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Meet the CCOF Staff

For the staff at CCOF, advancing organic is more than just a job—it's a movement. CCOF is a multi-armed organization that promotes organic on many fronts ...

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A Day in the CCOF Office

My day starts with a bike ride along Santa Cruz's foggy coastline.

At the CCOF home office, Erica and Lucia say hello as I walk my bike into our open office space. I pass the policy and marketing teams who joke with one another as they prepare for their morning meetings. I smile at the office dogs who look up to see if I might give them a little attention.

I put my bike away and note the pictures of smiling grantees from our Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund. They are pictured in a colorful organic flower field at the University of California, Santa Cruz farm, which served as a training ground for several CCOF employees.

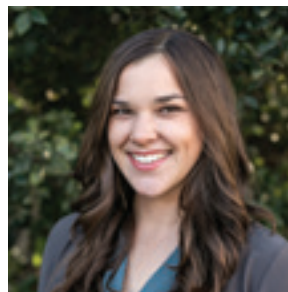
I head to the kitchen and overhear Val discussing livestock standards with remote coworkers who conference in from different time zones. I listen to Megha fluently explain forms to a Spanish-speaking farmer and to Jen who asks her coworker for help on a difficult label review.

In the kitchen, coworkers are sharing a loaf of locally made organic bread. They are chatting about day cares and talking about items that they can borrow from one another for their family vacations.

I head back to my office and see our food safety director, Jacob, collaborating with Meaghan, who runs the Foundation's Organic Training Institute, on an upcoming training. I say hello to an inspection coordinator who is working at a desk that was designed by our operations manager, Robert, especially for visiting remote employees.

Accounting and our people department team members are going for a morning walk break to the ocean overlook a couple blocks from the office. They will be back soon to field calls from producers who need help with payment plans or to work on programs that support our employees' professional development.

I am now writing this at the end of the day, and I am the last one left in the office. I will lock up and then cruise back along the coast just in time for another beautiful Santa Cruz sunset. Today, I leave the office filled with gratitude after reading this issue's feature by Ellen Vessels. With a few personal stories, Ellen managed to capture the skill, passion, and determination of our staff who, in turn, provide organic producers with the personal, reliable services that they deserve.



Kelly Damewood

Kelly Damewood
CCOF CEO

Issue Contributors

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Ellen Vessels is a freelance writer and copy editor with a passion for environmental issues, the outdoors, and social justice. She is a staff writer covering small business news and generational marketing for TheAmericanGenius.com, and an assistant to fermentation revivalist and author Sandor Katz. She has written for outdoor magazines and environmental nonprofits, and formerly served as a project manager for Florida Organic Growers.

Vessels is a self-taught herbalist who grows organic herbs and maintains a community apothecary. When not writing, Vessels performs original music and puppet shows. A sampling of her writing can be found at clippings.me/EllenVessels, while her music can be found at helenskeleton.bandcamp.com.

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Get Ready for the 2019 Organic Grower Summit

Preparations are underway for the third annual Organic Grower Summit (OGS) on December 4 and 5, 2019 at the Monterey Convention Center. This year's event, made possible by partners CCOF and Organic Produce Network (OPN), is designed to provide vital information to organic farmers and ranchers to help grow their businesses, as well as an overview of the challenges and opportunities in the production of organic fresh food. OGS is the only event specifically designed to bring organic fresh food producers and their service and supply chain partners together for information sharing, education, and networking opportunities.

"The organic sector is always rapidly evolving with new research and cutting-edge techniques. OGS offers busy organic professionals a two-day solution to staying up-to-date with an outstanding program of educational sessions and inspirational speakers," says CCOF CEO Kelly Damewood.

The 2019 summit will include educational sessions on hemp, organic plant health, food safety and organic, sustainability reporting, and a deep dive into data on organic sales.

"This year's summit will provide up-to-date resources and information to support the continued success of organic producers," says Tonya Antle, co-founder of OPN. "From seed to soil to harvest, our goal is to present the most relevant information on the most important subjects and issues facing organic production."

Organic Farming in the Age of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) will dive into the changing landscape of food safety on organic farms, and how the industry is complying with the FSMA Produce Safety Rule. The session will also explore how Food and Drug Administration produce inspections will be rolled out and the changes affecting the leafy greens industry.

CCOF's Director of Food Safety Jacob Guth will moderate the discussion between panelists Donna Lynn Browne, director of food safety and social responsibility for Naturipe Farms; Greg Komar, technical director of Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement; and Steve Patton, branch chief for California Department of Food and Agriculture Inspection and Compliance.

"Organic production and food safety requirements can sometimes conflict, but often they work hand in hand. Producing safe food has always been the priority for organic growers," explains Guth.

Nationwide, as legal and regulatory barriers for growing hemp are removed and consumer education spreads, *Hemp Business Journal* estimates the U.S. hemp industry will grow to a \$1.9 billion market by 2022. The groundwork has been laid for the potential of hemp cultivation as of February 2019, when 41 states approved cultivation of hemp. There has already been measurable growth in the market, with 78,176 acres of hemp grown in 2018, compared to 25,713 in 2017.

The Growing Hemp Market in the United States educational session at OGS will further explore the market for hemp and what lies ahead for producers and extractors of organic hemp. CCOF's Chief Certification Officer April Crittenden will moderate the discussion between Chris Boucher, CEO of Farmtiva, and Ray Drysdale, founder and CEO of PureCrop1.

"The legalization of hemp production via the 2018 Farm Bill provides new opportunities for farmers and processors. Hemp is a sustainable crop that has the potential to both change the agricultural landscape and boost the United States economy," says Crittenden.

OGS also provides the organic community with chances to celebrate our collective successes, in addition to a robust educational schedule. Raise a glass to organic on the first night of the summit at the CCOF Foundation Feast, where friends will gather for a three-course organic meal, live music, and leaders in organic speaking about the power of organic. All proceeds from the dinner benefit the CCOF Foundation, so you can connect with your community and contribute to growing organic at the same time.

"CCOF members look forward to OGS each year as a chance to network with each other and with other organic sector leaders and innovators. It's also a chance to celebrate all the good happening in the organic community at the CCOF Foundation's celebratory dinner," says Damewood.

We hope you'll join us in Monterey in December to learn, connect, and celebrate.

Register today at www.organicgrowersummit.com/registration. CCOF members receive a discount on registration—simply use your client code when you purchase your ticket!



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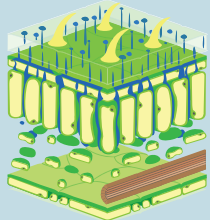
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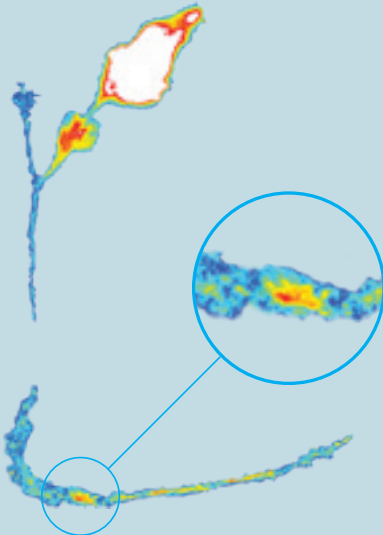
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Organic Flowers Above, City Lights Below

How many of us make it a priority to have fresh flowers in our homes? And when we do find ourselves planning an event such as a wedding, or treating a loved one to a particular bouquet for a special occasion, how often do we consider where those beautiful blooms came from or how they were grown? Consumers expect that the varieties of cut flowers in highest demand will be available year-round, just as we tend to do with the staple fruits and vegetables in our diets. In 2018, the United States imported \$1.24 billion worth of cut flowers, mostly coming from Colombia, Ecuador, the Netherlands, Canada, and Mexico. On average, just 20 percent of cut flowers sold in the United States are produced domestically, most of which come from California.

