



# CERTIFIED Organic

## ORGANIC HOTSPOTS

### Organic Agriculture Cultivating Rural Communities



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Enhancing Biodiversity Through Organic Rice Farming  
CCOF-certified Farmers Host Legislative Farm Tour**



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# CERTIFIED Organic



24

## Organic Hotspots—Organic Agriculture Cultivating Rural Communities

*Organic advocates are excited about the hotspots research because it helps make a compelling case for organic agriculture as an effective tool for economic development.*

## Departments

### 05 First Words

From CCOF's Executive Director/CEO

### 07 In the News

Organic making headlines

### 11 Member News

Members doing great things

### 15 Foundation Programs

CCOF Foundation at work

### 21 Chapter Update

Staying active with your chapter

### 33 Organic Advocacy

Supporting organic interests

### 37 OTA Update

OTA's report from the Capitol

### 41 Certification News

Keeping you compliant

### 45 Member Listings

New CCOF members

### 45 Advertisers Index

Find our partners' ads

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## Making the Case for Organic

The study “Economic Impact of Organic Agriculture Hotspots in the United States” sets the stage for CCOF’s annual meeting and educational conference in Sacramento on February 22-23, 2018. The study names 43 out of California’s 58 counties as organic hotspots, meaning that organic activity in those counties resulted in increased median household income and lower poverty rates. The opportunity for organic agriculture to revitalize rural communities is an exciting revelation.

These findings underscore a passion that conference keynote speaker Glenda Humiston, University of California vice president for agriculture and natural resources, has carried throughout her career. Humiston, as former undersecretary for natural resources and environment and later as USDA’s rural development director for California, has continually sought to enhance farmers’ economic opportunities and to bridge urban-rural divides.

The conference will bring findings from the hotspot study to life, featuring panels and talks that will explore the impact of organic on communities and the role of educational institutions in creating organic hotspots. Individual producers will share their business stories, hotspot study author Dr. Edward Jaenicke will discuss his research, and a legislative panel will explore bipartisan solutions to help organic grow.

As Ellen Vessels writes in this issue’s feature article, “We already know that organic farming methods protect ecosystems, build soil health, and provide quality, healthful food products.” The hotspot study now tells us that specific economic benefits are also attributed to the expansion of organic agriculture.

The study is a perfect jumping off place for the CCOF Foundation’s newest initiative, the *Roadmap to an Organic California*. This project will highlight the benefits of organic production and develop broadly supported, bipartisan strategies for advancing organic agriculture to benefit producers and communities.

The two-year project will evaluate ways to strengthen market opportunities for California-grown organic crops and products, promote a regulatory framework that incentivizes organic farming, support the next generation of producers and transition land to organic production, and maximize the benefits of organic farming systems to disadvantaged communities, with the result of increasing the amount of land in California that is farmed organically.

Now, more than ever before, policymakers need broadly supported, bipartisan strategies to address the nation’s social, economic, and environmental challenges. Certified organic food production has a proven track record of deterring the use of toxic pesticides and promoting healthy, carbon-storing soils while also driving strong economic returns for rural and socially disadvantaged communities.

It’s time to make the case for organic.



*Cathy*

**Cathy Calfo**  
CCOF Executive Director/CEO

## Issue Contributors

*Organic Hotspots—Organic Agriculture Cultivating Rural Communities, Page 24*



**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](http://TheAmericanGenius.com) and real estate trends for [TheRealDaily.com](http://TheRealDaily.com). She has written for outdoor magazines and environmental nonprofits, and formerly served as a project manager for Florida Organic Growers.

Vessels works and lives at a sustainability education nonprofit and intentional community in Tennessee where she and her fellow land mates maintain an organic garden and orchard, and a small herd of dairy goats. When she’s not writing, Vessels performs original music and puppet shows. A sampling of her writing can be found at [clippings.me/EllenVessels](http://clippings.me/EllenVessels).

# CALIFORNIA ORGANIC FERTILIZERS, INC.

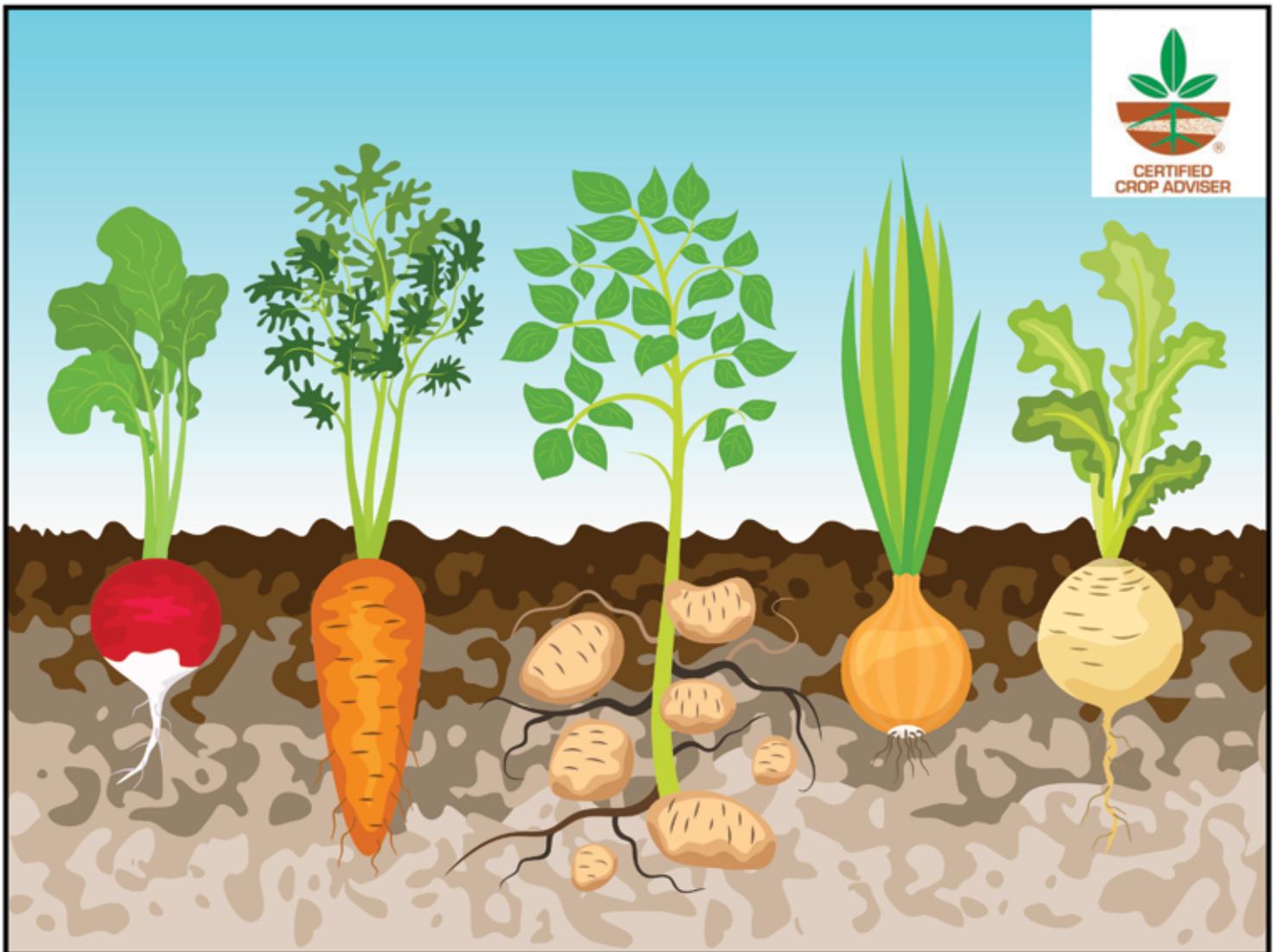
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## ***Soybean Crops Across United States Impacted by Drift***

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A weed killer called dicamba has wreaked havoc on soybean crops across the United States due to herbicide drift. The herbicide is used on genetically modified soybean and cotton crops that are grown from seed and tolerant to weed killers.

Although dicamba has been used in the United States since the 1960s, it was only approved last year for spraying on the fields after the soybeans are already growing, instead of before they sprout—also called “over the top” application. This change in application method caused a massive drift issue, where the herbicide drifted off the fields where it was applied to neighboring farms and land.

University of Missouri plant sciences professor Kevin Bradley compiled a list of damages from complainants in 25 states. More than 3.6 million acres of soybean crops (about 4 percent of all soybeans planted in the country this year) have been damaged by drift of the herbicide, but those are only measurements of recorded complaints. The amount of damage could be up to five times greater than what has been reported, according to Reuben Baris, the acting chief of the herbicides branch of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

While soybeans were the primary crop affected by the drift, damage was also caused to other crops, including tomatoes, watermelon, cantaloupe, pumpkins, and organic vegetables, and to vineyards, residential gardens, trees, and shrubs. “It is not often that we hear about impacts of this magnitude,” said Rick P. Keigwin Jr., the director of the EPA’s pesticide program.

