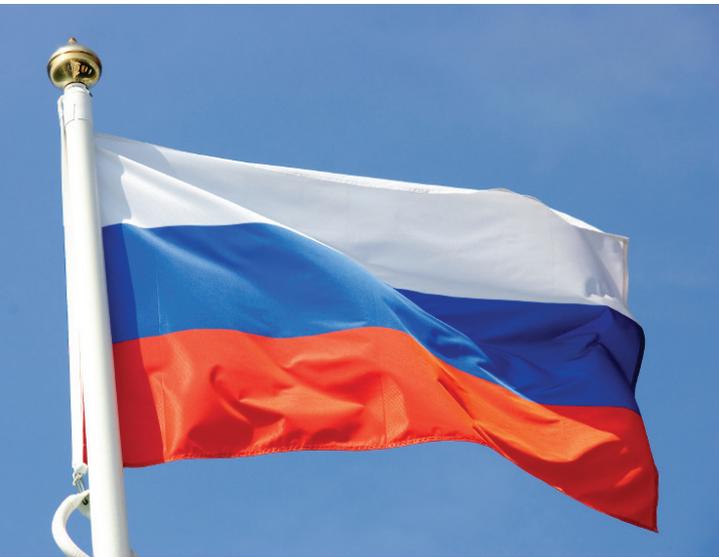
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Russia Moves Towards Organic Standard

A recent report from the USDA Foreign Agriculture Service states that Russian organic producers are frustrated with the absence of a regulatory body or certification system for organic products, and have encountered problems with market expansion. Russian producers are forced to obtain organic certification from other countries, mostly EU nations, if they are interested in export. Several farms in Russia are already working under many of the principles of organic agriculture: avoiding synthetic herbicides, pesticides, and mineral fertilizers. With Russia's organic food market estimated at \$250 million in 2011, some producers take advantage of the lack of a regulatory system and falsely label their products "bio" or "organic" without certification.

Several Russian producers of "bio" products sent a letter to the Russian Minister of Agriculture that expressed concerns about the lack of organic food regulations and asked for changes to current laws in 2012. In November came a draft of a new law, called "On Manufacture of Organic Agricultural Products and Modification of the Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation." The regulation includes a definition of organic products, stipulations for complying with international standards, and an explanation of issues related to government support for organics. While the draft law has been released, there is no accredited organization in Russia that lives up to the standards of the EU or USDA NOP.

The law is pending approval by the State Duma and is expected to come into force in 2015, allowing Russian organic farmers to be more competitive internationally and within the country.

Guide for Veterans Transitioning to Agricultural Careers

The Farmer Veteran Coalition (FVC) has released a manual aimed at helping veterans launch a career in agriculture, the first of its kind to focus on helping service members transition to careers in food and farming. "Veteran Careers in Agriculture: A Resource Guide" is available online and in print now, published at a time when more veterans are in need of services to help them transition to civilian life. The guide includes education programs, farm funding options, information on starting an agricultural business (crop planning, marketing, legal plans), helpful organizational partners, and inspiring stories from successful farmer veterans.

The guide, which is a collaboration between FVC and Farm Credit, offers an introductory letter from Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recounting the many opportunities for veterans in the agriculture industry and praising the farmer veterans who have continued to serve their country by securing our nation's food supply. The information-filled guide is available free of cost to military veterans in print by mail or downloadable online at www.farmervetco.org/our-resources.

Blue Mussel Farmers Earn Canadian Organic Certification

Sustainable Food News reports that three blue mussel processing facilities and eight mussel growers in Newfoundland have received the first Canadian Organic Aquaculture Standard certifications. The new standard, which came into enforcement in May 2012, requires an independent third party auditor to verify that the operations are not using synthetic chemicals, pesticides, or GMOs. Production of cultured blue mussels in Newfoundland reached 9.7 million pounds last year.

The United States continues to review the legal status of using the organic label for aquatic species, including the development of certification standards for organic aquaculture products and aquatic species.

As Canada succeeds at an organic aquaculture standard, the United States has unfortunately begun the process of integrating

GMO animal species into the human diet, with mostly unknown consequences. AquAdvantage salmon, the first genetically engineered animal intended for human consumption, is working its way toward approval by the Obama administration. The salmon is engineered by inserting a Chinook salmon growth hormone gene and ocean pout gene sequence to cause the fish to reach market size in half the normal time. Many environmental and consumer groups oppose its approval, citing concerns about biodiversity, safety, and consumer choice. More than 40 members of Congress have urged the FDA to conduct a more rigorous review of the AquAdvantage salmon's environmental and health safety. Over 300 organizations filed joint statements with the FDA opposing its approval.

Texas Organic Rice Production Reaches 15,000 Acres

Of the 50,000 acres of organic rice grown annually in the United States, Texas is proud to now claim 15,000 acres. The state is revitalizing their rice industry by increasing organic rice farming to compete with conventional rice production in the state, which has declined since 1998.

New grants for studies to boost organic rice while cutting greenhouse gas emissions provide hope for the future of a successful organic rice industry within the state. One grant will provide almost \$730,000 to look at reducing greenhouse gas emissions on organic rice farms. The effect of cover crops, organic soil amendments, and the variety of rice on yield, milling quality, soil carbon sequestration, and greenhouse gas emissions will also be researched. Another study will examine severity of disease in rice crops in Texas and South Carolina, observing the effects of dissolved organic carbon, nitrogen, and phosphorous concentrations and salinity on water quality. Both projects will be conducted through 2015. We await the results of this research and the potential impact it could have on organic rice production in Texas and perhaps nationwide.

EU Market Worth \$50 Million to U.S. Organic Food Exporters

Opportunities worth \$50 million abound for U.S. organic food exporters interested in the European Union. A new USDA Foreign Agriculture Service report details trade opportunities for U.S. certified organic products headed to the EU, highlighting organic vegetables, fresh fruits, dried fruit and nuts, specialty grains, and processed products. Vegetables such as sweet potatoes, lentils,

and broccoli showed a market potential of \$19 million. Fresh fruit including apples, pears, cranberries, strawberries, roasted coffee, grapefruit, and Minneola tangelos demonstrated a potential \$12 million. Dried fruits and nuts – raisins, dates, almonds, walnuts, and hazelnuts – showed \$9 million. Lastly, specialty grains and processed products were both valued at \$4 million, respectively.

The 2011 EU market for organic products was \$27.4 billion, an increase of 8% since the previous year and an indication that the market is healthy and growing. Yet, only \$6 million of organic products were exported to the EU in 2012, a surprising 13% drop from 2011 and the result of a sharp reduction in the U.S. organic cherry supply, a significant contributor to U.S. exports. Other top crops exported to the 27-member EU in 2012 were organic apples, coffee, strawberries, and grapes.

Canada remains the top market for organic exporters from the U.S. You can find the report, *Export Opportunities for U.S. Organics in the EU Market*, online.

Have you considered exporting to the EU? Learn more about CCOF's international programs at www.ccof.org/international.

Study Finds Organic Tomatoes Smaller, More Nutritious

A group of researchers recently published a study in the journal *PLOS ONE* finding that organic tomatoes are 40 percent smaller in size and mass than conventionally produced crops but pack more Vitamin C, lycopene, and other phenolics. Previous research has shown that a diet high in lycopene lowers markers of oxidative stress and carcinogenesis in healthy people, diabetic patients, and prostate cancer patients.

The research focused on organic and conventional crops grown in Brazil, where the organic farm applied compost just before sowing and the conventional farm applied a synthetic pesticide and inorganic fertilizer when necessary for maximum yield and stress control. In their report, the researchers urged conventional producers to shift toward organic production if they want superior quality and nutrition, focusing less on maximizing yields through pesticides and other chemicals in order to improve environmental conditions that promote more nutritious crops. Organic tomatoes are more prone to environmental stress such as drought, nutrient deficiency, and wind/temperature damage, which shorten the developmental period but accelerate ripening and the production of nutritional compounds.

Visit www.plosone.org to access the peer-reviewed study, "The Impact of Organic Farming on Quality of Tomatoes is Associated with Increased Oxidative Stress during Fruit Development."