Joanna Letz, founder and manager of Bluma Farm, produces an extensive array of cut flowers on the rooftop of the Garden Village apartments, a four-story building in the midst of downtown Berkeley, California. Hers is the first rooftop growing operation certified organic by CCOF. At first glance, the Garden Village building resembles so many of the new housing developments in Berkeley. But looking up, one sees mounds of California native plants, including ceanothus, buckwheat, and coffeeberry, dripping over the edges of the multi-level rooftops and drawing pollinators from all directions.

Berkeley is a densely populated urban area that has long been a hub of progressive thought and action. Locals such

as Alice Waters and Michael Pollan have contributed to nationwide consumer interest in our food's origins, production, and preparation. In Berkeley and surrounding areas, it's not uncommon to see rooftop farms or community production gardens nestled in previously vacant nooks of the urban sprawl, but this one is uniquely committed to producing organic cut flowers. Although Bluma Farm does not produce food, Letz's rooftops are a beacon for pollinators, and it's her mission to produce organic cut flowers for the community in synergy with the farm-to-table movement.

Letz grew up in Berkeley and long wanted to be involved in agriculture. She studied history and agribusiness in college, then apprenticed and worked on farms throughout California following her training at the University of California, Santa Cruz's Center for Agroecology & Sustainable Food Systems. An opportunity arose to start an operation of her own near her hometown on about two acres of land at the Sunol AgPark, and she took the leap to establish Bluma Farm.

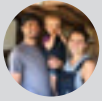
Why choose flowers over food? Most farms in the greater Bay Area were already growing vegetables, and Letz knew that she needed to focus on a crop that would yield the highest price per square foot since she was farming a relatively small piece of land. Letz chose flowers as that winning specialty crop, a decision bolstered by a 2014 USDA report which found that ornamental flowers are among the most profitable crops for farms with 10 acres or less.

Letz focused on selecting varieties that thrived in the Sunol heat, and quickly learned just how demanding and delicate the logistics of ornamental flowers are, especially with a daily commute through notorious Bay Area traffic factored in. When she got the chance to move her operation to the sixth-of-an-acre



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rooftop a mere five-minute bike ride from her home, Letz decided to take another risky step and trade in the logistical challenges of the AgPark for those that come with farming ten inches of soil atop a bustling apartment building.

The building owners' original vision for the rooftops was to produce food to support the local food movement, and Letz initially encountered some pushback when she told them about her plan to focus solely on cut flowers. At the end of the day, the building owners wanted the space to be a successful production farm that served the local community, which is exactly what Letz has established. She works with local florists to limit waste by recrafting arrangements left over from weddings, giving them second lives as donations to the Zen Hospice project, local churches, and neighbors' homes.

Inspired by programs like Brooklyn Grange and Edible Schoolyard, Letz would like to see Bluma Farm spur a shift in the cut flower market toward locally grown, seasonal, organic products by cultivating consumer consciousness and community involvement. She encourages visits from anyone interested in learning about the diverse potential of local organic agriculture in an urban setting.

To learn more about Bluma Farm, visit www.blumaflowerfarm.com.

Organic Tequila from Mexico's Valle Azul

Since 1873, Casa Sauza has supported generations of tequila makers who believe in the delicate balance between tradition and innovation. Sauza's old-meets-new recipe has served them well over the last 145 years—today, they are a leading producer of tequila, with well-known brands such as Hornitos and a thriving organic division that embraces sustainable practices. Sauza took a brave leap into organic certification nearly 10 years ago, hoping to set themselves apart from neighboring tequileros and elevate the tequila experience for their consumers. With help from longstanding organic consultant Lois Christie, Sauza became one of CCOF's first complex processor clients in Mexico.

The magic of Sauza's organic tequila begins in the fields of Jalisco, in an agricultural region often referred to as the *valle azul*—or blue valley—due to its rich abundance of blue agave plants as far as the eye can see. Not only is this landscape visually stunning, but it is also foundational to Mexico's tequila industry, as agave is the raw material from which tequila is made. Sauza has their own collection of blue agave fields throughout Jalisco, and according to Quality Specialists Mario Camacho and Ramón Cortes, specific fields are hand-selected for organic production to ensure the best outcomes. After about eight years of growth and proper care, the center of the agave plant, known as the *piña*, is ready for harvest and transformation into tequila.

Where does this metamorphosis take place? The Sauza processing factory is appropriately situated in Tequila, a UNESCO World Heritage Site with deep roots in spirit distillation dating

back to the 17th century. Here, Sauza produces 900,000 liters of tequila annually, conducting exclusive organic production runs once or twice per year. As explained by Distillation Manager Josué Muñiz, it takes over one week to prepare for these dedicated organic runs, with a complete system cleanout that involves purging chemicals and ends only when all equipment is "liberated" by test results showing no contaminants.

The first stage of organic tequila production can begin at the *tolva receptora*, an automated hopper that receives organic agave *piñas* from field trucks and moves them into transport tubes. *Piñas* are then chopped into smaller pieces, which are fed into a diffusor for extraction. At this stage, near-boiling water is circulated through the diffusor to clean the *piñas* and break them down into a liquid agave juice high in *fructanos*, or sugar compounds such as inulin. In the spirit of *reutilización*, or reuse, Sauza composts leftover agave fibers, turning this biowaste into a mulch soil amendment for their organic agave fields. Camacho and Cortes are actively working on compost trials to expand the program. They add mulch to some rows of agave and not to others to demonstrate that mulch-grown plants are always taller, healthier, and more resistant to pests.

Back at the factory, organic agave juice is transferred to an autoclave, where it is heated for two hours at 248°F. For conventional tequila, acid is added to catalyze the cooking process, however, Sauza's organic tequila remains pure, with no additives. The pressure cooker environment reduces large inulin chains into glucose and fructose molecules, which are digestible forms of sugar that yeast will soon consume during fermentation. Next, heated organic agave juice is pumped into fermentation tanks with certified organic yeast, which expels alcohol and CO₂ as it consumes sugar and reproduces. Water is circulated around these tanks to keep a steady temperature of 90°F, and after two days, all sugar has been converted into alcohol. Muñiz explains that conventional tequila ferments in less than a day because yeast nutrients (prohibited in organics) are used to expedite yeast growth.