New application instructions have been signed off on by the three companies that sell the problematic dicamba formulations: Monsanto, BASF, and DuPont. Going forward, application of dicamba is prohibited when winds are greater than 10 miles per hour, and farmers will have to do additional cleaning on tanks that store the herbicide.

When the EPA approved the “over the top” application method of dicamba, it required dicamba manufacturers to get the method re-approved after a two-year period. Both Baris and Keigwin have said that the re-approval may not be granted if the modified methods do not improve the drastic nature of the drift damage. We will have to wait and see how the modifications to the application method affect those farmers dealing with drift damage.

Of course, organic agriculture prohibits the use of GMOs and synthetic inputs. Visit [www.ccof.org/advocacy/pests-pesticides](http://www.ccof.org/advocacy/pests-pesticides) for more information about pesticide drift.

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## **Organic Livestock Rule Delayed Again by USDA**

Implementation of the Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices (OLPP) rule has once again been delayed by USDA. The rule was originally published on January 19, 2017, but its

## CCOF continues to support more consistent organic livestock and poultry regulations that improve animal welfare.

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implementation was then delayed twice in 2017. This is the third delay for the rule, until May 14, 2018.

The OLPP rule represents more than 14 years of discussion and work among organic stakeholders to craft a rule to improve animal welfare while strengthening the organic regulations for livestock and poultry. The OLPP rule includes changes to the organic regulations on living conditions for both poultry and mammals, indoor and outdoor requirements for chickens, guidelines for transport and slaughter of animals, specific recordkeeping details, and many other changes that help ensure the health and welfare of all organic animals. For more details about the rule, read our in-depth article about the OLPP in the Summer 2017 issue of *Certified Organic*, which you can find a digital copy of at [www.ccof.org/magazine-archives](http://www.ccof.org/magazine-archives).

When the rule was first finalized, USDA explained that the purpose of the new rule is to level the playing field by creating greater consistency in livestock practices and to assure customer confidence in the integrity of organic.

The OLPP rule has already undergone many rounds of public comment, has been financially vetted, and was ready for implementation in January 2017. During the delay that extended to November 14, 2017, the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) solicited public comments on the direction USDA should take with respect to the rule, giving the public four options:

1. Implement: Allow the OLPP final rule to take effect on November 14, 2017.
2. Suspend: Suspend the OLPP final rule indefinitely.
3. Delay: Delay the OLPP final rule's effective date beyond November 14, 2017.
4. Withdraw: Withdraw the OLPP final rule.

Of more than 47,000 comments AMS received on the four options, over 40,000 of them supported "Option 1: Implement," displaying clear public support for implementation of the rule. Only 28 commenters supported "Option 4: Withdraw," with only a handful of commenters selecting the other options, and the remaining commenters submitting comments without preference. Supporters of implementation expressed concerns and support that have long been a part of the conversation: the importance of humane treatment of animals and the importance of including animal welfare in the organic regulations.

Those supporting the options to suspend or withdraw the rule cited financial and regulatory compliance burdens, increased

cost for consumers, food safety risks, or a belief of the rule being unnecessary or inappropriate for organic regulations.

USDA has selected the "delay" option for its course of action, despite overwhelming support for implementation. In the agency's announcement of the delay, USDA explains, "This final rule adopts Option 3: Delay, so that important questions regarding USDA's statutory authority to promulgate the OLPP rule and the likely costs and benefits of that rule, can be more fully assessed through the notice and comment process prior to AMS making a final decision on whether the OLPP final rule should take effect."

USDA cited three main reasons for the additional lengthy delay in the announcement, beginning with the Organic Food Production Act of 1990's (OFPA) reference to additional regulatory standards "for the care" of organically produced livestock. AMS believes that reference does not reflect a stand-alone concern for animal welfare, but instead solely refers to health care practices similar to those specified in the statute.

Secondly, the announcement cites Executive Orders 12866 and 13563, both of which outline principles agencies must follow when developing regulations. According to AMS, the requirements in the OLPP may not be the most innovative and least burdensome possible, may impose unjustifiable costs, and may not align with text in OFPA. AMS also reported finding a significant error in the calculation of the benefits estimates that they imply could change the interpretation of the cost-benefit analysis.

Lastly, AMS cites additional time for public comment as a reason for further delaying implementation of the rule. The agency intends to provide comment periods on all of the aforementioned issues and will review the response before making a final decision.

In anticipation of further delays or overall dismissal of the rule, the Organic Trade Association (OTA) filed a lawsuit against USDA earlier this year. The lawsuit alleges that by continuing to delay the rule despite broad public support, the USDA violates administrative laws and OFPA by blocking the organic sector and public stakeholders from revising, refining, and advancing organic standards. Learn more about OTA's actions at [www.ota.com/news/press-releases/19820](http://www.ota.com/news/press-releases/19820).

CCOF continues to support implementation of the OLPP rule and more consistent organic livestock and poultry regulations that improve animal welfare. Sign up for our newsletter at [www.ccof.org/subscribe](http://www.ccof.org/subscribe) to stay up-to-date on new developments for the OLPP and alerts for public comment periods.

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## *Enhancing Biodiversity Through Organic Rice Farming*

Robbins Rice Co. is an innovative CCOF-certified organic rice farm that promotes natural resource conservation and biodiversity in the region. Formed in 2006 in Northern California's Sacramento Valley, they provide an environmental service using their land and organic farming practices to aid wildlife in the area. The small, family-oriented company includes four organic rice growers who specialize in the cultivation of Japanese short grain rice, known as Koshihikari. It is a traditional Japanese cultivar that is a sweet, nutty, and fluffy variety of sushi rice.

The Sacramento Valley provides a critical habitat for resident bird populations and hundreds of species of migratory birds that come through the Pacific Flyway, the flight path for migrating birds in America. Sacramento Valley offers resting stops as millions of birds make their annual trip south. Robbins Rice Co. has partnered with numerous organizations to conserve precious habitat and migratory bird resting and nesting grounds. They are part of several programs, including the Waterbird Habitat Enhancement Program through the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), BirdReturns through the Nature Conservancy, and the Waterbird Riceland Management Program in partnership with the National Audubon Society.

Organic farming practices, in combination with habitat preservation, ensure waterbird conservation in the Sacramento Valley. One key component of waterbird conservation is staggering the timing and levels of water drainage from flooded rice fields to provide varying water levels for bird species that require different depths of water for nesting. Additionally, the farms create nesting islands for waterbirds, permanent wetlands, and hedgerows. They install bird boxes, provide bee stumps, and collect and relocate eggs from planted fields. These conservation programs also give the Robbins Rice Co. farmers educational strategies to promote biodiversity conservation among farmworkers and the greater community.



Robbins Rice Co. also partners with a number of academic researchers, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies to improve and re-establish healthy Chinook salmon populations in the Sacramento Valley. Before the levee system was established in the valley, the region was predominantly



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Member News Meets Social Media



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**Kaiulani Spices** via Facebook:

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**Di Stefano Cheese** via Facebook:

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composed of natural floodplains that provided abundant salmon habitat. Now that the historical floodplains have been converted for agricultural production, most salmon are restricted in their waterways and do not obtain necessary sustenance from the environment.

Robbins Rice Co. strategically acquired land and shifted production to ensure that flooding of the rice fields occurs in a way to ensure that salmon have a connection to the river. The flooded rice fields offer zooplankton for the salmon to feed on, which allows them to grow and increase their likelihood of survival in the delta and the ocean. These healthy juvenile salmon are called the “floodplain fatties” because of their substantial size compared to salmon that do not feed in the flooded rice fields. Salmon populations in the Sacramento Valley became significantly stronger after the implementation of these strategies. Robbins Rice Co. prioritizes this research and the program continues to expand.



Robbins Rice Co. takes a holistic approach to organic farming. They look at the entire ecosystem and prioritize healthy soil, habitat, water, and air. In response to witnessing the negative environmental impacts of “clean farming,” which includes using harsh chemicals to remove weeds, pests, and all life outside of agricultural production, owners Lance Benson, Jon Matteoli, and John Brennan strive to incorporate sustainable

and ecological farming into the natural ecosystem of the Sacramento Valley. Their progressive farming practices are supported by the local community. Robbins Rice Co.’s Emily James notes that this work is not theirs alone, but “an effort of the valley.” She states that the Robbins Rice Co. owners, staff, and growers “are people from the Sacramento Valley who want to improve habitat and farming. They are true conservationists.”

Through these collective efforts to restore ecosystem diversity while growing organic rice, Robbins Rice Co. illustrates that conservation and food production can go hand in hand. Consumers can feel good about eating Robbins Rice Co. organic sushi rice, knowing that the farming practices benefit thousands of migrating birds, wood ducks, garter snakes, and juvenile salmon. You can purchase Robbins Rice Co. organic sushi rice at [www.robbsriceco.com/products](http://www.robbsriceco.com/products) and under the Black Fox Brand at local stores in the Sacramento Valley.

