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## *Our Bright Future* *CCOF's Three-Year Strategic Plan*

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# CCOF Looking to the Future

## The new three-year strategic plan

by Peggy Miars,  
Executive Director

You wouldn't start out on a vacation without a plan of where you're going, how you'll get there, and a basic idea of what you'll do, would you? *The Field Guide to Nonprofit Strategic Planning and Facilitation* likens the strategic planning process to vacation planning. Our vision is where we want to end up and what we will be doing at our ultimate destination. Our mission is why we are traveling, and our values are our priorities in how we carry out our trip. Goals are our major stops along the way, and objectives help determine who will drive each route, and budgeting rounds out the process so we ensure we'll have enough money for our trip.



CCOF Promotion

Of course, our route needs to be flexible because we'll need to change course as storms arise, or maybe we'll want to spend more time at a particularly sunny spot along the way. Our three-year strategic plan allows us to adapt by adopting new strategies and letting go of others as our needs and resources change along our trip. Change is inevitable within CCOF and the organic sector!

CCOF Assistant Executive Director Steve Lustgarden summed it up nicely: "As the baseball legend Yogi Berra warned, 'If you don't know where you are going, you will end up somewhere else.' This strategic plan is the map CCOF needs to get us where we want to be three years down the road," said Steve.

Regular readers of *Certified Organic* have followed CCOF's journey as we developed our three-year strategic plan, so I won't revisit the whole process of how we got here. Suffice it to say that it included numerous discussions between staff and board representatives of CCOF, Inc. (education, advocacy, promotion, and trade association), CCOF Certification Services, LLC (certification), and the CCOF Foundation (research and education).

Cathy Holden, Chair of the CCOF Foundation Board of Trustees, applauded the



CCOF Advocacy

opportunity for the three CCOF organizations to work together. "Creating the strategic plan provided the opportunity for the three organizations to engage in dialogue over an extended period of time. In so doing, we had the opportunity to get to know our counterparts better, improve communication and cooperation, and most importantly, to share and reaffirm the reasons we give much of our time and talent to the cause of organic agriculture," said Cathy.

The staff has been implementing the goals, objectives, and strategies of the plan since January 1. This is a very aggressive and optimistic plan that requires the hard work, attention, and cooperation of staff, board members, committee members, and volunteers to succeed. I'm pleased to report that we've already accomplished some of the strategies we identified for 2008! For example, we've hired a new Policy Director (see article on page 5), and we've identified more consumer events in which to participate to promote our members, CCOF and the organic community. The volunteer leadership of the three organizations will receive semi-annual updates on our accomplishments. And, I'll personally check in with the staff more frequently to ensure we're staying on course.



### CCOF Vision

To be the leading voice for organic.

### CCOF Mission

CCOF certifies, educates, advocates and promotes organic.

### CCOF Values

- Upholding the integrity of organic certification and food production
- Being socially, environmentally, and economically responsible
- Maintaining openness and transparency and embracing the democratic process
- Appreciating and supporting its staff
- Treating everyone with respect

### Inc. Goals

#### Inc. Goal: Innovate the chapter system.

CCOF chapters have experienced tremendous change since implementation of the National Organic Program (NOP) in 2002. Chapters are no longer active in the certification process, so our work needs to address their purpose and role within CCOF.

#### Inc. Goal: Expand education, advocacy and communication efforts to consumers, media and appropriate entities.

CCOF is experiencing increasing demand to be more proactive in education and advocacy issues. Our policy demands have more than doubled in the last year, and advocacy matters have historically been prioritized on more of a reactive, rather than proactive, basis. We need to continue to work to protect the integrity of organic agriculture and products and to communicate the benefits of organic agriculture.

To find out how you can support CCOF's education and advocacy efforts, visit us at [www.ccof.org/support/php](http://www.ccof.org/support/php).

Will Daniels, Chair of the CCOF, Inc. Board of Directors, was my co-travel director throughout this process. I appreciate the time and effort that Will spent reading resource materials, preparing presentations, chairing meetings, and leading the process.