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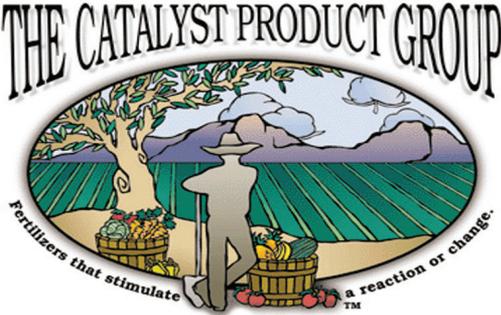
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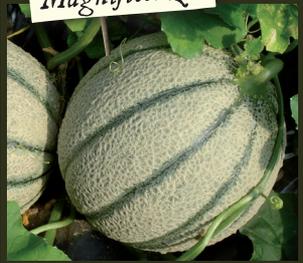
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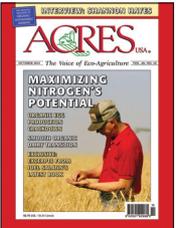
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Saint Benoit Creamery Wins for Sustainable Packaging

Congratulations to Saint Benoit Creamery! The certified member was recently selected by the Responsible Packaging Project to win the Extended Producer Responsibility award as part of the 2012 Responsible Packaging Awards. The Responsible Packaging Project, a trade group that promotes eco-friendly and socially responsible packaging innovation, is a collaboration of the Sustainable Food Trade Association, Independent Natural Foods Retailers Association, National Cooperative Grocers Association, Organic Trade Association, United Natural Foods Inc. (UNFI), and Whole Foods Market. Saint Benoit's regional, reusable, returnable, and refillable ceramic jar system is an innovative method for reducing waste and demonstrates the producer's commitment to sustainability in packaging and production. The Responsible Packaging Awards recognize packaging creativity and achievements under a set of guidelines: source reduction, extended producer responsibility, innovation, and next life. The other winners are Revive Drinks, Packaging 2.0/Whole Foods Market, and Chico Natural Foods.

Bryce Lundberg Appointed to CA Board of Food and Agriculture

We're pleased to announce that Governor Jerry Brown recently appointed Bryce Lundberg to the California State Board of Food and Agriculture (CDFA). Bryce has been owner and partner at CCOF-certified B & E Lundberg Farm since 1985 and has held many positions at certified member Lundberg Family Farms. Bryce also serves as chair of the Northern California Water Association and board member of both the Western Canal Water District and the California Farm Water Coalition. Bryce is a busy man and we're glad to have him as a member of CCOF's government affairs committee. His term with the Board of Food and Agriculture will continue until January 2017.

Of his appointment, Bryce commented to *Engredea News & Analysis*, "The Governor's appointment reinforces that valuing resources and protecting the environment is good for the people, good for business, good for farmers, and good for our future." He hopes to be a voice for California agriculture and organic farming on the board. "California is the most diverse state agriculturally, and our agriculture has so many great stories just waiting to be told. I hope to help tell those stories to consumers who increasingly want to know where their food comes from," he said.

We are excited to see how he takes advantage of this new position to support organic agriculture across the state.

Hallie Muller Joins CA State Fair and Exposition Board

Hallie Muller, director of outreach and education at CCOF-certified Full Belly Farm since 2009, has been appointed to the California State Fair and Exposition Board of Directors. Muller is also secretary of the Ecological Farming Association and member of the Agriculture and Food Alliance. Full Belly Farm, owned by Muller's family, is a sprawling 357-acre farm located in California's Capay Valley. The farm has been certified organic since 1985 and strives to "support local food systems and create a strong local food economy." It is home to the popular Hoes Down Harvest Festival held annually at the property in October.

The 11-member board serves as the governing and policy-making body for California Exposition & State Fair (Cal Expo), a separate entity in the California state government. Events



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by Cal Expo include the California State Fair, Sacramento Independence Day Celebration, horse racing, September 11th memorial, and the State Fair Gala. The Sacramento site hosts hundreds of events every year on the 350-acre property. Cal Expo first opened in 1968.

Congratulations to Hallie Muller on her appointment! Learn more about Full Belly Farm at www.fullbellyfarm.com.

Brad's Raw Foods Serves up Raw 4 Paws

Certified member Brad's Raw Foods has taken owner Brad's vast knowledge of living foods and nutrition to create healthy and organic dog treats for man's best friend. Free of grains, preservatives, animal products, fillers, and chemicals, Brad's treats provide a delicious and safe alternative to conventional dog treats made of who knows what. Instead of mystery ingredients, Raw 4 Paws reinvent the dog treat as they are made right here in the United States with whole vegetables, fruits, and seeds. The certified organic treats come in six flavors: Garden Gourmet, Up-Beet, Apple-Tizer, Pizza Pizzazz, Yappy Yam, and Pooch-Pourri. Kale-based, Brad's treats are full of antioxidants, iron, calcium, and vitamins. Kale helps protect your pooch against cancer and arthritis while promoting a healthy liver and immune system.

Ditch your old treats and give Brad's Raw 4 Paws a try. Visit www.bradsrawchips.com for more details, or to buy online.

Organic Valley Fund Crucial as Federal Funding for Organic Unavailable

CROPP Cooperative, owner of CCOF Business Partner Organic Valley, will distribute \$1.1 million in grants for organic education, advocacy, and research through the Farmers Advocating for Organics (FAFO) fund. Funded and governed by farmers, the fund has already awarded nearly \$1.2 million to nonprofits, educational institutions, and others in the regions of Organic Valley's local farmer-owners. Organic Valley noted the elimination of federal funding for the Organic Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) in the farm bill extension, cutting the competitive grants program and leaving organic research funding up to independent providers.

A new FAFO award category, Initiatives, has been added that will provide funds annually for two priority topics for a two-year period. The first two initiatives chosen are healthy soil

and seed. \$450,000 has been budgeted for the execution of these initiatives in 2013 and 2014. FAFO's grants totaled nearly \$300,000 in 2012. Areas targeted included seed diversity, GMO labeling, organic agricultural systems research, young farmer development, pesticides and children's health, women in agriculture, organic education and advocacy, organic dairy farming systems, and organic milk research.

Learn more about the FAFO program at www.organicvalley.coop/about-us/donations/fafo-fund.

Ecopia Farms Deliciously Fuses Technology with Agriculture

Ecopia Farms founders Koichi "Ko" Nishimura and Sam Araki were Silicon Valley technology buffs long before they began growing gourmet organic greens and herbs indoors. Certified by CCOF since 2011, Ecopia Farms resides in a warehouse in Campbell, California, at the heart of Silicon Valley, growing and producing over 60 varieties of organic baby lettuces, greens, and petite and micro herbs. Fueled by LED lighting, their production practices conserve water and energy resources, allowing Ecopia to offer high quality produce directly to local chefs and restaurants.

A recent and extensive profile by *California Bountiful* highlights the technology backgrounds of Nishimura and Araki, who retired from their respective careers and began testing the indoor farming concept in 2008. "What we did was create a spa for the plant and, as engineers, we know a lot about optimization," said Nishimura, to *California Bountiful*. Ecopia's successful artificial environment allows them to grow large quantities of produce on a fraction of the space necessary for an outdoor, land-based farm. Water requirements dropped to 3% of a standard farm's needs. In fact, their website mentions that today's farms average 72 gallons of water per lettuce head grown - Ecopia has it down to 12 oz.

Starting from seed, the plants are grown under LED light in trays filled with custom soil and then transferred to larger containers. The whole growing cycle takes only about 8-9 weeks. Chefs in the Bay Area go crazy for the concentrated and bright flavors, as well as the pristine appearance of Ecopia's harvest. Their year-round production also allows them to meet the purchasing needs of restaurants and supply consumers with fresh, organically grown delicacies.

Learn more about Ecopia Farms and their innovative growing techniques at www.ecopiadirect.com. Be sure to read their *California Bountiful* profile at www.californiabountiful.com.

CCOF "Likes"

Member News Meets Social Networking



ATTRA - Sustainable Agriculture via Facebook: "Check out the ATTRA Question of the Week: When propagating strawberries, do transplants or seeds need to be certified organic in order to be certified organic when they are in full production?"

Have you "liked" ATTRA on Facebook? Their posts are informative and helpful for both organic consumers and producers. Plus, their website is full of information for growers and those seeking more resources on organic production methods.



Evergreen Nursery via Facebook: "Now is a great time to plant perennials such as Gaura, Achillea/Yarrow, Blue Marguerite Daisy, Santa Barbara Daisy, and lavender."

Thanks Evergreen! If you have tips on organic gardening to share with your fans, don't hold back! Your readers will be happy to get information from a reliable and trusted source.



Cooper-Garrod Estate Vineyards via Facebook: "Getting ready now for a little rain, they say. We're thinking provencal beef stew and syrah as comfort food for this winter weather. What's your favorite?"

Lightly encouraging your fans to get involved with your post by asking a question is a great way to start a conversation. Sharing your favorite foods and recipes invites others to speak up about their favorites as well.