## Raw Organic Goodness



Before Tannere Martin developed an artisanal chocolate business, you could only find his raw, organic chocolate truffles on his rafting trips along the Trinity River. Now, Trinity Raw is a small, family-owned chocolatier located in Eureka, California.



Their chocolate truffles can be found in retail establishments in Northern California, and they are expanding into other states.

Following raw food principles, Trinity Raw creates chocolate truffles that provide a healthful way to indulge. Raw chocolate is known to have wide-ranging health benefits including high levels of calcium (higher than milk) and antioxidants (more than blueberries). It also contains anandamide (also known as the “bliss chemical”).

CCOF recently had the opportunity to talk with Martin about Trinity Raw.

### **Tell us a little bit about Trinity Raw.**

We are a tiny family-owned and -run artisanal chocolatier. We believe food can be both delicious and healthy at the same time, and started to make our own chocolate accordingly. Most people know when something is delicious, but not as many know when something is healthy, so to help we use two criteria: raw (minimally processed) and of course, organic.

Our chocolaty story began on the Trinity River, but our philosophic trinity is health, happiness, and harmony. Health and happiness come, of course, from many sources, but in our opinion, delicious, good-for-you food is one of the best sources and raw chocolate is on top of that list. Harmony is exemplified through organic practices, not just in our kitchen, but we encourage its growth worldwide when we choose to grow, produce, and use organic. All our ingredients are tropical, so shipping does create a footprint, but we know that the origin communities are better off because of choices made locally as we do our best to balance global harmony.

### **Why did you choose to get certified organic?**

At first our chocolate was just for us and we trusted our suppliers' organic certifications, and when we shared it with friends they trusted us. When we began to serve it as a dessert on my company's rafting trips, the guests loved it and believed us when told it was organic and healthy. Next, we began to sell to stores by producing it out of our house under California's cottage food operations permit and we really tried to express its healthy nature on the label, but trusting and

believing become harder the farther you are from the source. Finally, we got our own commercial kitchen and organic certification shortly thereafter, and now people know they can trust us with no need to scrutinize the label or even having to read anything—just a quick glance at the CCOF logo and you know you're good to go!

### **How has becoming certified organic affected your business?**

Our future is looking brighter due to our certification. Our chocolates are made from the highest quality ingredients we can find and consequently cost a bit more than other products around them, but having that logo makes up the difference. People really are willing to pay more when they know it's better for them. Beyond that, trying to get into new markets and working with distributors has been so much easier with the certification. We weren't 100 percent sold on the idea beforehand, but after nearly a year of being with CCOF we would never go back.

### **What can you tell our readers about being a small business in a small town?**

We consider ourselves very fortunate to live in Humboldt County. It is great how organic has such a high value in the community and on top of that, it seems like everyone here just does their own thing. We have more entrepreneurial enterprises than you can shake a stick at. As a result, there is a huge community of support here for anyone starting out. Starting, maintaining, and keeping a business profitable is hard. Doing it all by yourself is a lot harder. We like to think of everyone who helps us along the way as our friends. See some of them under the About Us tab on our website at [www.trinityraw.com](http://www.trinityraw.com). We recommend eating more raw, organic chocolate. We aren't everywhere yet, so grab what you can where you are and enjoy life.

## *Organic Hotspots: Revitalizing Rural America*

Join us in Sacramento on February 22-23, 2018 to explore the factors that have made California a hotbed of organic hotspots activity and discuss ways to encourage the growth of organic hotspots across rural America. We will hear the stories of organic leaders who have contributed to economic revitalization through organic in rural areas, and from those who have seen the impacts firsthand on their businesses and communities. Leaders in policy development, education, and agricultural technology will also share their insights as key individuals helping support these regional economic changes.

The presence of organic businesses—especially when they exist in clusters, or “hotspots”—stimulates and strengthens rural economic development. Studies by Penn State agricultural economist Dr. Edward Jaenicke conclusively show that median household incomes increase and poverty rates decrease as a direct result of organic food and crop production in the county. (Read more about this research on Page 24.) The potential for organic as a rural economic development tool is vast—especially given the inherent environmental benefits of organic agriculture.

The organic industry has the capacity to create real and long-lasting regional economic opportunities. As these regions spread with California at the forefront, clusters of economically healthy communities have the potential to link throughout the entire country. Organic businesses have become unique economic drivers that have the capacity to protect our environment while functioning as a key component of an economic toolkit.

In celebration of our collective work to advance organic agriculture, CCOF will host our second annual CCOF Foundation Awards Feast to kick off this two-day event. This year we will present the Organic Champion Award to Melody Meyer (UNFI/UNFI Foundation), who was instrumental in launching our Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund and whose steadfast support has ensured the fund’s success. Please join us Thursday evening to raise a glass to Meyer and thank her for her important contributions to fostering the next generation of organic farmers.

Also at the dinner, Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund grant recipient Kevin Hesser will share the impact the fund had on his Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund-funded project at Toyon

Middle School in the Sierra Nevada foothills. With a grant from the fund, Hesser taught his students about the importance of organic agriculture with an organic pizza garden that provided healthy organic meals to 500 students.

On Friday, we’ll continue the annual tradition of convening the CCOF membership and supporters to celebrate successes and plan for the future of organic with our CCOF Annual Meeting and educational conference. Our annual educational conference is treasured as a yearly opportunity for the organic community to network, share resources, and learn how to grow your businesses. Every other year, we hold our event in Sacramento, California to highlight the strength of organic in the state at the capital. We hope you will join us to share your knowledge. The conference also benefits the programs of the CCOF Foundation: the Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund, the Organic Training Institute, the Brimont Hardship Assistance Fund, and our consumer education programming. Find out more about these programs at [www.ccof.org/foundation](http://www.ccof.org/foundation).

Register early for the CCOF Foundation Awards Feast, Annual Meeting, and Organic Hotspots educational conference at [www.ccof.org/2018-event](http://www.ccof.org/2018-event). A special rate for hotel rooms is available until February 1. To learn more about the event, contact [ccofoundation@ccof.org](mailto:ccofoundation@ccof.org) or (831) 423-2263.

### **Event Agenda**

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22

#### **Annual CCOF Foundation Feast**

**5:30-6:30 p.m. - Reception**

**6:30-9:00 p.m. - Dinner**

- Presentation of Organic Champion Award to Melody Meyer, Vice President of Policy and Industry Relations, United Natural Foods
- Kevin Hesser, Teacher & Garden Coordinator, Calaveras High School

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23

#### **CCOF Annual Conference: Organic Hotspots**

**7:30 a.m. - Breakfast**

**8:30-9:30 a.m. - CCOF Annual Meeting**

- Phil LaRocca, CCOF Board of Directors Chair; Founder & Owner, LaRocca Vineyards
- Cathy Calfo, Executive Director/CEO, CCOF
- Jake Lewin, President, CCOF Certification Services, LLC

*Continued on Page 17.*

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# The CCOF Foundation's ..... **ORGANIC TRAINING INSTITUTE**

Through hands-on trainings, workshops, and seminars, the Organic Training Institute provides resources to aspiring and current organic professionals about the latest organic research and best production and marketing practices. All event dates and locations are subject to change—check online for the latest details.

## Helping Organic Produce Growers Meet Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Requirements

### Check FSMA Compliance Off Your List for 2018

Is your business a produce farm that grosses between \$250,000 - \$500,000 in annual sales?

If the answer is yes, you may be required by the FSMA Produce Safety Rule to complete a mandatory Produce Safety Alliance (PSA)-approved training course by the beginning of 2019.

The CCOF Foundation, in partnership with the Agriculture & Land-Based Training Association (ALBA) and the California Center for Cooperative Development (CCCD), is here to help! Attend one of our low-cost, in-person workshops that will fulfill this FSMA requirement.

In 2018, we will hold PSA-approved workshops at various locations throughout California.\* To find the workshop closest to you, visit [www.ccof.org/PSA-food-safety-workshops](http://www.ccof.org/PSA-food-safety-workshops).

Still unsure about whether you are required to take this training? Visit [www.ccof.org/PSA-food-safety-workshops](http://www.ccof.org/PSA-food-safety-workshops) for more information about FSMA requirements.

**Register for these events and more at [www.ccof.org/events](http://www.ccof.org/events) »**

\* These workshops are based upon work that is supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under award number 2017-70020-27242.



