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22

The Soil Could Save Us

As we face the biggest environmental challenge in human history, we'll look to the wisdom of organic farmers to lead the way.

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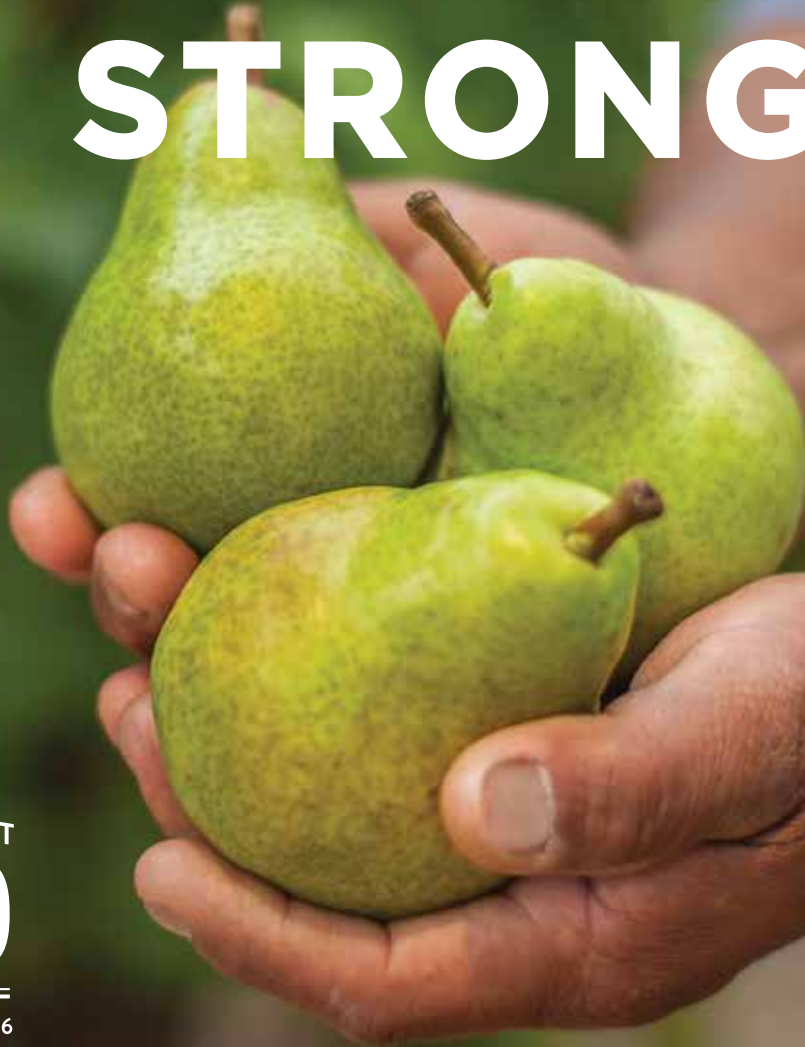
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Organic: Coming Together to Tackle One of Our Biggest Problems

This election year has been characterized by a cloud of disillusionment with government and political candidates. Many are left wondering whether it is possible to bring together Americans of diverse opinions to tackle big challenges like immigration, healthcare, or drought.

When it comes to tackling big issues, like climate change, can we succeed in moving the ball forward?

History tells us that it that it can be done. We've seen it in passage of the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 and the subsequent growth of organic product sales that continues even today, both events that many deemed unlikely.

As an example outside of our own community, think for a moment about the city of Los Angeles. Many think of air pollution before palm trees and sunny beaches come to mind—which still isn't altogether incorrect. But in Los Angeles, pollution from smog-causing chemicals is down 98 percent since 1960 according to the Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences and the University of Colorado Boulder. Further, during the past 20 years, Angelenos have seen dramatically improved air quality and public health. Last year, the *Wall Street Journal* reported on a *New England Journal of Medicine* study that found that in Los Angeles, "broad-based efforts to improve general air quality are associated with substantial and measurable public health benefits." The study shows a dramatic decline in air pollutants corresponding with a relative decline in the percentage of children with poor lung function. Like climate change, addressing the city's air pollution seemed like an insurmountable challenge, with a slew of different opinions clamoring over the issue. How did things get better?

Folks on both sides of the issue came together to develop a set of standards that would improve health and air quality in Los Angeles. Did some people think it should happen faster? No doubt. Did some people think that air quality didn't affect children's health? Probably. Would auto companies have agreed to stricter emissions standards voluntarily? Unlikely.

The problem of air pollution in Southern California wasn't eliminated, but things got better and children are healthier.

Today, we see groups of people coming together to address climate change from different angles, like the intersection of organic agriculture and climate change discussed in this issue's feature article on page 22. Despite the gridlock of national debate on solutions for climate change, organic farmers are digging in and finding creative ways to have a net positive impact on our planet.

Congressional stalemate cast a vast shadow during the past session, and many seeking to join the House and Senate articulate hope for a return to dialogue, compromise, and forward movement. However, expanding organic food production to protect the environment, promote good nutrition, and grow the economy is something that we have already seen national leaders reach across the aisle to support. Our previous success can inspire new leaders as they head to their offices primed to make a difference.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cathy Calfo".

Cathy Calfo
CCOF Executive Director/CEO

Issue Contributors

The Soil Could Save Us: Mitigating Climate Change on the Farm, page 22



Ellen Vessels is a freelance writer with a passion for environmental issues, the outdoors, and social justice. She is a staff writer covering small business news and generational marketing for AmericanGenius.com and real estate trends for TheRealDaily.com. She has written for outdoor magazines, environmental non-profits, and formerly served as a project manager for Florida Organic Growers.

Vessels works and lives at a sustainability education non-profit and intentional community in Tennessee where she and her fellow land-mates maintain an organic garden, 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.

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Organic & Non-GMO Forum: Certified Transitional Session

Hundreds are expected to turn up for a panel session at the upcoming Organic & Non-GMO Forum that will address “certified transitional,” a new process spearheaded by Kellogg-owned Kashi in which a third party certification company monitors and approves farms that are transitioning from conventional to organic production.

The second annual Organic & Non-GMO Forum, to be held November 14-15, 2016, at the Hyatt Regency Minneapolis, is the only domestic conference of its kind, bringing together stakeholders across the organic and non-GMO value chain, from production to packaging.

The comprehensive nature of this event pushes beyond the typical material in consumer-focused organic/non-GMO events, exploring the interconnected nature of the markets, trade, transportation, policy, and technology. From the ballroom to the hallways, both domestic and international stakeholders create unparalleled networking and business opportunities.

The diverse speaking faculty addresses growing opportunities for foreign and domestic stakeholders, plus best practices and insights on the challenges that remain. This includes experts from Kashi, Amy’s Kitchen, and the Organic Trade Association (OTA), who will shed light on certified transitional, the newest initiative in the organic food sector.

The group will cover the various certified transitional initiatives currently affecting the marketplace as well as review the programs available to farmers and the impact on organic supply. They also will take a look at what’s coming next.

Certified transitional will fill the void between the estimated \$39 billion organic food market and the less than 1 percent of U.S. farms that are certified organic. Currently, it takes three years of organic harvests for farmers to leave behind conventional status and to achieve the official certified organic label. This means that the first and second years’ harvests must be sold as conventional products, despite being grown using organic production methods. Now, producers in the midst of transition will see a more immediate return on investment. For Kashi, this means that they will pay certified transitional farmers a price that is “somewhere between the price for conventional and the price for USDA certified organic,” Kashi CEO David Denholm told CNBC earlier this year.

At the Organic & Non-GMO Forum, HighQuest Group has brought together esteemed experts on certified transitional, including:

Tina Owens, senior manager of sustainability at Kashi—Owens has worked for Kellogg’s for 14 years and currently manages the certified transitional farmer program. She implemented the first round of non-GMO product verification work in 2011 and continued to support the Non-GMO Project Renovation work for the full Kashi portfolio. In addition, for the last six years, she has directly managed the supply chains for such brands as Bear Naked, Stretch Island Fruit Company, and Pure Organics brands. She also is responsible for the sustainability strategy of these brands.