The life cycle of organic tequila continues with distillation. Sauza is the only tequila operation in Mexico with cutting-edge Japanese stainless steel tanks that generate steam in five minutes, compared to 90 minutes for standard copper tanks. Organic tequila is triple distilled for six to eight hours; each round removes impurities and creates an alcohol safe for consumption. Distilled product is then separated by variety into different tanks. *Plata* (white tequila) is diluted with water, and *reposado* (aged tequila) is enhanced with organic caramel color. While organic *plata* is ready for bottling, organic *reposado* gets its smoky flavor in *barilles* (wooden barrels), where it has a rest, or *reposo*, for two to six months.

Currently, Sauza makes both organic *plata* and *reposado* for their Tres Generaciones brand, and will likely convert Tres Generaciones *añejo* to organic as demand rises. Many of their agave fields are also transitioning to organic, and our three Sauza friends hope this trend continues. You can find local sources of Sauza's certified organic tequila using the product locator at www.tresgeneraciones.com, or consider buying at BevMo for your next margarita!

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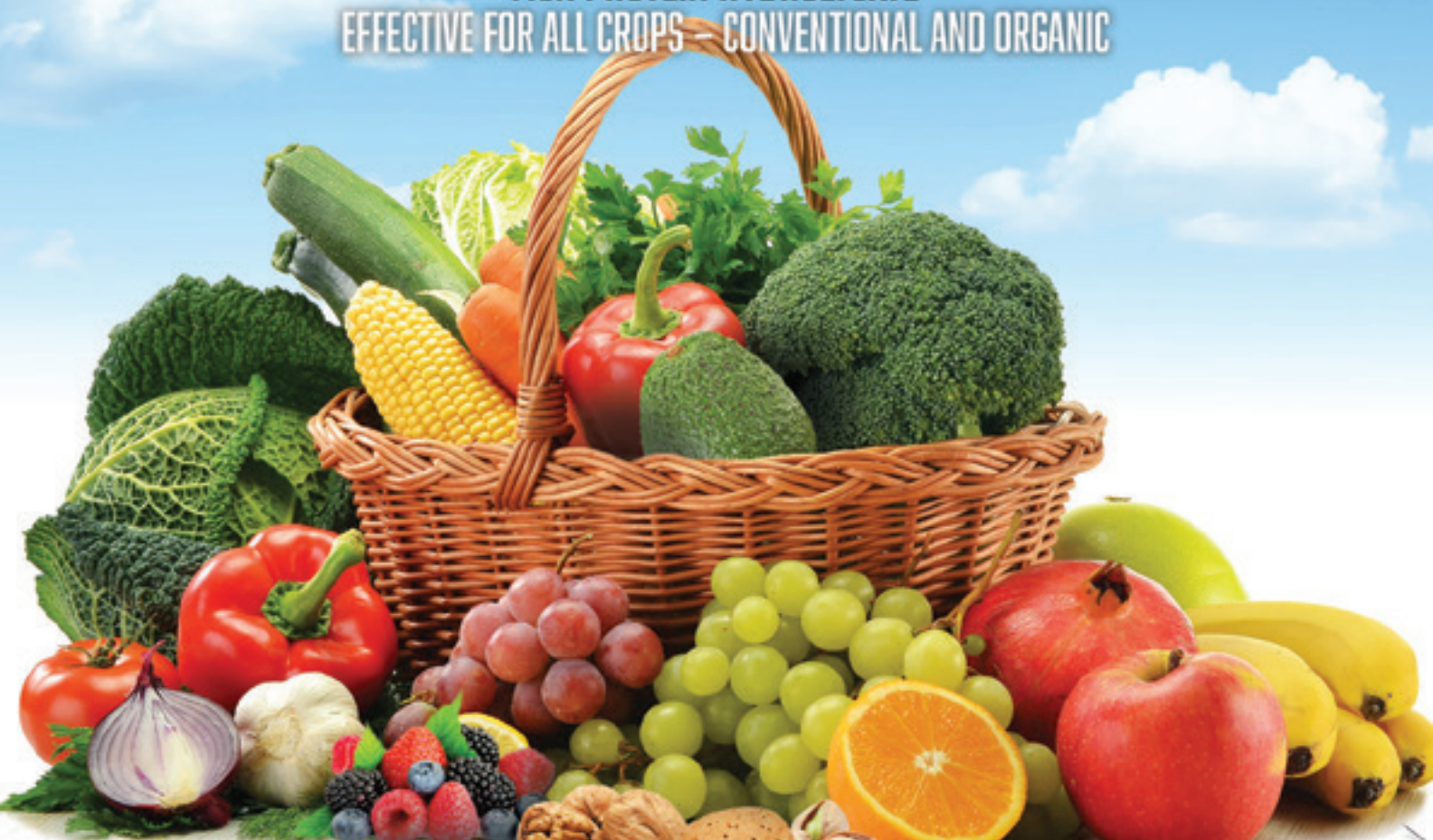
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Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund

The CCOF Foundation's Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund encourages students of all ages to learn about and pursue careers in organic agriculture. By connecting these students to resources that help fund their organic projects and studies, the CCOF Foundation is fostering the next generation of organic farmers and producers. The fund has distributed roughly \$600,000 dollars in grants over the past six years. This year, 22 grants will be made to kindergarten through eighth grade teachers, 20 to high school students, and 21 to students pursuing organic higher and vocational education.

Meet some of our 2019 future organic farmers!



Samuel Peckinpah, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, California

Samuel Peckinpah is a senior at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo majoring in agriculture and environmental plant science with a plant protection concentration. Peckinpah is a student member of the California Association of Pest Control Advisors as well as Cal Poly's Crops Club. Most recently, Peckinpah interned for CCOF-certified Sunview Vineyards in Delano, California, where he learned all aspects of the production, storage, packaging, and international sales and marketing of organic grapes, raisins, and olive oil. Before that, Peckinpah interned at Sunlight International/Pretty Lady Vineyards/Dulcich Farms in Bakersfield, California, growing and marketing 13 varieties of grapes, and Burkdoll Farms in Visalia, California, where he harvested, transported, and sold many varieties of pluots, apricots, cherries, pomegranates, figs, and guava fruits at the Santa Barbara Certified Farmers' Market.

Peckinpah feels fortunate to have had the opportunity to learn from these industry leaders and Cal Poly's "learn by doing" education. Upon graduation, Peckinpah plans to pursue a career as an organic farmer and to gradually establish his own sustainable farming operation.



Katie Doonan, Washington State University

Katie Doonan is pursuing a double major in organic and sustainable agriculture and basic medical science at Washington State University. Doonan has been farming regularly for seven years and helped on her family's ranch before that. She comes from 13 generations of American farmers and is proud to continue the legacy of producing food for the nation.

Doonan is currently working toward a Bachelor of Science degree in agricultural and food systems and she hopes to attend medical school after she completes her undergraduate studies. Her goal is to further the vertical integration of food production and health care to show how important food production and nutrition are in preventative medicine. Outside of school and agriculture, she is a volunteer firefighter and emergency medical technician for her rural home community.



Anandi Gandhi, Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems, California

Originally from India, Anandi Gandhi is currently an agroecology apprentice at the Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems (CASFS) based on the University of California, Santa Cruz campus. Over the last 10 years she has gained experience in regenerative design, organic farming, environmental education, and agricultural research through working in both India and the United States.

