



CERTIFIED

# Organic

**INSIDE LOOK**

## ADVANCING ORGANIC FOR A HEALTHY WORLD

CCOF's 2016-2018 Strategic Plan



**The California Organic Food and Farming Act (COFFA)  
Approval of Genetically Engineered Salmon  
Hydroponic Production Systems Update**



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# CERTIFIED Organic



22

## Advancing Organic for a Healthy World

*At CCOF, the time has come to examine our growth and our position in the organic community—and to harness both in our quest to make organic the norm.*

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**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF** Laura Mathias

**SENIOR EDITOR** Rachel Witte

**ART DIRECTION/DESIGN** Sarah Watters

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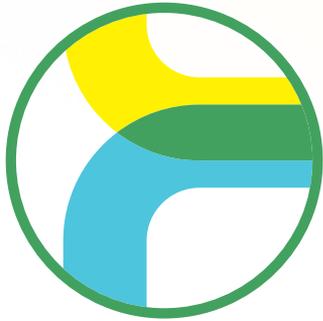
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For every pound of paper used to print this edition of *Certified Organic*, an equivalent number of trees are planted through Trees for the Future, an organization dedicated to planting trees with rural communities in the developing world, enabling them to restore their environment, grow more food, and build a sustainable future.



# ORGANIC CONFLUENCES

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The first-ever Organic Confluences Summit will bring together **farmers, scientists, policy makers, and organic stakeholders** for in-depth discussions about ways to turn evidence-based research on the environmental benefits of organic agriculture into everyday policy practice. Please join us.

This one-day event is co-located with the Organic Trade Association's **Policy Conference and Hill Visit Days**.

Register for \$79 at [www.Organic-Center.org](http://www.Organic-Center.org).



## A Look Forward: Growing the Future of Organic

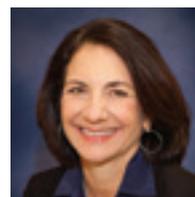
This issue of *Certified Organic* updates CCOF members and supporters on the strategic direction of our organization for the next three years, and defines the role we will play in the larger world during this timeframe.

In its early years, CCOF saw educating shoppers and growing demand for organic products (through passage of the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 and establishment of the National Organic Program) as one of its most important roles. Today, that backdrop has changed with almost all American households purchasing organic goods, while suppliers struggle to add organic acreage and source organic ingredients to meet consumer demand. So you'll see a theme in our strategic direction: across the organization, all CCOF programs are aimed squarely at growing organic supply.

During the next three years, we expect to dramatically increase the number of USDA certified operations across the country. We will do this by continuing to improve certification processes, being ever more present in communities across North America where processors and handlers are looking to learn more about how to go organic, and providing food safety certification services to support organic producers in meeting new business and regulatory requirements.

Through our Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund partnerships, we will educate more than 16,000 elementary and high school students across the nation about organic agriculture, and we will grant at least 60 scholarship grants to vocational and higher education students who aspire to careers in organic agriculture. Between now and the close of 2018, the CCOF Organic Training Institute will provide organic training to 1,500 more participants, 600,000 more consumers will receive *Why Buy Certified Organic?* postcards distributed by retailers and at farmers' markets, and 60 more organic producers suffering from hard times will receive support from our Brimont Hardship Assistance Fund.

The priorities in our strategic plan were defined by CCOF members through the CCOF, Inc. Board of Directors, whom they elect to represent 12 California chapters, a national Processor/Handler chapter, and a Mexico chapter. The board developed the priorities and accompanying strategies with the participation of these members and CCOF staff at every level. The plan honors our commitment to value community, farmers and farming, and the democratic process. We are excited about what, together, we will accomplish during the next three years and beyond!



*Cathy*

**Cathy Calfo**  
CCOF Executive Director/CEO

## Issue Contributors

*Advancing Organic for a Healthy World*, page 22



**Rachel Witte** grew up in her mother's professional kitchen in Kansas City, sampling the dishes that would form the foundation of her love for good food. She attended St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, where she discovered a passion for the environment and social justice while earning a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Anthropology. Witte's interests in food and the environment inform her work as CCOF's marketing specialist.



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## Update on Bees and Neonicotinoids

The declining health and decreasing numbers of bee populations worldwide is an issue that has received a great deal of attention in the agricultural community in recent years. Seventy-five percent of our crops are pollinated by insects, predominantly by bees—a crucial, irreplaceable service almost all farmers rely on. These pollination services provide farmers with the ability to successfully grow their crops and are estimated to contribute \$190 billion to the global agricultural economy.

As reported in the Fall 2014 issue of *Certified Organic*, researchers had begun to uncover one of the possible reasons for the decline of bee health and populations: neonicotinoid insecticides. This assertion quickly became controversial, and in 2015, a slew of scientific research emerged on the topic as researchers tried to further understand the link between bees and neonicotinoids.

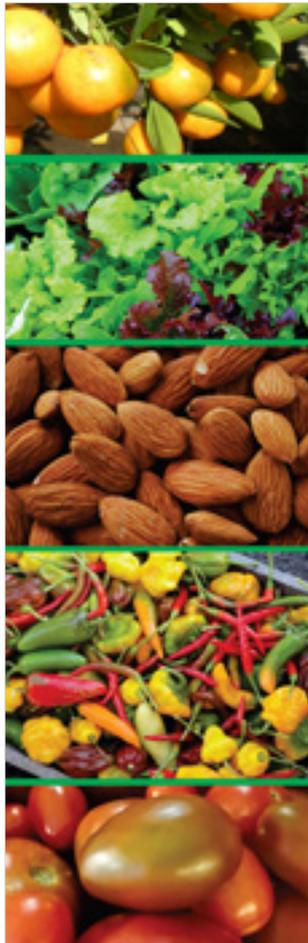
Neonicotinoids include imidacloprid, acetamiprid, clothianidin, thiamethoxam, thiacloprid, dinotefuran, nithiazine, and nitenpyram, which are often marketed under different brand names. These pesticides function as neurotoxins that cause death in insects by targeting receptors in their nervous systems. The problem arises from the fact that these neurotoxins are broad-spectrum insecticides, making many insects vulnerable to their effects.

Neonicotinoids are currently the most widely used insecticides in the world, meaning insects across the planet are potentially

affected. They can be applied to crops either as a ground application or a foliar spray. Neonicotinoid-coated seeds are also available for many plants, which in theory should decrease the amount of the insecticide that is applied as a spray or ground application. All application and usage methods, however, have proven to affect bee populations. The plants grown from neonicotinoid-coated seeds readily absorb the neonicotinoids into the plant tissue, and residues persist in the plants long enough to be detectable in pollen and nectar. With over 90% of neonicotinoids currently being used as seed coatings, this poses a significant threat to pollinators visiting those plants over long periods of time.

Specifically to bees, there is an increasing body of scientific knowledge that confirms bees' sensitivity to even very low levels of neonicotinoids. Say Moffat *et al.* in their January 2015 paper on the issue in *The FAESB Journal*, "Growing evidence indicates that sublethal levels of neonicotinoids may cause deficits in brain function, olfactory learning, navigation, and colony development, therefore implicating their use in bee decline." Additionally, a June 2014 study by Williamson *et al.* in *Ecotoxicology* found that bees' motor skills are impaired by exposure to neonicotinoids, and research published by Gill and Raine in *Functional Ecology* in July 2014 showed that the insecticides affected the honeybees' foraging behavior, causing them to spend more time foraging for much smaller final loads of nectar. While the bees' exposure to neonicotinoids does not result in death, it is clear that their altered behavior has already caused a decrease in their activity and a range of negative impacts to the health of the hive.

Prior to a May 2015 paper published by Kessler *et al.* in *Nature*, researchers and farmers were skeptical about whether or not bees could taste neonicotinoid residues on treated crops. In



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their study, worker bees could choose to collect sugar water from either an untreated solution or a solution containing one of the three most commonly used neonicotinoids (clothianidin, imidacloprid, or thiamethoxam) in concentrations typical of what is found on treated crops. Neither honeybees nor bumblebees avoided the neonicotinoid-tainted solutions. Those results, combined with neurophysiological measurements showing that bees are unable to taste neonicotinoids in water, indicate that bees are unable to avoid the insecticide through taste.