Nathaniel Lewis, senior crops and livestock specialist for OTA—Lewis provides staff support to OTA’s Farmer Advisory



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Jake Lewin (top row, second from left) and members of the Organic Integrity Database Team received the Secretary of Agriculture's Honor Award for developing and launching the Organic Integrity Database on September 13, 2016. USDA photo by Lance Cheung.

Council, on-the-ground outreach to OTA's organic farmer membership community, and analysis of policy issues that affect organic crop and livestock producers. He interacts directly with government officials and the organic supply chain on behalf of the grower segment of OTA's membership. Prior to his current position, Lewis served as certification coordinator for Washington State Department of Agriculture's organic certification program.

Anna Jesus, senior director of quality systems at Amy's Kitchen—With over 18 years in the food industry, Jesus has worked in several commodities and FPG companies through the United States, including working in quality assurance at Superior Foods Company and ConAgra Foods. Throughout her career, she has focused on building strong, sustainable process and systems development, both domestically and on a global scale.

CCOF will present at a separate session on the challenges along the value chain for certified transitional, immediately preceding the panel discussion on certified transitional. April Crittenden, CCOF's director of farm certification, will speak at the session on Monday, November 14, at 1:45 p.m. Learn more about the Organic & Non-GMO Forum at www.ongforum.com.

CCOF's Jake Lewin Recognized for NOP Contributions

The organic marketplace continues to grow at a rapid pace, outstripping the utility of the technology and tools used to support the sector. The 2014 Farm Bill recognized the need for updated organic infrastructure and included \$5 million in funding to support a modernized technology system for the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Organic Program (NOP).

Prior to the Farm Bill investment, the NOP listed certified organic operations on its website in a list that was updated only once per year. The new tool—dubbed the "Integrity Database"—provides an updated and improved listing of current certified and non-certified operations under the NOP. Certifiers update their lists of certified operations regularly and have improved access to information. These improvements help deter fraud and also support a robust organic marketplace.

Developing the Integrity Database involved the efforts of an expert team at the NOP and an engaged group of stakeholders. CCOF participated in the Integrity Database development process in a certifier working group, working in tandem with the NOP to provide feedback, ideas, and improvements, and the NOP team worked tirelessly to provide the organic sector with a tool that has national utility in record time.

As a leader in certification technology implementation, CCOF was proud to provide significant strategic direction to the NOP's project. We participated as a major user, tester, and contributor, looking closely at each iterative launch of different database versions. We provided detailed feedback with the goal of allowing all CCOF members to be easily listed while also easily able to verify the status of other organic operations. CCOF Certification Services, LLC President Jake Lewin served as the lead contributor from CCOF on this project. He advocated for features that highlight the operations themselves, including a "more information" field that populates with the operation's own company statement (provided to their certifier).

The resulting Integrity Database is a strong system that allows certifiers to regularly update certification records in the national database, while also providing an additional marketing platform for certified operations. The new system meets today's standards for on-demand information by providing real-time information about certified organic operations. "We see the modernized Integrity Database as a critical tool for the long-term success of the organic industry and appreciate the approach of USDA to consider the needs of many stakeholders in the process," explained Lewin. "Participating in the development of the database was a rewarding experience."

As a result of CCOF's engagement in the database-building process, Lewin will be presented with USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack's Honor Award, along with two other certifier representatives involved in the process and the entire team at USDA. "I am humbled to have been included as a team member of this project on behalf of CCOF, and congratulate USDA on a great achievement," said Lewin.

CCOF is continually engaged on behalf of our members to help create and improve systems that support the growth of organic. Visit the Integrity Database at apps.ams.usda.gov/integrity.

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Community Grains Pasta: The Star of the Show

Pasta is usually thought of as the vehicle for an amazing sauce, not the star of the show. But Community Grains' CCOF-certified, whole-grain, "identity preserved" line of pastas will have you considering otherwise. Here, the flavor of the pasta shines through and has an identity all its own, even while complementing the sauce you've lovingly prepared to accompany it. "Wheat has a flavor. It's not anonymous," Community Grains founder and owner Bob Klein explains. "You get a presentation of whole grains that delivers on the wheat component. You're adding this nutty base to food. You'll see that it's really rich. It's thrilling."

Klein is also a restaurateur, and it was at his Italian-inspired restaurant Oliveto in downtown Oakland, California, that he began to puzzle over how difficult it was to source local, whole-grain flour for his pasta. He began working on a plan to nudge the grain industry away from its preference for white flour. There are a variety of obstacles Klein and his team are grappling with: lack of infrastructure for whole-grain milling, low market prices for organic heirloom wheat, consumers who don't have a full understanding of the benefits of whole grains, and the availability of capital and acreage for heirloom wheat farmers, among others.

Community Grains was formed as an answer to these challenges. Klein approached local California farmers—many of them CCOF members—to grow heirloom wheat for a line of

identity preserved products, which are now stocked in Whole Foods Markets across the United States. In order to expand production even further, Klein and his colleague Heather Crawford are now making plans for Community Grains' own granary for cleaning and storing the heirloom wheat their farmers grow.

Community Grains' "identity preserved" label is a term they use to characterize the 23 Points of Identity that describe each batch of product they produce. The 23 points encompass everything from the farmers who grew the product for that batch, the harvest date, and product certifications (like certified organic), to more technical characteristics of the ingredients like the protein content, moisture level, and ash content of the flour. Consumers can key in the batch number from their pasta package on the Community Grains website and pull up the full report on the origin of their spaghetti.

"When I started Community Grains, I really thought of it as an information company, with products. It is focused on a true whole grain. We think that's really essential to diet. People should have the right to actually know what they're getting. To have straight, transparent information," explains Klein.

The unique qualities of each product batch—due to the unique terroir and varieties of the wheat they're composed of—are what give Community Grains' products personality. As they describe on their website, "In our agrarian past, it was the norm for regional flours and grains to have distinct personalities from the natural interaction of seeds, soil, weather, the farmer, and the mill. Flour could taste of vanilla, honeysuckle, or black pepper." Identity preserved pasta gives the consumer the chance to experience and learn about those subtle differences between one farmer's wheat crop and another's.

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“Organic farming is providing for our family, and we have to give some of our time and be involved if we expect it to remain viable.”

“It all starts with good, solid organic farming practices, and picking the right varieties that are best suited to your climate,” says CCOF-certified member and Community Grains grower Johnny Wilson of Front Porch Farm. “Wheat is a crop that is beautiful when it grows. It reminds you of the seasonality.” Wilson grows many varieties of wheat for Community Grains, including Senatore Cappelli, a rare long-grain, durum, semolina wheat used for making pasta. Once the grain is milled and made into pasta, it’s packed into boxes that proudly display Front Porch Farms’ name as the wheat farmer on the label.

As Community Grains states on their website, “We believe good farming and healthy soil is the key to better grain and a more resilient food system.” To cast your vote for better grain, shop their products at your local Whole Foods Market or visit www.communitygrains.com.

Want to get your grain certified organic, or make certified organic pasta? Learn more about CCOF’s organic certification services at www.ccof.org/get-certified.

CCOF Member Vernon Peterson Serves on COPAC—Are You Next?

Vernon Peterson of CCOF-certified Abundant Harvest Organics grows stone fruit and grapes at the farm his family has owned since 1892 in Kingsburg, California. In 2002, Peterson switched his stone fruit production to organic “cold turkey.” Today, Peterson works hard to spread the organic message by serving on boards and committees that benefit the organic community, and he has been recognized as a leader by Farm Credit as a “top 100 farmer” this year for his dedication and innovation in agriculture.

Peterson has served as a member of the CCOF Board of Directors since 2013, currently as the board’s treasurer and chair of the Finance Committee. Always with an eye toward protecting organic farmers and advancing organic successes, he has made invaluable contributions to CCOF through his participation at the board and chapter levels.