Gandhi plans to use her agriculture training to help organic farmers at the interface of wildlife and farmlands navigate their complicated relationships, by creating designs that benefit both farmers and the wild animals that live near their farms.



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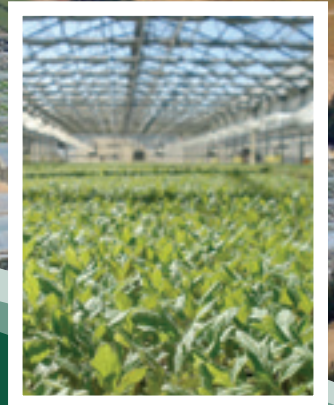


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Joseph Malone, West Virginia University

Joseph Malone is an agroecology student at West Virginia University (WVU) and works at the WVU Organic Research Farm. He used his grant money from the Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund to further his study of agroecological principles and rural development. The goals of Malone's studies are to find sustainable management practices, crops, and rotations that are best suited to the unique farming conditions found in the Mountain State. It is his firm conviction that small-scale sustainable agriculture is the key to rebuilding West Virginia and its proud people in a post-coal world. The decline of the coal industry has hit the West Virginia economy hard, and Malone believes the development of a new, healthy land stewardship will be essential to their local future, and the future of the world. He dreams of making Appalachia a beacon of sustainable land stewardship in an unforgiving landscape.



Celsa Ortega, The Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association, California

Celsa Ortega is originally from the Mexican state of Oaxaca. She grew up in the mountain ranges with her grandparents and harvested traditional *milpa* crops (corn, beans, and squash). This early experience and her grandparents' ways created a love and dedication to agriculture in Ortega.

Ortega now has four children of her own, ranging from five to 13 years old. She and her family arrived in the Salinas Valley of California in 2006 and have since been employed as field workers. She enjoyed many years of working in Greenfield, California, harvesting cilantro by contract. The job provided well for her family with the high pay and hours that she was able to achieve. When a previous coworker invited Ortega to come work with her on her farm that she was starting with the support of the Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association (ALBA), a Salinas-based organization that supports farmworkers transitioning into farm ownership, Ortega was surprised to see how marvelous a crop Mother Nature can grow

organically. The experience motivated her to apply to ALBA's student program.

Ortega holds it as an honor to take care of the land in an organic manner, one that is healthier for the earth, its people, and her family, while at the same time providing food to people all over the world. She hopes to be a great example to her own children, especially demonstrating that field work is an enormously important and worthy life path.

Learn more about the Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund at www.ccof.org/fofgf, or donate to the fund to help more students like Samuel, Katie, Anandi, Joseph, and Celsa at www.ccof.org/donate.

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All event dates and locations are subject to change—check online for the latest details.

OCTOBER 29, 2019

Online Webinar (in collaboration with Kitchen Table Advisors)

Assessing Crop Profitability for Farm Business Planning

NOVEMBER 19, 2019

Online Webinar (in collaboration with CAFF/Farmers Guild)

Small Farm Food Safety Questions Demystified

DECEMBER 4-5, 2019

Monterey, CA (in collaboration with the Organic Produce Network)

Small Farm Food Safety Questions Demystified

Learn more about upcoming Organic Training Institute events at www.ccof.org/events »

The Organic Training Institute's 2019 fall events are supported in part by funding from the following entities within the U.S. Department of Agriculture: Agricultural Marketing Service, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, and the Risk Management Agency.



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CCOF staff members Drake Bialecki (Farm Certification), Renee McKeon (Certification Operations), and Chris Head (Information Technology), photographed by Michael Thompson (International Certification).



Meet the CCOF Staff

WRITTEN BY Ellen Vessels

For the staff at CCOF, advancing organic is more than just a job—it's a movement.

CCOF is a multi-armed organization that promotes organic on many fronts simultaneously by upholding organic standards through certification; by providing resources to growers and handlers; by networking between stakeholders; by advocating for governmental policies that support organic; and by educating the next generation of organic movers and shakers.

These far-reaching goals are achieved through the collective effort of a great many individuals. Somehow, these ambitious intentions are broken down into the daily to-do lists of 108 hardworking CCOF staff members. Who are these people behind the scenes? Who is on the line when you call in for help?

To give us a glimpse at the passions and personalities at CCOF, five staff members agreed to share about the services they provide, how they became involved in organic, and how their day-to-day activities support a vision of organic for a healthy world.

Getting You Certified: Applicant Support



KIM HATFIELD

First things first: help farms and businesses become certified. When an operation is interested in certification through CCOF, their first contact will be with members of the applicant support team like Kim Hatfield. Hatfield helps prospective members get started on what can sometimes be a “daunting” certification process.

Some who inquire are already familiar with organic. However, says Hatfield, “For a farmer or processor who has no idea how the organic world works and how it fits together, there’s going to be a lot of questions. We help them figure out where their operation fits in the big picture.”

Hatfield helps ease the overwhelm by answering questions, making sure applicants have all the information and paperwork that they need, and referring them to the agencies and experts who can provide more details.

Most inquiries come through CCOF’s online form, but Hatfield also meets potential new members at trade shows. Whether or not a grower she meets chooses to certify through CCOF, Hatfield is happy to spread the word about organic and answer questions about certification.

Hatfield was raised in southern California by her father, who grew up on a chicken ranch, and her mother, who helped run the family lumberyard. Hatfield spent her childhood learning automotive repair and restoring classic cars with her dad. Raised in a household with no shortage of do-it-yourself initiative, Hatfield finds resonance among organic farmers. “If something was broken, we fixed it,” Hatfield says of her family. “I like that get-it-done attitude. I feel like farmers and organic processors really have that.”

The “beautiful sense of community” and the “wide variety of people” whom Hatfield meets in the diverse organic industry also keep her motivated. “Someone will walk in in a suit, and then next, someone in a cowboy hat and boots,” she says.

“It’s really nice to see the organic community comprised of so many different folks. It sparks a passion to continue doing it.” In particular, Hatfield enjoys the “connectivity work” of creating support networks by linking up farmers with similar interests.

Besides strengthening organic through her work at CCOF, Hatfield also supports local farmers’ markets, where she seeks out unusual new varieties of vegetables, then finds creative ways to transform her market haul into delicious cast iron-cooked meals.

Keeping You Compliant: Certification Service Specialists



MARIA BARAJAS

When you walk into the CCOF office you’ll likely be greeted by Barajas and her Doberman, Tanok, who occupy the desk nearest to the front door.

Barajas hasn’t walked the easiest road to get to where she is today. When Barajas was a child, her parents emigrated from Mexico. They were unable to cross the border with their children, and so had to leave them behind and send for them after gaining entry. “I almost didn’t end up here,” Barajas says, pointing out that oftentimes families who split up due to emigration are never able to reunite.

Barajas’ education started off slow. It was difficult to pay for school while raising kids, and her immigration status barred her from scholarships. Fortunately, Barajas achieved permanent residency status in 2012, allowing her to access scholarships that accelerated her education toward a degree in environmental studies at San Jose State University.

When interviewing with CCOF, Barajas was asked why she wanted to work in organic. Her answer? “I want to be able to look at myself in the mirror in the morning. I don’t want to compromise my personal beliefs.”