Many of the studies on neonicotinoids and bees published in 2015 point towards a grim future for these special pollinators. However, organic agriculture remains at the forefront of agricultural methods that benefit these stressed bee and pollinator populations. Synthetic insecticides are prohibited in organic production, and organic farmers implement integrated pest management (IPM) techniques to prevent and control pests before relying on organic-approved materials. Beyond providing neonicotinoid-free crops for bees to forage from, organic farms provide a more diverse crop landscape that benefits bees' diets and well-being. Studies have shown that beneficial pollinator habitats, combined with reduced pesticide usage, have a compounding effect on the benefits to pollinators. We are proud to be an organization of members who provide healthy places for bees to forage and live!

Want to know more about how to support pollinators on your farm through organic certification? Visit [www.ccof.org/certification](http://www.ccof.org/certification).

## Genetically Engineered Salmon Makes a Splash

On November 19, 2015, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) gave its first-ever approval of a genetically engineered (GE) animal intended for human consumption: GE salmon called AquAdvantage Salmon developed by AquaBounty Technologies. The announcement of AquAdvantage Salmon's approval sent shock waves through environmental groups and raised alarms for conscientious consumers, spurring a flurry of media activity around the decision. The nation's voices clamored with concerns about the safety of human consumption of GE animals and the risk of wild population contamination in the event of an unplanned introduction of the GE salmon into the wild.

"The FDA has thoroughly analyzed and evaluated the data and information submitted by AquaBounty Technologies regarding AquAdvantage Salmon and determined that they have met the regulatory requirements for approval, including that food from the fish is safe to eat," said Bernadette Dunham, D.V.M., Ph.D., director of the FDA Center for Veterinary Medicine.

AquAdvantage Salmon is an Atlantic salmon that has been genetically modified so it grows to market size faster than a

non-engineered farmed salmon. These AquAdvantage Salmon reach market size in 18 to 20 months—half the time it takes its non-engineered counterpart to reach the same size. The GE salmon contains a growth hormone gene from Chinook salmon combined with a genetic switch from the ocean pout that keeps the growth hormone gene continuously active.

The GE salmon are raised in Panama from eggs produced in Canada. The FDA reported that there are multiple barriers at each facility separating the genetically modified fish from escaping and entering the wild. As a backup precaution against a potential GE salmon escape, the fish are made sterile to prevent reproduction, although the sterilization method has not been proven to be foolproof. An escape of GE salmon into the wild would present an obvious challenge and great concern to our environment.

However, AquAdvantage Salmon is just the beginning. With the development of Crispr-Cas9—a tool that allows scientists to edit animal genomes rather than add genes from other species—the reality of genetically modified animals is here. A quick Internet search reveals the wide variety of "edited" animals (as they're termed): bulls who never grow horns, malaria-resistant mosquitoes, and even a recent study that's working on altering pigs to grow human organs. The bioengineering industry is becoming increasingly complex with the continual development of new tools and approvals for genetically modified animals.

The AquAdvantage Salmon saga continued on December 16, 2015, when a federal spending bill was released containing language that would require the FDA to develop labeling guidelines before the salmon is allowed to hit the markets.

"There's a question as to whether this fish should even be called a salmon," said Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), who pushed for the additional language. "The FDA made no mandatory labeling requirement. Instead, they said it could be labeled voluntarily. But no manufacturer of a 'Frankenfish' is going to label it as such. ... At least now people will have the opportunity, the chance, to know what it is that they are purchasing."

Ultimately, on January 29 of this year, the FDA issued a ban on the import and sale of AquAdvantage Salmon until the agency can publish labeling guidelines for the fish. Developing labeling guidelines could take years, during which time the national discussion of GE animals will continue. Although the introduction of GE salmon into our grocery stores is delayed at this time, the human and environmental health impacts of GE animals is a topic that will need to be further explored.

Of course, certified organic products are always non-GMO and more. Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are prohibited in organic production, and organic production supports a food system that values environmental stewardship, public health, animal welfare standards, transparent labels, and complete traceability of products without the use of toxic fertilizers or pesticides. To learn more, visit [www.ccof.org/non-gmo](http://www.ccof.org/non-gmo).

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## *Making the Most of Organic Dairy Cows*

Where meat comes from is a question most consumers avoid. Beyond the disconnect between food and how it is grown and raised, the details of meat production are generally avoided by consumers. When it comes to dairy, eggs, and other animal products, the mystery of these animals' lifecycles grows even more—what happens to a dairy cow or an egg-laying chicken after their dairy or egg-producing careers end?

It's not surprising that many people don't want to envision those grim endings, but one company has turned these animals into a business opportunity that allows them a mid-life career change. Mindful Meats, a CCOF-certified member based in Northern California, provides locally-sourced, pasture-raised, certified organic meat from retired dairy cows, upending the traditional process of how dairy cows are dealt with in retirement.

Typically, retired dairy cows are sold at low prices as commodity meat, regardless of whether the cows were raised using conventional or organic methods. The meat from those animals is lumped together in the final processed products, despite the fact that organic cows are raised without the use of antibiotics and growth hormones, are required to include pasture in their diets, and live in conditions that provide year-round access to the outdoors and fresh air. The organic, pasture-fed beef is devalued in this process simply because the animals were dairy cows. Not only is this wasteful, but it is disincentivizing to an organic dairy producer, who will spend more money and time over the lifetime of that cow to follow organic livestock regulations.

"The reason our team is working on meat is that—at least in the United States and more and more over the world—livestock production is the single largest contributor to the destruction agriculture is causing," explained Clair Herminjard, co-founder and CEO of Mindful Meats. "Our strategy is to reform meat production—take it back to the way that it's supposed to be, with animals living on pasture and not consuming so much of the unrenewable resources that we have."

Herminjard saw an opportunity to increase the availability of ecofriendly, pastured beef through those organic dairy cows. Today, Mindful Meats is the only company in the United States diverting quality, organic meat out of the combined stream of commodity meat.

Mindful Meats purchases retired dairy cows from certified organic, pasture-based dairies, offering those farmers almost double the price they would typically receive from the commodity market. "We are able to pay our producers roughly 40% above market rate so that they are able to maintain their farm economically," Herminjard said. "We have very minor cost transfer onto the consumer—a couple dollars more per pound at the store—but no hidden costs externally to the world."

The company works with farmers who use rotational grazing practices, which prevent soil erosion and encourage grass growth and carbon sequestration. Eighty percent of the cows' lifetime diet is made up of pasture and dried grasses from the pastures of California's Sonoma and Napa counties. "It's amazing to see what a positive impact pasture-based livestock production has on this environment. There's a growing body of evidence that supports that species of plants and animals are even dependent on the presence of livestock," Herminjard added.

## Care for the health of people, communities, and the planet is a signature trademark all of CCOF's members share.

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All of these benefits of Mindful Meats' products combine into a powerful product that supports the success of sustainable agriculture, ecofriendly and humane livestock production, healthy consumers and communities, and the regeneration of our planet's land and soils.

"We are so proud to work with our ranchers who care about their animals and their land. They practice organic stewardship and contribute to healthy ecosystems," expounded Herminjard. "We love knowing that we support their livelihood and the viability of sustainable agriculture in our communities. This gives us purpose every day and helps us bring [our customers] healthy protein."

Mindful Meats defied all expectations as it became a successful purveyor of sustainable, pasture-raised beef products that can be found in grocery stores throughout California, as well as in a number of restaurants who proudly serve Mindful Meats meat on their menus. Their products can also be ordered on Amazon Fresh, and consumers can opt to be part of a direct-to-consumer "cow share" in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Perhaps the most surprising place their beef can be found is on the menus at Bay Area schools and hospitals. Mindful Meats is the exclusive beef supplier for Stanford Hospitals, and they recently partnered with Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) to supply product for OUSD's "California Thursdays" school lunch initiative. Healthy, sustainably-raised, delicious beef dishes are certainly a far cry from the questionable school lunches and bland hospital meals of the past.

"We really want to push the needle on consumer understanding of food production in general," said Herminjard. "If we can communicate a message that helps people understand how food is produced, where it comes from, how integrated all of the systems are... then we will feel successful."

Visit [www.mindfulmeats.com](http://www.mindfulmeats.com) for more information and to find out how to purchase their products. Interested in organic livestock certification? Learn more at [www.ccof.org/certification](http://www.ccof.org/certification) or contact [getcertified@ccof.org](mailto:getcertified@ccof.org).

