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22

Innovations in Organic

Many of our certified organic members go the extra mile, continually reevaluating what it means to be a sustainable business.

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Organic Innovation and Inspiration: Join the Conversation!

Organic Innovation and Inspiration-Ideas that are changing the way we grow is the theme of this year's CCOF annual conference. This year, we're heading to Visalia, California on February 9 and 10 for the event, located in California's Central Valley—the heart of the largest agricultural economy in the nation.

Keynote speaker Gary Hirshberg, chairman and co-founder of Stonyfield Farm, the world's leading organic yogurt producer, and founding partner of Just Label It, will join the CCOF conference to share his thoughts on organic going mainstream, advancing consumer appreciation of what organic means, and maintaining organic integrity and credibility in a dynamic marketplace.

At the conference, major retail and brand representatives will also discuss ideas and initiatives that are helping scale up organic production to meet demand. Representatives of multi-generational family farms will share their perspective on organic's role in a discussion on keeping the family in family farms. We'll also hear stories of organic innovation from certified organic producers who push the envelope in new and different ways to bring organic products to family tables.

On the eve of the conference, we will gather together for a CCOF Foundation Awards Feast, where CCOF will honor Robynn Schrader, CEO of the National Co+op Grocers (NCG), with our Organic Champion Award. NCG was a key partner in launching the Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund, a partnership between the CCOF Foundation and leading organic producers to invest in a next generation of organic producers. Between 2013 and 2015, the fund distributed more than \$300,000 to nearly 200 students and teachers (out of about 600 applicants)!

The setting for this year's conference is both a beacon for U.S. agriculture and a place where the challenges of agriculture and rural economies are brought into focus. It is a place where more than 300 crops are grown and is a center of California's \$12 billion livestock sector. It is also a place where drought, an intense regulatory framework, environmental challenges, and economic disparity push us more than ever before to look for inspiration and find new ideas.

We hope that you will join us for an engaging discussion! Visit www.ccof.org/2017 to get your ticket.



Cathy

Cathy Calfo
CCOF Executive Director/CEO

Issue Contributors

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Jamie Collins has been growing organically since 2001. She owns Serendipity Farms, which consists of 20 CCOF-certified organic acres in four different microclimates between Carmel and Watsonville. This allows Collins to grow a diverse array of row and tree crops, blueberries, and perennial herbs and flowers, which she sells through up to 10 weekly farmers' markets, local restaurants, u-picks, and direct to the community via social media meeting points and a CSA. Collins is also an organic farm and processor inspector for CCOF and writes about food and farming for various publications.

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Hawaii Counties' GMO Ban Prohibited

Three counties in Hawaii received notice in November that they cannot enact their own bans or regulations on GMOs and pesticides. The United States Court of Appeals found that the bans violated both state and federal law, reflecting an earlier decision in the United States District Court. Hawaii state law prohibits counties from regulating agricultural matters, making the counties' proposed bans invalid.

Maui County voted in 2014 to ban the cultivation and testing of GMO crops on the island. Kauai County enacted pesticide notification requirements and mandated pesticide buffer zones. On Hawaii Island, an ordinance banned open-air testing of GMOs. Concerns about GMO seed companies and pesticides prompted passage of the laws; now, all three regulations will fail to regulate GMO production in their counties, as state laws overrule them.

GMO crops grown on the islands primarily include papaya and corn. Local organic farmers cited concerns about GMO drift from neighboring farms, while residents who supported the bans were worried about the effects of pesticide exposure from the materials applied to GMO crops. In Kauai, pesticides were detected at low levels in the air at a local middle school, further distressing anti-GMO and anti-pesticide citizens on the island.

The court decision is a major win for the large agricultural companies who fought against the regulations. The Hawaii Crop Improvement Association—including member companies Dow AgroSciences, DuPont Pioneer, Monsanto, and Syngenta—was

a major voice in the conversation against the county-level GMO bans. "This is good news for local agriculture in Hawaii, as it clears up potential confusion over who has jurisdiction in regulating agricultural operations, leaving that responsibility with the appropriate government agencies," said the Hawaii Crop Improvement Association's Executive Director Bennette Misalucha in a statement.

The Center for Food Safety represented the counties on the other side of the issue. According to their senior attorney George Kimbrell, the decision will only result in the counties' citizens changing course. "We will continue to stand and fight with the people of Hawaii against these chemical companies, and part of that is going to be demanding action at the state level to protect the people and the environment," he said. Proponents of the GMO bans are already making plans to introduce state-level regulations concerning pesticides and GMOs.