United States Department of Agriculture  
National Institute of Food and Agriculture

### 9:30 a.m. - Organic-Growing Food & Local Communities

- Tonya Antle, Co-Founder, Organic Produce Network
- Thaddeus Barsotti, Co-Owner/Co-CEO, Capay Organic Farm/ Farm Fresh to You
- Darrell Wood, President, Rancher & Board Member, Panorama Meats

### 10:35 a.m. - Stories of Organic Hotspots

- Ted Jaenicke, Professor of Agricultural Economics, Penn State University Q&A with Laura Batcha, CEO & Executive Director, Organic Trade Association
- Mathew Raiford, CheFarmer, The Farmer & The Larder

### 11:20 a.m. - It Takes a Village: The Role of Education & Research

- Tom Tomich, Director, Agricultural Sustainability Institute at the University of California, Davis
- Anne Thrupp, Executive Director, Berkeley Food Institute
- Leonard Diggs, Manager, Shore Farm at Santa Rosa Junior College
- Hunter Francis, Founder & Director, Center for Sustainability at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo

### 12:15 p.m. - Lunch

### 1:15 p.m. - Stories of Organic Hotspots, Continuing the Conversation

- Sergio Núñez de Arco, Co-Founder & CEO, Andean Naturals
- Brie Reiter, General Manager of the Northern Production Region, Driscoll's

### 1:45 p.m. - Working Hand in Hand: Partnerships Between Elected Officials & Organic

- Anna Caballero, California State Assembly Member, Chair of Agriculture Committee
- A.G. Kawamura, Owner/Partner, Orange County Produce, former Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture

### 2:45 p.m. - Keynote Speech

- Glenda Humiston, Vice President, University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources

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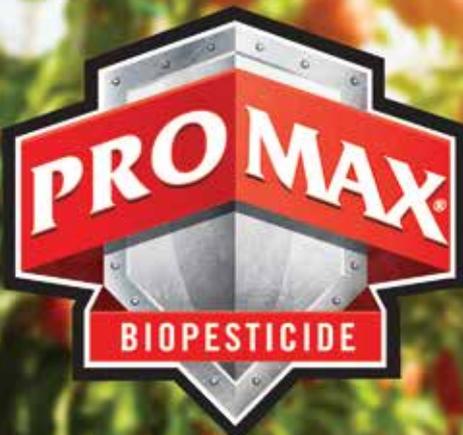
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## ***Solidarity and Strengthening Organic Through the Chapter System***

As we complete another cycle around the sun and cooler temperatures and longer nights set a mood for introspection, we have the opportunity to look back at our goals for the season. Among the goals we've set out to accomplish at CCOF is ensuring the strength and viability of organic through the chapter system. Chapter meetings accomplish this goal by creating a setting in which our members can gather for in-person conversations, learn, and be inspired by each other. Building solidarity in a community that is constantly facing difficult challenges fortifies the work we do collectively, cultivates relationships, and fosters a future for organic.

The **Pacific Southwest Chapter** held a very successful full-day Organic Symposium on September 17 in Encinitas, California, with over 100 people in attendance. As Karen Archipley, the chapter's president and board representative writes, this was a "direct response to members' articulated challenges and concerns" where they "brought together experts on a range of topics relevant to local organic growing." The event covered a wide range of topics, including water regulations, bee and soil health, immigration and farmworker safety, and organic in schools. The event hosted produce buyers for growers to make direct marketing connections, and experts who answered questions about growing cannabis. The event was a huge effort on the part of the chapter leaders and was a great success!

The **South Coast Chapter** held a meeting on October 26 in Ventura, California, in a relaxed outdoor atmosphere under warm, dry skies. The meeting was a splendid example of the advantages of in-person meetings, where among other important connections, several members recognized each other and realized they were neighbors. The meeting also allowed members to voice their concerns about a variety of issues, including the integrity of organic and how much it means to them both ethically and for market value. As Allen Harthorn discussed CCOF's rather unique structure, a participant asked, "Who owns CCOF?" Harthorn explained that one of the central characteristics of CCOF is that our member-elected board of directors sets the strategic direction

of the organization. This structure means that—in essence—*our membership* owns CCOF. People in attendance had a great evening and succeeded in ushering in new chapter leadership. Congratulations to the newly elected South Coast Chapter leadership: Steve Zaritsky, president and board representative; Alisha Taff, vice president; and Veronica Gomez, secretary. Congratulations also to Maren Johnston, who was re-elected as treasurer.

The **Central Coast Chapter** held a meeting on November 6 in San Juan Bautista, California, at the cozy and quaint Doña Esther's, where several guest speakers shared knowledge and advice on a variety of topics. Kirk Schmidt, executive director of the nonprofit Central Coast Water Quality Preservation, Inc. spoke about his work with the San Benito water board. Schmidt pointed out that all operations are going to have to report to the state water board regardless of the type of operation (organic and non-organic). The board will also determine the acceptable levels of nitrate through a curve based on all operations reporting. The objective is to reduce the amount of nitrate going into the groundwater. Schmidt recommends getting involved and letting your voice be heard as much as possible to help inform and guide this set of regulations, which has the potential to be especially burdensome for most organic operations growing dozens of varieties of crops simultaneously. Ken Kimes, owner of CCOF-certified New Natives, gave an insightful presentation about the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). Kimes has been deeply involved in FSMA from the vantage point of a sprouts grower, a category that has been scrutinized under the new law. He suggested keeping food safety plans as realistic and as simple as possible and encouraged farmers to get training on food safety as soon as they can. Eric Brennan presented on some of his recent research with Jim Leap on bed top cover cropping systems. After touching on the crucial role of using cover crops to mitigate and adapt to climate change, Brennan spoke of the potential advantages of cover cropping directly on vegetable beds. Some of the advantages to this are that the less densely seeded style that leaves furrows unseeded offers savings in seed costs, the ability to mechanically control weeds, and—depending on the seeding mix—the ability to control density and growth with high mowing. Videos on Brennan's work can be found on YouTube at [www.youtube.com/user/EricBrennanOrganic](http://www.youtube.com/user/EricBrennanOrganic).

Please join us at your next chapter event!

.....  
***Let the CCOF community know what your chapter is doing!***

Write to [afischer@ccof.org](mailto:afischer@ccof.org) and we will publish your chapter update in the next edition of *Certified Organic*.



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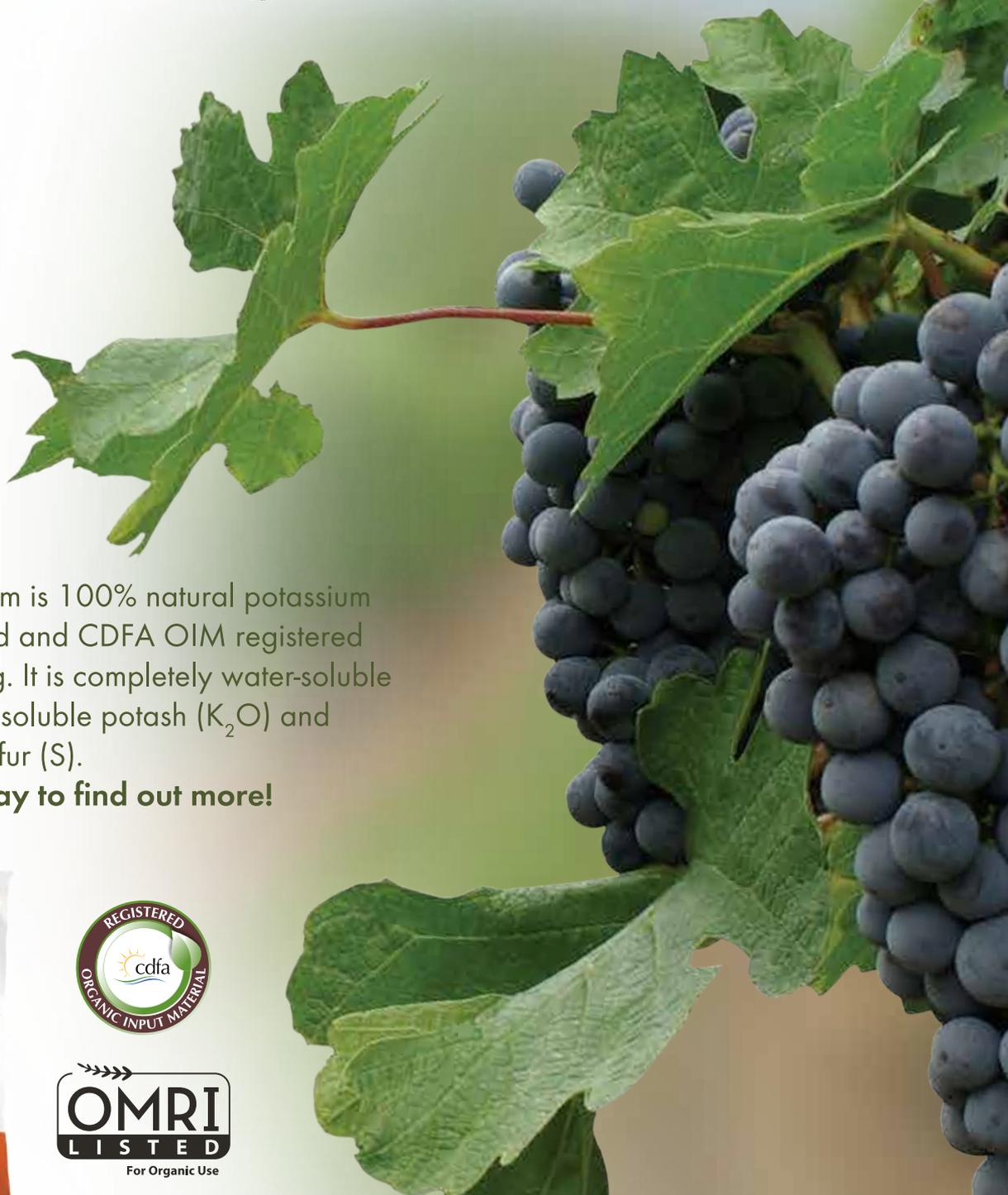
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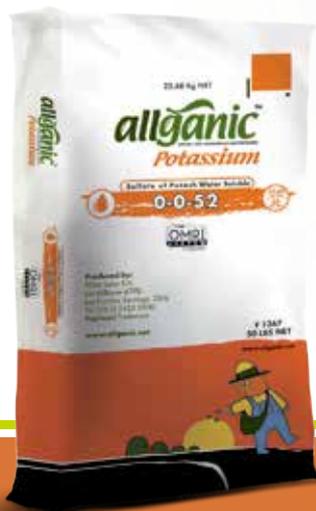
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# ORGANIC HOTSPOTS