## MALK: A Different Kind of Dairy-Free Milk

For those dealing with dairy allergies or lactose intolerance, the surge in popularity of dairy alternatives in recent years must come as a relief. Specialty nut milks are now grocery store staples, but have you ever glanced at the ingredient list? For consumers concerned about the ingredients in processed food they consume, they may be surprised to find that many dairy alternatives contain high amounts of sugars, processing

aids, and—in the case of nut milks—only a very small amount of actual nuts.

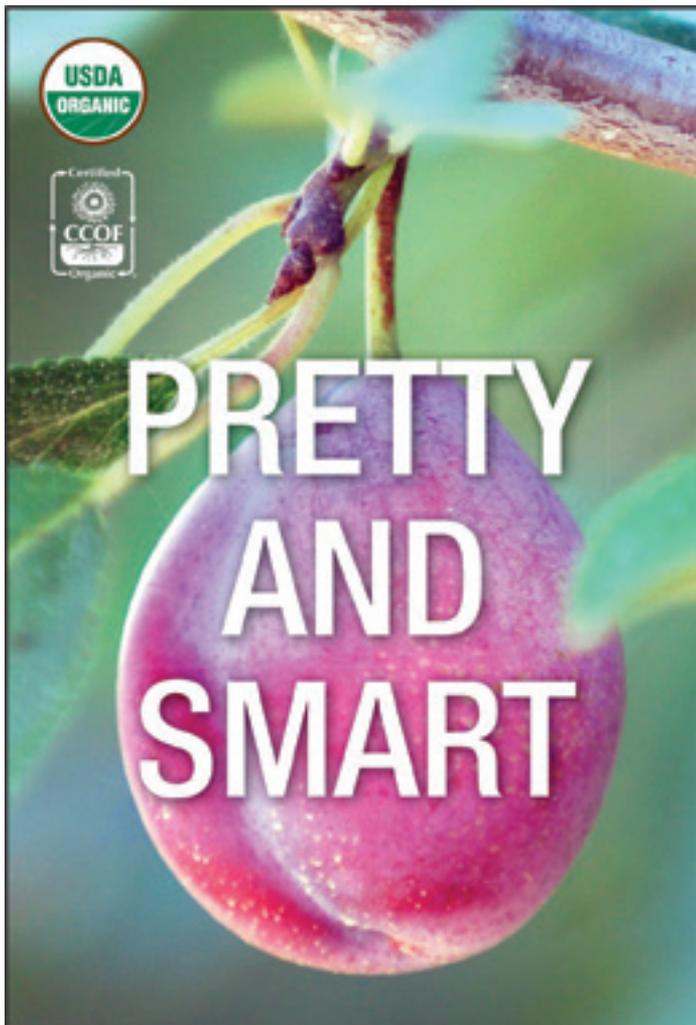
CCOF-certified member MALK Organics is one of the plant-based milk companies trying to change that. "MALK was founded on a simple principle of wanting a really clean dairy alternative," explained MALK Founder/CEO August Vega. "I began making homemade almond milk for my son and realized that there is such a huge void for natural and safe-to-consume milk alternatives. I care about honest food and knew that I had to do something about it." MALK grew from Vega's initial passion into a family-owned and -operated company based in Houston, Texas that distributes its plant-based milks to Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Arkansas, in addition to their home state.

MALK currently offers four different nut milks, plus two nut milk-based beverages. From their signature almond milk to their unique maple pecan milk, none of their products have more than five ingredients. "You don't have to have Bill Nye the Science Guy on speed dial to know what MALK is," quipped Co-Owner Justin Brodnax. We're particularly eager to try their maple pecan milk, a seemingly simple mix of just water, pecans, maple syrup, vanilla, and Himalayan sea salt that we've heard tastes just like melted pecan ice cream. MALK drinkers also enjoy over a full cup of nuts that make up each of their large bottles of milk.

The company uses high pressure processing (HPP) to extend the shelf life of MALK instead of relying on heat-based processing. HPP helps maintain the vitamins and nutrients in the nuts, one of the most important benefits of consuming plant-based milks. Between using HPP in its processing, keeping ingredient counts low, and focusing on organic ingredients, MALK does everything they can to produce the best, most nutritious plant-based milk on the market. "We are one of the cleanest plant-based milk companies out there," Co-Owner Joel Canada summarized. "We don't use any refined sugars, we don't use any preservatives, any gums, any binders, any fillers, and no carrageenan in our product. We extend the shelf life through a high-pressure process. We never use heat."

Health of people, communities, and the planet is such a clear priority for MALK—a signature trademark all of CCOF's members share. Explained Canada, "'Sustainable' means many things to me. In terms of food, sustainability means feeding your body clean food in order to sustain the body's health system. It also means only growing clean, organic food so as not to disrupt other systems, like our ecosystem."

Find out more about MALK on their website at [www.malkorganics.com](http://www.malkorganics.com), or find them in natural, specialty, and co-op grocery stores in Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana.



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Member News Meets Social Media



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**Casa Rosa Farms** via Facebook:

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**Rockside Ranch** via Facebook:

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## ProBio® gopure® for Swiss chard, coriander and red beet

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## Spreading the Organic Message

CCOF envisions a world where organic *is* the norm. To make that vision a reality, the CCOF Foundation invests in the next generation of organic farmers and eaters, provides technical and hardship assistance to organic producers, and educates consumers about why they should always buy certified organic.

The CCOF, Inc. Board of Directors spurred the growth of the Foundation with an investment of \$100,000 per year for three years. By the end of 2016, that investment will be leveraged by 300%! Together with individual, corporate, and government partners, the CCOF Foundation will impact more than 200,000 students, teachers, and consumers this year alone.

### CCOF Foundation Budget



CCOF, through the Foundation, focuses on four program areas: the Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund, the Organic Training Institute, the Brimont Hardship Assistance Fund, and the *Why Buy Certified Organic?* consumer education campaign.

There are two principles underlying each Foundation program. First, our programs don't duplicate work that others already do to advance organic agriculture. Second, wherever possible, our

programs expand existing agricultural program infrastructure to include organic educational offerings. By doing so, the Foundation is able to offer education and information about organic practices to new audiences. Were it not for the Foundation's work, these audiences would likely not have access to technical support and educational resources specific to organic production methods.

This focus on partnership in the agricultural community is woven throughout all the Foundation's programs. In the case of the Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund (FOFGF), CCOF partners with the California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom to give K-8 teachers grants that help them develop and implement organic curricula in their classrooms. The FOFGF also partners with the National FFA Organization to incentivize students in the Supervised Agricultural Experience program to choose to complete projects focused on organic methods. The Organic Training Institute offers educational programs developed in collaboration with dozens of organizations, companies, universities, and extension services across the country. These include workshops for organic producers on food safety, how to transition to organic, securing conservation funding, complying with agricultural water orders, and more. The *Why Buy Certified Organic?* consumer education campaign is made possible through partnerships with small farmers and large retailers alike.

As these partnerships mature, the Foundation is able to reach an ever-increasing number of farmers, teachers, students, and agricultural professionals each year.



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

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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.

**APRIL 15, 2016**

*Santa Barbara, California*

## Field-Level Introduction to Food Safety Workshop for Growers\*

**APRIL 21, 2016**

*Online Webinar (in collaboration with the Farmer Veteran Coalition)*

## Go Organic! – An Organic Certification Webinar for Growers

**MAY 17, 2016**

*Santa Barbara, California*

## Field-Level Introduction to Food Safety Workshop for Growers\*

**MAYO 12, 2016**

*Seminario Virtual*

## La Certificación Orgánica es Fácil - Creación y mantenimiento de un “Plan de Sistemas Orgánicos”

**JUNE 2, 2016**

*Online Webinar (in collaboration with the Farmer Veteran Coalition)*

## Organic Recordkeeping Made Easy

**JUNE 16, 2016**

*Online Webinar (in collaboration with the Farmer Veteran Coalition)*

## Labeling Your Organic Produce with Twist Ties, Clamshells, and More!

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

\*This is a CCOF, Inc. event.

## Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund

The Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund provides grants to students and teachers of organic agriculture.



### PROGRAM IMPACT

**2015** 4,500 teachers, students & their families

**2016** 8,000 teachers, students & their families

## Organic Training Institute

The Organic Training Institute partners with agricultural professionals to provide technical assistance to *organic* and *prospective organic* producers.



### PROGRAM IMPACT

**2015** 500 trainees

**2016** 671 trainees

## Bricmont Hardship Assistance

The Bricmont Hardship Assistance Fund offers direct financial assistance to organic operations that suffer losses due to extreme hardship.