Earl's Organic Produce via Facebook: "Galangal is a member of the ginger family and most commonly used in Thai, Malaysian and Indonesian cooking. The flavor is stronger than ginger, spicy, sweet and has an essence of cinnamon. It is very fibrous and should be removed from food before eating. I love making Thai curries in my mortar with galangal."

If your operation has a unique or special ingredient to offer, help your fans understand how to take advantage of it. Offer pairing suggestions, recipes, and other preparation information to make dedicated fans out of timid eaters. Provide a photo so they can identify your crop when shopping in stores.



Pastry Smart via Twitter: "Seven days.....until we land @NatProdExpo #ExpoWest. Visit @PastrySmart at Booth #1986 or Booth #5210. #breadandchocolate"

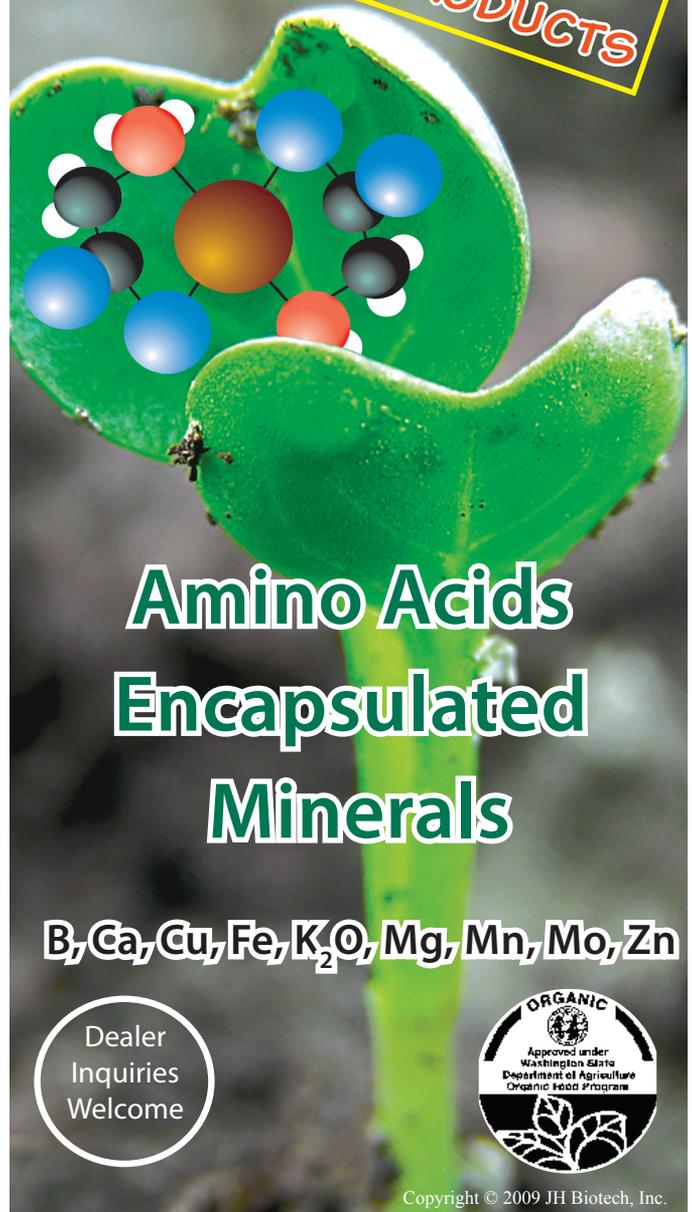
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Homegrown Organic Farms consists of growers like owners John and Cindy France. Their stories are as diverse and unique as the produce we offer but maintain a common thread of inspiration and conviction that provides the foundation for our success. For us, it's not just a number on a balance sheet; it is a part of who we are and how we live. We believe in organic produce and the change in farming philosophy that it represents.



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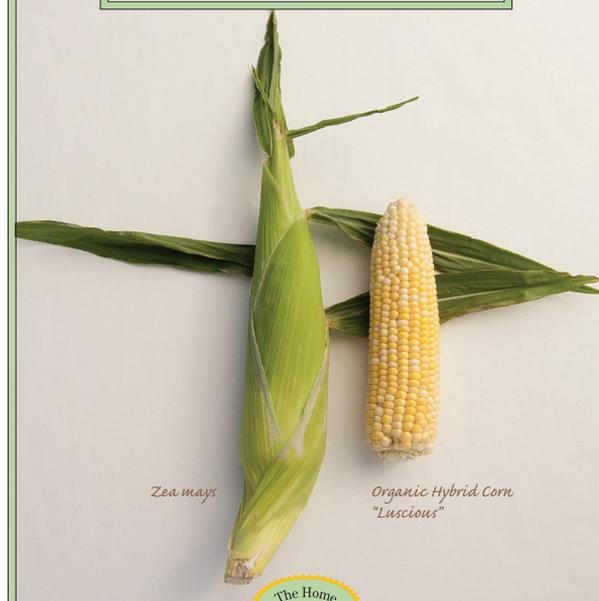


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CCOF 2013 Annual Meeting and 40th Anniversary Celebration

CCOF kicked off our 40th Anniversary Celebration with a full-day preconference to EcoFarm 2013 on January 23. Anniversary activities began with our annual meeting, including a review of the past year's accomplishments and an open microphone for member comment. After the meeting, a commemorative bus tour departed from the Asilomar Conference Grounds to visit farms and highlight CCOF's innovative role in helping to grow organic agriculture. Mark Lipson, USDA organic and sustainable agriculture policy advisor; David Katz, farm doctor/land specialist; and Wendy Krupnick, organic farming and gardening instructor, filled participants with stories of CCOF's early history en route to the bus stops. The buses were also joined by Irene Reti and Sarah Rabkin, who shared excerpts from their book, *Cultivating a Movement: An Oral History of Organic Farming and Sustainable Agriculture on California's Central Coast*.

The first stop was Phil Foster Ranch-Pinnacle Brand, where farmer/owner Phil Foster shared from his 23-plus years growing an array of organic crops in Hollister, California. Participants got a first-hand look at Phil's elaborate compost yard and learned the inner workings of fertility and soil management. Participants learned the importance of hedgerows in maintaining a healthy balance of beneficial insects and observed Phil's hoop houses, which help give him a competitive edge on being first to market with choice crops.

Participants enjoyed lunch catered by Whole Foods Market. Bob Scowcroft, CCOF's first executive director, gave a lively walk down memory lane over lunch and shared several documents from his personal archives regarding critical moments that allowed CCOF to grow and thrive.

The second stop was the USDA Agricultural Research Station in Salinas, which has the longest-standing organic cropping systems trial on high-value crops in the United States. USDA-ARS Research Horticulturist Eric Brennan passionately shared some of the initial findings of the 10-year study on cover cropping and compost systems on the CCOF-certified land. "This is your land," he said, encouraging participants to touch the soil beneath their feet. "Farming partners like Roy Fuentes are critical to bringing this research to the organic community." Roy Fuentes, owner/farmer of Fuentes Berry Farms, shared his journey to organic agriculture: transitioning his land to organic to create a sustainable business for his family. Roy farms strawberries and caneberries in the Salinas Valley, and has been engaged with the research trial with Eric for the past 2 years. Roy shared: "Participating in the organic field trial has been an important learning point for my operation. The trial has demonstrated the benefits of cover cropping and crop rotation for organic systems. I will be adapting these practices in my other fields to improve sustainability and productivity."

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En route to the third farm stop, the conversation changed to looking at the future of CCOF and organic. Mark Lipson shared insights from USDA, and Melody Meyer of UNFI and David Lively of Organically Grown Company shared how the reach and scope of the organic marketplace has grown. Our third and final stop was Serendipity Farms, where farmer/owner Jamie Collins told her story of joining CCOF as an inspector and regional service representative, which allowed her to begin her small farm over 11 years ago. Jamie shared insights into her diversified marketing strategy that includes U-Pick, farmers' markets, and the use of social media to connect with her customers. The tour concluded with a reception featuring CCOF-certified wine and beer. Myra Goodman, co-founder of Earthbound Farm, recounted CCOF's role in Earthbound's rise: "When we started our farm in our backyard in 1984 there wasn't a lot of support. When we realized we could get certified organic, it was exciting. CCOF certified us when we were 2 ½ acres and they have grown with us. We now have 40,000 acres."

"The Spirit of CCOF" video was shown at the reception highlighting CCOF's first executive director, Bob Scowcroft, and CCOF's first employee, Mark Lipson, as well as some early members including Betty Van Dyke of Van Dyke Ranch. The video is posted on our blog at www.ccof.org/blog.