At CCOF, Barajas has found an occupation in alignment with her values. Studying environmental science inspired in her “this desperate need to just get moving to do something to help

the planet.” Barajas knows she is making a difference because farmers have told her that they would’ve given up their organic status if not for her help; she is proud to see that the farmers she helps continue to thrive.

In addition to serving as a Certification Service Specialist (CSS), Barajas has also recently taken on the important role of Spanish Services Coordinator, ensuring that CCOF trainings and documents are available in Spanish.



JESSIE NICHOLS

Besides the CCOF Board of Representative meetings, some CCOF staff attend a “different kind of board meeting”—a boogie board, to be precise, says Jessie Nichols. While living in Santa Cruz, Nichols splashed around with CCOF’s unofficial surfing club, who catch waves in the morning before heading to the office.

Nowadays Nichols can be found beachside on the opposite coast. After nine years in California, she has returned to her home state of North Carolina. She works from her home in Wilmington, making her perhaps one of the most far-flung CCOF staff members.

Before bringing her talents to CCOF, Nichols obtained a degree in environmental studies, completed the two-year Farm & Garden apprenticeship at University of California, Santa Cruz, and got her hands dirty at an experiential learning farm for kids, an urban farm, and an Italian winery.

As a handler CSS, Nichols ensures that the organic standard set in the field by the grower is maintained throughout the supply chain by organic processors. By helping handlers stay organic, Nichols expands the market for organic “through value-added products and shelf-stable foods.” It’s hard to get bored when working with handlers because of the sheer diversity of operations. According to Nichols, “In a single day you might look at granola or wine or cheese or someone who repacks lettuce. There’s so many different kinds of businesses out there and they’re all working to put food on your plate.”

Nichols likewise aspires to put food on your plate. She hopes to one day have her own blueberry and blackberry farm. In the

meantime, she keeps well-fed by growing an organic home garden.

Supervising Inspection Operations



JAMIE CARR

When it’s inspection time, Inspection Operations Supervisor Jamie Carr matches the organic operations with the best available inspectors in her assigned South Valley region. Carr trains inspectors to be thorough and precise, while keeping inspections as painless as possible for the farmer. Inspecting is a “tough job,” says Carr. “They have to be efficient with time because the operator is paying for it, but leave enough time to do a thorough inspection, and know which areas to dig a little deeper.”

Many factors play into the cost of the inspection. Tighter deadlines sometimes force Carr to enlist an inspector who is further away. Occasionally an inspector with specialized knowledge is required. However, Carr does all she can to keep inspections as timely, efficient, and affordable as possible.

While your inspector is verifying that your operation is compliant, Carr ensures that the inspectors themselves are proficient and professional. She organizes continuing education events and webinars for inspectors, provides updates when there are regulation changes, and evaluates inspectors in the field.

Carr also manages a sampling program in which produce samples from CCOF-certified farms are sent to the National Organic Program (NOP) for pesticide residue testing. This helps the NOP verify the integrity of CCOF certifications.

Carr became an organic advocate after working at an ornamental nursery that relied heavily on petrochemical inputs. The staff was dismissed on Wednesdays for pesticide application. On Thursdays they could still smell the chemicals. After getting to know the nursery’s neighbors, who drew their drinking water from nearby wells, Carr became concerned about pesticide contamination. She knew there had to be a

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“better way” that was “more friendly toward people, plants, the environment, insects.” Thus began her dedication to organic and her nine-year career as an inspector.

While serving as an inspector, Carr was also helping her husband, Chris, manage a vegetable CSA. When drought hit the farm, Chris shifted gears and began working for a land trust, while Carr took on a full-time position as inspection operations supervisor. Now the couple, along with their kids Stella and Cosmo, maintain a smaller home vegetable garden, some fruit trees, and a flock of sheep.

To her role as inspection operations supervisor Carr brings her experiences both as a farmer and as an inspector, making her the ideal person to balance farmers’ need for ease, convenience, and affordability with the rigorous inspection required for organic certification.

Connecting the Dots: Member and Public Outreach



ADRIAN FISCHER

“When you do what you do because you believe it in your heart/ We plant the seed and we watch it grow/ Sometimes one is stronger than two/ Why would you, when you can do it together?/ Do it as one.” So sings FlyinFisch, the performance persona of music producer turned farmer turned organic advocate Adrian Fischer.

Fischer’s lyrics could be about his relationship to CCOF. As CCOF’s member and public outreach specialist, Fischer is a spider weaving disparate strands of the organic community into one web—a task into which he seems to pour his whole heart.

Fischer’s responsibilities are vast and varied—from spreading the word about the Foundation’s grants to planning CCOF’s annual meeting—but they all draw upon his knack for connecting people. He manages the chapter system, which he calls the “mainline conduit” between members and CCOF staff. Chapters discuss “issues, ideas, suggestions;” it’s up to Fischer

to bring this feedback to CCOF so that members’ voices will directly inform CCOF’s policies and advocacy.

This year, Fischer will team up with CCOF’s policy team and CEO to host several policy events with organic stakeholders, building an organic coalition tackling challenges such as climate change, public health, and water quality. These conversations will also shape the policy recommendations that will be presented to legislators as part of CCOF’s *Roadmap to an Organic California*. “We want to make sure the members are connecting with their representatives,” says Fischer. In this way, Fischer unifies the organic community and strengthens advocacy by facilitating communication between the different teams at CCOF, the members, other stakeholders, and lawmakers.

An excellent example of Fischer’s cross-organizational collaboration brought together CCOF’s outreach, certification, and accounting teams to streamline the application process for the USDA cost share program. By combining their expertise, the team designed a system that draws upon member data to automatically fill in a summary that can be used to apply for reimbursement of certification fees. This saves members the “cumbersome paperwork” that often discourages farmers from getting their reimbursement.

Fischer understands firsthand that farmers would rather be in the field than filling out paperwork. After many years of producing music, this Venezuelan transplant dedicated himself to learning how to grow food by working for an educational farm, a permaculture farm, a greens grower, and a ranch. These experiences showed Fischer that farmers “need as much support as possible.” He jumped at the opportunity to work for CCOF because he wanted to “help their voices be heard.”

A Shared Vision

Each member of the CCOF team is vital for keeping the ship sailing. This magazine doesn’t have enough pages to honor them all. However, from this small sampling, and from how highly these staff members speak of their coworkers, it is clear that CCOF attracts dedicated organic advocates who are motivated not by salaries and career ambitions, but by a deep concern for agriculture’s impact on health and the environment and a real investment in the organic community. Says Barajas of the CCOF staff, “All of us do this because we love it. We do this because we really care.”

CCOF’s strength lies not only in the dedication of each staff member, but in the sum of its parts. CCOF depends on strong interconnectivity between its various departments, and between CCOF staff and membership. This interconnectivity, besides creating an almost familial bond among CCOF staff, also reflects what Hatfield calls the “whole systems approach” of organic agriculture. It’s about acknowledging how the different parts fit together to impact the whole. In this way, the many and varied efforts of CCOF staff synergize into an unstoppable movement for organic.