### PROGRAM IMPACT

**2015** 20 organic operations

**2016** 10 organic operations

## Consumer Education

*Why Buy Certified Organic?* postcards help consumers make informed food choices by explaining the benefits of organic.



### PROGRAM IMPACT

**2015** 130,000 consumers

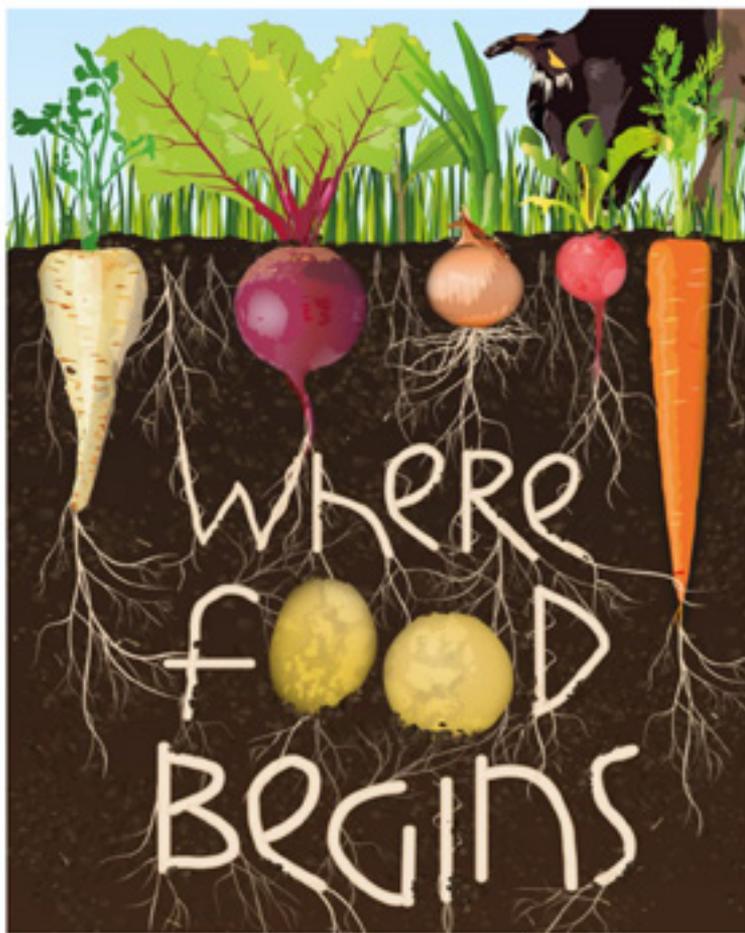
**2016** 200,000 consumers

In 2015, the CCOF Foundation reached 135,000 people, and in 2016 we anticipate reaching over 200,000 students, teachers, farmers, processors, agricultural professionals, and consumers.

## How do these numbers move us toward our vision?

While the organic industry thrives and consumer interest is at an all time high, the reality is that only 2% of all farmland in the United States is certified organic. There is a lot of work to be done to advance organic agriculture to increase the percentage of land farmed organically. This means reaching out across borders and businesses, across political alliances, and across farms and rangeland to support organic farmers, invest in the next generation of organic producers, and continue to educate consumers about the importance of buying organic.

We hope you will join us and spread the organic message. Find out more about the CCOF Foundation's work at [www.ccof.org/foundation](http://www.ccof.org/foundation).



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**José Graziano da Silva, FAO Director-General**

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## **CCOF Chapters: Activating the Grassroots**

.....

The importance of CCOF chapters comes into clear focus in a year such as this, when CCOF is working to pass legislation in California to ease the fee and paperwork requirements imposed on them by the State Organic Program.

Assembly Bill (AB) 1826, the California Organic Food and Farming Act (COFFA), was introduced into the California legislature on February 8, 2016, by Assemblymember Mark Stone. To pass the bill, CCOF will look to our chapters as sources of grassroots support for this legislation. We anticipate that many chapters will invite California assemblymembers and state senators to their meetings to hear directly from organic farmers and processors about why they would like to see California's organic law updated.

Some chapters are located in the districts of key state representatives, and can help CCOF carry the message: pass the California Organic Food and Farming Act to improve organic regulation in California. We look forward to reaching out at chapter meetings to provide more information on what the bill will accomplish for chapter members and the public.

California leads the way for the rest of the nation in policies that have wide-ranging positive impacts. One example of this is the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, passed in California in 1969, which was so influential that it was used as the basis for the federal Clean Water Act of 1972. We have similar aspirations for the California Organic Food and Farming Act: that it will serve as a national model for strengthening state-level oversight of organic businesses in cooperation with the National Organic Program.

Visit [www.ccof.org/coffa](http://www.ccof.org/coffa) to learn more and find out how to get involved.

### **North Valley Chapter Meeting**

Despite occurring during one of the first heavy rainstorms of the year, the North Valley Chapter met at the headquarters of Lundberg Family Farms in Richvale in early January. The chapter bid adieu to long-time chapter member Carl Rosato of Woodleaf Farm in Oroville, who sold his farm and is moving to Oregon. Carl has served CCOF in many ways during the 33 years he has been a CCOF member, including a stint on the CCOF Board of Directors. We wish Carl all the best in his new endeavors.

WRITTEN BY Jane Sooby

Two farming couples gave talks about their farms. Frank Mazzarino and Sally Shea from Green Cedar Farm and Sharon Casey and Guy Baldwin from Towani Organic Farm shared their farming experiences.

CCOF's Executive Director/CEO Cathy Calfo provided an update on CCOF, including a discussion of its rapid level of growth. Phil LaRocca, Board Representative for the chapter, gave a board report. Policy Director Kelly Damewood gave an overview of CCOF's effort to update the State Organic Program by passing the California Organic Food and Farming Act. Bryce Lundberg, Chapter Treasurer, gave a report on chapter finances. Chapter Secretary Nancy Schleiger of Native Springs Nursery took meeting minutes.

The meeting adjourned to an organic taco bar that was, by all accounts, delicious.

### **Kern Chapter Meeting**

The Kern Chapter met near the end of January at the Temblor Brewing Co., a microbrewery located in a large warehouse in Bakersfield. After members approved minutes from the previous meeting, Chapter Treasurer Pete Belluomini of Bel Lehr gave the financial report.

Board Representative Malcolm Ricci of Bolthouse then presided over an election to fill two empty chapter leader positions. Ben Diesl from Grimmway Farms was elected chapter president and Mark Campbell of Bel Lehr was elected vice president. Each will serve a term of one year, and then all positions will be open in the next election. Congratulations to the new chapter leaders!

Malcolm Ricci gave a board update followed by Jane Sooby, Chapter Liaison, who explained where chapter funds come from and presented background on the effort to update the State Organic Program.

The meeting ended with Jacob Guth, CCOF Food Safety Program Manager, describing the food safety certification services offered by CCOF.

Special thanks to outgoing chapter Vice President Mike Beagle, and to Secretary Kim Dixon of Bolthouse for her continuing service to the chapter.

.....  
**Let the CCOF community know what  
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# ADVANCING ORGANIC FOR A HEALTHY WORLD





**The story of CCOF's origins has taken on the patina of oft-told family lore. Many CCOF members and staff can tell it by heart: in 1973, a group of environmentally-minded farmers gathered around Barney Bricmont's dining room table and laid the foundation for an organization that would create and enforce organic standards and innovate organic practices.**

## CCOF's 2016-2018 Strategic Plan

**WRITTEN BY** Rachel Witte

From the beginning, collaboration and community were woven into the structure of CCOF, and this strong foundation remained even as the landscape of organic dramatically grew and changed in the following decades.

Fast forward to November 2014, when organic leaders once again gathered together to dream about the future of CCOF and the organic movement. At that time, the CCOF, Inc. Board of Directors; CCOF Certification Services, LLC Management Committee; members of the CCOF Foundation Board of Trustees; and a handful of CCOF staff convened to kick off what would turn out to be a 13-month journey of defining who CCOF is, where CCOF will go, and how CCOF will get there. Together, these individuals represent a multitude of contributions and decades of commitment to the organic movement.