In fall 2015, Peterson was also appointed as a member of the California Department of Food and Agriculture’s (CDFA) California Organic Products Advisory Committee (COPAC). COPAC is a 15-member committee that advises the California Secretary of Agriculture on California’s State Organic Program’s enforcement activities. Members of COPAC provide their insights to the Secretary on current issues related to organic

food production and also make specific recommendations on issues pertaining to the California State Organic Program. “I would call it being a ‘ground wire’ as to the realities of organic production in California, and ways the State can accomplish their goals with minimal burden on us,” Peterson added.

This year, CCOF sponsored and helped pass the California Organic Food and Farming Act (COFFA), which includes modifications to COPAC’s function and purpose. After implementation of COFFA, COPAC and the California Secretary of Food and Agriculture will be able to support organic through education, outreach, and other programmatic activities. Now is an exciting time to get involved with COPAC—you can help shape the future of the committee and its contributions to organic!

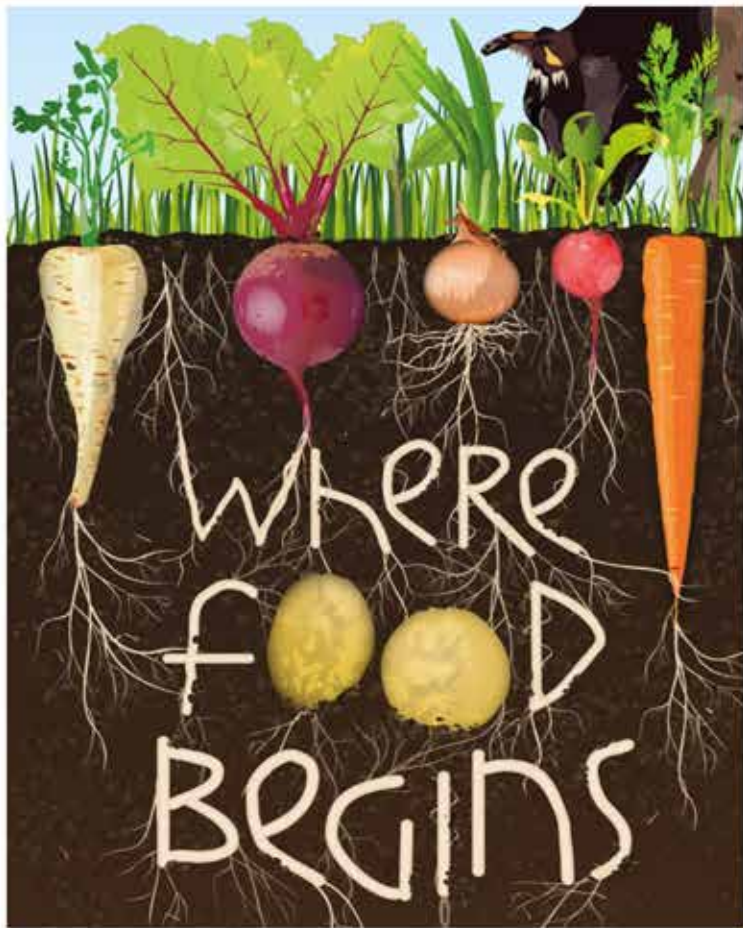
“COPAC is a mechanism to encourage the Secretary of Agriculture. If we have real live farmers at the table, that encouragement will be much more realistic and valuable,” explained Peterson. “Organic farming is providing for our family, and we have to work together, give some of our time, and be involved if we expect it to remain viable; much like caring for a peach orchard.”

CDFA is currently seeking applicants to fill a number of vacant seats on COPAC. Committee composition is specified by state law and details the number of members required to meet criteria related to professional credentials. Appointments for advisory committee positions are normally for three years from the date of appointment, and a member may serve for two consecutive terms.* All applicants must fulfill the position requirements explained in the California Organic Products Act of 2003, section 46003.

CCOF members like Peterson make great participants on COPAC and other organic advisory groups like the National Organic Standards Board because of the leading example they already set in the organic community. With so many current COPAC openings, please consider applying for a position! Have questions about the committee or the application process? Contact Laurel Rudolph at CDFA at laurel.rudolph@cdfa.ca.gov, or our policy department at policy@ccof.org.

Already know you’re interested in serving on COPAC? Review the requirements and complete the prospective member appointment questionnaire at www.ccof.org/copac-questionnaire. Return the questionnaire to Laurel Rudolph at laurel.rudolph@cdfa.ca.gov or by mail to 1220 N Street, Sacramento, CA 95814.

*Commencing with the January 2009 appointments. Term limits do not apply to alternate position. See August 18, 2009 COPAC minutes.



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Learn more about 2016 Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund recipient Parvati Brown (pictured above) at www.ccof.org/future-organic-farmers.

Supporting Students of Organic Agriculture

In July the CCOF Foundation team attended the semi-annual Sustainable Agriculture Education Association (SAEA) conference along with nearly 400 sustainable agriculture educators from hundreds of post-secondary institutions to hear and speak about opportunities and challenges in educating the next generation of organic producers and thinkers.

CCOF envisions a world where organic *is* the norm. Our Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund gifts scholarships to dozens of students in higher education and vocational programs, high schoolers in FFA, and K-8 teachers each year to make that vision a reality, totaling \$300,000 over the last three years.

CCOF Assistant Director Jessy Beckett Parr facilitated an open-space session at the SAEA conference on how the organic community can best help programs in public colleges and universities get the resources they need to train the next generation of organic producers. Faculty, staff, and students from programs that focus on organic reported that they struggle to get institutional buy-in and support from administrators at their respective schools. While consumers and industry support the promise and possibility of going organic, the experience of this impromptu focus group was that many colleges and universities underfund and sideline programs with a focus on organic and sustainable agriculture.

Faced with the question of what the organic industry can do to support the students and teachers of these programs, participants highlighted the lack of both private and public funding for organic-focused faculty research and student tuition. Throughout the session, attendees gave examples of how conventional agriculture has filled gaps in funding for research, even as state and federal educational resources dwindle.

Attendees also shared several examples of innovative partnerships between organic businesses and universities. A faculty member from the Midwest shared an example from Clif Bar, which is spearheading a 10-million-dollar investment to fund five endowed chairs at universities focused on organic agricultural research. Another faculty member mentioned that the Organic Farming Research Foundation provides small grants for organic research, which excited the entire group about the idea of a campaign to reinvigorate public reinvestment in land-grant universities, specifically with a focus on sustainable agriculture. All concurred that, given the current state of public funding, there is a role for the organic industry to lobby for public research and financial support for organic programs, research, and students.

Many faculty and staff whose students have received support through the Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund were at the conference, and echoed the session participants' call for more funding for organic education. "[We] struggle to find funding for our students, and the Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund has been a consistent source of support for these aspiring organic farmers," said Megan Fehrman, education director at Rogue Farm Corps in Oregon.

In the face of adverse conditions, private and public schools alike continue to create programs that give students the ability

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Left to right: 2016 Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund recipients Joshua Dransfield and Sierra Torres

to study organic agriculture. However, in order to achieve our vision of a world where organic *is* the norm, it is clear that we—the organic industry—need to do more. “The impact of programs like the Future Organic Farmer Grant is more than just financial for these students. It gives them a sense that they are on the right path, and there are career opportunities waiting for them,” explained Jeremy Moghtader, organic Farmer Training Program Director and Farm Manager at Michigan State University.

CCOF will continue strengthening our commitment to these students and their future through the Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund, and we look forward to continuing our collaborations with large and small businesses to make supporting future organic farmers possible. Learn more at www.ccof.org/fofgf.

Get to Know a Few Future Organic Farmers

The 2016 recipients of the higher education and vocational student Future Organic Farmer Grants have been selected, and we’re pleased to introduce two of this year’s students! Meet more future organic farmers at www.ccof.org/future-organic-farmers.