"What the decision makes clear is that it is the state's responsibility to meaningfully protect against undue harm from pesticides, whether it's to workers on a field or to kids in schools nearby, and we have an obligation to make sure that safety is paramount," said Representative Chris Lee (D-Lanikai/Waimanalo), chairman of the Hawaii House Committee on Energy and Environmental Protection. "And looking forward, I do think there's a middle road that can satisfy everyone that ensures public safety and doesn't put an undue burden on anyone."

The use of GMOs is prohibited in organic production, and organic production supports a food system that values environmental stewardship, public health, animal welfare, transparent labels, and traceability of products without the use of toxic fertilizers or pesticides. Learn more at www.ccof.org/non-gmo.

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USDA Boosts Conservation Innovation and Value-Added Products

USDA Conservation Innovation Grants

In September 2016, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced an investment of \$26.6 million into 45 projects focusing on conservation initiatives on rural and urban farms throughout the country as part of USDA's Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program. The projects funded by the 2016 grants cover water quality, conservation finance, and assistance to those who have been historically underserved by the USDA; 25 percent of the funding went to historically underserved producers, military veterans, and new and beginning farmers.

The CIG program focuses on providing funding to projects that “stimulate the development and adoption of innovative approaches and technologies for conservation on agricultural lands,” according to the CIG webpage.

The USDA received 170 applications in the 2016 round of funding, requesting more than \$100 million. In response to the overwhelming demand and importance of these projects, USDA increased their initial investment of \$20 million to \$26.6 million, plus an additional \$32.5 million in matching investments from the grantees. Since 2009, USDA has awarded more than \$173 million to 414 CIG projects across the country.

A new area of focus for CIG grants since 2015 has been the area of conservation finance. Thirteen of the 2016 projects focus on conservation finance, which “support the design and implementation of approaches to attract private capital to working lands conservation,” per the USDA press release. These projects cover several aspects of conservation, including pollinators; sage-grouse conservation; forest, carbon, and corporate chain sustainability; and organic farming.

“The Conservation Innovation Grant program is a highly competitive conservation grant program that helps put the very best conservation tools to work on privately held farms and forests, for maximum environmental impact,” said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. “This investment will offer farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners new ways to protect their natural resources and new revenue streams to keep their operations viable, building on the record amount of conservation work that has already been done under this Administration. Demand for this type of support outpaces

what USDA can provide alone, but outside partners are willing to make additional investments because they see the good it can do for the environment and for their communities.”

To learn more about the 2016 selected projects, visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/cig.

\$25 million will be invested in the selected 2017 CIG projects, which will focus on conservation finance; data analytics for natural resources; pay-for-success models to stimulate conservation adoption; precision conservation; water management technologies and approaches; and benefitting historically underserved farmers, ranchers, and private forest owners. Up to \$2 million of the 2017 funding has been set aside for projects that benefit historically underserved farmers and ranchers, military veterans, beginning farmers and ranchers, and those with limited resources and the organizations that include or support them.

USDA Value-Added Producer Grants

In October 2016, USDA announced 325 recipients of a total of \$45 million through the Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program. VAPG grants can be used by recipients to develop new product lines from their agricultural products or boost marketing for existing products. USDA prioritized applicants who are veterans, socially-disadvantaged groups, beginning farmers and ranchers, operators of small- and medium-sized family farms and ranches, and farmer and rancher cooperatives.

“Value-Added Producer Grants are one of USDA's most sought-after funding sources for veteran and beginning farmers, and rural-based businesses,” Vilsack explained. “These grants provide a much-needed source of financing to help producers develop new product lines and increase their income, and keep that income in their communities. Economic development initiatives like this one are working—the unemployment rate in rural America is at an eight-year low and incomes rose 3.4 percent last year. Small business entrepreneurship, which Value-Added Producer Grants support, is a major reason why rural America is making a comeback.”

A total of \$183 million VAPG awards have been disbursed by the USDA since 2009 to 1,441 recipients, as a key element of the department's Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food initiative.

Stay Informed

CCOF regularly announces grant opportunities from USDA and other agencies on our blog at www.ccof.org/blog. Keep your eyes out for upcoming grants that may help you grow your own organic business!



Ferticell has deepened its footprint in the organic market by offering 6 new, organic certified plant nutrition products, designed to fit the needs in the field. First established in Europe almost 30 years ago, and 12 years here in the US, the Ferticell product line brings agronomists, advisors, and growers a one-stop source for all of their organic nutritional needs. We encourage you to contact your local sales representative today for more information or visit our website at www.agroplasmausa.com.