The day concluded with a celebratory dinner featuring all CCOF-certified ingredients and a generous donation of pork ribs from certified member Llano Seco Rancho. Matthew McGuire of the Cancer Treatment Centers of America (CTCA) shared an inspiring story of how CTCA set up an organic farm at one of their institutions to address nutrition needs of cancer patients. He noted that 40% of cancer patients do not die from cancer but from a form of malnutrition. The organic farm was placed on campus to provide true farm-to-table nutrition to their guests. "Because of CCOF's accomplishments and the groundwork laid to

make organic mainstream in our markets, our board embraced the concept with open arms and we planted our very first seed of our 25-acre farm in December. We will be harvesting a wide array of organic, seasonal produce beginning this spring from just steps outside our dining room door," he said.

Feed the World you Want to Live In: EcoFarm 2013 Highlights

The 33rd annual EcoFarm Conference was a huge success with over 1,500 participants. *Feed the World you Want to Live In* was the theme of this year's conference, which included many firsts this year: a butchery demonstration, many new preconference events, and the exhibitor marketplace scavenger hunt! CCOF adapted our popular *Organic Marketing 101* training into a live workshop at the conference, presented by Dina Izzo of BluDog Organic Produce Services and Jeff Bordes of Marin Sun Farms. The workshop was attended by over 50 participants, including 20 Spanish speakers who took advantage of the simultaneous translation. A video featuring famers' market veteran Jeff Larkey of Route One Farms was also shared with participants, which we had recently updated to include Spanish subtitles.

CCOF Policy Director Brise Tencer organized the "Farm Bill Update: What's in it and What Does it Mean to You?" workshop talking about the what, why, and how of the U.S. farm bill. Brise presented an overview of the bill and status of CCOF's priorities. She also provided a brief training on how farmers can advocate for these priorities. John Teixeira, farmer/owner of CCOF-certified Lone Willow Ranch, presented on how he uses farm bill programs on the ground and his involvement in advocating for farm bill resources. Greg Fogel of the National Sustainable

Agriculture Coalition provided an overview of conservation programs in the farm bill, program strategy, and the legislative process. Together the presenters inspired participants to continue to advocate for resources for organic farmers.

CCOF Handler Certification Specialist, Taryn Washburn, organized and moderated a workshop with wine industry leaders from Bonterra Vineyards, Frog's Leap Winery, and LaRocca Vineyards, who shared their innovative practices during the "Making the Jump to Organic Winemaking and Viticulture" workshop. From dry farming practices in the Napa Valley to integrating sheep into the vineyards in Mendocino, the speakers brought their enthusiasm and passion for organic farming and winemaking. The audience was educated and inspired by the success stories of these producers. Proof was in the glass later that evening as conference attendees filled the room for the wine tasting event where wines from these three wineries shone.

CCOF Launches California Central Coast Training Program at EcoFarm!

CCOF helped launch the Central Coast Farmer Education Network calendar with partners CASFS, CAFF, and EcoFarm thanks to our USDA Beginning Farmer Rancher Development Program grant. The calendar was announced throughout the conference targeting beginning farmers at more than a dozen workshops and the CASFS mixer on Thursday evening. Check out CASFS's Grow a Farmer website at www.growafarmer.org for a complete listing of organic and sustainable agriculture trainings offered on California's Central Coast.

CCOF Participates in Organicology

Organicology was the biggest ever with over 750 participants attending in Portland, Oregon, February 7-9. CCOF was pleased to take part in this educational and inspiring three-day event. The first day of the conference consisted of five different day-long intensive sessions, including a full day on policy where CCOF Policy Director Brise Tencer presented on the farm bill. "We had a great panel of speakers and the audience was really engaged; it's great to see a broader audience taking an interest in farm bill policy," she said. Day two included a mix of workshops including "Beyond Organic" with CCOF Executive Director, Cathy Calfo, and "Organic Materials and Input Regulations: The Future" with Zea Sonnabend, CCOF policy

specialist and inspector, and organic farmer. CCOF had a table with materials at the exhibit hall and sponsored the Spirits & Organic Winter Veggie Tasting reception.

Don't Miss Out! Join us for CCOF's Spring Education Series

Los Angeles Wholesale Market Tour (New in 2013!) April 19, 6:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Walk the docks of the Los Angeles Wholesale Produce Market and tour the warehouses of Heath & Lejeune and Better Life Organic Produce. Learn the importance of pack standards, box quality, and cold chain management in preserving the integrity of your organic product. See firsthand a variety of NOP-compliant labels. This is your opportunity to see behind the scenes of wholesale operations, learn about the varieties of fruit and vegetables currently in the marketplace, and see what your competition is doing.

Organic Labeling Webinar May 9, 9:30-11:00 a.m.

This webinar provides processors and handlers new insight into the most common mistakes companies make with their organic labels, and defines a step-by-step process for developing labels that comply with the USDA National Organic Program. After this webinar, participants understand the relevance of product composition and percentage calculations to their product claims, the correct use of the CCOF and USDA seals, ingredient lists, and the steps in the CCOF label approval process.

Postharvest Field Day June 26, 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

This field day will focus on low-tech, low-cost postharvest handling techniques for small- to mid-scale organic farmers. This full-day field day links the importance of postharvest handling and food safety to effective marketing and consumer satisfaction. We will visit farms nestled in lovely Pescadero, California, where will observe innovative postharvest handling facilities in action.

Please visit our new Events, Trainings & Resources webpage for a full calendar and registration for these events:
www.ccof.org/education.

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Welcome New CCOF Chapter Leaders!

San Luis Obispo (SL)

On December 16, 2012, the Grange Hall in San Luis Obispo, California, was buzzing with 31 members of the SL chapter for their yearly chapter meeting. Secretary/Treasurer Eric Michielsson coordinated a successful chapter meeting including a satisfying buffet and a presentation direct from CCOF headquarters. After signing in, members greeted one another while sipping wine from Thomas Hill Farm and noshing on samples of member products such as olive oil, cactus, and pistachios. After plating up an assortment of member-grown produce, barbecue chicken, and steak (Santa Maria style), members sat down to enjoy the bounty before presentations took place. Eric gave the initial welcome and served as the MC for the remainder of the meeting. He spoke about the significance of the chapter meeting being held at a grange hall and encouraged chapter members to join the revitalized SLO Grange as a means to support the community focus on granges. Although elections for SL were not due, Carolyn Shaffer stepped into the role of chapter president after a short run as vice president. CCOF staff members Cathy Calfo, Executive Director; Brian Coltrin, Certification Service Specialist; and Christine Coltellaro, Executive Assistant and Chapter Outreach Coordinator, attended the meeting from the CCOF office in Santa Cruz. After Eric's updates, Cathy presented on the new CCOF website, certification improvements, policy updates, farm bill, and the (then) upcoming annual meeting and 40th Anniversary Celebration, which since raised \$100,000 in sponsorship donations. CCOF staff members were also on hand to answer questions. The meeting ended with a raffle of CCOF merchandise from the home office.

Since the meeting, Carolyn has populated the SL chapter web page. Check it out at www.ccof.org/ccof/chapters/san-luis-obispo.

South Coast (SC)

The home of Kathy and Stan Cowell III sits on a small avocado orchard overlooking the ocean on a hill in Santa Barbara, California. This passive solar home was the site for the annual South Coast chapter meeting on December 4, 2012. Harriet Sharp, former SC treasurer (and Kathy's mother) coordinated the meeting, which featured a presentation on CCOF policy and certification updates from CCOF Executive Director Cathy Calfo, a certification report from inspector Glenn Johnson, and a gourmet dinner prepared by Olivia Chase from The Farmer and the Cook restaurant in Santa Barbara. Wine for the meeting was donated by Alma Rosa Winery & Vineyards. After Cathy and Glenn's presentations, elections took place. Maren Johnston was elected treasurer after Harriet Sharp retired from the position. Steve Sprinkel was elected alternate board representative, which was previously vacant.

Pacific Southwest (PS)

The Pacific Southwest chapter members held their most recent meeting with their regional processor/handler chapter members. Local small farmers, citrus growers, date farmers, coffee roasters, organic input and pesticide vendors, beef ranchers, inspectors, speakers, and more attended the joint-chapter meeting on February 16 at 123 Farm, located in the foothills of Southern California's picturesque Cherry Valley. 123 Farm sits on 20 acres at the Highland Springs Resort and is known for its lavender production. The meeting kicked off with a farm tour conducted by Jan Kielman, farm coordinator. Following the tour, the meeting moved indoors and presentations were given over a healthy, colorful, and satisfying lunch buffet. CCOF Executive Director Cathy Calfo and Senior Grower Certification Specialist Amber Pool gave pertinent policy and certification updates. Next, Kim Lary from the local NRCS gave an informative presentation on ongoing conservation projects and practice funding. Lunch ingredients and meeting logistics were the result of a collaborative effort among chapter members and supporting members, namely Shelton's Poultry, Wilson Coffee Roasting, Be Wise Ranch, Page's Organics, and Christie Organic Consultants.