Joshua Dransfield - New River Technology School and Community College

Joshua Dransfield was born and raised on a conventional dairy farm in Gap Mills, West Virginia, which is located in the southeastern portion of the state near the Great Eastern Divide. He graduated from James Monroe High School with honors in 2015, where he was a member of both 4-H and FFA. He participated in many 4-H judging competitions at both state and national levels, received the national first place at the Mid-America Grassland Evaluation Contest in Missouri in 2014, and he and his land judging team were National Reserve Champions in 2013 in Oklahoma. Dransfield also represented his state as a member of the 2015 Dairy Judging Team, competing in Madison, Wisconsin, and Louisville, Kentucky.

In the fall of 2015, Dransfield attended West Virginia University before returning to his family’s farm in the spring to help during a difficult transition year from conventional to organic production. His family’s farm, Windspring Farms, became a member of the Organic Valley Cooperative in May 2015.

Dransfield is excited about the future of organic dairy production because it is a good combination of how he likes to treat his cows and the land. He also feels it is a good way for small dairies to stay in business in the increasingly difficult economic times for dairy farmers. This fall, Dransfield plans to attend a local community college, New River Community College in Lewisburg, West Virginia, then transfer back to West Virginia University to study animal science with a focus on organic dairy production.

Sierra Torres - University of Massachusetts

Growing up, Sierra Torres’ mother never failed to come home after working all day to cook dinner for her and her two brothers. She cherished the sense of community that eating together brought to her family and the way it united them.

It is this same feeling of comfort and warmth from cooking and eating with loved ones that influenced her desire to make her community a healthy and sustainable place through food and agriculture. After spending four years working various food-related jobs—anywhere from a line cook to a farm hand—she has seen and experienced just how unsustainable the food system is. Torres believes that clean and fair food should be affordable and accessible to people of all socioeconomic backgrounds. She wants everyone to have the opportunity to sit at the table, eat home-cooked meals, and spend time with their families.

Through studying sustainable food and farming at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Torres hopes to change our food system through policy work, community engagement and outreach, and working with small-scale farmers. For Torres, food is more than just something to eat—it is an agent for change that can rebuild communities into places where people can thrive and support each other. Food has not only brought her closer to her family—it has given her a sense of community. She believes that if people come together around food then we can all create a more equal and connected world.

Thank you to those whose generous support makes the Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund possible: CCOF, the UNFI Foundation, the CCOF Processor/Handler Chapter, the Clif Bar Family Foundation, Dr. Bronner’s, Driscoll’s, Duncan Family Farms, Forager Project, Frey Vineyards, Frontier Co-op, Green Ox Pallets, Independent Natural Food Retailers Association, National Co+op Grocers, Organic Valley, and SunRidge Farms.

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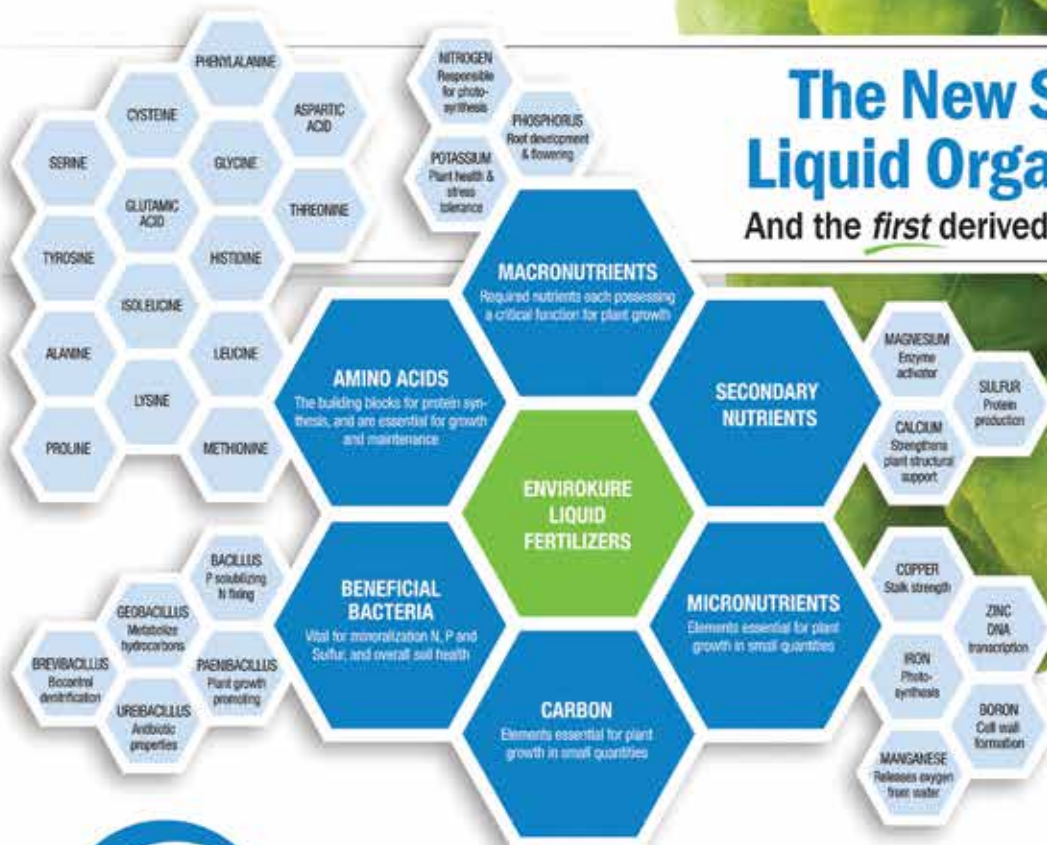
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CCOF Chapter Support of COFFA

The support of CCOF Chapters played a key role in the passage of the California Organic Food and Farming Act (COFFA) by the California legislature, which was signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown on September 21, 2016. COFFA is CCOF-sponsored legislation that will streamline mandatory state registration for organic farmers by allowing accredited certifying agents (such as CCOF) to register its certified members directly with the state. It also caps or lowers the fees assessed on growers.

Chapter leaders stepped up to gather signatures in support of COFFA. They also dedicated time during chapter meetings to host legislative staff to hear directly from growers about why these changes matter to them. Thank you, chapters, for your support and dedication to making change! See page 31 for more information about COFFA.

Chapter Activity: Summer Highlights

Pacific Southwest Chapter Elects New Treasurer

The Pacific Southwest chapter elected new chapter leaders, which include Karen Archipley of Archi's Acres as board representative and chapter president, Helene Beck of Beck Grove as vice president, Laura Fairchild of Fairchild Consulting as secretary, and Linda Antonioli of Kool Ranch as treasurer. Congratulations, and thank you for your service to the chapter.

The chapter's second meeting was in June in Escondido and featured three speakers. Karen Tomlinson of Pan American Insurance Agency presented information on crop insurance. Rosalinda Singh, Executive Director of the Imperial County Farm Service Agency (FSA), described FSA programs that can help farmers, including microloans, beginning farmer and rancher loans, and disaster assistance programs. Eric Larson, Executive Director of the San Diego County Farm Bureau, gave a talk on southern California water issues.

North Coast Chapter Learns About Historic Winery

New North Coast chapter president Eric Pooler of the Boisset Collection arranged for the chapter's August meeting to be held at the historic Buena Vista Winery in Sonoma. Thick

adobe walls still enclose California's oldest commercial winery, which was built in 1857. Spencer Rank, wearing top hat and tails, convincingly played the role of Arpad Haraszthy, son of the winery's first owner, who told the story of the winery's founding and its end in 1864 due to the devastation caused by the well-known grape-eating aphid, phylloxera. On the third floor of the Champagne Cellar building, a Disneyland-like display of old tools danced in a dramatic display that told the story of the winery's early days.

Maddy Baer, development manager for the CCOF Foundation, provided an overview of the programs that the CCOF Foundation offers, such as the Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund. The meeting also included a financial update by chapter treasurer, Gove Celio, a report by board representative Andrea Davis-Cetina, and a CCOF policy update.