According to Will, "I've seen CCOF change tremendously over the last several years. We've progressed from primarily a California certifier to a key player in state, national and international organic certification and policy communities. Our strategic plan has been thoroughly vetted and carefully crafted, which has resulted in an aggressive plan that will help CCOF accomplish our mission and move closer to our vision. I'm very pleased with the results and appreciate everyone's input. Our members can be confident that CCOF is representing their interests and working to uphold the integrity of organic agriculture and organic products."



CCOF Education

Sean Swezey, an active member of the CCOF Certification Services, LLC Management Committee, felt that including CCOF member farmers, processors and supporting members helped bring a variety of interests to the table. "It's difficult for any one individual to consider each goal from a variety of perspectives. It was helpful to include representatives from CCOF's diverse clientele and volunteer base in the discussion and decision-making process," said Sean.

Some families have their own mission statements, goals and objectives to keep them moving in the direction they want to go. I have a personal mission statement I developed during a leadership conference many years ago...yet, it still rings true for me. What about your farm or business? Have you ever heard, "If you can visualize it, you can make it happen"? Put your goals down on paper and review them regularly. Be sure to take action, even small steps, toward your goals. You'll be amazed at the results! And, I hope at the end of three years, you'll be amazed at the results we've achieved together for CCOF. Happy spring!

### Inc/LLC Goals:

**Inc./LLC Goal: Strengthen board and committee governance.** Our current Inc. structure relies on chapters electing representatives to the Board of Directors. We are discussing the possibility of creating a process in which board nominees submit documentation of their qualifications and desire to serve with a possible at-large election process. On the LLC side, recruiting committee members with specific skill sets, and developing ground rules for participation top the discussion.

**Inc./LLC Goal: Expand services and benefits to members, including the needs of the small grower/processor.** Identifying member needs, determining what benefits and services can be offered, and improving two-way communication between CCOF and our members are the key areas we're exploring. The feedback we received at our 2008 Annual Meeting was loud and clear – Members want increased online services and resources. We've been slowing moving in this

direction, and a new certification database will help to provide service using the latest technology. Members also expressed interest in group benefits such as health insurance and workers compensation and resources on topics such as organic best practices and record keeping.

**Inc./LLC Goal: Improve capacity to deliver effective, efficient, and sustained programs.** This is key to our success. Creating new revenue sources, attracting and retaining effective staff, maximizing use of technology, and monitoring and reporting on key measurements will ensure that CCOF will remain an effective and sustainable leader in organic.

**Inc./LLC Goal: Be competitive in the marketplace for certification and trade associations.** Developing and implementing an aggressive marketing strategy, expanding in key strategic certification categories, and ensuring that certification fees are competitive and appropriate will help grow our membership and will solidify CCOF's position as an organic certification leader.

### LLC Goals:

**LLC Goal: Grow revenue by 12% year over year and double number of clients by 2013.** Objectives include maintaining organic accreditations that meet client needs, identifying areas of opportunities in the marketplace, and maximizing new client acquisition and retention.

**LLC Goal: Streamline the certification process while maintaining the highest level of organic integrity.** As we strive to meet the needs of clients, it's critical that we maximize the use of technology, eliminate redundancy, innovate the role of Regional Service Representatives, improve policy development, clearly communicate with clients, and streamline the renewal process.

### CCOF Foundation Goals:

The CCOF Foundation manages the popular Going Organic project, which helps farmers transition to organic through mentoring and training sessions. Our strategic plan includes two goals for the Foundation.

**Goal: Determine the viability and pros and cons of merging with Inc.** The staff and boards of both organizations will be conducting a feasibility study and analyzing whether to merge the CCOF Foundation, and the Going Organic project, with CCOF, Inc.

**Goal: Mobilize the Foundation – increase individual and organization involvement.** Foundation trustees are working to secure future funding for the Going Organic project and will be providing quarterly reports on the project to the CCOF, Inc. Board of Directors.

*If you'd like to be part of the CCOF Foundation by making a tax-deductible donation, by serving as a Trustee, by suggesting a project idea, or by partnering on a possible future project, please contact Chair Cathy Holden at (916) 487-9049, holdenresearch@att.net, or Treasurer Jim Zeek at (530) 644-6448, jzgoodness@yahoo.com.*