Ferticell



Two generations of the Muller Family: (left to right) Tom, Frank, Joe Sr., and Louie Muller.

Muller Ranch Recognized by Woodland Chamber of Commerce

This fall, CCOF-certified Muller Ranch was named Agribusiness of the Year by the Woodland Chamber of Commerce. Muller Ranch, located outside of Woodland, California, grows a variety of crops on several thousand acres across Yolo County, including tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, wine grapes, garlic, onions, sunflowers, and recently, almonds and walnuts.

The farm was started in 1967 by Joe Muller, Sr., who immigrated to the United States from Switzerland, initially operating a dairy farm in the Santa Clara Valley before relocating to Yolo County to grow cereal grains and alfalfa. His three sons Louie, Frank, and Tom returned to the farm after graduating from college, and in 2013, Joe's grandsons Colin C. and Colin T. also joined the family farming business.

"My father has been a model of how to transition a farm from one generation to the next," Tom said at the Chamber of Commerce event where Muller Ranch was recognized. "Our siblings, especially Joe—the pioneer—and Louie, have spent many years working on the farm. Louie retired in January and he deserves this as much as Frank or I do. We're also fortunate to have the next generation on the farm. We're excited about the new energy and knowledge that they bring. Both of our sons are involved in the business and they have certainly made my life easier. They

give me great pride in knowing that our farm, which we have worked so hard to build, will continue for another generation."

As we see the average farmer age increase across the United States, fostering the next generation's desire for agricultural careers is vital to the survival of farms in our country. The Muller brothers are doing their part by encouraging their sons' agricultural careers in the family business. "The involvement of multiple generations allows the current generation of farmers to look at the long run a little differently. It places more importance on the value of stewardship of the land and on the importance of biodiversity," said Frank. "To the younger generation of farmers who are considering returning to the farm, we believe that there are unprecedented opportunities available to them. There is a growing consumer base out there that places a high importance on how and where their food is produced, and these consumers are willing to provide value to the farmers who can fill this niche. Creativity on the farm has value and provides opportunities that have never before been available to farmers."

The family's farm also focuses on sustainable practices when raising their variety of crops, including not only organic certification, but also drip irrigation systems that reduce water usage, utilization of cover crops, and environmental restoration and natural habitat enhancement, among other activities. "Our farm has always had a philosophy of sustainable agriculture. What it means is leaving your farm better at the end of the year than when you started the year. We always want to leave things better for the next generation, and I think we've done a good job of that. There's a tremendous amount of pride in what we're doing out here," Frank explained.

Organic certification is also an important aspect of the family's business. "We see a robust and growing market for organically



CCOF "Likes"

Member News Meets Social Media



Lonely Mountain Farm (@lonelymountainfarm)
via Instagram:

Getting close to the end of the CSA season- but the boxes are still pretty beautiful!



EUSD Farm Lab via Facebook:

Rain is welcomed where EUSD school lunch grows. This soil has been amended to use each rain drop to its fullest potential, because water conservation is at the root of sustainable farming! #farmtoschool #EUSDleads



Pasta Sonoma via Facebook:

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“You have to have research in order for agriculture to progress, to feed the masses of people who are out there.”

grown products and have increased our organic acres and production to be a part of this trend,” Frank explained. “Organic production adds diversity to our farm and to our marketplace. Organic certification provides the reassurance to our customers that the products grown on our farm will meet the established expectations and standards.”

The Mullers also maintain a strong connection with the University of California, Davis (UC Davis), where Frank and Louie studied in the 1970s. Today, they still collaborate with UC Davis to advance agricultural research by lending their acreage to studies. “We believe in opening our farm to any kind of research project that someone’s interested in,” Frank explained. “So we’ve done soil studies, cover crop studies, native pollinator habitat studies, bird studies... you can go right down the list. Every year we probably have four or five different projects going on, and even though I graduated from UC Davis a number of years ago, it’s still the place I learn the most.” His brother Tom agreed, saying, “You have to have research in order for agriculture to progress, to feed the masses of people who are out there.”

It was for their commitment to the environment, agricultural progress, and community contributions that 190 people gathered on October 27 to honor Tom and Frank at the Woodland Chamber of Commerce’s Agribusiness of the Year luncheon. Tom spoke at the luncheon on behalf of the family, praising his father’s commitment to agriculture and his family’s dedication to the business.