Chapter members brought a variety of items to share with each other including wine, cheese, fresh veggies, ice cream, and yerba mate beverages courtesy of Guayaki.

San Luis Obispo Chapter Makes Ambitious Plans

A small but dedicated group led by new chapter president and board representative Jutta Thoerner met at the Atascadero Grange in July. Treasurer/secretary Eric Michielszen provided a financial report and recommended that the chapter move its account to a local credit union that will not charge a monthly service fee. Members passed a motion to approve this change.

Thoerner led the group in discussing how the chapter could benefit its members. People liked the idea of having a closed Facebook page where members can post notices about equipment to share or give away, marketing opportunities, and networking. Local products shared at the meeting included walnuts, both plain and chocolate covered.

The chapter will hold quarterly meetings. The next one will be held in October.

Other Chapters Meet

Continuing with their schedule of quarterly meetings, the Yolo chapter met in July and the Fresno-Tulare chapter met in May.

.....
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THE SOIL COULD SAVE US

A man wearing a light-colored hat, a blue and white checkered shirt, and blue jeans stands in a field of dry, yellowish-brown grass. He is looking down and to the right. The background shows rolling hills under a clear blue sky.

Mitigating Climate Change on the Farm

WRITTEN BY Ellen Vessels

Rosie Burroughs is worried about the pines. Each time she drives from her family's dairy to their pack station in the Minarets, she notices more and more dead trees, the lush green landscape withering into a brown, twiggy boneyard. The Forest Service tells her the pines have been wiped out by a beetle that would normally die off in the cold season, but because the winters have been so mild, the beetle has proliferated, meaning devastation for the trees.

This is disconcerting not only for the forest, but also because the snow melt in the Sierra Nevada Mountains is a major source of California's water. An ecological imbalance in the Sierras could portend disaster for the entire state.

Burroughs has noticed other changes too, at her family's farms and at her neighbors'. Warm winters are confusing the plants, which bud and bloom out of season. Farmers who purchase water face skyrocketing prices. Others neighbors have had their water cut off before their crops could ripen.

For the agriculture industry, the effects of climate change have become undeniable, especially in the drought-prone state of California. Farmers, whose livelihoods are utterly dependent upon the cycles of nature, are on the front lines of the battle, taking the first and hardest blows. So while others may anxiously await for yet undiscovered technologies to thwart climate change, organic farmers are already adapting. Better yet, they are creating solutions that we can use immediately.

As organic agriculture has proven time and time again, management practices that benefit the environment also make farms more resilient. The healthy, water-retaining soils of organic farms are less likely to flood and will withstand drought. On biodiverse farms with habitat corridors, hedgerows, and intercropping, predator species will keep pests in check as warm winters lengthen their life cycles. And as fossil fuels become increasingly precious resources, organic farmers will be less vulnerable to the instability of market prices since their farms use an estimated 30 to 50 percent less energy than conventional farms.

But organic management can do more than just prepare farms for unpredictable conditions—it can actually mitigate, and possibly even reverse climate change. Farmers carry a heavy responsibility to do whatever they can to turn the tide, and luckily, organic farmers are already using techniques that benefit not only their crops, but the Earth's atmosphere as well.

Organic management of soil, and the resulting carbon sequestration, could very well be the most feasible, affordable, and immediate short-term solution to address our climate crisis.

Less Fossil Fuel Means Lower Emissions

Organic farms are already setting an example for their conventional counterparts by emitting less greenhouse gases, largely by opting out of the use of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides. The fossil fuel used in the manufacturing of these amendments emits a tremendous amount of greenhouse gases. The problems don't stop after these products leave the factory—application of nitrogen-based fertilizers releases the greenhouse gas nitrous oxide (N₂O) into the atmosphere. Fertilizers continue to give off N₂O as they leach out of the soil and pollute nearby waterways. Organic farmers abstain from using these heavy emitters, instead feeding the soil with compost and nitrogen-fixing cover crops, and controlling pests by intercropping or creating wildlife corridors to attract predator species instead of using toxic pesticides.

Organic farmers are also finding energy solutions that forgo fossil fuels, including solar and wind power systems. Some farms are even recycling agricultural byproducts to generate electricity or power farm vehicles with biofuel. These renewable energy sources save farmers money and lower overall greenhouse gas emissions. Some farmers even earn additional income by selling excess wind or solar power back to the grid.

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions is helpful, but is it enough? Many experts fear that we may have irreparably altered our atmosphere, and that even if we slow down our greenhouse gas emissions now, it may be too little too late.

Luckily, reducing greenhouse gas emissions is not the only available response to global climate change. There is another solution, one that many organic farmers are already accomplishing whether they realize it or not.

The Soil Could Save Us

Excess carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere is a major contributor to climate change. However, the atmosphere is not the only thing absorbing carbon emissions—it shares the burden with the ocean, geological formations, plants, and soil. And while the ocean becomes acidified when it takes in excess atmospheric gas, endangering marine ecosystems, the soil is like a sponge that can afford to safely absorb significantly more carbon.

The process is called soil carbon sequestration, and it's a direct result of photosynthesis. Plants convert CO₂ into carbon, storing it in soil organic matter, an aggregate of root masses, minerals, decomposing plants, and microbial life. This carbon either remains stabilized in the soil or is released once again into the atmosphere, depending on a number of conditions.

As you might have guessed, organic soil management creates conditions that encourage carbon sequestration, and that carbon stays in the soil for years—even decades—at a variety of depths. Soil carbon in turn improves the health of the soil, making it more productive. Yet again, organic practices are a win-win for both our atmosphere and for farmers.

A 27-year study by the Rodale Institute found that organic systems significantly increase soil carbon sequestration when compared to conventional systems. In fact, the researchers took their data one step further, scaling up their findings to predict what might happen if all of our planet's farmland were converted to organic. Their data suggests that, using organic soil management, we could sequester more than 100 percent of current yearly CO₂ emissions, significantly slowing the effects of greenhouse gas and climate change.

Organic management of soil, and the resulting carbon sequestration, could very well be the most feasible, affordable, and immediate short-term solution to address our climate crisis.

For more examples of the organic practices that can help slow climate change, we turn to the farmers themselves.

Morris Grassfed Beef: Holistic Grazing for Soil Carbon Sequestration

Morris Grassfed Beef raises cattle organically for their own direct-market business and for several other purveyors. Their thousands of cattle roam vast rangeland and do not require any commercially-produced feed.

You might assume that Morris Grassfed uses rotational grazing, but rancher Joe Morris prefers not to use the word "rotational"—he says it implies a "mechanical approach." His management style, inspired by ecologist Allan Savory's Holistic Management framework, considers the entire ecosystem and the ways that grassland plants and ruminants co-evolved.

Long before humans tamed livestock, ruminants grazed huddled together for protection against predators. Once their manure had fouled one grazing area, they would move on to the next area, leaving ample time for grasslands to regenerate their perennial plant growth and for the soil to reinvigorate with microbial life. Joe Morris manages the grazing of his cattle to simulate this ancient process.

Whereas feedlots rely on fossil fuel-intensive feeds and other ranchers continuously graze animals in the same location, depleting the soil and plants, the Morrises' style of grazing actually sequesters carbon into the soil, decreasing the ranch's overall carbon footprint. Rather than being munched



on continuously, perennial plants are allowed to reestablish, giving them plenty of time to photosynthesize and convert atmospheric CO₂ into soil organic carbon. Their large perennial root systems and healthy, microbe-rich soil absorb that carbon and hold it there.

Morris Grassfed Beef participates in the Soil Carbon Coalition, an organization collecting data about management practices and carbon sequestration. From 2011 to 2015, even under drought conditions, soil carbon increased in the Morrises' most intensively-grazed rangeland by 7 percent in the top 10 centimeters of soil, by 11 percent in the next 15 centimeters, and by 5 percent another 15 centimeters deep.