# Organic Agriculture Cultivating Rural Communities

**WRITTEN BY** Ellen Vessels

When Martin Barnes, along with fellow University of California, Davis classmates, founded the Davis Farmers' Market in 1976, he "didn't know if anyone was going to come." As he pulled his produce truck up to the market on opening day, he was relieved to find three or four other farmers there. After that, he says, "the whole market took off" with more and more farmers and customers coming every week.

From these humble beginnings, the Sacramento area—and indeed, all of California—has become a hotbed of organic agriculture. Thaddeus Barsotti, Barnes' son who has grown his parents' farm into a multi-regional CSA, says that in California, "organic is absolutely everywhere."

The tremendous growth of organic over the past several decades would have been impossible if not for the pioneering work of farmers like Barnes and his late ex-wife, Kathleen Barsotti. Their son Thaddeus says that farmers like his parents believed in organic so much that they "devoted their lives and toiled with financial risks" to establish markets for locally grown, organic food.

Thanks to their efforts, organic has become the fastest growing sector of the U.S. food industry. Despite the risks, many of these early organic farmers established successful businesses and markets for their products. Following their example, more and more farmers are going organic, creating organic hotspots throughout the country. The industry as a whole has grown, much like the Davis Farmers' Market, which is still thriving today. But has the rise of organic affected the growth of local economies where these farms are located?

## Is Organic Good for the Economy?

We already know that organic farming methods protect ecosystems, build soil health, and provide quality, healthful food products. There are also some obvious ways in which organic has positive economic benefits for farmers themselves. Farmers who transition to organic can almost always increase their incomes by charging higher prices than they did for conventional crops.

However, until recently, the impact of organic agriculture on local economies had not been quantified through research. In 1980, the USDA issued a major report recommending research on a number of topics within organic. Many of those topics have been studied at length, and yet it is only recently that a study has emerged that specifically tracks the socioeconomic impacts of organic agriculture.

This exciting new research, conducted by Edward Jaenicke, associate professor of Agricultural Economics at Penn State University, and I. Julia Marasteanu of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, is the first study demonstrating that organic agriculture has a positive impact on local economies.



## The Research

The study, “Economic Impact of Organic Agriculture Hotspots in the United States,” first set out to identify organic hotspots. For a county to be considered part of an organic hotspot, it must have a high level of organic activity and be surrounded by counties with similar high levels of organic. In other words, organic hotspots are clusters of counties with significant numbers of organic farmers, livestock producers, processors, and/or handlers.

The study identified 225 U.S. counties in organic hotspots, including a large contiguous hotspot covering most of California all the way up through Oregon and Washington state. In fact, 43 out of 58 California counties are in organic hotspots. There are other hotspots spreading from Wisconsin through the Midwest, in New England, and in the northern Mid-Atlantic states.

In order to show that organic agriculture improved economies, and not the other way around, the researchers used a statistical model to “characterize a hotspot as a ‘treatment,’” then measured the impact of the treatment on county-level economic indicators. They found that organic activity led to greater economic benefits than conventional agriculture, and reduced poverty levels at a rate equal to or greater than major governmental anti-poverty programs such as food stamps.

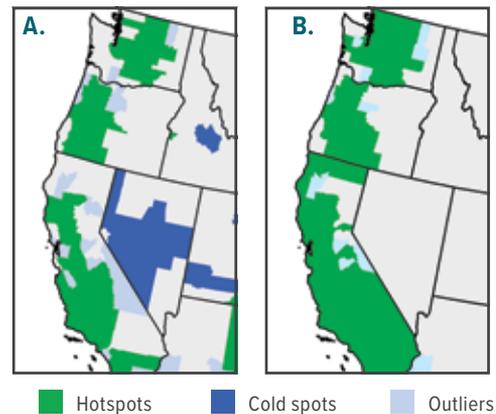
The research shows that by being part of an organic hotspot, counties increase their median household income by as much as \$2,094 and their per capita income by \$899. Furthermore, being in an organic hotspot lowers a county’s poverty rate by 1.35 percentage points and lowers unemployment by 0.22 percentage points.

In order to show that these benefits came from organic agriculture specifically—and not agriculture generally—the researchers also measured the economic impacts of conventional agriculture hotspots. Organic and conventional agriculture hotspots rarely overlap, so separating the data was a relatively simple task.

The study found that while general agriculture also increases median incomes and decreases poverty rates, its effect is less

dramatic than that of organic agriculture. In conventional agriculture hotspots, median incomes increase by less than \$75, while the poverty rate decreases by 0.17 percentage points. In addition, the research shows that in general agriculture hotspots, per capita income actually decreases by \$1,076, while unemployment *rises* by 0.06 percentage points.

A. Agricultural Farms, West Coast, 2009  
B. All Organic Operations, West Coast, 2009



## How Do Organic Hotspots Improve Local Economies?

The purpose of the research was to measure the impact of organic hotspots on economic indicators. While the researchers did not study exactly how or why being in an organic hotspot improves these indicators, previous case studies by sociologists and economists allow us to make informed hypotheses.

Studies show that the “clustering” of industries tends to advance economic growth. When many businesses of the same industry are clustered together in the same area, industries become highly organized, create markets for resources and support services, and attract specialized workers, all leading to overall economic growth and increased employment.

The organic industry in particular may have more dramatic economic benefits than agriculture in general because organic tends to use local labor and has a shorter, localized supply chain, meaning, in Jaenicke’s words, that organic farms “buy their inputs and sell their outputs closer to home and without

## *The organic industry in particular may have more dramatic economic benefits than agriculture in general because organic tends to use local labor and has a shorter, localized supply chain...*

as many intermediaries.” In a shorter supply chain, he explains, profits “stay local and thus have a larger multiplier effect.”

A study published last year by the University of California and UC Davis shows that when farmers sell directly to local customers, these sales generate twice as much regional economic activity as compared to wholesalers or farmers who export their crops.

### **CCOF Farmers Are Improving Local Economies**

There are countless examples of CCOF-certified farmers who are already tapping into regional networks within their hotspots and recirculating profits back into their local economies.

Andean Naturals, a quinoa importer, has created partnerships with Bolivian farmers to provide quality quinoa to American consumers while ensuring that the profits from the sales enrich grower communities. They hope to recreate this model in North America by aggregating quinoa supply in organic hotspots.

Meanwhile, Farm Fresh to You, Barsotti's business, has mobilized farms in West Coast hotspots to create a multi-regional CSA that brings local, fresh produce to the doorsteps of customers, creating hundreds of jobs in the process.

#### **Andean Naturals: Alleviating Poverty through Social Enterprise**

When Sergio Núñez de Arco was growing up, the farmers in his home country of Bolivia were amongst the poorest in the Western Hemisphere. But when American consumers developed a taste for quinoa, Núñez de Arco saw an opportunity to uplift his fellow Bolivians.

He founded Andean Naturals to aggregate the quinoa crops of small, traditional farms. Andean Naturals combines the crops of about 4,500 Bolivian quinoa farmers, importing about one-third of the quinoa purchased in the United States.

By processing and packaging quinoa in a centralized facility, Andean Naturals is able to provide quinoa for major U.S. distributors such as Costco and Kellogg—suppliers with markets that would otherwise be inaccessible to farmers with small operations. This creates a stable demand that encourages farmers to continue using traditional, sustainable growing methods. “We take a partnership approach,” explains Núñez de Arco. “We expect them to keep their fields organic. In exchange for that, we reciprocate with a commitment to buy at a fair price and to pay them a premium for quality.”