“This fall marks the 50 years that the Muller family has been on our farm,” Tom told the audience. “I would like to think that over this time we have had a positive impact on our community, our farm, and our employees. I am very grateful to be part of this community and give thanks every day that this is where my parents decided to set their roots.”

Enza Zaden Announces New Facility, Partnership

Earlier this year, organic seed development received a boost through new initiatives put forth by seed company Enza Zaden and their organic division Vitalis Organic Seeds, certified by CCOF.

In October, Enza Zaden unveiled a new 43,000 square foot building to expand their existing headquarters in Salinas, California. The new facilities not only contain office space for employees, but also include an industrial-quality seed processing, storage, and distribution center. “Our building expansion allows us to offer significantly increased inventory of diverse crops, which is important to growers across the U.S. Especially here in the Salinas Valley, where we have a dedicated team on the ground to directly service regional growers,” said Ton van der Velden, President and CEO, Enza Zaden USA.

Increasing the seed development and inventory capacity is not the only exciting feature of the new facility; the company also focused on environmentally-friendly design for the new structure, underscoring their commitment to sustainability. The new structure features water- and energy-efficient systems, use of regional and recycled building materials, and the installation of more than 700 solar panels in 2017. The new facility includes organic seed handling certification, providing an opportunity to expand local organic seed inventory.

Vitalis also announced a partnership with Wholesum Harvest earlier this year that features organic tomatoes grown by Wholesum Harvest from Vitalis organic seed. The tomatoes grown through the project will be labeled as “Vitalis Born, Wholesum Raised” to celebrate the seed-to-product organic nature of the produce. “We arrived at this decision through rigorous trialing of genetic material under multiple organic production systems and locations combined with a varietal selection process prioritizing flavor and quality. Through this quality mark, we are demonstrating our commitment that organic agriculture should start with organic seed,” explained Wholesum Harvest Marketing Manager Jessie Gunn.

To learn more about Vitalis Organic Seeds, the “Vitalis Born, Wholesum Raised” campaign, or their new facility, visit usa.vitalisorganic.com.

2017 CCOF Annual Meeting and Conference

Save the date for CCOF’s 2017 Annual Meeting and Conference events on February 9-10, 2017, in Visalia, California. This year’s theme—Organic Innovation and Inspiration—will feature the innovative techniques organic producers, handlers, retailers, and other change-makers are using to address current economic and environmental issues, as well as big ideas for tackling the challenges of tomorrow. We invite you to join other innovators to change the world by changing the way we grow.

The festivities begin Thursday evening with our first annual CCOF Foundation Awards Feast. Hear from the next generation of organic producers and the champions who are helping them build their careers in agriculture.

Friday’s full-day conference will focus on the innovations that are shaping our organic world, including a keynote address from Stonyfield Farm Chairman Gary Hirshberg. From new technology to out-of-the-box solutions for sustainability, you won’t want to miss this show and tell from some of organic’s biggest thinkers.

You’ll also learn more about the organic community in the Central Valley, as we highlight CCOF’s members and their state-of-the-art businesses in the region. Visit www.ccof.org/2017 for details.

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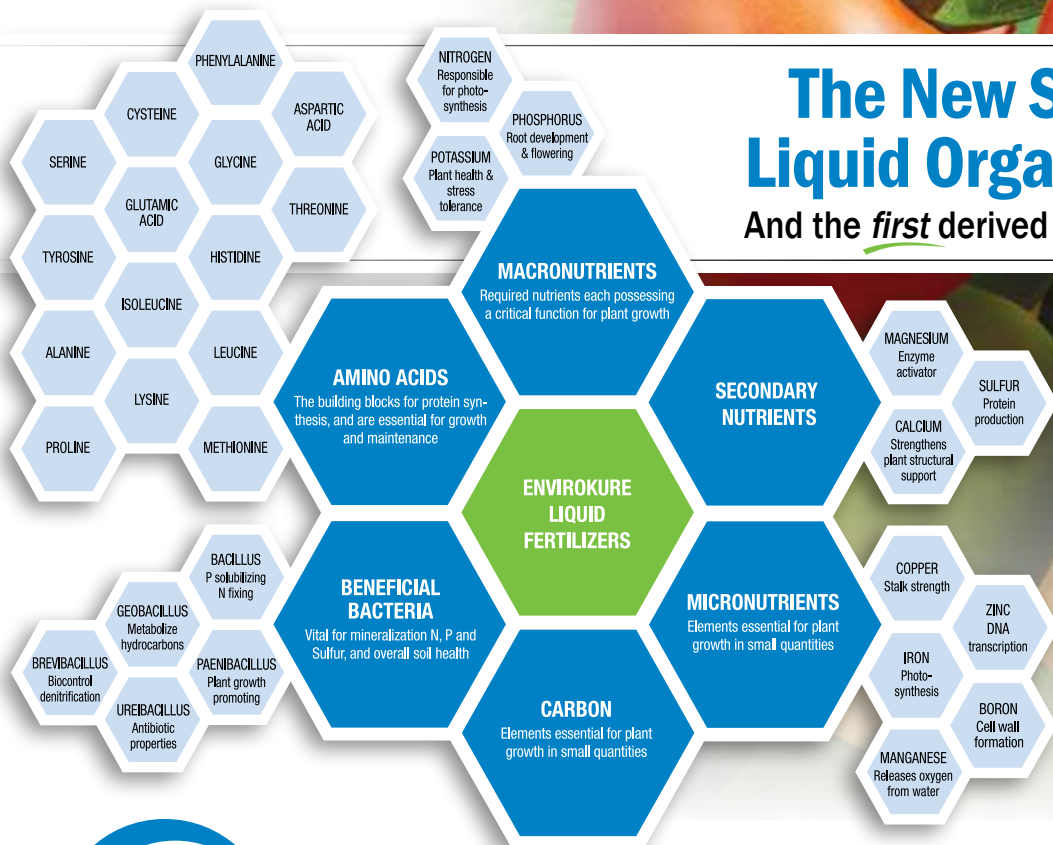
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PROGRAMS