Fresno-Tulare (FT)

The most recent Fresno-Tulare chapter meeting was held February 19 at the Organic Fresno restaurant, which serves food made from organic and locally sourced ingredients, many of which are from CCOF-certified members. Chapter President Dwayne Cardoza led the meeting. Brise Tencer, Director of Policy and Programs; Jacob Guth, Senior Grower Certification Specialist; and Christine Coltellaro, Executive Assistant and Chapter Outreach Coordinator, attended the meeting from the CCOF office in Santa Cruz. They gave a brief update on the new CCOF website, the online member pages, and farm bill and FSMA issues. Vernon Peterson, the chapter board representative, gave an update on the recent CCOF board meeting held January 22. Members had a brief discussion on foreign certified organic products and CCOF products certified outside the United States. In addition, the chapter leaders enthusiastically committed to communicate with the Fresno State Ag Program to maintain training for future organic farmers and organic agriculture education at FSU. At the end, the chapter had an elaborate raffle with donated organic products and CCOF goods. The chapter has two officer openings for secretary and treasurer.

Congratulations to Our New CCOF Chapter Leaders!

Big Valley (BV)

Brad Samuelson, Fagundes Brothers Dairy,
Board Representative

San Luis Obispo (SL)

Carolyn Shaffer, Rancho Rendezvous
Farms, Chapter President

South Coast (SC)

Maren Johnston, El Caminito Ranch,
Treasurer

Steve Sprinkel, The Farmer and the Cook,
Chapter Board Alternate

Yolo (YO)

Jenny Lester Moffitt, Dixon Ridge Farms,
Chapter Board Representative

We would like to thank Cindy Lashbrook (BV) and Paul Underhill (YO) for their years of dedicated service, leadership, and guidance on the CCOF Inc. Board of Directors.

Let the CCOF community know what your chapter is doing!

Write to programs@ccof.org and we will publish your chapter update in the next edition of *Certified Organic*.

Thank you to this issue's contributors: Carolyn Shaffer (SL), Harriet Sharp (SC), Mint Paskadee (FT), Tom Page (PS)

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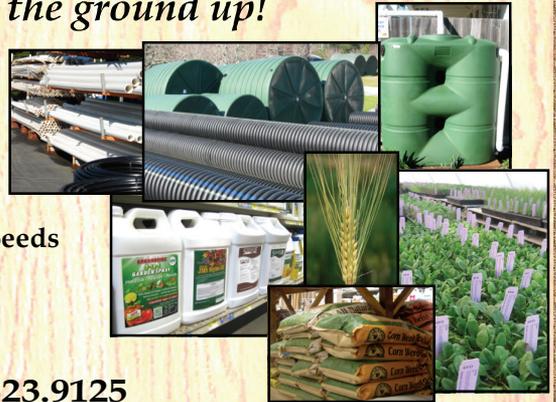
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Funding California's Next Generation of Organic

USDA: Working to Expand Economic Opportunity for Farmers and Ranchers

By Val Dolcini, USDA Farm Service Agency State Executive Director, val.dolcini@ca.usda.gov

Recent studies indicate that the United States is losing both farms and farmers. According to a USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) report, the number of U.S. farms declined by 11,630 in 2012, leaving the nation with approximately 2.2 million family farms with an average size of about 420 acres. Similarly, USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) reports that as of January 2013, the national share of beginning farms and ranches - defined as having 10 or fewer years of experience - has been on the decline for at least two decades. Yet, in California, interest in local and regional food systems has never been higher. Here, the numbers of farmers' markets and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) businesses have steadily increased, agritourism is increasingly popular, and other metrics of success are all on the rise (e.g. crop prices, export opportunities, job prospects). How do we reconcile these seemingly opposing data trends? Is California that different? Or will next year's Census of Agriculture indicate that beginning farmers and ranchers are losing their footing in the Golden State, too?

The answers probably lie somewhere in the middle. But in the meantime, we're building ladders of opportunity at the USDA to ensure that the unlimited potential represented by California agriculture in terms of jobs, local food production, renewable energy creation, rural economic development, and other areas of opportunity are accessible to those who are willing to work hard to chart their future and that of our rural towns and communities.

As the state executive director for the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) in California, I have met countless beginning farmers and ranchers, military veterans, farmers' market vendors, CSA growers, urban agriculturalists, and many others interested in making a living growing the food that we consume. For most of these men and women, two significant issues stand in the way of their dreams: access to land and access to capital. To address these challenges, USDA targets a portion of direct and guaranteed farm ownership and operation loan funds directly to beginning farmers and ranchers. Known by some as the lender of last resort, I believe that "Lender of First Opportunity" is a more accurate description of the agency these days for the role it plays in working with farmers just starting out. In California, well over half of our lending portfolio is focused on beginning farmers and ranchers, and we continue to support farmers and ranchers in every corner of the state through our network of 30 county offices. A great example of this is in our newest financial tool: the microloan.

Land is prohibitively expensive in California and the daily costs of running even a small farming operation can test the mettle of the most committed would-be farmer or rancher. Many have resorted to funding their daily operating expenses on high interest credit cards or personal loans. The debt burden quickly becomes overwhelming, the personal risks too high, and the result can be dashed hopes and deferred dreams, or even bankruptcy. In a state where the average farmer is approaching 60 years of age and planning for their exit from the working life, we need programs like the microloan that address this "capital crunch" for the newcomers in a direct and citizen-friendly way.

It is imperative that we provide access to credit to those just starting out or those on a smaller scale...

Moreover, to revitalize our rural communities and economies, we need programs that invest in our people and provide the next generation of farmers and ranchers with the financial tools they'll use to grow their own version of the American Dream. USDA understands these critical needs of smaller farmers and ranchers, and has created this new microloan program that will provide up to \$35,000 to help bolster these producers during their start-up years. Microloans are like other operating loans offered by the USDA. They can be used to purchase livestock, equipment, feed, seed, fertilizer, and related supplies. But here's a real benefit when compared to those who use credit cards and personal loans to fund their operations: the current interest rate for these smaller microloans is 1.25%. From the tiniest acorns grow the mightiest oaks.

Microloans differ from traditional FSA loans. Applying for them is a simpler, more flexible process. By reducing the application form to seven pages and modifying requirements for experience, it's far more convenient for both our customers and our employees. We've reduced the red tape and bureaucracy to make the whole process more citizen-friendly.

Of course, some farm production or apprenticeship experience is necessary, but there are many producers who may not meet the managerial requirements for traditional loans and still may be eligible for a microloan. FSA will consider an applicant's small business experience, experience with an apprenticeship, and specialized education to meet this prerequisite.

It is imperative that we use new tools like the USDA Microloan to provide access to credit to those just starting out or those producing on a smaller scale in order to grow American agriculture. It's important because agriculture can provide the food, fuel, and new jobs that will build our economy and ensure a safe and affordable food supply at home and abroad. It's important because loans like these keep people living in vibrant, economically successful rural communities, sending their children to our local schools, and doing business with local shops, banks, and other businesses. And it's important because a rising tide lifts all boats.

Here in California we've seen an increasing desire to "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food." With the expansion of local and regional food sources, and as communities around the state join the growing "field-to-fork" movement, there are increasing numbers of people going back to the farm and selling their products directly to consumers through farmers' markets and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) businesses. Microloans are perfect for these farmers and those who grow niche crops to sell directly to ethnic markets, restaurants, and specialty produce distributors.

Young farmers and ranchers will also benefit. Borrowers that previously used an FSA Youth Loan and successfully repaid

the debt are good candidates for a microloan. Young producers who graduate from the microloan program move to a new level and are preparing themselves and their businesses for larger operating loans or commercial loans through the FSA Guaranteed Loan Program. Successful participation in USDA loan programs also helps to build good credit and, in turn, builds important relationships between farmers and their local banks, credit unions, and farm credit associations, further strengthening rural economies.

By expanding access to credit, FSA continues to help grow the industry on which our country was built: agriculture. Throughout the United States, FSA made more than 32,000 loans totaling over \$4 billion last year. The number of loans to beginning farmers and ranchers has increased from 11,000 in 2008 to 16,000 in 2012. More than 50 percent of USDA's farm loans now go to beginning farmers, while lending to socially disadvantaged producers has increased nearly 50 percent since 2008.