By linking small Bolivian farms to large U.S. distributors, Andean Naturals has helped to dramatically increase farmer incomes

from about \$35 per month per family a decade ago to over \$200 per month today. In addition, charging customers a fair trade premium price generates a fund of about \$100,000 per year, which is given back to Bolivian farm communities to use as they see fit. So far, farmer communities have used the fund to provide school supplies for their children, to assist retiring farmers, and to reinvest in materials and machinery for their farms.

Andean Naturals provides a great example of how organic agriculture can directly increase incomes with long-lasting results. Núñez de Arco explains that while some “opportunistic” would-be farmers attempted to “make a quick buck” by using non-organic methods to grow quinoa, these farms generally collapsed after their practices caused erosion and desertification. Meanwhile, traditional farmers, by stewarding healthy soil and maintaining the centuries-old practices of their ancestors, have created “lasting income.”

Andean Naturals hopes to replicate their model in North America. Small organic farms in the United States face similar barriers to accessing large markets as small Bolivian farms. In order to amass and standardize a large supply of quinoa, Andean Naturals has opened a CCOF-certified quinoa processing plant in Sutter County—itsself an organic hotspot—which has encouraged many small California rice farms to start rotating quinoa into their crop cycles.

By working with regional networks of farmers both in North and South America, encouraging the use of sustainable methods, and returning profits back to grower communities, Andean Naturals is using organic agriculture as a strategy for alleviating poverty and stimulating economic growth.

#### **Farm Fresh To You: Activating Hotspots to Create a Regional Food Network**

When Thaddeus Barsotti and his brothers inherited Capay Organic, they were inspired to continue their parents' work of transforming the food system and hoped to make a living doing it. Their mother Kathleen Barsotti had started a CSA, Farm Fresh To You, taking orders by phone and delivering boxes of seasonal produce to her customers' doors.

The Barsotti brothers decided to expand upon this concept. They harnessed the power of the internet and reinvested 10 percent of their earnings into marketing. As a result, from 2008 through 2012 the company doubled in size every year.

Thaddeus Barsotti credits their success, at least partially, to being “in the right place at the right time, given the right idea.” Their Yolo County farm is located in the organic hotspot that their parents helped create. What's more, Farm Fresh To You has expanded through partnerships with farms in organic hotspots up and down the West Coast.

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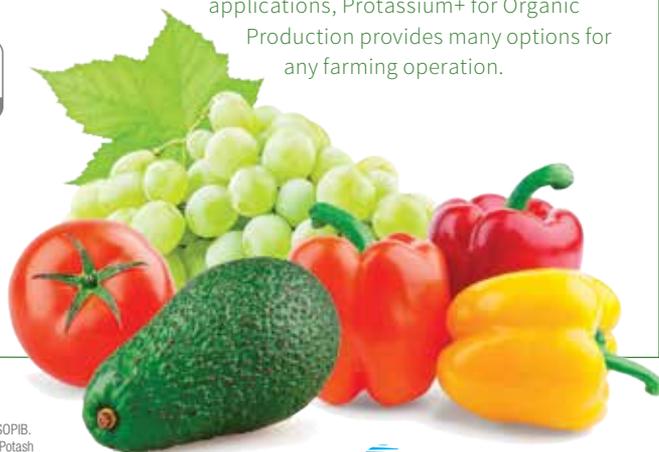
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# Organic and local food systems benefit from governmental support to maximize their potential as economic development tools.

Now, Farm Fresh To You has hubs in Los Angeles, Sacramento, and Seattle. Each week, Farm Fresh To You fills CSA boxes with seasonal produce, starting with the farms closest to the hub, and completes the box with a variety of crops that won't "leave the customer looking longingly at the produce aisle."

By maximizing their regional network of hotspots, Farm Fresh To You provides reliable markets—and thus reliable income—to other organic farmers on the West Coast. For example, Farm Fresh To You purchases apples from the same orchardist every year, providing a stable income to the farmer and fresh, ripe apples to their customers.

The growth of Farm Fresh To You has also created jobs. As a mom-and-pop business, Capay Organic employed about a dozen year-round employees and about 50 seasonal employees. Today, Farm Fresh To You employs over 500 year-round employees and another 100 seasonal employees. They keep their profits circulating locally, hiring local workers for farm labor and management, sales, packing, deliveries, and more.

The economic benefits of a local, seasonal, and organic food system are apparent to Barsotti, who says he wishes that customers "were more motivated by how positive this thing is for local economies." He acknowledges, however, that "the vast majority of people are very price driven." Therefore, he calls upon elected officials to drive the movement toward promoting local, organic food systems.

## Why the Hotspots Research Matters

Barsotti is right. Organic and local food systems benefit from governmental support to maximize their potential as economic development tools.

Organic advocates are excited about the hotspots research because it helps make a compelling case for organic agriculture as an effective tool for economic development, especially in impoverished rural areas. Organic farmers have already shown policymakers that organic is an environmentally friendly and healthy option for growing food when compared to conventional agriculture. Now we have solid numbers demonstrating that organic also has proven economic benefits.

"We need broadly supported bipartisan strategies for rural development," says CCOF Director of Policy & Government Affairs Kelly Damewood, "and the hotspot study shows that organic is a viable means to generating more economic activity." CCOF, and other organic advocacy organizations like the Organic Trade Association, are already including the hotspots research in the literature that they send or share when meeting with legislators. "The research is getting to their desks," says Damewood.

## Policy Recommendations

Jaenicke says that he'd like to see legislators "consider policies that promote organic agriculture when trying to improve local or regional economies." The policy recommendations included in the study are very much aligned with CCOF's work to support and expand organic.

Policy recommendations include increasing funds for organic; developing new programs; helping farmers transition to organic through loans, grants, and entrepreneurial assistance; increasing outreach and building networks; building bipartisan coalitions in support of organic; and further researching ways organic can be used to target impoverished areas for economic development.

CCOF is promoting many of these recommendations through their advocacy work with local and federal governments, through educational programs, and through the chapter system, which helps organic farmers share information and resources through regional networking. The hotspots research, showing the economic benefits of organic, gives CCOF all the more motivation to continue to champion organic.



Organic is a fast-growing market, but still only represents a small fraction of total U.S. agriculture. With organic businesses like Andean Naturals and Farm Fresh To You setting examples of how to build local economy through sustainable agriculture, along with this important new research on organic hotspots, we have more evidence than ever that organic is not only good for business, the environment, and health, but is also beneficial for local economies.

CCOF farmers can be proud knowing their farms not only maintain ecosystems, grow healthy food, and provide their families with a way to make a living, but they also help stimulate their local economies by creating jobs, increasing incomes, and alleviating poverty.

Says Barsotti, local, organic agriculture is "a pretty amazing way to make jobs for people."

Interested in learning more about the organic hotspots research and discussing it with leaders in the organic community? Join us at our 2018 Annual Meeting and Conference in Sacramento, California, on February 22-23, 2018. Learn more on Page 15.



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## **CCOF-certified Farmers Host Legislative Farm Tour in Capay Valley**

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In mid-November, CCOF hosted a farm tour for the California State Legislature to highlight the challenges and opportunities for organic agriculture. Assemblywoman Cecilia Aguiar-Curry (D-CA-04) and legislative staff joined Paul Underhill at Terra Firma Farm and Thaddeus Barsotti at Capay Organic Farm. While the tour highlighted the multiple environmental and economic benefits of organic agriculture, it also clearly demonstrated the immense regulatory pressures organic farmers are struggling with today.

Underhill began the tour at Terra Firma Farm by broadly introducing organic and showing real-world examples of organic practices, such as cover cropping, intercropping, and integrated pest management. He explained how long-established organic practices build soil health and help all types of farms manage fertility.

At Capay Organic, Barsotti continued the tour with an overview of the history of the organic movement, including his own family's story—he and his brothers are second-generation farmers who have continued growing the farm founded by their parents at the start of the organic movement. He elaborated on the use of compost and organic fertilizers before explaining the farm's water efficiency techniques. The tour concluded with a visit to the cold storage facility, where fresh fruit and vegetables

are chilled, stored, packed, and shipped for farmers' markets, wholesale retailers, and Capay's CSA service, Farm Fresh To You.

In addition to discussing organic practices, Underhill and Barsotti spoke to Assemblywoman Aguiar-Curry and legislative staff about how state policy and regulations impact their ability to grow organic. Between forthcoming water regulations to shortages and increased labor costs, growers have serious concerns about their ability to continue to grow organic produce in California under increasing regulatory and cost pressures. Their call to the group was to stop and listen to growers before making policy, and to ask themselves whether the state wants to be a place where local, organic farms can survive well into the future.

Overall, the group engaged with the farmers with in-depth questions on a variety of organic and farming topics. The tour successfully educated the attendees with a thorough background on organic practices and principles and left the group with plenty to think about while back in their offices in Sacramento.