Besides managing their grazing to maximize carbon sequestration, Joe and Julie Morris also contribute to the struggle against climate change by engaging other ranchers and their local community. Says Joe Morris, "We can't really thrive, or maybe even survive, if our communities fall apart." Borrowing a phrase from their tech industry neighbors in the Silicon Valley, they call Morris Grassfed an "open source" company, meaning they'll gladly share their tricks of the trade with other ranchers. Joe Morris is an advisor to the California Climate and Agriculture Network, and also founded Rancher to Rancher, an organization that helps ranchers share information about "how to create the best possible future" for California's beef market and its ecosystems.

Burroughs Family Farms: Grass Farmers, First and Foremost

When people ask the Burroughs family what they grow, they answer, "we're grass farmers." That's because, according to the Burroughses, the health of the pasture is vital to the health of their dairy cows and the ecosystem as a whole.

Like Joe Morris, when the Burroughses plan the grazing schedules for their animals, they carefully consider the interconnected lifecycles of the cows, the pasture, and the soil. Their system, called Managed Intensive Grazing, allows

perennial grasses to regrow, and also times calving with the regrowth of pastures so that newborns receive maximum nutrition from their mothers' milk.

The Burroughses use a diversity of grassland plants to increase soil carbon sequestration. They are working with local nurseries to continuously add native plants. A variety of plants with different root depths pull up nutrients from all parts of the soil to feed the pasture. What's more, the varied root depths of the Burroughses' diverse pastures also help the soil sequester carbon at different levels.

For the Burroughses, "the key to the future is building soil." When their pastures need a boost, they plant new grasses by overseeding, a practice that requires only very light tillage, thus preserving the integrity of the topsoil. The Burroughses eschew the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides because these amendments destroy the microbial life of the soil that is so crucial for carbon sequestration.

Instead, they nourish the soil with compost made from manure and plant residue, which has the added benefit of reducing the amount of waste that would otherwise be sent to a landfill. On the Burroughses' almond and olive farms, cover crops are planted between the rows, likewise adding nutrients to the soil and sequestering carbon.

Rosie Burroughs can't stop her plants from budding early, but she can protect her farm from the worst effects of drought. Cover cropping, composting, and careful pasture management are all practices that not only build soil health and allow for soil carbon sequestration, but also help the soil retain moisture through drought periods. When rain hits bare, lifeless soil, it bounces off, causing flooding and soil erosion. On the other hand, when it rains on the Burroughses' farms, the healthy, cover-cropped soil absorbs and retains water, replenishing the aquifer. The Burroughses also conserve rainwater through a system of French drains that funnel rain and irrigation runoff into holding ponds that double as habitats for beneficial predators and migratory birds. Once again, organic practices benefit both the environment and the farmers.

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Fetzer Vineyards: Beyond Sustainability

For Fetzer Vineyards, makers of Bonterra Vineyards organic wines, every stage of production, from seed to bottle, is an opportunity to make a positive impact. According to their Director of Regenerative Development Josh Prigge, the company would like to move “beyond sustainability” –not just maintaining their farm and ecosystem, but enhancing it. Always looking to the future, Fetzer Vineyards would like to become a “net positive” company by 2030, meaning that their operation not only neutralizes its negative impacts, but creates positive changes. They’d like to add more water to the aquifer than they take, and sequester more carbon than they emit.

With their commitment to environmentally-conscious practices and a number of cutting-edge technologies, they are well on their way to this goal. In 2005, Fetzer became the first winery to publicly report their greenhouse gas emissions to the Climate Registry. Besides the fact that organic practices produce less greenhouse gasses than conventional, Fetzer Vineyards also keeps emissions low by powering their operations entirely with renewable energy, about 20 percent of which comes from their on-farm solar system while the rest is purchased from a wind turbine. To make up for the emissions they can’t eliminate, the company purchases carbon offsets to become a certified CarbonNeutral® company.

Agriculture’s impact on the atmosphere doesn’t end at the farm. Waste that goes into landfills or incinerators also causes greenhouse gas emissions. That’s why Fetzer Vineyards has been reducing its waste since 1990, and in 2014 became a certified Zero Waste company. Over 99 percent of waste produced by the vineyards, winery, and office buildings is composted, reused, or recycled.

The vineyard’s water is recycled, too. A promising new technology uses earthworms and microbes to clean all of the winery’s wastewater which then irrigates the vineyard. The new system cuts energy costs by 85 percent and will keep the vineyard well-watered even in times of drought. As an added

bonus, the earthworms generate castings, a valuable ingredient that is added to the compost made from grape seeds, skins, and stems. This compost, in turn, feeds the grape plants and builds soil organic matter, which besides sequestering carbon, also increases water retention in the soil, protecting the plants from heat spikes during the summer ripening phase.

Fetzer Vineyards wants to be a leader in the movement to reverse climate change. Says Prigge, “Agriculture is seen as contributing so much to climate change. What we’re saying is that we can actually be the biggest ally in this fight.”

The Solution is in Our Hands

These outstanding farmers prove that making environmentally-sound management choices doesn’t mean sacrificing your crops or your profits. On the contrary, organic farms thrive when ecosystems are healthy. By using less fossil fuel, improving soil health to sequester carbon, and encouraging a diverse ecosystem of plants and insects, organic farmers are fortifying their farms against unpredictable conditions while simultaneously alleviating the impacts of—and potentially reversing—climate change. What’s more, these farmers have gone above and beyond the basic requirements for organic certification, finding innovative ways to make a positive impact on the soil, the aquifer, local ecosystems, and the atmosphere as a whole.

It’s easy to feel pessimistic when it comes to climate change. In order to avoid potentially apocalyptic consequences, our fossil fuel-addicted economy will have to undergo extraordinary transformations that can’t come quickly enough. The rising temperatures remind us that all ecosystems are interconnected—no one will escape the impacts of climate change. And yet this interconnectedness also means that the changes we make locally can impact the entire planet. Organic farmers are proving that we already hold the solutions in our hands, and in the soil beneath our feet. As we face the biggest environmental challenge in human history, we’ll look to the wisdom of organic farmers to lead the way.

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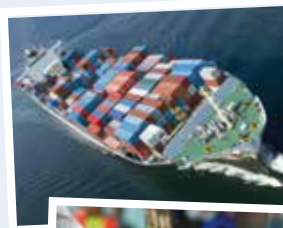
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COFFA has come a long way since CCOF Policy Director Kelly Damewood's presentation at our 2016 Annual Meeting.

California Organic Food and Farming Act Signed into Law!

CCOF members are celebrating a critical victory for California farmers after Governor Jerry Brown signed the CCOF-sponsored California Organic Food and Farming Act (COFFA) into law on September 21, 2016.

California Central Coast Assemblymember Mark Stone (D-Monterey Bay) worked closely with CCOF members to introduce COFFA in February 2016. Since then, hundreds of individuals and businesses have rallied behind the legislation to support the critical role organic producers play in California's economy and environment. Due in large part to this grassroots advocacy, both houses of the California legislature voted with unanimous, bipartisan support in favor of COFFA.

COFFA makes long-needed reforms to California's State Organic Program (SOP), including the following:

COFFA streamlines paperwork for certified organic producers. Prior to COFFA, California law required organic producers to register with the SOP by reporting information that duplicates other state and federal reporting requirements. COFFA streamlines this process by allowing USDA-accredited organic certifying agents to submit information about their clients directly to the state to complete their SOP registration.

COFFA caps or lowers SOP fees. COFFA updates the SOP fee schedule by capping fees at their current levels and reducing fees for some small producer categories.

COFFA updates the role of the SOP. COFFA allows the California Secretary of Agriculture and the California Organic Products Advisory Committee (COPAC) to support organic agriculture through education, outreach, and other programmatic activities.