The diversity of these contributions was vital to developing a plan for CCOF. Long-time certified member Phil LaRocca of LaRocca Vineyards returned to the helm as chairman of the Board of Directors for this season of looking forward. Having previously served as vice chair of the board in 1997 and chair from 1998 to 2000, he brought his years of wisdom and experience to the planning process. The fresh perspectives and enthusiasm of newer board members from a younger generation of organic farmers were equally important. Collaboratively, the planning participants took a comprehensive look at CCOF's past and laid out big dreams for the future.

"More Americans than ever are putting organic food on the family dinner table, and the next generation of farmers is stepping up to the task of growing food using organic methods that protect the earth and environment," explained LaRocca. "To develop our plan for the future, we heard the voices of all members of the CCOF family as they described their shared vision: a world where organic *is* the norm."

The original farmer-founders of CCOF in 1973 had the goal of planting the seeds of the organic movement. The early years of CCOF that followed were focused on encouraging growth of the organic marketplace while also growing the business. Now, 43 years later, we're faced with a different—but no less exciting—challenge around the growth of organic: how do we keep up with the current pace while also pushing the growth of the movement even further? This is the question CCOF's governance, staff, and supporters grappled with while drafting our new strategic plan.



## Perennial Organic Growth

After surviving the tumultuous early years in the business of organic and restructuring to comply with the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) standards in the late 1990s, CCOF was equipped to provide not only organic certification, but also leadership in the organic world. As organic as a whole grew to a nearly \$40 billion sector of our agricultural economy, CCOF remained at the forefront of this growth. From 2002, when the final NOP rule was implemented, to 2015, CCOF grew from less than 1,000 members to over 3,000 certified operations—and the pace of that growth continues to this day.

Our last strategic plan, created to guide the organization from 2011 through 2015, aimed to put CCOF in a position to capitalize on the organizational growth we anticipated. Our vision statement from that plan, “CCOF’s vision is to be the leading voice for organic,” embodied the organization’s leadership goals. Many of the strategies outlined in the accompanying strategic plan worked to place CCOF firmly in the position of leading the nation’s conversations about organic.

Today, our membership is a whopping 3,061 members strong. Organic product sales experienced 37 percent growth from 2011-2015, and is now a \$39 billion sector of the economy. The time has come to examine our growth and our position in the organic community, and determine the best way to harness both in our quest to make organic the norm.

## A World Where Organic *is* the Norm

The first step in determining our new strategy was articulating why we’re passionate about organic and spelling out our commitment to support the organic movement. What does CCOF want to change in the world as a nonprofit organization?

Answering that question was an opportunity for CCOF members, governance, and staff to come together and review our shared purpose. This introspection led to the development of our new mission, vision, and values statements.

CCOF governance and staff representatives participated together in an exercise that helped articulate CCOF’s vision. During this visioning exercise, groups wrote fictional front-page newspaper headlines from a world 100 years in the future that had been shaped by CCOF’s work. Headlines included: “75% of the World’s Ag Land is Certified Organic,” “The World of Vitamins is Over: Vitamin Sales Decline with Healthiest Population in over a Century,” “UN Declares Soil Health Emergency Over!,” and “Non-Organic Certification—Now Mandatory!” While the headlines ranged from ridiculous to serious, the theme was clear: we are all dreaming about a world where organic *is* the norm.

Health of the planet and all its people was another recurring theme among CCOF staff and governance, which helped us put words to the reason we do our work and where our true passion for the organic movement lives: “CCOF advances organic agriculture for a healthy world.” The promise of building healthy soil and healthy communities is the underlying driving force of CCOF’s work.

We also spent time refreshing our values statements, in particular highlighting the organization’s roots and the origin of organic food: farmers and farming. We also acknowledged our community as one of our most-valued assets, because it is our members, supporters, and staff who work together to make CCOF a successful organization.

With these foundational statements in mind, the committee was tasked with developing strategic priorities that would be used to launch CCOF into the next phase of organic leadership and growth. (Read more about the strategic planning process on page 27.)

## Championing the Movement

One of our bold new goals for the next three years is to champion the continued growth of the organic movement. To that end, two priorities laid out in the new strategic plan are for CCOF to be the leading organic certifier under the USDA National Organic Program and for the CCOF Foundation to grow at a rate of at least 50 percent annually during the next three years. With the current supply of organic unable to meet the growing demand, CCOF is taking responsibility for driving the increase in production that needs to happen to make organic the norm.

Focusing on the national growth of certified organic production and processing has an immediate impact on the availability of organic products for environmentally-conscious consumers. As the largest and one of the oldest organic certifiers in North America, expanding our certified membership and continually improving our services facilitates the overall growth of the sector. You'll feel the reach of this priority in many ways over the coming years, from seeing our faces at more trade shows, watching our office staff grow so we can continue to provide our members the best possible service, and exciting new MyCCOF services to make managing your organic certification more efficient than ever.

Reinvigorating the CCOF Foundation in 2013 affirmed our commitment to supporting current and prospective organic producers by giving them tools to grow their businesses or explore an interest in organic. Since that time, the Foundation also added the cultivation of the next generation of organic farmers to the wide scope of its activities with the launch of its Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund. Since 2014, the Foundation has reached 138,400 people through its programs and given \$183,000 in hardship assistance grants and grants to students from K-8 through high school and higher education.

When we reach our goal of growing the Foundation by 50% each year for the next three years, by the end of 2018, we'll have reached 2,350 farmers and processors through the Foundation's Organic Training Institute webinars and field days, 30,000 students through its Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund (FOFGF), 155 organic producers who suffered hardship or loss, and 731,500 consumers with information about buying certified organic.

Growth of the Foundation is crucial, as it not only provides organic producers with support that isn't available elsewhere, but it also addresses the looming shortage of farmers as the current generation of farmers moves closer to retirement. We're able to spread information about organic in grade schools and middle schools across the United States through teachers who develop organic lesson plans. We've been honored to work with the National FFA Organization to provide grants to FFA students who conduct Supervised Agricultural Experience projects focused on organic. Higher education and vocational students in schools across the country are able to pursue their organic agriculture dreams thanks to FOFGF educational grants. Imagine the impact of the CCOF Foundation's support of these young people rippling throughout our communities as they grow older and are able to supply their families and communities with healthy food grown

## CCOF'S MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

### OUR MISSION

CCOF advances organic agriculture for a healthy world. We accomplish our purpose through organic certification, education, advocacy, and promotion.

### OUR VISION

We envision a world where organic *is* the norm.

### OUR VALUES

We value:

- Our community
- Farmers and farming
- Mutual appreciation and support
- Integrity in organic production and certification
- Social, environmental, and economic responsibility
- Transparency, respect, and the democratic process

## CCOF'S STRUCTURE



with respect for the planet. This potential drives us to multiply the Foundation's impact year over year, until organic food is on every home's dinner table.

## Shared Vision, Shared Purpose

Where does CCOF, Inc. fit into these plans? The "original" trade association branch of CCOF did some soul-searching through the strategic planning process to redefine itself in this new season of organizational growth.

The history of CCOF's tri-part organizational structure dates back to the implementation of the NOP regulations, under which organic farmers were no longer able to oversee the certification agency providing the certification for their own businesses. NOP administrators saw this peer-to-peer, chapter-based system as a conflict of interest, and CCOF was forced to restructure. CCOF, Inc. formed CCOF Certification Services as a Limited Liability Corporation (LLC), a wholly-owned subsidiary of CCOF, Inc. that is governed by a management committee appointed by the CCOF, Inc. Board of Directors. To this day, CCOF, Inc. is governed by a member-elected board of directors who guide CCOF's work.

CCOF, Inc.'s role and identity were frequent topics of discussion throughout the strategic planning process. Executive Director/CEO Cathy Calfo explained, "CCOF, Inc. serves an important organizational role, but our struggle through this process was to define that role and maximize its potential. As the connective tissue of the organization, we realize the importance of investing in the branch that provides support for other mission-based activities." A seemingly disparate variety of activities is tackled by the CCOF, Inc. branch: advocating for organic at the federal and state levels, supporting the community of CCOF members through its signature chapter system, and keeping things running smoothly at the CCOF office by maintaining top-notch human resources and business infrastructure, all with the overarching priority of supporting CCOF Certification Services and the CCOF Foundation.

The scope and importance of these activities were encompassed by the priority language in the strategic plan: "We will strengthen the role of CCOF, Inc. as the connective tissue between internal organizational units and between CCOF, its members, and its partners." Although the three CCOF entities are legally separate, the spirit of CCOF isn't easily divided between organizational lines—everyone is working together toward a shared vision, with a shared purpose. In the coming years, CCOF, Inc. will be more strategic than ever at supporting the continued success of all of CCOF's endeavors.