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## **Congressmen LaMalfa & Valadeo Join Congressman Panetta in Championing Organic Research Funding**

California Congressmen Doug LaMalfa (R-CA-01) and David Valadao (R-CA-21), two Californian Republicans, show strong support for the organic sector by joining Congressman Jimmy

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# The Organic Agriculture Research Act is critical to the success and growth of organic crop production.

Panetta (D-CA-20) is co-sponsoring the Organic Agriculture Research Act (H.R. 2436).

Congresswoman Chellie Pingree (D-ME-1) introduced the Organic Agriculture Research Act earlier this year with the bipartisan support of co-sponsors Congressmen Dan Newhouse (R-WA-4) and Congressman Panetta. The proposed legislation would increase and protect federal funding for the Organic Research and Extension Initiative (OREI).

The Organic Agriculture Research Act is critical to the success and growth of organic crop production. OREI funds a wide range of projects that help producers overcome today's most pressing production challenges. For example, OREI funded development of no-till practices, new crop varieties, soil management practices, and integrated pest management practices. Both organic and conventional producers use these tools, yet the program is currently underfunded and at risk of defunding in the next farm bill cycle. Therefore, increased funding and protection of OREI should be a top priority for representatives concerned about the success of their districts' agricultural economies.

As a dairy farmer, Congressman Valadao understands how national policy impacts farmers and ranchers. His district includes California's agriculturally diverse Kings County and portions of Fresno, Kern, and Tulare counties. He is also the vice chair of the Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies within the House Committee on Appropriations.

Congressman LaMalfa, a fourth-generation rice farmer, is a member of the House Committee on Agriculture. His district includes Butte, Lassen, Modoc, Plumas, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, and Tehama counties with portions of Nevada, Glenn, and Placer counties.

CCOF applauds Congressmen LaMalfa and Valadao for joining Congressman Panetta in supporting organic research on behalf of California farmers. CCOF encourages all Californian representatives to join in support of California's organic sector through co-sponsorship of the Organic Agriculture Research Act.

## California Climate Policy Update: Uncertain Future for the Healthy Soils Program

CCOF producers know that organic farm viability depends on healthy soils. So it comes as no surprise that many organic producers in California eagerly anticipated the launch of the

Healthy Soils Program, a new state program to incentivize soil health as a strategy for addressing climate change. Healthy Soils is one of the state's four cap and trade funded Climate Smart Agriculture programs to achieve agricultural reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and increased carbon storage on working lands.

In August 2017, the California Department of Food and Agriculture released its first call for proposals for the Healthy Soils Program to give grants totaling almost \$7 million. To qualify, growers must implement new practices or expand existing ones. Eligible practices include adding compost or mulch, reducing or eliminating tillage, and/or installing herbaceous or perennial woody plantings (for wind barriers, riparian cover, hedgerows, or silvopasture). Applicants applied for up to \$50,000 for a three-year project, or up to \$250,000 for demonstration projects that require monitoring and outreach. Grantees will be announced in December. Read more about the program at [www.calclimateag.org/healthysouils](http://www.calclimateag.org/healthysouils).

There was obvious interest in the Healthy Soils grants from farmers around California. Hundreds attended workshops about the program, including 65 CCOF members who attended a webinar co-hosted by CCOF and the California Climate and Agriculture Network (CalCAN). There is interest from outside the state, too, as four other states have put in place healthy soils programs, some inspired by California's model.

To the disappointment of many, the legislature and governor did not include funding for the Healthy Soils Program in their 2017-18 budget, passed in September. Another important program—the State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program (SWEET), which provides grants for on-farm water and energy efficiency projects—was also zeroed out. Instead, state lawmakers directed the cap and trade agricultural money to equipment upgrades, food processor efficiency improvements and renewable energy projects, and methane reductions on dairies. Visit [www.bit.ly/2zkXcVG](http://www.bit.ly/2zkXcVG) to read more.

As we head into 2018, it is a top priority of CalCAN's to restore funding to the Healthy Soils Program and SWEET. The Healthy Soils Program provides the only state-funded incentives to unleash the powerful carbon sequestration potential of farms and ranches. And only SWEET supports on-farm reduction of both water and energy, achieving both greenhouse gas reductions and water savings to make farms more resilient to future droughts. Twice as many farmers have applied for grants than the state has been able to fund.

Along with our coalition partner CCOF, and many other organizations and growers, we will work hard to educate state legislators about the interest in and value of these programs. The voices of farmers and ranchers are powerful and credible. To get involved, please email [renata@calclimateag.org](mailto:renata@calclimateag.org).

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## ***Breakthrough Study Shows Organic's Role in Climate Change Mitigation***

A new groundbreaking study proves soils on organic farms store away appreciably larger amounts of carbon—and for longer periods—than typical agricultural soils. The important study, directed by Northeastern University in collaboration with The Organic Center, provides a new, significant proof point that organic agricultural practices build healthy soils and can be part of the solution in the fight on global warming.

The new data was published in the October 1 issue of the scientific journal *Advances in Agronomy*. One of the largest field studies of its kind ever conducted, the study pulls together over a thousand soil samples from across the nation. It uses cutting-edge methods to look at how organic farming affects the soil's ability to lock away carbon and keep it out of our atmosphere.

One of its most compelling findings is that on average, organic farms have 44 percent higher levels of humic acid—the component of soil that sequesters carbon over the long term—than farms not managed organically. In addition, on average, soils from organic farms had

- 13 percent higher soil organic matter,
- 150 percent more fulvic acid, and
- 26 percent greater potential for long-term carbon storage.

Agriculture is one of the main causes of the depletion of carbon in the soil and the increased presence of carbon in our atmosphere, as evidenced by a recent study published by the National Academy of Sciences that estimated agriculture's role in global soil carbon loss. Organic farming can play a key role in restoring soil carbon and in reducing the causes of climate change, and this study proves that.

Working with Dr. Elham Ghabbour and Dr. Geoffrey Davies, leaders of the National Soil Project at Northeastern University, The Organic Center contacted organic farmers who acted as "citizen scientists" to collect organic soil samples from throughout the country to compare with the non-organic

soil samples already in the National Soil Project's data set. Altogether, the study measured 659 organic soil samples from 39 states and 728 conventional soil samples from all 48 contiguous states. It found that *all* components of humic substances were higher in organic than in conventional soils.

"This study is truly groundbreaking," according to Dr. Jessica Shade, Director of Science Programs for The Organic Center. "We don't just look at total soil organic carbon, but also the components of soil that have stable pools of carbon—humic substances, which gives us a much more accurate and precise view of the stable, long-term storage of carbon in the soils."

"To our knowledge, this research is also the first to take a broad view of organic and conventional systems, taking into account variation within management styles, across crops, and throughout the United States. It gives a large-scale view of the impact of organic as a whole, throughout the nation," she added.

Healthy soils are essential for robust and resilient crop production, and the amount of soil organic matter is one of the most critical components of a healthy soil. Organic matter is all the living and dead plant and animal material in our dirt that make it more than dirt—earthworms and insects and microorganisms, plant and animal residues, fermented compost, decomposed leaves and plant roots. Soils high in organic matter support healthy crops, are less susceptible to drought, and foster a diversity of organisms vital to soil health. Soils rich in organic matter can also maintain carbon for long periods, and help reduce the causes of climate change.

Humic substances—made up of carbon and other elements—are the lifeblood for fertile soils. These substances resist degradation and can remain in the soil for hundreds and sometimes thousands of years. They don't just mean healthy soil; they are also one of the most effective ways to mitigate climate change. The more humic substances in a soil, the longer that healthy soil is trapping and keeping carbon out of the atmosphere.

Explained researcher Dr. Davies, "We were focused on developing and adopting reliable methods of soil analyses for this national project. It was a huge cooperative effort involving hundreds of sample donors. The results of this project will be of value to farmers, policymakers, and the public at large."