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) administers the SOP and will implement the changes made under COFFA. CDFA provided valuable input throughout the legislative process, and CCOF looks forward to working with the department to ensure members operate under a streamlined SOP registration process moving forward. CCOF also encourages members to engage with COPAC and consider serving on the committee to further improve the SOP. For updates and more information, please visit www.ccof.org/policy.

NOSB to Meet in St. Louis

The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) will meet November 16-18, 2016, in St. Louis, Missouri, to listen to public comments, discuss agenda items, and vote in a public forum. The NOSB is an advisory board that makes recommendations to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture and the National Organic Program (NOP) on a range of issues related to organic production.

Find up-to-date information on agenda items and topics of interest for the upcoming St. Louis meeting on the CCOF blog and in our weekly newsletter. CCOF policy staff are also available to answer questions. Please submit queries to policy@ccof.org.



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Pictured left to right Cesar, Lupe, Roy Jr., Roy and Ilse

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Climate Smart Agriculture and the Connection to Organic

Agriculture is on the front lines of climate change. Farmers and ranchers are among the first to experience its effects, from erratic and extreme weather events, increased pest pressures, and greater water scarcity, to decreased chill hours and more frequent heat stress for workers. Successful farmers have always been adaptable to change, but the magnitude, unpredictability, and severity of the “new normal” can push the limits of even the most experienced and innovative growers.

Now for the good news: There are powerful management practices that can make operations more resilient while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and serving as a sink for carbon. A growing body of research is identifying the climate benefits of improving the organic content in soil, increasing biodiversity, conserving water and energy, and generating on-farm renewable energy.¹

The organic toolkit in particular provides powerful climate solutions. Cover cropping, compost and manure applications, and managed grazing practices can draw down atmospheric carbon into the soil. One 12-year study of organic farming practices in California showed that carbon sequestration increased by 36 percent with the use of green manures and animal manures, even with the use of more tillage compared to conventional systems.² Another study looked at 13 organic tomato farms in Yolo County and found that their use of organic inputs with a high C:N ratio led to increased soil microbial activity, minimal nitrogen loss, better nitrogen uptake by roots, and—notably—no yield loss.³ In addition, conservation plantings in hedgerows, windbreaks, and riparian restoration projects lock up carbon in woody plant material as they grow.

The state of California has taken note of these agricultural climate solutions, and is rolling out several financial incentive programs to encourage their wider use. The state’s Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, derived from cap-and-trade money, funds these efforts.

The following is a summary of the state’s “climate smart” agriculture programs. Organic farmers and those seeking to transition to organic should be highly competitive for some of the grant programs.

Healthy Soils Initiative (HSI)—Total funding as of September 2016: \$7.5 million

Governor Jerry Brown proposed the Healthy Soils Initiative in 2015 and included it in budget proposals for fiscal year 2016-17. This initiative—led by the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA)—will incentivize growers to increase carbon storage in soils and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Potentially eligible practices include compost application, cover crops, reduced tillage, conservation plantings, and more.

HSI will also fund on-farm demonstration projects to provide growers, researchers, and other agriculture professionals with strategies for mitigating climate change in agriculture.

State Water Efficiency & Enhancement Program (SWEET)—Total funding as of September 2016: \$43.5 million

This CDFA-run program funds on-farm irrigation management projects that save water and energy while reducing related greenhouse gas emissions. Eligible activities include pump upgrades and switching pumps to solar power, conversion to drip or micro irrigation, improved water storage and/or recycling, soil moisture monitoring, and irrigation scheduling.

Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation (SALC) Program—Total funding as of September 2016: \$45 million (and likely another \$40 million in 2016-17)

The SALC Program funds permanent conservation easements on cropland and rangeland at risk of sprawl development, preventing greenhouse gas emissions associated with urban and suburban development. The program also provides grants for local land use planning and policy development to support long-term agricultural conservation. Launched in early 2015, SALC is the first program of its kind in the country, and it is administered by the Natural Resources Agency’s Department of Conservation.

Dairy Digester Research and Development Program (DDRDP)—Total funding as of September 2016: \$62 million

This program funds dairy digesters and related research to reduce methane emissions from the dairy sector. CalCAN is working to include alternative dry manure management techniques and pasture-based dairying in the program.

CalCAN, in collaboration with many partners such as CCOF, acts as the voice of sustainable and organic agriculture to ensure that California’s climate policies and these programs serve a wide diversity of growers. We advocate for a systems approach to farm management that achieves climate benefits while maximizing other environmental and health benefits such as improved air and water quality, higher crop yields, greater resilience and fertility, decreased erosion, enhanced wildlife habitat, decreased input costs, and more.

We rely on the involvement of innovative producers and a range of allies. For information on any of these programs and to get involved with CalCAN, visit www.calclimateag.org.

CCOF is a founding coalition member of the California Climate and Agriculture Network (CalCAN), whose mission is to advance the powerful climate solutions of sustainable and organic agriculture using state and federal policy.

¹<http://calclimateag.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Climate-Benefits-of-Agriculture-2015.pdf>

²Horwath, W., et al. 2002. Soil carbon sequestration management effects on nitrogen cycling and availability. *Agricultural Practices and Policies for Carbon Sequestration in Soil*, 155–164.

³Timothy M. Bowles, T.M., et al. 2015. Tightly-coupled plant-soil nitrogen cycling: comparison of organic farms across an agricultural landscape. *PLoS ONE* 10(6): e0131888. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0131888.

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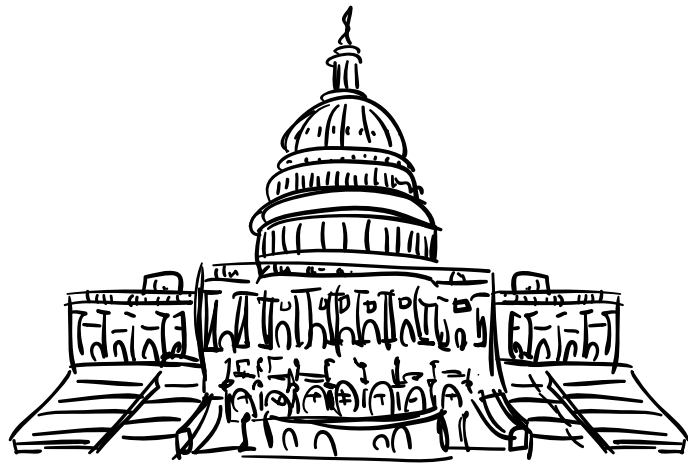
The Organic Trade Association (OTA) and Canada Organic Trade Association (COTA) bring all segments of the organic industry together to protect the integrity of organic standards and promote the benefits of organic agriculture and products. The Annual Fund enables OTA and COTA to carry out the critical government affairs, consumer marketing and media outreach projects necessary to the health and well-being of the organic industry.

OTA's mission is to promote and protect ORGANIC with a unifying voice that serves and engages its diverse members from farm to marketplace. OTA's vision is to grow ORGANIC to achieve excellence in agriculture and commerce, protect the environment and enhance community well-being.

*List of investors as of 8/12/16. To see a complete list of Annual Fund Investors, please visit www.ota.com.



OTA Defends Integrity of Organic Rulemaking Process



This summer, Organic Trade Association (OTA) members banded together to defend the process by which organic regulations are created and implemented against an outside attack from Congress and the powerful livestock industry.

The National Organic Program (NOP) published its proposed rule on organic livestock and poultry practices in April 2016. This was the result of 14 years of public and transparent rulemaking process—the very process that was set forth in the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 (OFPA). That process included two National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) recommendations, including a unanimous recommendation in 2011, as well as six NOSB meetings with full public comment and a preliminary economic analysis.

The proposed rule that came out of that process creates standards for organic products that consumers demand and that are necessary for organic to maintain its premium position in the marketplace. As all certified organic operations know, organic operations voluntarily participate in this program and agree to regulations that consumers demand.