Of course, none of this growth is possible without CCOF's greatest asset: its members. CCOF-certified members, who each belong to one of 13 regional chapters or the processor/handler chapter, now span 42 states and three countries—a breadth the CCOF founders only dreamed about. "CCOF's chapters embody the best qualities of CCOF: belonging, community, and engagement. Our chapters help shape the future of organic through their participation, and also provide a vehicle to involve CCOF's members in the organization's governance," explained Calfo.

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# THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Developing CCOF's 2016-2018 Strategic Plan was a collaborative process that involved all levels of CCOF's organization—boards, staff, members, and external partner organizations.

The CCOF, Inc. Board of Directors; Certification Services, LLC Management Committee; CCOF Foundation Board of Trustees; and staff representatives started the process by dreaming about the future of CCOF through a visioning exercise led by consultant Alfredo Vergara-Lobo.



CCOF staff identified internal and external strategic issues at a company-wide "Town Hall" meeting, which were distilled into a set of strategic issues that inform the priorities outlined in the final plan.



The Strategic Planning Committee and Matrix Mapping Committee formed with members of each of CCOF's governance groups and staff representatives. These committees engaged in data-gathering about CCOF's business lines, organizational priorities, and strategic issues, all of which informed the final strategic plan.



The Strategic Planning Committee compiled feedback from all levels of the organization, and distilled it into an actionable set of priorities as the 2016-2018 CCOF Strategic Plan, which was formally adopted by the CCOF, Inc. Board of Directors at their November 2015 meeting.



At the beginning of 2016, the new strategic plan was implemented. The plan will be used each year to set actionable goals at the management level, which will in turn act as guiding principles for annual departmental work plans. A board committee will oversee ongoing progress toward and completion of strategic plan priorities.

"Collaboration and the democratic process define who we are at every level," Calfo continued. However, organic's booming growth across the country and beyond has raised some challenges for the chapter system and providing opportunities for engagement and representation for members outside the regional chapters within California (and the recently-formed Mexico Chapter). We'll be taking a hard look at our membership model to ensure strategic representation for all our members over the coming years—your voices are all important to us!

Further integrating Spanish language into our programs and services is also a strategy we will be exploring in order to engage the ever-growing segment of Spanish-speaking CCOF members. CCOF currently provides some certification tools and educational resources in Spanish, but we will assess where we can increase these offerings to better support our Spanish-speaking members organization-wide.

## The Next Season of Growth

As we embark on this era of new growth and adjust to the growth that's occurred in the past few years, CCOF is also making it a priority to evaluate and formalize some of our internal functions. With growth, our internal culture has also transformed over time. In the next three years, we will clarify our organizational culture and standardize the "CCOF way": cultivating a passionate, effective team of people who work to realize the organization's goals every day. Not only does this make our objectives achievable, but it trickles down in a very real way to maintaining the excellent level of service we are able to provide to our members.

In light of the ambitious goals laid out in the new strategic plan, CCOF will also be focused on practicing intentionality in the way we balance volume and excellence in our work. We're in a community where there are a multitude of ways we could help or support the advancement of organic, but our priority is to be intentional about the work we choose to do, and do it to the standard of excellence CCOF is known for.

In 1973, CCOF's founders envisioned organic as a viable alternative to the conventional industrial agricultural system and planted the seeds that grew into the organic community we have today. For the past 43 years, we've been tending to those crops, diversifying our plantings, and harvesting the rich community values that have blossomed among organic farmers, processors, retailers, and supporters. Today, we envision something even bigger—a world where organic *is* the norm.

The time has come to dig deep. We have our sights set on the long-term health of organic, and over the next few years, we'll be improving the CCOF soil that will continue sustaining the organization through its next season of growth.

### Thank you to the those who dedicated their time, expertise, and passion in this process of shaping CCOF's future:

Karen Archipley, Jody Biergiel Colclough, Robin Boyle, Cathy Calfo, Sandy Garl, Val George, Allen Harthorn, Phil LaRocca, Jake Lewin, Neal MacDougall, Pete Petri, Tessa Rosichan, and Rachel Witte. Special thanks to consultant Alfredo Vergara-Lobo, whose guidance and support was critical in forming this strategic plan.

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## *Attention California Producers: Help Pass the California Organic Food and Farming Act (AB 1826)*

Join CCOF's member-elected board of directors in calling for a long-overdue update to the California State Organic Program (SOP). If you are an organic farmer based in California, call or write your state legislator today and voice support for the California Organic Food and Farming Act (COFFA)—an act to reform outdated state fees and paperwork.

### **Consider:**

- California is the only state that imposes outdated state fees and paper work upon certified organic producers.
- The additional layer of regulation isn't helping California consumers—it's only adding costs and duplicating national and state regulation of the organic label.
- Time and costs of compliance unfairly burden all types of production—especially small-scale, highly diversified farms.

### **The California Organic Food and Farming Act will:**

- Reduce fees and paperwork for certified organic producers
- Maintain vigorous organic enforcement in California

- Expand the role of the California Products Advisory Committee (COPAC) in advising the Secretary of Agriculture regarding organic agriculture

## **What is the California State Organic Program?**

California is the only state with a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)-approved state organic program. Organic is a federally regulated label, but states may develop state organic programs to enforce federal organic standards upon approval from the USDA. California created a state organic program before the federal law went into effect, and in 2004 the USDA approved California's SOP. Today, California has the only state-level organic enforcement program in the U.S.

The state organic program is not the same as a state-managed organic certification program. California's SOP is not accredited by USDA to provide certification services. Rather, the SOP handles enforcement activities such as investigation of complaints of fraud.

A state organic program has the potential to more efficiently investigate and enforce the federal organic standards. Under the program, the state and its counties can resolve complaints



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# We will maintain vigorous organic enforcement in California while reducing fees and paperwork for certified organic producers.

of fraud, conduct inspections at farmers' markets and on farms, monitor exempt operations (operations that make \$5,000 or less in gross organic sales annually), handle appeals of noncompliance, and collect information from organic farmers.

The downside of California's state organic program is that it has a complex system of duplicative paperwork that is especially burdensome for small- to mid-scale and highly diversified farms, and it complicates the organic certification process. Moreover, valuable enforcement activities that the state could contribute are not designed to supplement federal enforcement, and they are not well-coordinated with other state and certifier enforcement. The National Organic Program (NOP) relies on California's producers to subsidize enforcement costs through SOP fees, allowing it to focus its enforcement funds in all states except California. California's SOP creates local enforcement of federal organic standards, but it needs to be updated to create a fair, meaningful regulatory framework for California's certified producers.

For more details on the history and details about the SOP, read CCOF's report titled *Review of the California State Organic Program*. Look for it in the Policy & Advocacy section of the CCOF website.

## Background on the Development of COFFA

California Central Coast Assemblymember Mark Stone authored the COFFA to maintain organic enforcement while easing outdated, unfair burdens on California's certified organic producers. The bill is based upon the findings and policy recommendations set forth in *Review of the California State Organic Program*.

CCOF wrote the *Review of the California State Organic Program* in collaboration with an advisory committee to ensure input from a range of stakeholders, including organic producers, policy experts, and public officials. The committee helped identify the scope of inquiry and reviewed drafts of the report. CCOF also interviewed over 15 diverse stakeholders and reviewed multiple public documents, including laws and regulations affecting certified organic production and marketing. After reviewing the report, the member-elected CCOF Board of Directors, representing over 2,500 organic businesses in California, unanimously voted to support legislation to reform State Organic Program fees and registration.

The existing state organic law has prescriptive fee, paperwork, and other requirements. COFFA will update language under state law to create a fair and meaningful program that will reduce paperwork and reform the fee structure.

## About COFFA

### COFFA has five goals:

1. Reform the California SOP;
2. Update California law to clarify that the SOP is intended to supplement, not replace, NOP enforcement funds in California;
3. Streamline burdensome paperwork and fee requirements for certified organic operations;
4. Continue a program to monitor non-certified operations; and
5. Update the existing organic advisory committee to the Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture. The updated committee authority will include a role in advising the secretary and land grant universities on organic education, outreach, research, and technical assistance.

The goal of the bill is to streamline fee and registration collection while providing the SOP with the resources it needs to conduct rigorous enforcement activities in the state of California.