At USDA, we help people achieve their dreams whether they are traditional production agriculture operations or smaller-scale farms and ranches. By supporting **all** of America's growers, we help **all** Americans. By providing access to capital in the form of a USDA microloan, we're expanding access to greater opportunity for **all** of our rural citizens.

From the wheat grower in Modoc County to the CSA in Solano County, from the peach grower in Fresno to the greenhouses of San Diego County, for all of California's diverse farmers and ranchers, USDA investments in these agricultural entrepreneurs and innovators will continue to ensure safe, secure, and affordable food for all Americans and many millions around the world.

Funding at a Glance

- Since January 15, FSA has made 18 microloans totaling nearly \$500,000
- In FY 2012, more than half of FSA's total lending in California went to "socially disadvantaged" farmers (e.g. farmers of color, women farmers)
- In FY 2012, over 200 loans were made to beginning farmers (less than 10 years of experience)
- In FY 2012, nearly 200 loans were made to young farmers (less than 21 years of age)



Shooting Star – Matt and Lily Start a Farm

Funds for New Farmers Paying Dividends

Matt McCue and Lily Schneider launched their new farming venture on 10 acres in verdant and fertile Suisun Valley, California, close to the urban market centers in the San Francisco Bay Area and Sacramento. They took the farm name Shooting Star from a bright flower growing on nearby hillsides. This young couple started their CCOF-certified organic operation with the help of two Farm Service Agency (FSA) Operating loans.

"There's a myth, lots of people say you can't make a living farming," Schneider says. "Everyone has just bought into this idea. But thankfully we've had mentors who have helped us along the way." At Shooting Star, Matt and Lily are hands-on partners running a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operation. Their farm's impressive list of seasonal vegetables includes potatoes, chard, lettuce, onions, carrots, cabbage, tomatoes, peppers, melons, squash, green beans, broccoli, cilantro, kale, leeks, beets, corn, eggplant, dill, and basil. Matt and Lily rotate through about 35 types of produce each year and are now farming 15 acres.

"The Farm Service Agency keeps this country running," states Matt. "The banks just wouldn't touch farmers like us, but FSA helped us get started." FSA funds grow jobs as well as food. Three employees work hard alongside Matt and Lily, earning a living wage during most of the year. Besides the growing,

Matt and Lily process, package, and deliver to over 200 CSA subscribers, most weeks on the same day it's picked. They also sell at six urban farmers markets in the area from May to November.

Matt and Lily are no strangers to hard work, here and elsewhere. Matt is a veteran who has served in Iraq and Korea with the U.S. Army. He is also a veteran of the Peace Corps, serving in Niger helping sesame and millet farmers improve their planning and field operations. Lily studied agriculture and did field work in South America with the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile working on kiwi, apple, and pear crops. The young couple met in Santa Cruz while working in the fields at the University of California at Santa Cruz's organic farm.

They select their crops varieties as well as cultivation and rotational practices to reduce impacts on the environment. All their irrigation is pipe and drip to avoid the evaporative water loss that occurs in flooded open furrows or pressurized sprinklers. It's not by accident that they started this farm; they are dedicated and passionate about their convictions that sustainable agriculture can help improve the world. They should know. They've seen the world.

Learn more about Shooting Star at www.shootingstarcsa.com.

Business Succession

Planting the Seeds for an Abundant Future

Whether retirement is near or far, thinking about who will take the reins and lead your farm into the future isn't easy, but it's especially relevant these days. According to the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, approximately 70 percent of U.S. farmland will go on the market in the next 20 years as the nation's farmers age. Without a succession plan, many family-run farms are likely to go out of business, be bought by larger farms, or get turned over to real estate developers or other purchasers for nonagricultural use.

Establishing a Well-Defined Succession Plan

With a solid strategy in place to identify, develop, and groom the next generation of leaders and owners, your farm is more likely to achieve longevity and success. Indeed, those who translate their vision for long-term prosperity into a detailed succession plan can not only resolve uncertainties about the future of the business but also enhance its long-term performance and health.

A plan also helps the farm prepare for other future challenges, such as securing access to capital. Beyond assessing whether a business has a sustainable competitive advantage, dependable cash flow, and solid net worth, lenders often look for a succession plan when determining the amount of credit to extend. A formal plan, accompanied by the development of key successors, will go a long way toward demonstrating long-term financial viability to your bank or other lender.

While succession is a natural stage for most kinds of businesses, it represents unique territory to farmers, for whom the success of your business can be much more closely tied to your personal wealth. Thus, it's important to begin well in advance of the transition, since many of the important issues may take time to talk through and evaluate, including:

- **Your personal cash flow needs.** Do you have assets outside the business to satisfy those needs, or will they depend on the business?
- **Your successors' ability to operate the business.** Have you identified the next generation of management? Are their plans for the farm consistent with your—and the farm's—cash flow needs?
- **Creating equity between children that work on the farm and those that don't.** In the case of family succession, how is management and ownership being structured between working and nonworking family members? Will there be tension about the cash flow needs of the business and return on ownership?
- **Personal guarantees and credit.** If there is to be a family succession, will you remain personally liable for bank debt? If so, for how long? What is the borrowing capacity of the inheriting owners?
- **Tax.** Have potential estate taxes been accounted for? If so, how will they be paid?

Where to Begin?

Start with written goals that establish a timeline for your exit, identify your successors' responsibilities, and determine what credentials they should possess. These goals will ultimately serve as benchmarks you can use to track progress and guide future business decisions.

By definition, succession is about change. It will be important to consider how the business might need to change or grow in the years ahead and what skills and talents its future leaders will need. Planning for succession will provide natural opportunities to make changes that strengthen leadership performance for the long term, ensuring the company has the right people in the right positions at the right time.

Your succession plan should also provide for an orderly exit of owners and leverage exit strategies that enhance the company's value in the process. You'll want to carefully evaluate your exit alternatives, which may involve selling all or part of the business to existing management and employees, a financial or strategic buyer, or family members.

Family Matters

Family-owned farms often want a successor from within the family. While some family members may not have an ownership role or even work on the farm, they may still have considerable influence on its future. A family business owner must strive to meet not just the different needs of management and ownership but also those of a third stakeholder: other family members.

A family conversation can be a good first step toward navigating the process of succession planning. Inviting all stakeholders to engage in the conversation together allows everyone to offer his or her input about the plan.

Tailoring the Right Plan

Every company has a different financial scenario, operations, motivations, and leadership team requirements. An advisor can help you develop a customized plan: one that fits your business and helps you build a legacy that's just as unique. Ask yourself:

1. Do I have a timeline for exiting my business?
2. Is there a succession plan for key positions?
3. Is there a process in place to identify successor candidates?
4. How will I transition key business and client relationships to successors?
5. Are bankers aware of my succession plans, and do they approve of the successor candidates?
6. Do I understand all my choices for exiting the business? If I'm considering selling, do I know whether there are financial or strategic buyers? Should I sell to employees, third parties, my children, or a combination of all three?
7. How much in net proceeds will I need from the sale of my business or ownership interests to meet my personal financial goals?
8. What's the best way to communicate my ownership transition and estate plans to key employees or my children?
9. Are my business operations structured properly to take advantage of current income and estate tax laws?
10. If something happens tomorrow, can the company continue without me?

Jay Silverstein has over 21 years of experience serving the food processing and agriculture industries. He specializes in business succession and estate planning. He can be reached at (707) 535-4115 or jay.silverstein@mossadams.com.

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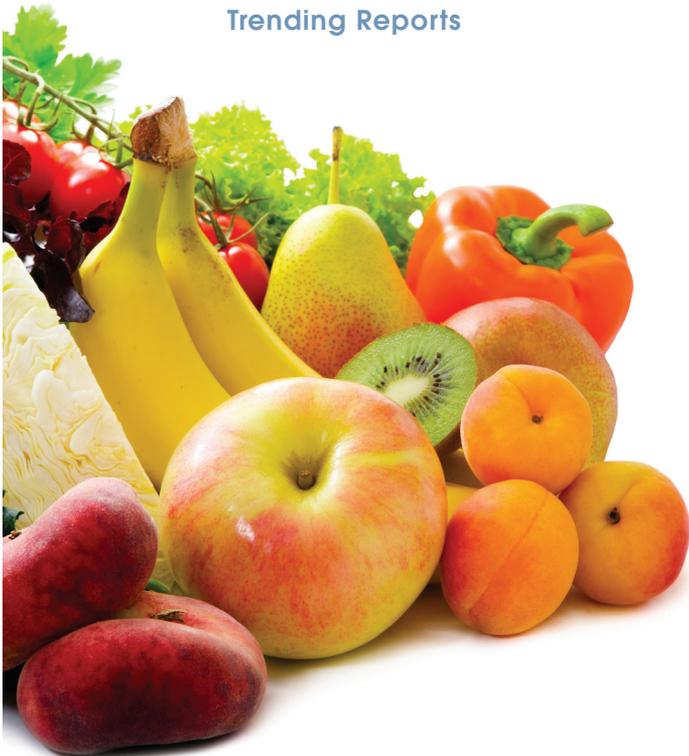
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Direct Marketing Gets a Face Lift in California

Consumers are increasingly turning to farmers' markets to buy healthy, fresh produce. These markets provide a welcomed higher-margin return to farm producers and reduce costs by eliminating the need for standard pack on fresh fruits and vegetables. Farmers' markets provide a benefit to farmers and consumers alike.