There was an effort in the U.S. Senate appropriations process to prevent the NOP from finalizing this rule—and that effort continued through the summer. If Congress had blocked the NOP from following the transparent and congressionally mandated process to create and implement organic regulations set forth in OFPA, that would have called into question the entire process by which organic standards deliver transparent meaning to the consumer—a process that Congress created, the industry has worked within, and consumers trust.

OTA members and staff jumped into action. We included this as one of our topics during our annual Hill Visits and Policy Days, and educated Senate offices about the integrity of the organic rulemaking process. We explained to senators and their staffs that hamstringing the NOP from doing its job of writing, implementing, and enforcing organic rules would set a very dangerous precedent for organic.

We mobilized our membership, in coalition with other interested organizations (including the Humane Society of the United States), to make phone calls to their senators, urging them to reject any attempts to impede the NOP's rulemaking.


We engaged in social media outreach to ensure organic consumers were able to weigh in with their support for the proposed rule.

We held a targeted fly-in, in which about half a dozen OTA members with specific interest in the proposed rule on livestock and poultry practices came to Washington to spend a day on the Hill with their senators, educating them on the danger of any efforts to stand in the way of the NOP rulemaking process.

There was a dangerous possibility that an amendment would have been offered during either the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee consideration of the Agriculture Appropriations bill, or the full Appropriations Committee consideration of that bill. Thanks to the hard work and extraordinary efforts of our members, no such amendment was offered. This was a quiet victory, but a victory nonetheless. Had we not been pounding the pavement and ensuring the opposition to an amendment was engaged, the proponents may have been successful.

Despite the fact that the comment deadline for the proposed rule has passed, the work is not over. We remain vigilant against any language impeding the implementation of the proposed rule during the remainder of the congressional funding process. Moreover, there was an unprecedented amount of weigh-in from organizations representing conventional agriculture in the comment period.

These comments represent a new approach by conventional agriculture, arguing that the organic regulations should not be strengthened, because that would make it more difficult for conventional farmers to enter the market and earn the organic premium. This is a dangerous new approach, and one we will need to guard against going forward.



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- **Inspections** – Quickly see what step of the inspection process you are in.
- **Certificates** – Download copies of your current certificates.
- **Service representatives** – Find contact information for CCOF representatives who can help answer your questions.

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—the contract and invoice—as well as send you an email with your renewal information.

Complete your renewal contract and pay your annual certification fees by January 1, 2017, to complete the renewal process and remain certified in good standing.

You can submit your contract and fees 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! Read our frequently asked questions at www.ccof.org/faqs for more help.

Renewal Timeline:

- **November** – Renewals sent by email and “snail mail.”
- **January 1, 2017** – All renewals and annual payments due.
- **February 15, 2017** – A Notice of Noncompliance and a \$75 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 2017 certification fees.
- **March 15, 2017** – A Notice of Proposed Suspension and an additional \$75 late fee will be issued to all operations that have not completed the renewal process.
- **April 15, 2017** – 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!

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



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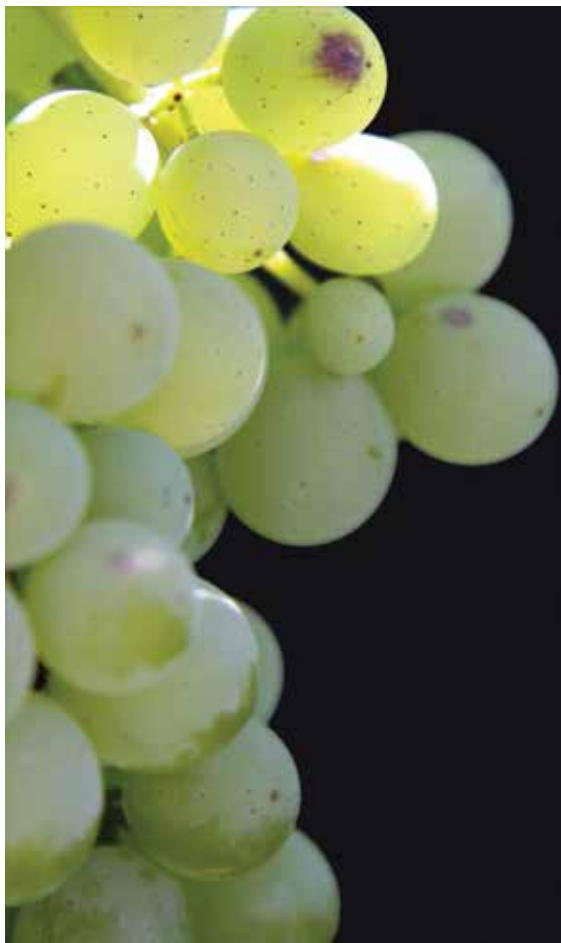
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California Environmental Protection Agency



If you are affected by drift, commingling, or contamination, remember to report the incident immediately to CCOF.

CCOF is happy to help you set up a payment plan if needed—contact our accounting department at accounting@ccof.org.

Thank you for taking the time to renew your organic certification! We look forward to another year of growing the organic movement with you.

Contamination Happens—What to Do Next

Operations are not always aware of their options and responsibilities when they suspect that contamination or commingling may have occurred at their operation. Prompt and thorough reporting can help your operation maintain compliance and ensure appropriate measures are taken.

If you are affected by drift, direct application of a prohibited material, or a commingling issue (including GMOs) that you believe resulted in the contamination of organic crops or products, remember to report the incident immediately to CCOF. Use the Procedures for Third Parties Reporting Contaminated Product to CCOF (excerpt below) to guide your report of the relevant details and your responsibilities. These procedures are available on our website at www.ccof.org/certification/standards/contaminated-product.

Here is a list of information operations reporting contamination should provide along with their general report of the contamination event(s):

- The type (including variety, if applicable) of contaminated product
- The source of the product, including the certification agency of that source
- The lot number or other identifying mark, if any, of the product
- The quantity of contaminated product, if known
- The name of the prohibited contaminant, if known
- The amount of the prohibited material, if known
- The basis of knowledge of the contamination (food safety testing, observation, etc.)
- If testing was performed, the test results themselves and any information about the sampling protocol and chain of custody
- Any information about the likely source or reason for the contamination
- Who the product has already been sold to (if applicable)
- Any additional information relevant to the situation

Together we will investigate and ensure organic integrity is upheld. Thank you for joining us in protecting the organic seal.

Compliance Oversight Surcharges

We work hard to provide all CCOF certified clients with cost effective and timely service. The vast majority of CCOF operations meet organic standards. In rare cases, operations and CCOF are able to address serious compliance issues through formal and informal mediation and settlement agreements that require ongoing monitoring, regular reporting, and/or additional inspections. These efforts place significant strain on resources and impact our ability to meet the needs of other clients, the vast majority of whom are generally in compliance.

Therefore, effective September 1, 2016, CCOF Certification Services has implemented a Compliance Oversight Surcharge program as an additional fee that may apply in these situations. Annual fees for additional compliance oversight will be determined in context of the situation, typically in \$2,500 tiers, not to exceed \$10,000.

This ensures that operations that require additional organizational resources are not subsidized by other operations, including small farms and processors. Additional information about noncompliance procedures, proposed adverse action, mediation, and settlement agreements can be found in the CCOF Certification Services Program Manual.

New Director of Farm Programs Certification

CCOF Certification Services is delighted to announce that former employee April Crittenden will return to CCOF as our new director of farm programs certification. Crittenden has a long history with CCOF, having participated in nearly every aspect of the farm and quality departments, from certification specialist to senior quality and compliance supervisor. Crittenden has been committed to organic excellence at CCOF for nearly a decade, and we expect to see our farm program flourish under her leadership. Crittenden can be reached at april@ccof.org, or at (831) 432-2263, extension 6218.

Everyone at CCOF also wants to take this opportunity to thank Amy Lamendella, Crittenden's predecessor, for all of her work in the director of farm program certification role. Lamendella has been an important member to the CCOF team for more than 10 years. We are happy to say that Lamendella will not be leaving CCOF, but will be staying on in a supportive role to our food safety team.

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