## Take Action and Get Involved

Tell your state legislator to support the California Organic Food and Farming Act (COFFA), AB 1826.

1. Visit [www.ccof.org/coffa](http://www.ccof.org/coffa) and send an electronic letter of support to your legislator.
1. Contact [policy@ccof.org](mailto:policy@ccof.org) to be listed as an official supporter.
2. Attend your CCOF chapter meeting to find out more about the bill and how to support it.

With your help, we will maintain vigorous organic enforcement in California while reducing fees and paperwork for certified organic producers through the passage of COFFA. Visit [www.ccof.org/coffa](http://www.ccof.org/coffa) for more information.

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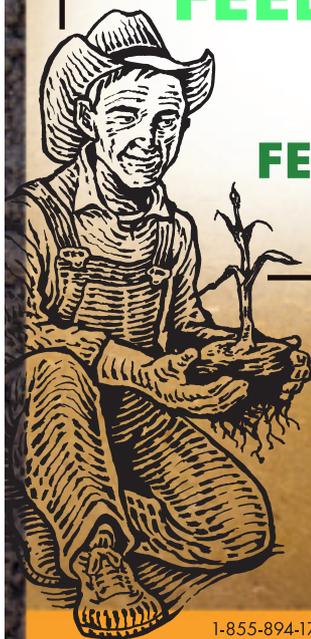
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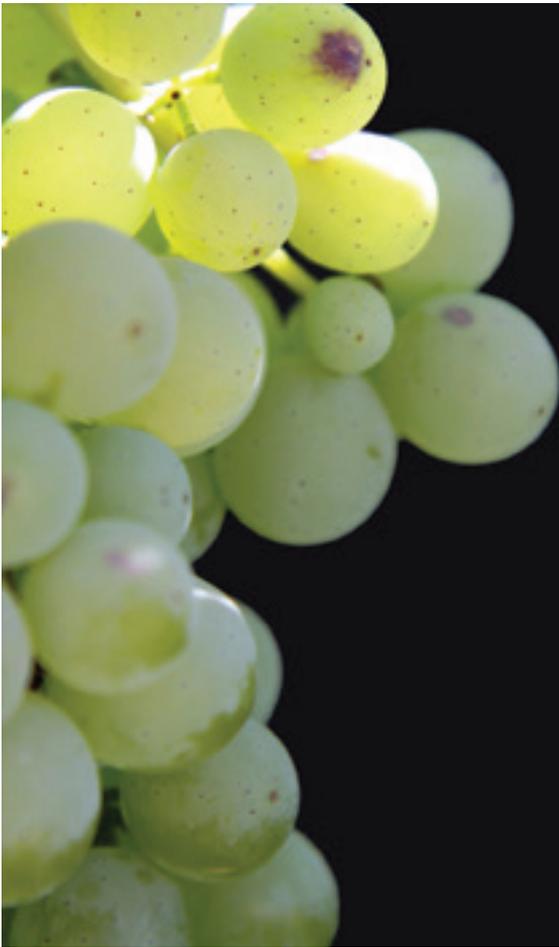
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## ***New Studies Show Dietary Benefits of Organic Dairy and Meat***

Two new studies out of Newcastle University have confirmed several benefits of consuming organic dairy and meat. The papers, published in the *British Journal of Nutrition*, show that organic milk and meat contain about 50 percent higher levels of beneficial omega-3 fatty acids than conventionally-produced products. They also show that organic meat had lower concentrations of two saturated fats, and that organic milk and dairy products contain 40 percent more of the heart-healthy conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) than their conventional counterparts. Apart from marginally lower iodine levels, organic milk had several beneficial increases in nutritional minerals and antioxidants, such as higher concentrations of iron, vitamin E, selenium, and carotenoids.

While several other studies have supported the benefits of consuming organic milk and meat, these publications are groundbreaking. They are the first to utilize state-of-the-art meta-analysis techniques. Plus, these are the most comprehensive reviews ever conducted on these topics, and drew upon findings from 196 papers on milk and 67 papers on meat from around the world.

### **Importance of Omega Fatty Acid Profiles**

One of the main findings was that both organic meat and dairy products had markedly higher levels of omega-3 fatty acids. This is important because diets low in omega-3s, especially in combination with high omega-6 diets, are risk factors for cardiovascular disease, cancer, and inflammatory and autoimmune diseases. Diets with high omega-3 intakes, on the other hand, suppress these conditions. For example, one study found that low ratios of omega-6 to omega-3 fatty acids suppressed inflammation in patients with rheumatoid arthritis, reduced asthma severity, and decreased cardiovascular disease mortality. Other studies have shown how low omega-6:omega-3 ratios result in a decreased risk of breast cancer and dementia, and improved eye health.

The recent Newcastle papers show that choosing organic meat and dairy could help consumers overcome the lack of omega-3 fatty acids in a typical Western diet without increasing calorie or saturated fat intake. "Omega-3s are linked to reductions in cardiovascular disease, improved neurological development and function, and better immune function," said Chris

Seal, Professor of Food and Human Nutrition at Newcastle University. "But getting enough in our diet is difficult. Our study suggests that switching to organic would go some way towards improving intakes of these important nutrients."

This research follows up on several publications confirming the nutritional benefits of organic dairy. Research out of Washington State University in 2013, for instance, showed that organic dairy has 25 percent less omega-6 fatty acids and 62 percent more omega-3 fatty acids than conventional milk, resulting in a 2.5-fold higher omega-6:omega-3 ratio in conventional milk compared to organic milk. In addition, the approximate 2:1 ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 fatty acids in organic milk is close to the levels scientists regard as optimal in terms of prevention of cardiovascular disease.

### **Other Benefits of Organic Dairy**

In addition to higher levels of omega-3 fatty acids, organic milk contains higher levels of CLA, iron, vitamin E, and carotenoids, all of which are associated with health benefits.

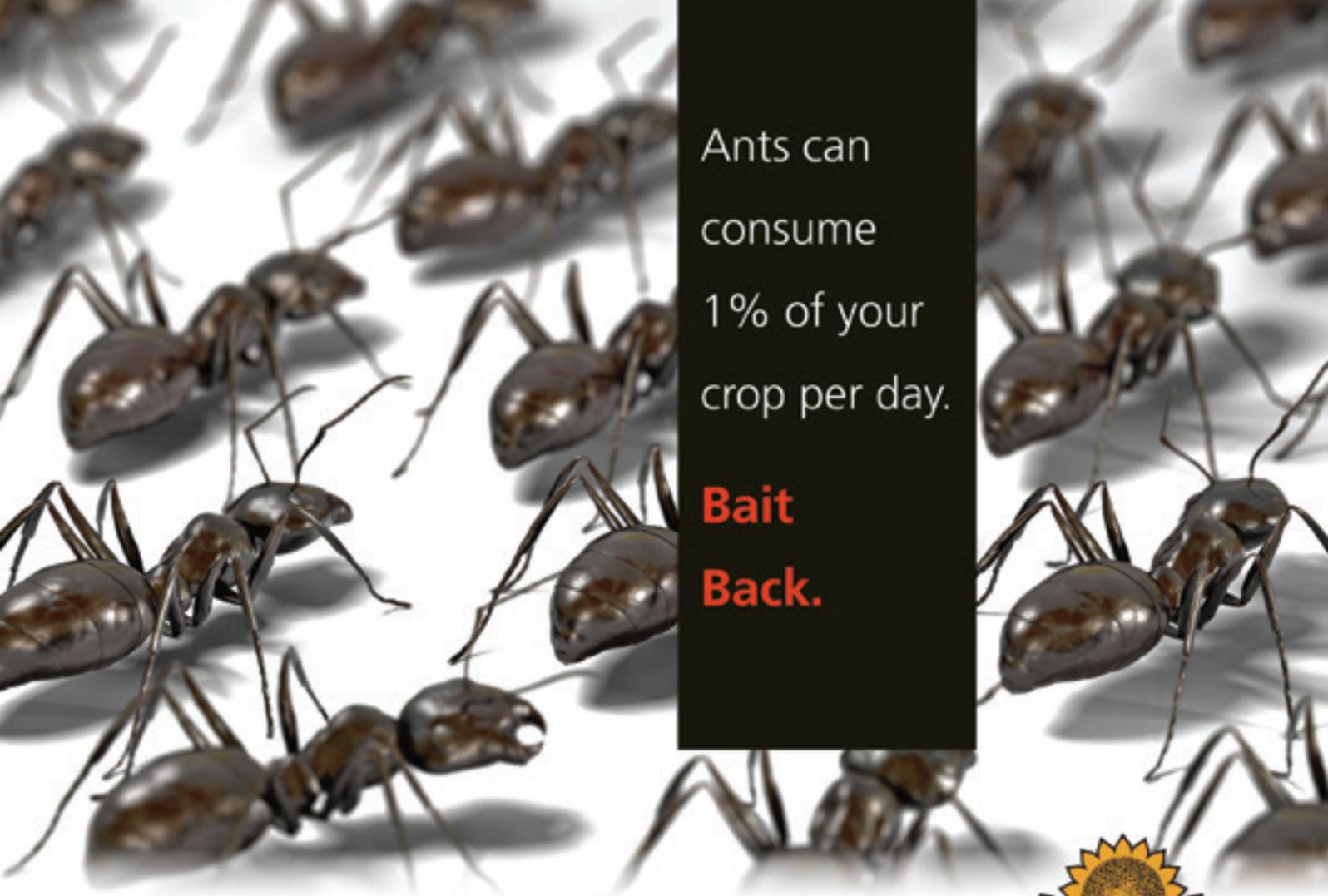
Other studies have explored a multitude of benefits that organic dairy and meat can provide consumers. One study tackled antibiotic-resistant bacteria, finding that bacteria collected from dairy herds on conventional farms were more resistant to antibiotics than those on organic farms. Other studies looked at antibiotic resistance levels in meat such as chicken and pork, and found that conventional meat had bacteria that were more resistant to antimicrobials than organic meat.