During the past decade, the number of local farmers' markets in California and the United States has exploded. As of mid-2012 there were 7,864 markets operating nationwide. This is a 9.6 percent increase from 2011. Today, there are over 800 state-certified farmers' markets in California alone, representing approximately 2,200 certified producers. This explosion has been driven by supportive regulatory framework and increasing consumer demand for a direct connection to local farmers and healthy, fresh produce.

Until 1977 farmers were required to pack and label their fresh fruits, nuts, and vegetables in standard containers to transport and sell at markets anywhere other than the farm site. Looking for a solution to keep small farmers in business, the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) exempted farmers from packing, sizing, and labeling requirements in order to directly market their products through farmers' markets.

Farmers may now sell California-grown fresh fruits, nuts, and vegetables directly to the public through farmers' markets, Community Supported Agriculture programs (CSAs), or farm stands through CDFA's Direct Marketing Program. CDFA and county agricultural commissioners work to ensure the integrity of farmers' markets by verifying that the produce sold at markets is actually grown by the seller. Farmers' market management agencies verify that specific requirements are met and that product is labeled and displayed properly.

Legislation regulating farmers' markets is due for revision, presenting an opportunity to improve even further on the current system. A couple of areas of concern have been raised by some CCOF growers. These include ensuring that all vendors are abiding by the rules (e.g. not purchasing wholesale product and reselling at farmers' markets, or selling goods produced or grown outside of California) and guaranteeing through market inspection that organic and non-organic growers are following product labeling and market signage requirements. The CDFA State Organic Program is currently charged with inspecting markets for compliance with organic labeling claims and standards, but has limited capacity to investigate complaints.

At the end of 2011, CDFA formed a Direct Marketing Ad Hoc Advisory Committee, which includes a CCOF representative. The role of this committee was to make recommendations regarding the updating of direct marketing regulations in California, including those that pertain to California Certified Farmers' Markets (CFMs), CSAs, and farm stands. CCOF consistently advocated for a regulatory structure that would protect and enhance CFMs, CSAs, and farm stand sales without placing the regulatory or fee burden solely on producers. The final CDFA report, based on committee input, was released in December 2012. The report can be found on the CDFA website at www.cdfa.ca.gov/is/pdfs/DM_Ad_Hoc_Recommendations_Final.pdf.

California Certified Farmers' Markets (CFMs) are established through state legislation that expired in 2012. The program is currently operating on a two-year extension, with state legislation required to continue operation of CFMs in 2014. The CDFA committee described above has also used this opportunity to review the state rules and regulations governing CSAs, and explored ways to create consistent interpretation and enforcement of California health and safety codes across county lines. Several policy bills will be debated in Sacramento this spring. CCOF will be using the following principles to evaluate these proposals. If you are a direct market producer in California we hope you will weigh in on these issues.

Six Principles to Guide Legislative Thought Related to Regulation of Direct Sales of Agricultural Products

1. Ensure broad access to healthy, fresh produce.

California farmers produce healthy, fresh produce that is widely available through “direct sales” of products at farm stands, farmers’ markets, and through Community Supported Agriculture programs (CSAs). These sales methods must be supported to ensure broad access to healthy foods for consumers and support the economic viability of California’s diverse farming enterprises. Currently, 408 of CCOF’s 2,174 California members sell their products to thousands of consumers through these direct market channels.

2. Consumers have a right to know where and how their food is grown.

CCOF joins other agricultural and consumer organizations in calling for transparent labeling for CSAs that discloses where agricultural products are coming from.

3. Create a level playing field for producers.

Organic producers are regulated by California and the National Organic Program. These programs demand compliance with standards for handling, labeling, and signage. Oversight must be established to ensure that non-organic vendors also provide accurate labeling and signage at farm stands and farmers’ markets, and on CSA products.

4. Organic producers should not be burdened with unfair or duplicative fees and paperwork.

All organic producers in California are currently required to register under CDFA’s State Organic Program, which includes additional annual fees on top of fees for certifying to the USDA National Organic Program. Additional paperwork and cost creates added burden on those growers.

5. Change the term “Certified Farmers’ Market.”

The term “Certified Farmers’ Market” is widely confused by consumers with the term “certified organic.” Changing the name used to describe Certified Farmers’ Markets to another, such as Verified Farmers’ Markets, would be an important step towards reducing the perception that all food sold at farmers’ markets is certified organic.

6. Meaningful penalties for fraud must be enacted and enforced.

Meaningful financial penalties play an important role in deterring fraudulent behavior and should be imposed when rules are violated.

Policy proposals under consideration by the legislature at the time of writing this article include the following provisions:

1. Create a California statewide directory for all direct marketing channels (CFMs, CSAs, farm stands, and community gardens) with an annual registration fee of \$25.00, paid to CDFA.
2. Increase farmers’ market vendor stall fees to fund enforcement efforts.
3. Give authority to California agriculture commissioners to administer fiscal penalties to deter fraud.
4. Require farmers’ market vendors to post signage stating they have grown the product (i.e. “Grown in California”) and point-of-sale signage indicating certified organic products.
5. Define CSAs in statute for the first time in the United States, creating a three-tier CSA system including: single-farm CSA, multi-farm CSA, and California Grown box. Farmers selling via a CSA would be required to register with CDFA, creating the first-ever registry of California CSAs. To address food safety concerns, CDFA would require an environmental health permit for multi-farm CSAs and California Grown box.
 - a. **Single-farm CSA:** all delivered farm products originate from the farm of one certified California direct marketing producer.
 - b. **Multi-farm CSA:** a group of certified California direct marketing producers declare their association at the time of their annual certification, and all delivered farm products originate from one or more of the farms of the group.
 - c. **California Grown Box:** means a program under which a person or entity directly purchases and aggregates products only from certified California direct marketing producers, and delivers to a membership or subscriber group of California consumers. Entities aggregating in such a manner could not call themselves a CSA.

CCOF will continue to advocate for direct marketing opportunities for organic farmers with minimal fees and regulation. It’s now time to add your voice to this important conversation! We want to hear your feedback on these potential policy changes and how they may affect your work with direct markets in California. If you want to monitor these bills directly you can search by the following bill numbers on leginfo.ca.gov: AB 38, SB 599, AB 996, AB 224. If you have comments please contact policy@ccof.org. CCOF will keep you updated as these proposals are debated.



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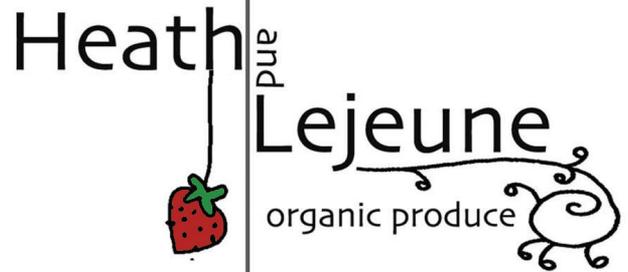
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The Organic Center Steps Up its Research Focus

The Organic Center has signed an agreement with the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) for ARS scientists to conduct targeted research on the factors affecting the presence of arsenic in organically grown rice. Making this research possible is a \$50,000 grant to The Organic Center from the newly formed UNFI Foundation.

The Center, which recently added Jessica Shade, Ph.D., as its director of science programs, is funding organic rice research headed up by ARS scientist Anna McClung at the Dale Bumpers National Rice Research Center in Stuttgart, Arkansas. For the studies, the center has channeled an additional \$12,500 in support it received from the Organic Farming Research Foundation through an additional grant made possible by the UNFI Foundation.