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CCOF Seeks Member Input on How to Increase California's Organic Acreage

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Earlier this year, the CCOF Foundation launched the *Roadmap to an Organic California* project (learn more at www.ccof.org/roadmap), beginning with *Roadmap to an Organic California: Benefits Report*, a groundbreaking research project that highlights how organic agriculture improves the health and prosperity of California. CCOF is building on the demonstrated benefits of California's organic sector to develop policies that will increase the percentage of California agricultural land in organic production from four percent of total agricultural acreage to 10 percent by 2030.

CCOF is seeking input from a wide range of stakeholders and wants to hear your ideas too.

California needs bipartisan strategies to address the state's most pressing challenges, from diet-related disease epidemics and struggling local economies to depleted water resources and climate impacts. The future health and productivity of the state depends on creating comprehensive solutions such as those provided by organic agriculture.

The *Benefits Report* (available for download at www.ccof.org/roadmap) is a comprehensive analysis of over 300 scientific studies showing the benefits of organic agriculture to California's economy, environment, and society. This report is phase one of the *Roadmap to an Organic California* project.

Phase two, the upcoming *Policy Report*, presents a policy agenda with creative solutions to support organic farmers and processors, to support the transition to organic, and to expand access to organic food. This is where you come in. These are the policies that will chart the course for California to increase organic acreage by over a million acres by 2030. Knowing that you are the backbone of California's organic sector, we want to gather your insight on these topics:

- What are the biggest challenges that you, as an organic producer, face today?
- What do you think would improve your bottom line?
- What are the biggest challenges of organic transition?
- What would make the transition to organic easier?
- What kind of support is most needed for California's organic sector?
- What would it take for more Californians to eat more organic food?

CCOF welcomes your feedback. Please share your perspective on these questions with us. Email your answers to roadmap@ccof.org or submit your responses at www.surveymonkey.com/r/RJCYH3X.

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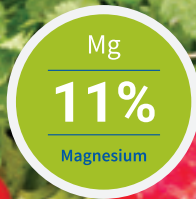
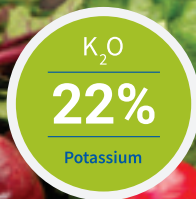
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California Expands Comparable Organic Cannabis Programs

Interest in organic cannabis is growing as more states around the country legalize cannabis for adult recreational use and cannabis producers look to differentiate their products in a growing market. CCOF often receives inquiries from producers interested in certifying their cannabis and cannabis products as USDA organic. Despite its legal status in California and other states, cannabis is not eligible for organic certification because it is listed as a Schedule I drug under the federal Controlled Substances Act.

In 2017, the California Department of Food and Agriculture was mandated by state law to create a program for cannabis “that is comparable to the National Organic Program (NOP) and the California Organic Food and Farming Act.” The program, OCal, is mandated to begin certification by January 1, 2021. The law also noted that if the NOP authorizes organic designation and certification for cannabis, the program will become inoperative and repealed by the following year.

Ocal Update

Ocal staff have spent the spring and summer hearing from stakeholders in both the organic and cannabis communities. In public meetings with the California Organic Products Advisory Committee (COPAC) Cannabis Working Group, Ocal staff posed questions on topics regarding the development of their program, such as how to manage certifier accreditation to the program, regulatory and enforcement overlaps between their program and the California State Organic Program, how to include the NOP Handbook into their regulation, and more.

At their July stakeholder working group meeting, Ocal staff announced that they will be releasing draft regulations for their program by the end of 2019.

Manufactured Cannabis Products

This year, Governor Gavin Newsom signed a bill into law that establishes a program under the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) for manufactured cannabis products. The new law created a new comparable organic cannabis certification program for CDPH. CDPH was given an extra six months to get the certification program off the ground and is mandated to begin certification by July 1, 2021. CDPH was also given an exemption to the state Administrative Procedures Act to further jump-start their program.

CCOF at Work on Cannabis

CCOF has actively participated in the development of OCal and will also engage in the development of CDPH’s cannabis program. CCOF’s priorities are for the comparable organic cannabis certification program to:

- be equivalent to the NOP and share the same standards to ensure that organic farmers can harmoniously add cannabis certification along with their organic certification;
- accept certified organic producers’ existing Organic System Plan forms;
- use the same accreditation requirements as the NOP so that the integrity of the program is maintained and organic experts are providing the certification; and
- continue to consult with COPAC on the development of the standards and any updates to the standards.

CCOF will share updates on the comparable organic cannabis certification programs through the weekly emailed CCOF newsletter (www.ccof.org/subscribe) and our blog (www.ccof.org/blog). Updates on CDFA’s program can be read at www.cdca.ca.gov/calcannabis/ocal.html.

If you are a certified organic producer interested in participating in advocacy involved with the comparable organic cannabis certification programs, please contact Peter Nell at pnell@ccof.org.





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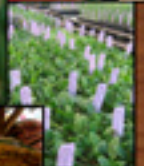
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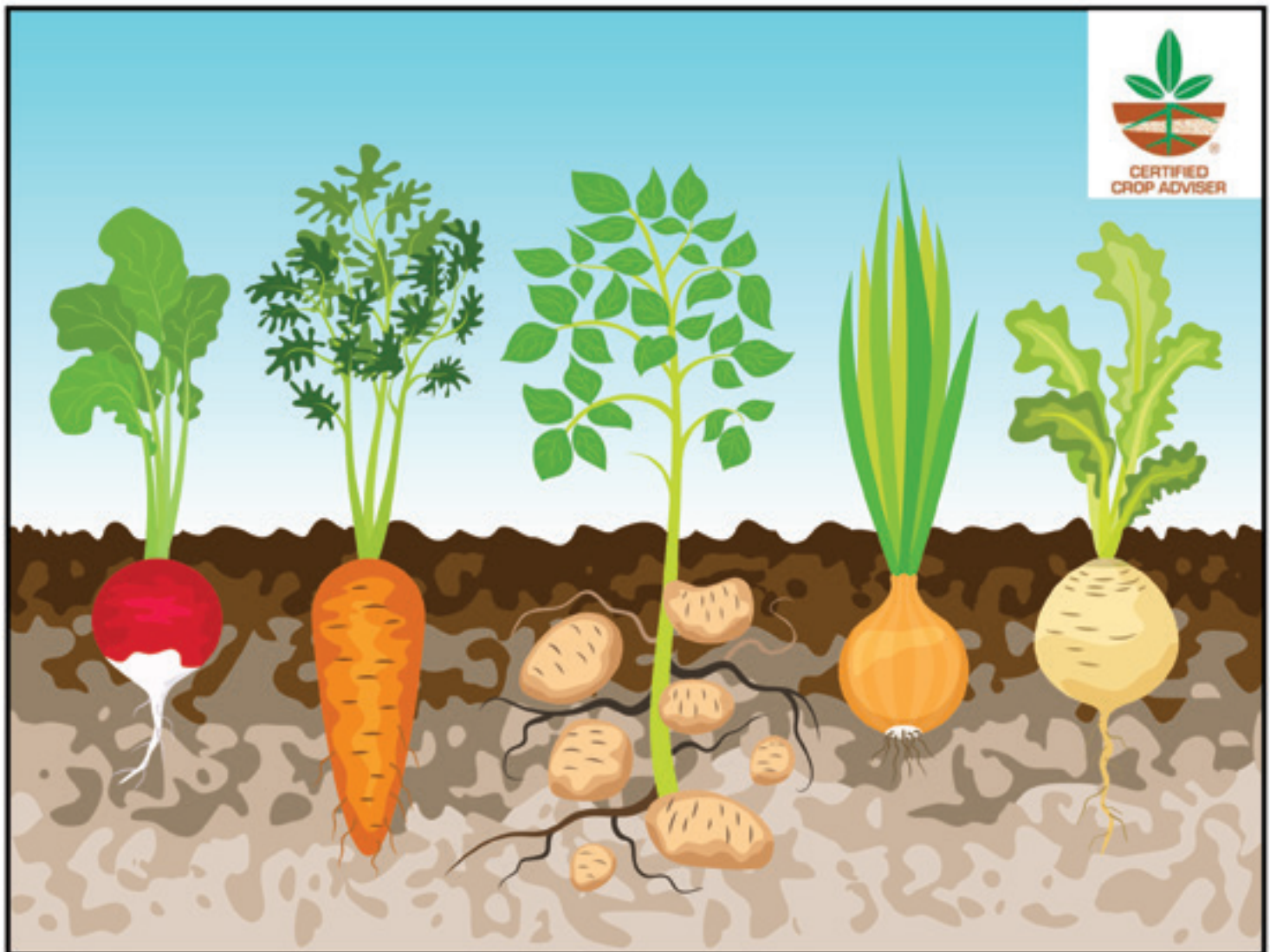
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COFI offers free consultations, custom nutrient planning and in-field evaluations for all crops from alfalfa to zucchini.