Additionally, pesticides and growth hormones are banned from use in organic operations, so when consumers choose organic, they are avoiding potentially harmful synthetic chemicals.

### **Conclusion**

As stated by the study's lead author and Organic Center's Science Advisory Board member Carlo Leifert, "People choose organic milk and meat for three main reasons: improved animal welfare, the positive impacts of organic farming on the environment, and the perceived health benefits." This work, he noted, builds on the team's previous studies finding that organic crops have up to 60 percent higher antioxidant levels than conventionally-grown crops.

"We have shown without doubt there are composition differences between organic and conventional food. Taken together, the three studies on crops, meat, and milk suggest that a switch to organic fruit, vegetables, meat, and dairy products would provide significantly higher amounts of dietary antioxidants and omega-3 fatty acids," he wrote.



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## ***Update on Hydroponic/ Container Production***

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In recent years we have seen an increase in the number and complexity of container-based agricultural production systems. These production systems were addressed by the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) in 2010 in their recommendation regarding Terrestrial Plants in Containers and Enclosures. This recommendation advised a prohibition on hydroponic and aeroponic systems, but was never finalized into official standards. In the interim a wide spectrum of container production has continued to evolve ranging from transplants, to rooftop gardens, to commercial crop production.

CCOF is participating in the hydroponic task force formed in 2015 by the National Organic Program (NOP). This group was formed to provide additional technical information and background to support NOP's response. A final report is planned to be completed in 2016.

NOP may consider changes to the requirements for terrestrial plants in containers and enclosures (i.e., hydroponics, aquaponics, aeroponics, and crops produced within containers in substrate/media of any kind). This is an important time for operations with these production systems to review the relevant standards, existing NOSB recommendations regarding container production and to participate in the standard-setting

process and dialogue. Potentially affected operations are strongly encouraged to keep abreast of developments and engage directly as this discussion unfolds at the standards-setting level.

**Operations with novel production systems, hydroponic production, and container production may be subject to changes in standards at some point.**

The exact details and timeline of these potential changes are unknown.

Due to the uncertainty of the outcome and timeline, the financial and operational implications for your operation should be carefully assessed. Future investment should only be made after taking into account the potential that standards may change to require new practices, or specific practices could be disallowed at some point.

CCOF is working to fully understand the operations of those using greenhouses, containers and hydroponic systems and, wherever possible, helping to make them aware of all existing standards, recommendations and potential changes. This will help operations assess impacts on their systems and provide tools for them to participate directly in the larger discussion. CCOF will also be carefully applying existing natural resources elements to greenhouse and container production wherever applicable. Over time these efforts may include new inspection elements, Organic System Plan updates, and/or notifications.

Due to the potential complexities involved, CCOF may not be able to review applications for container or hydroponic production within our expedited services program. We

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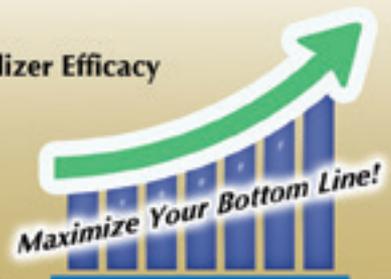
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# *As agriculture evolves, consistent standards provide a level playing field and result in positive impacts on agriculture and the world.*

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encourage operations to work with us directly and to either apply with ample time or allow CCOF time to review changes to their operations prior to implementation.

Hallmarks of organic production and philosophy such as site-specific management, robust biological activity, conservation, and maintenance or improvement of natural resources will continue to be important elements long-term. In general, systems that do not rely solely on direct application of liquid nutrition and that mimic soil and soil biology are more likely to meet the 2010 NOSB recommendation, which has not been finalized with the current standards. Operations can learn the latest by visiting our container production page under Standards and Program Manuals at [www.ccof.org/standards](http://www.ccof.org/standards).

As agriculture evolves and new production systems are developed in response to unique challenges and new constraints, we are hopeful that a robust discussion and collaborative approach at the national level will result in clear and consistent standards that provide a level playing field and result in positive impacts on agriculture and the world.

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## **Always Add Transitioning Acreage Immediately**

With the 2016 inspection cycle in full swing, please remember that all operations are required to document new and transitioning parcels as part of your Organic System Plan (OSP). Our inspectors will be verifying if there are any parcels not currently in your OSP that are in transition or newly under organic management. Failure to identify these during the inspection may result in noncompliances and/or the inability to recognize land history prior to submission of the land to CCOF.

You must update your OSP with changes that can affect your organic compliance, such as new land managed under your operation.

**All land under your management and within the 36-month planned transition to organic must be disclosed, included in your system plan, and inspected annually. Add all transitioning parcels and new ground to your OSP as soon as the land is under your managerial control.**

At all inspections, be prepared to allow the inspector to visually inspect all transitioning parcels.

Farms that implement transition of conventional ground, or begin managing new ground without including it in their OSP or

inspection until right before harvest of new crops can result in failure to achieve certification and/or avoidable expenses. This places a time constraint on the certification process, and may result in additional, last-minute inspection and/or may make certification of the crop impossible prior to harvest. Timely additions and inspections of all ground under management helps ensure that any potential issues are identified early, you achieve certification when it is required, and the full scope of your operation is appropriately included in the CCOF certification program.

Submitting parcel paperwork in advance of your inspection will greatly reduce the cost of adding acreage. This will also help CCOF plan cost-effective inspections.

You can find all necessary forms by visiting [www.ccof.org](http://www.ccof.org) and clicking the Add Acreage topic under Forms and Documents, or visit [www.ccof.org/documents/topic/add-acreage](http://www.ccof.org/documents/topic/add-acreage). If you have new parcels or parcels in transition that you have not previously submitted, please submit appropriate additional acreage documentation to [inbox@ccof.org](mailto:inbox@ccof.org) as soon possible. Contact your Certification Service Specialist with any questions.

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## **Organic Input Material (OIM) Program Reviews Now Accepted**

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) OIM program is a registration and approval program that requires fertilizers and other soil amendments marketed for use in organic agriculture to be registered with CDFA and reviewed for National Organic Program (NOP) compliance.



**CCOF will now accept organic input materials that have been approved by the CDFA OIM program.**

Going forward, CCOF will generally approve materials that have achieved a CDFA listing for use by CCOF certified operations. This change reflects the NOP's decision that the CDFA OIM program meets the criteria for a material review organization, as set forth in NOP Policy Memo 11-4, Evaluation of Materials Used in Organic Crop, Livestock and Handling Operations. CCOF growers will save time and experience less confusion through this expansion of the CCOF materials database. However, only those materials approved by CCOF based on CDFA review will be shown as such in the CCOF database and online MyCCOF: Materials Search. The entire CDFA list will not appear unless an individual material is recorded as CDFA approved.



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