*For more information on The Organic Center and the science behind organic food and farming, visit [www.organic-center.org](http://www.organic-center.org). The Center is an independent nonprofit 501(c)(3) research and education organization operating under the administrative auspices of the Organic Trade Association.*

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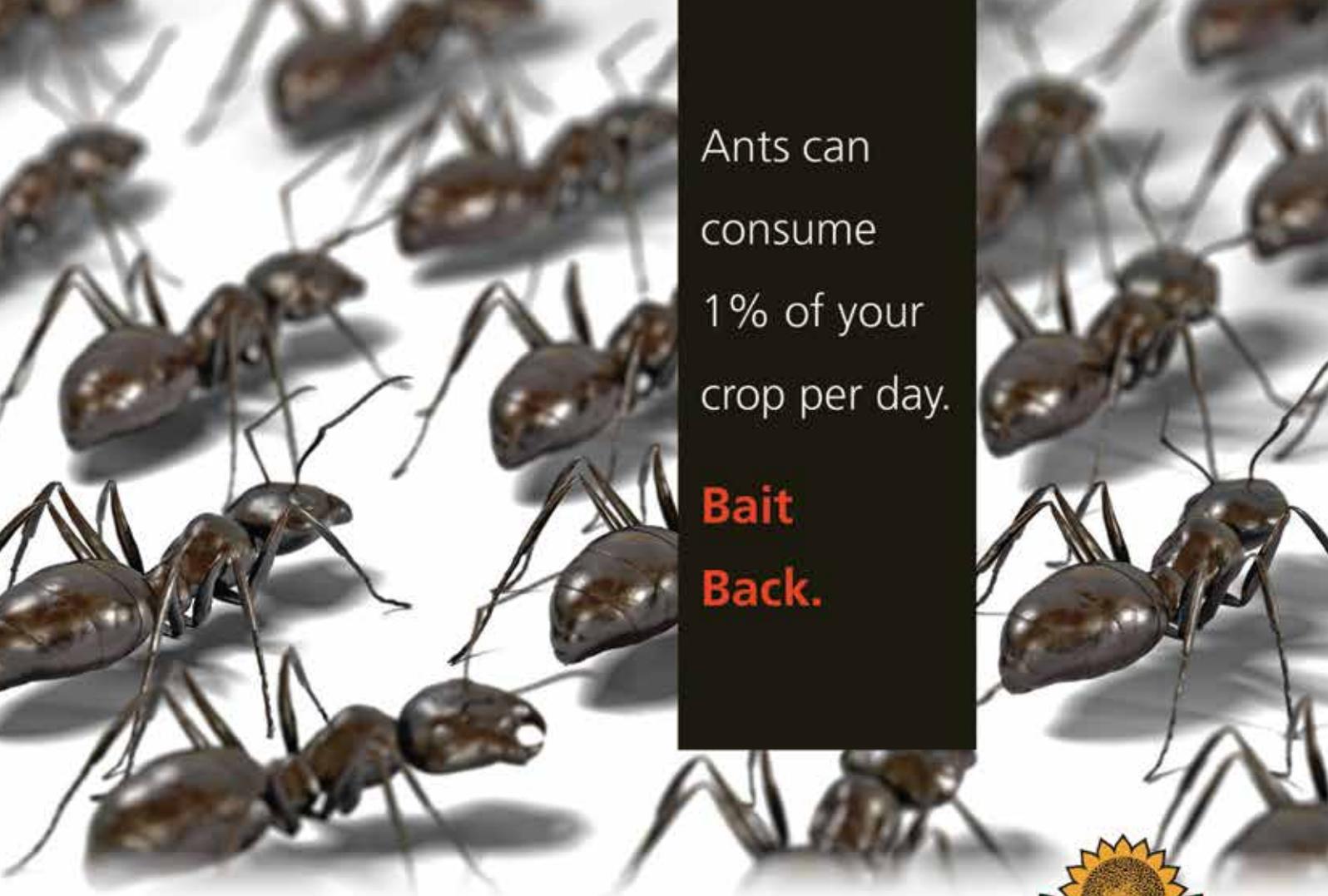
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## ***Great Year for Certification Services, Looking Forward to 2018***

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We are pleased to see CCOF-certified members working together and producing excellent organic products. We are pleased to announce that, in the last year, CCOF beat all our service performance measurements, and for most of the year, 100 percent of inspection reports were reviewed within 90 days of inspection. Over 90 percent of priority inspections were reviewed within 30 days.

Over the course of 2017, we implemented a major change to how compliance requests and communication are managed, transmitted, and tracked. This change allows you to respond to individual items and produce your own compliance report at any time. We appreciate your patience and support during this transition and we're confident that improvements planned for 2018 will make this system even more useful for you.

We are also working on a variety of email reminders and notifications that help you know what you need to know, when you need to know it.

At the same time, we launched new services and benefits for members. MyCCOF's Action Item Tracker gives you direct access to answer your compliance action item requests from CCOF directly online and a new online Organic System Plan (OSP) promises to bring helpful new tools to all members in

the future. In 2018 we will stay efficient and provide more invaluable tools while meeting your deadlines whenever we can. We are also looking for ways to give you the forms and documents you need as easily and efficiently as possible. Much more to come.

We appreciate your ongoing support and welcome your feedback. Your input helps us refine systems and improve our tools.

.....

## **Service Providers' Role in Organic Integrity**

Service providers such as nut hullers and coolers are a critical part of the organic supply chain, ensuring that organic producers have certified locations to handle their crops or products. CCOF has a flexible approach to certification of certain types of service providers. This approach relies on the service provider's system for verifying certification status of incoming crops or products.

Recently, we have seen instances of service providers performing insufficient due diligence to verify the organic status of incoming crops. While a customer may have brought in organic product in the past, many operations are mixed or may have transitional parcels, meaning that not all product from the same customer is certified organic. Additionally, customers may have had their certification suspended or revoked since they last requested services. Although it may appear that treating all crops as organic is harmless, it creates the potential for fraud in the supply chain when records generated by the service provider indicate that a crop was handled organically if the original crop is not certified organic.



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## Taking a moment to remove all unnecessary materials is a great way to help us maintain service levels to you and other clients.

Service providers are responsible for verifying the organic status of each incoming shipment of crops or products prior to processing or handling as organic by doing the following:

- Documents received with shipments must list organic status and parcel or lot number for product received.
- Documents must be a representation from the provider or farm and must not be created by the service provider. The supplier of the product must make the organic claim independently to you.
- Service providers must verify that the parcel or product you received is on the producer's current organic certificate.

CCOF will verify at inspection that service providers compare the parcel or lot number received to the producer's current organic certificate. If a service provider does not verify organic status, you may be held responsible for processing non-organic product as organic and receive a noncompliance. Additionally, product mixed with non-organic product may lose organic status and there may be potential for civil penalties.

## Investigation and Complaint Cost Recovery

CCOF spends many hours investigating complaints and following up on residue results from third parties, such as the USDA, the California Department of Food and Agriculture, the Department of Pesticide Regulation, or others. In most cases, the origin of the issue is a misunderstanding or a minor mistake, or the issue cannot be validated. In other cases, the violations of standards, failure to follow an operation's OSP, or other practices are found. These investigative inspections, testing, review, and other processes make delivering fast and effective services to all certified members difficult.

**Effective September 2017, when CCOF Certification Services performs an investigation and identifies noncompliance(s), we may bill for the associated costs of the investigation, including inspection(s). The costs recovered are based on the amount of time it took to conduct the investigation. This helps maintain low fees for all CCOF operations that remain in compliance. Please see the Certification Services Manual for details.**

Operations that disagree with the determination may request mediation or appeal and include cost recovery fees in their request. We encourage operations to help us with investigations and follow up so costs are reduced for everyone.

## Is Your Business Growing? Updated Fees May Apply

Fees to add acres or locations to your business have gone up to reflect the staffing that these additions require and ensure CCOF is able to meet your service needs.

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## advertisers index

|  |                                       |  |                                  |  |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|--|
| AgroThrive, Inc.....42                                     | Clark Food Safety.....12              | Foster Farms dba Organic Farms.....39            | Neudorff North America.....40    | Taylor Bros. Farms Inc.....39                            |
| ARBICO Organics.....20                                     | Community Printers.....34             | Greenheart Farms, Inc.....38                     | New Hope Natural Media.....46    | The Catalyst Product Group.....31                        |
| Associated Feed & Supply.....38                            | Compass Minerals.....28               | Growth Products, Ltd.....34                      | Organic Trade Association.....36 | True Organic Products, Inc.....2                         |
| AZ Enterprises Inc. and Organic Ag Products LLC.....31, 32 | Creative Ag Products Inc.....42       | Harmony Farm Supply & Nursery.....38             | Oro Agri, Inc.....9              | Valent U.S.A. Corporation.....BACK COVER                 |
| Blue Mountain Minerals.....38                              | Crop Production Services (CPS).....18 | Heath & Lejeune, Inc.....39                      | Osborne Seed Company, LLC.....43 | Vitalis Organic Seeds and Enza Zaden Research RSA.....42 |
| Cal-Organic Farms.....16                                   | Dixon Ridge Farms.....22              | Homegrown Organic Farms.....39                   | Sacramento Packing, Inc.....16   | Westbridge.....47  |
| California Organic Fertilizers Inc.....6                   | Driscoll's Inc.....19                 | Huma Gro.....18                                  | Sambraio Packaging.....19        | Wilbur Ellis - Organics.....30                           |
| Carlson Food Safety Consulting.....34                      | F. W. Cobs.....43                     | Intrepid Potash, Inc.....22                      | Scurich Insurance Serv.....31    |  |
| CCOF Foundation.....44                                     | Farm Credit.....4                     | J & D Fertilizers (dba D. Stutzman Farms).....31 | SQM Organic.....23               |  |
| Certified Kitchens.....45                                  | Ferrari Farms.....34                  | Kochergen Farms Composting, Inc.....30           | Sunshine Paper Company.....42    |  |
|  | Ferti-Organic, Inc.....10             | Natural Gardening Company.....45                 | WeedGuardPlus.....42             |  |

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