The Power of Connecting Voices

CCOF's chapter system is a powerful tool to connect our members from across the United States and Mexico. Chapter meetings serve as an outlet to voice challenges, share successes and advice, and strategize ways of advancing organic for a healthy world. Several chapters are gearing up for another peak in activity with the election cycle just around the corner, a process that occurs once every three years for each chapter.

As CCOF seeks leaders to step up and play a critical role in local CCOF governance, we encourage you to respond to a call for nominations. Calls for nominations and elections are emailed to the primary contact of each CCOF-certified business. Members in each chapter going through an election cycle will have the opportunity to nominate candidates for leadership roles and to run themselves. Make sure you vote in your chapter election to ensure your business has a voice in CCOF governance!

The chapters that are soon to have elections are Fresno-Tulare, North Valley, Processor/Handler, San Luis Obispo, and Sierra Gold.

Stay tuned to CCOF's weekly newsletter for election news and results.

Which Chapter Do I Belong To?

All CCOF-certified clients automatically become members when they get certified. All members belong to one of 14 chapters based on their geographic regions, and processor/handler members also belong to a single chapter regardless of location. The first two letters of your operation's client code, which can be found on your organic certificate, can help you determine which chapter you belong to. If you have ME or HT in your client code, you are in the HT-ME chapter. If you have a PR code, you are a member of both your regional chapter (based on the physical location of your operation) and the PR chapter.

AL – At-Large Chapter
BV – Big Valley Chapter
CC – Central Coast Chapter
FT – Fresno-Tulare Chapter
HT-ME – Humboldt-Trinity-Mendocino Chapter
KE – Kern Chapter
MX – México Chapter
NC – North Coast Chapter
NV – North Valley Chapter
PS – Pacific Southwest Chapter
PR – Processor/Handler Chapter
SL – San Luis Obispo Chapter
SG – Sierra Gold Chapter
SC – South Coast Chapter
YO – Yolo Chapter

WRITTEN BY Adrian Fischer

For more information, including which counties these chapters encompass, visit www.ccof.org/chapters.

If you have any questions about which chapter you belong to, please contact CCOF Member & Public Outreach Specialist Adrian Fischer at afischer@ccof.org.

How Can I Get Involved with My Chapter?

Ready to engage with your chapter? Attend a meeting! Chapter meetings are announced on CCOF's calendar, through our newsletter, and through emails to members of the chapter holding the meeting. Sign up for the CCOF newsletter at www.ccof.org/subscribe.

If you're thinking about running for a leadership role, a good place to start is reading through the chapter leader positions and responsibilities and reaching out to your chapter. Serving as a board representative requires a bigger time commitment than other positions and includes attendance at quarterly board meetings. Descriptions of roles for elected positions, current leadership, and chapter contacts are listed on each individual chapter webpage, found at www.ccof.org/chapters.

Pacific Southwest Chapter

The Pacific Southwest Chapter leaders are Treasurer Linda Antonioli, Marketing and Sales Officer Mike Reeske, Secretary Steve Reeb, Vice President Helene Beck, and President and Board Representative Karen Archipley. The chapter encompasses the Desert Valley, Imperial, South Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego counties.

The Pacific Southwest Chapter held a meeting on September 22 at Rio Del Rio Heirloom Beans. Food safety rules and best practices for organic producers were at the top of the agenda so that members could learn more about the current rollout of the Food Safety Modernization Act. Producers in the region are also looking to hemp as a crop to add a new revenue stream to their operations. While many see a promising market for hemp, attendees discussed the risk associated with this burgeoning industry due to unclear demand, unreliable buyers, and rules unfolding at the county, state, and federal levels. To help inform on organic certification technicalities regarding hemp and other crops, CCOF's Dana Ford flew in from Colorado for the meeting.

Contact Adrian Fischer at afischer@ccof.org to submit nominations for chapter leadership and for any other chapter-related inquiries.



Calling all CCOF members!

WE'VE GOT BIG, BOLD, PLANS FOR ORGANIC!



ADVOCATE FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The Organic Trade Association is taking steps to promote, protect, and advance organic.

TOGETHER WE WILL:

Advocate for continuous improvement in organic through public and private value-chain initiatives and via support for the public-private partnership.



EMBRACE INNOVATION

Embrace innovation and change to advance the Organic Trade Association, organic agriculture and trade, consistent with organic principles.



FOCUS ON SOLUTIONS

Provide opportunities to members to problem solve, learn, lead, and interact across the supply chain.



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Build a diverse membership, plan for the long-term, create adaptive member programming, and ensure financial sustainability.

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Creating Opportunities for Children's Access to Organic Foods

About once every five years, Congress drafts legislation to reauthorize federal feeding programs that serve children. Commonly referred to as the Child Nutrition Act, the legislation authorizes and funds the national school breakfast and lunch program, after-school snacks, the summer feeding program, and meals served in day care centers.

Children who meet certain criteria based on federal poverty levels are eligible for free or reduced-price meals subsidized by the government. Additionally, the Child Nutrition Act includes funding for the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program, which provides supplemental food assistance for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women, as well as for children and infants under the age of five who are nutritionally at risk.

The impact of these programs on the nutrition of children is profound. An estimated 30 million schoolchildren participate in the school lunch program daily, and nearly half of all infants born in the United States receive assistance through the WIC program. This presents a tremendous opportunity to expand access to organic food for kids and underserved populations.

Over the past decade, innovation, growth, and research have made organic more accessible than ever and an emerging choice not only in homes, but also in schools and institutions. The last time Congress reauthorized the child nutrition programs was in 2010 when it passed the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act. As part of former first lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! initiative to reduce childhood obesity, the law was the first time in decades that the nutrition standards for school meals were comprehensively updated. Schools have made great strides over the past few years to improve offerings of fresh fruits and vegetables, and become less reliant on overly processed foods high in sugar and sodium. Programs such as Farm-to-School have supported local farmers while also providing nutritious food to kids.