"This research advances the mission of the UNFI Foundation by strengthening consumer confidence in the safety of organic rice and rice-based products through the development of organic farming practices," said Melody Meyer, executive director of the UNFI Foundation. "Funding this research is a timely proactive approach to protecting public health and advancing organic farming," she added.

Currently, because of the agreement, ARS scientists are testing stored samples of organic rice grown under controlled organic conditions at USDA research facilities, and examining the factors that directly impact the rate of arsenic accumulation in rice grown organically: varietal selection, flooding, and organic-compliant fertilizers. The goal is to offer future strategies to the organic sector to minimize such accumulation.

"The organic industry is committed to maintaining the safety of food and working proactively on solutions to help minimize the presence of arsenic, especially in certified organic foods. The Organic Center's mission includes convening credible, evidence-based science on the health and environmental benefits of organic food and farming, so we are helping to facilitate this research," said Dr. Shade, who began working for The Organic Center February 19 as its new director of science programs.

The center is leveraging public investment it has received for research critical to the organic industry and of importance to public health. Because the studies are using stored samples, the timeline for completing the research is expected to be cut substantially. Currently, the studies are expected to offer tangible mitigation strategies for the organic sector within a year, and to be published in peer-reviewed journals by USDA scientists.

"The Organic Center is truly grateful for the huge support provided by the UNFI Foundation and OFRF. Without them, this research would not be possible," Dr. Shade added.

In her new role, Dr. Shade is to manage ongoing science programs and related communicated activities for the nonprofit affiliate science center housed in the Washington, D.C. office of OTA. She will provide leadership in research project formulation and management, grant writing, and report writing. She will also assemble and coordinate The Organic Center's Scientific Advisory Panel.

Serving most recently as the director for the Diversity Mentorship program at the University of California at Berkeley, Dr. Shade is an environmental scientist with experience in developing, conducting, monitoring, and supervising conservation research, a record of successful science communication and outreach program development knowledge.

Dr. Shade received a B.S. in plant science and B.A. in environmental studies at the University of California at Santa Cruz. She also earned a doctorate in integrative biology at the University of California at Berkeley.

"We are excited to have Jessica take The Organic Center's work to a new level," said Christine Bushway, OTA's CEO and executive director. "We envision that her skills will help strengthen, grow,



and lead a collaborative vision for the advancement of evidenced-based scientific knowledge for organic food and farming," she added.

Contact Dr. Shade at jshade@organic-center.org for more information about The Organic Center and its work.

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Practices, Not Paperwork Initiative

In the last six months CCOF has been in an ongoing dialogue with the National Organic Program (NOP) and USDA about issues we see in the certification and accreditation process that are overly reliant on paperwork and unnecessarily drive up costs. We are concerned that small operators may be leaving the NOP due to both the difficult paperwork and costs of organic certification. CCOF has implemented a number of innovative solutions to these issues and has been working collaboratively with the NOP, other certifiers, representatives of the National Organic Standards Board, and the Organic Trade Association to explore opportunities for improvement.

CCOF Leads the Discussion

In November 2012, CCOF Certification Services wrote the NOP about *Practices, Not Paperwork*, discussing our mutual concerns and providing 10 opportunities where we believe the NOP could help CCOF and other certifiers reduce paperwork while improving certification implementation. They were:

1. **Support *Practices, Not Paperwork* in instructions to certifiers**
2. **Support operations responding to onsite situations**
3. **Support use of tools other than noncompliances**
4. **Support updates to OSP during inspection**
5. **Support certifier assistance in completing and modifying OSP**
6. **Support and encourage electronic documentation systems**
7. **Support simplified continuation of certification processes**
8. **Support collaboration between certified operations and certifiers**
9. **Discourage reliance on “Described in the OSP”**
10. **Support increased inspector quality**

You can read the full document and the USDA's response at www.ccof.org/certification-news. CCOF does not believe that certification should be easy or there should be no recordkeeping, effort, or cost involved. But, over the last 10 years we have observed the evolution of the accreditation system: concepts that were written into the NOP standards have driven some certifiers towards paper-heavy practices that may act as barriers to success for operations. We are concerned that this could cause small farms and others to leave the organic program. For example, there are instances where CCOF is compelled to issue noncompliance notices for practices not described in the OSP but also not a violation of organic standards. We are working to identify these and clarify what practices and changes at the farm or processor level require the operation to notify CCOF. See the section below, Organic System Plan Updates, for more discussion.

We are extremely gratified to report that the NOP has responded positively to our suggestions and is implementing an initiative called *Sound and Sensible*. CCOF even received a letter from USDA Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan underscoring their commitment to addressing these issues.

Under the *Sound and Sensible* initiative, the NOP is working to help certifiers and operations focus on what is most important in certification. During the Accredited Certifiers Association training in January, the NOP discussed these concepts with certifiers and gave direction in areas where certifiers may be focusing too heavily on paperwork. In several of these areas CCOF has been leading the way, such as our brief annual update form, client compliance agreements, electronic inputs management, and approaches to OSP updates. In other areas we are working to implement the NOP's direction.

With the NOP's support and collaboration, many of CCOF's helpful approaches and new ideas can be implemented nationwide to benefit all organic operations. In addition, best practices from other certifiers can be adopted by CCOF over time.

Records are important and unavoidable in the certification system. There is also no way to avoid some costs of certification in terms of fees and costs to the operation to maintain and demonstrate compliance. We're working to minimize these expenses wherever possible so we can concentrate as a community on organic practices.

Organic System Plan Updates

CCOF maintains a convenient, modular OSP and streamlined annual update process. Under the NOP's recent training

We're working to minimize certification expenses wherever possible so we can concentrate as a community on organic practices.

modules, CCOF is working to help our clients understand the types of operational changes that may require an OSP update or approval.

The following changes require an operation to modify their OSP and notify CCOF.

All changes to the operation that *may* affect compliance. These include, but are not limited to:

- An application of prohibited substances or positive residue analysis
- Farms that add new parcels. CCOF strongly recommends submitting new acreage as early as possible to minimize costs and avoid harvest deadlines.
- Processors that add new products or types of processing
- Operations that create new labels
- Operations that move or plan a move to a new facility
- A change to processes, procedures, or practices where an operation is not sure if it still meets organic standards

The following changes do not require an operation to notify CCOF.

- Sourcing ingredients from a new supplier, as long as the handler verifies and keeps proof of organic status. Please note that it protects you to confirm with CCOF the status and applicability of the supplier's certification, and that ingredients used prior to approval are at your own risk.
- Sourcing livestock feed from a new supplier, as long as proof of organic status is maintained on file. Please note that it protects you to confirm with CCOF the status and applicability of a supplier, and that feed used prior to approval is at your own risk.
- Sourcing a new compliant input for a product, such as those listed by OMRI or WSDA. However, we recommend that it is safer to verify with CCOF that all inputs are approved prior to application to avoid potential problems. Please be aware that use of any input prior to approval by CCOF is at your own risk.

CCOF welcomes updates and information about changes to your operation at any time. Operations are free to email CCOF and their Certification Service Specialist, or call if they have questions about whether a change needs to be submitted. We accept OSP updates at any time and welcome your questions and feedback.

Triple the Phone Service!

On January 28, CCOF Certification Services achieved a huge milestone by **tripling our front line phone service**. As we've reported previously and talked about in the CCOF blog, CCOF has digitized about 1 million pages of our client files. This means that we are no longer making copies of files for inspectors and your OSP is available in real-time online. **The time, energy, and postage we're saving from no longer building physical inspection packages are now directed towards three additional staff members available to answer your incoming phone calls.** These staff members are trained to help you, fulfill simple requests, or route your call to appropriate staff. Now, weeks later we're finding that more callers are being served, questions are being answered, and service provided.

We need your input and information at inspections

Another important service aspect of 2013 is improvements we've made to our inspection update forms. At every inspection you have the opportunity to update your contact information and company profile. Now we've updated this form to give you an opportunity to tell us about your operation. You'll be asked about ways that you're unique, your use of USDA and other government services, and whether you're willing to host tours for policymakers and others. This information is critical for CCOF to support your needs and promote your operation. Please take the few extra minutes to fill out these short questions so we can deliver for you.

We're not slowing down! Give us your feedback

In the coming months we're working on ways to improve our communications and provide new services for you. Recently, a long-standing client gave us some fascinating feedback about letters and ways we can put you at the center of our communications. We're incredibly grateful for his contribution and are working on integrating as much as we can throughout the process. Over the course of the year we intend to review all our materials and nearly every piece of information you see during the certification process so we can improve them with you in mind. Please stay in touch and work with us as we try to improve your experience.

All of us at CCOF appreciate your efforts and thank you for your support.

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