In the last reauthorization bill, the Organic Trade Association secured authorization for an organic food pilot program under which school food authorities could explore opportunities



to build relationships with local organic companies, farms, and food providers to make organic foods available to schoolchildren. The Organic Trade Association is currently working with members of Congress to renew, update, and secure mandatory funding for the organic food pilot program as part of its reauthorization process.

Access to healthy organic foods is especially important for pregnant women and children under the age of five during the critical stages of development. In our most recent survey of U.S. families' attitudes toward organic, all buying groups—ranging from heavy to light users of organic—indicated that baby food was the most important category for buying organic.

WIC participants are provided monthly stipends to purchase certain nutrient-rich foods such as fresh produce, dairy, infant formulas, and baby food to supplement their diets. However, the federal government sets guidelines that dictate cost and nutrition requirements for what food can be included in the WIC program. States largely administer the program and have the discretion to choose which specific products are included. The Organic Trade Association is working for the first time to reduce barriers and expand access to organic food within the WIC program.

The organic industry is committed to providing healthy and safe food to all Americans. Expanding organic options within federal feeding programs will not only help organic farmers and businesses generate increased benefits to their local economies, but will also help meet the changing demographics and rising consumer demand for organic products.

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A Letter from CCOF's Chief Certification Officer

Dear CCOF members,

I hope you enjoyed reading about a few members of our incredible team here at CCOF as much as I enjoy seeing each of them every day. The individuals you met in this issue's article are just a small sampling of the many people at CCOF working every day to support our members and advance organic. You can meet some of them in person at trade shows and agricultural events across the country—we love seeing our members in person, so come say hello when you are at those events!

Earlier this year, I took the helm of CCOF Certification Services, LLC as the new chief certification officer. My journey with CCOF started back in 2007, when I joined the CCOF family as a farm certification specialist fresh out of the University of California, Santa Cruz's agroecology program. I grew up on a small farm in the Sierra foothills where my family grows grapes and produces delicious wines. I feel it is important to stay connected to my roots, and I do this by tending my own garden and helping at the winery whenever possible. I have learned so much in the last 12 years at CCOF, and I am honored to have the opportunity to lead certification services in this new role.

As the organic movement continues to grow and evolve, we're staying ahead of the curve by strengthening our vision for the future of CCOF and organic certification. Innovations across the industry are changing how organic food is produced and purchased. Fraud, climate change, consumer confusion, and divisive narratives about organic are some of the challenges we face. I believe it is important that CCOF stay grounded in our rich history yet still be able to adapt to the growing needs of our members so we can realize our vision of a world where organic is the norm.

One area that we will keep investing in is technology for our members that helps make organic certification manageable and accessible. We're constantly looking for ways to streamline MyCCOF, our online certification management tool (visit www.ccof.org/myccof for more information), where members can already track and respond to certification requests with just a few clicks.

Our ultimate goal is to uphold and strengthen the integrity of organic certification while also meeting the needs of organic

businesses that are doing the work of bringing healthy organic products to consumers around the world. We're always looking for better ways to serve our members, so please don't hesitate to give us feedback on how we can better meet your needs.

Thank you for joining us in advancing organic agriculture for a healthy world!



April Crittenden
Chief Certification Officer



Renewals are Coming

Every year, certified operations are required to submit an annual certification renewal contract and pay certification fees for the next year. In early November, we will mail your renewal package, which includes the contract and the invoice, and we will also send you an email with your renewal information.

Completing your renewal on time allows us to group inspections so they are as cost-effective and timely as possible throughout the next year. Help us serve you and other operations efficiently and avoid unnecessary costs by completing your contract and submitting payment by January 1, 2020.

You can submit your contract and payment by mail, or through our online contract and payment portal at www.ccof.org/renew. You can also complete your contract and pay your invoice through the "Renew now" and "Pay now" buttons in MyCCOF.

Renewal Timeline

November: Renewal contracts and invoices sent by email and USPS mail.

January 1, 2020: All renewals and annual payments are due.

February 15: A Notice of Noncompliance and a \$150 late fee will be issued to all operations that have not completed the renewal process (contract and payment). This is also the last day to withdraw from certification without accruing 2020 certification fees.

March 15: A Notice of Proposed Suspension and an additional \$150 late fee will be issued to all operations that have not completed the renewal process.

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April 15: All operations that have not completed the renewal process will have their certification suspended. If your certification is suspended and you wish to be certified organic in the future, your certification must be reinstated by the National Organic Program (NOP) after a costly and lengthy process. We don't want this to happen to you, so renew as soon as you can!

CCOF is happy to help you set up a payment plan if needed. Please contact our accounting department for more information about payment plans at accounting@ccof.org.

CCOF's OSP Walk-Through Service

Get yourself or your staff up to speed on maintaining your Organic System Plan (OSP) as quickly as possible with CCOF's OSP Walk-Through Service. This service provides time to meet with our staff and learn how to use our systems to improve your user experience! Walk-throughs are led by a CCOF certification specialist and can be customized for your specific operation. By the end of the orientation, participants will understand:

- your operation's OSP and how to update it,
- how to track and respond to CCOF compliance requests,
- where to find inspection information, and
- how to communicate effectively with CCOF.

Plus, you'll take a tour of CCOF's online certification management tool, MyCCOF. Learn how to:

- download certificates,
- search and add materials to your OSP,
- manage payments and pay bills,
- manage multiple certified operations from one account, and

- track your CCOF-certified suppliers and access their certification status in real time.

Be prepared for your next annual inspection and avoid costly mistakes that can affect your certification.

Who is This Service For?

This service is perfect for staff who are new to your organic system or who need additional training. Newly certified operations, businesses with recent ownership change, and any operation preparing for an upcoming inspection will benefit from a personalized OSP walk-through.

What Will CCOF Provide?

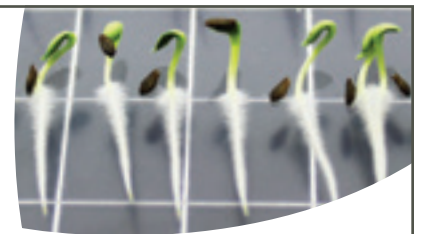
- A basic understanding of how to work most effectively with CCOF: how and where to direct communications, turnaround times for requests, and where to find useful information on www.ccof.org.
- Resource materials and a login for MyCCOF.
- A customized webinar, focused on your OSP and MyCCOF account, complete with instruction on how to update your specific company details.
- Time for questions with a CCOF Certification Specialist who can provide tips and tricks for maintaining your certification.

How Much Does the Walk-Through Service Cost?

The cost for the OSP Walk-Through Service is \$425 for 90 minutes. Each additional hour will be billed at \$100 per hour. Payment for the service will be billed after the training.

Register for an OSP walk-through today! Complete the OSP Walk-Through Service registration at www.ccof.org/osp-walk-through and return it by email to inbox@ccof.org or by fax to (831) 423-4528. You will be contacted within one week to schedule the training.

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