The CCOF Foundation and Lundberg Family Farms hosted a field day about growing organic quinoa in the Central Coast region of California in spring 2016.

Inspired by Organic: CCOF Members Support the Organic Training Institute

Across our certification, advocacy, marketing, and educational work, CCOF prides itself on being an organization that is member-driven and organic-focused. Founded by organic farmers to serve their interests and that of the organic community, CCOF has a long history of connecting producers with the resources they need to succeed. This combination of characteristics and history informs all of CCOF's work, but especially shines in the area of education. Conducted through the Organic Training Institute (OTI), CCOF's workshops, field days, and webinars cover the gamut of technical, political, and business issues that affect organic producers.

The OTI blossoms under the auspices of the CCOF Foundation. During the last three years, just under 2,000 organic and conventional producers, processors, agricultural professionals, academics, and journalists have attended OTI trainings.

The diversity of educational offerings is made possible through the engagement of experienced organic producers and partner organizations who host, sponsor, and present at these in-person and online events. Following are profiles of just a sampling of over 150 businesses and organizations who have

helped bring OTI events to life over the last three years. These businesses have given their time and their hearts to educating others in order to expand organic.



San Francisco Wholesale Market, Veritable Vegetable, Earl's Organic Produce, Heath & Lejeune, Better Life Organics

Organic wholesalers in both San Francisco and Los Angeles regularly open their doors and walk-in coolers to prospective organic producers who are interested in learning about organic wholesale markets. "It's all about continuing our long tradition of supporting local and regional farmers," said Michael Janis, General Manager of the SF Wholesale Produce Market. "We value connecting producers through the CCOF tour to wholesale distribution, which is a critical component of a vibrant food system." Thank you to the owners of these businesses for taking time out of their long workdays to connect with producers. Our wholesale market tours are some of our most popular events-keep your eyes out for the 2017 tours!



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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. Trainings focus on topics requested by organic professionals, including: on-farm resource management, climate-friendly farming practices, food safety practices and certification, wholesale marketing, and more. All event dates and locations are subject to change—check online for the latest details.

FEBRUARY 9-10, 2017

Visalia, California

**CCOF Annual Meeting and Conference—
Organic Innovation and Inspiration:
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FEBRUARY 27, 2017

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MARCH 3, 2017

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Food Safety Workshop for Organic Produce Growers

MARCH 2017 (EXACT DATE TBD)

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Food Safety Workshop for Organic Produce Growers*

**Register for these events and more
at www.ccof.org/events »**

**Visit www.ccof.org/oti-2017 in
January for a preview of this year's
Organic Training Institute events.**

*This CCOF Foundation event is separate from OTI events, but will include educational talks and seminars on organic topics.



Love & Hummus

Love & Hummus became certified organic by CCOF in 2011. Owner Donna Sky presented at our Breaking into Retail Webinar in summer 2014. She shared her experiences, lending the audience a sense of what it takes to start an organic processing business and ideas of how to make the retail environment work for independent food companies. CCOF was privileged to have Sky share some of her love of organic with us!

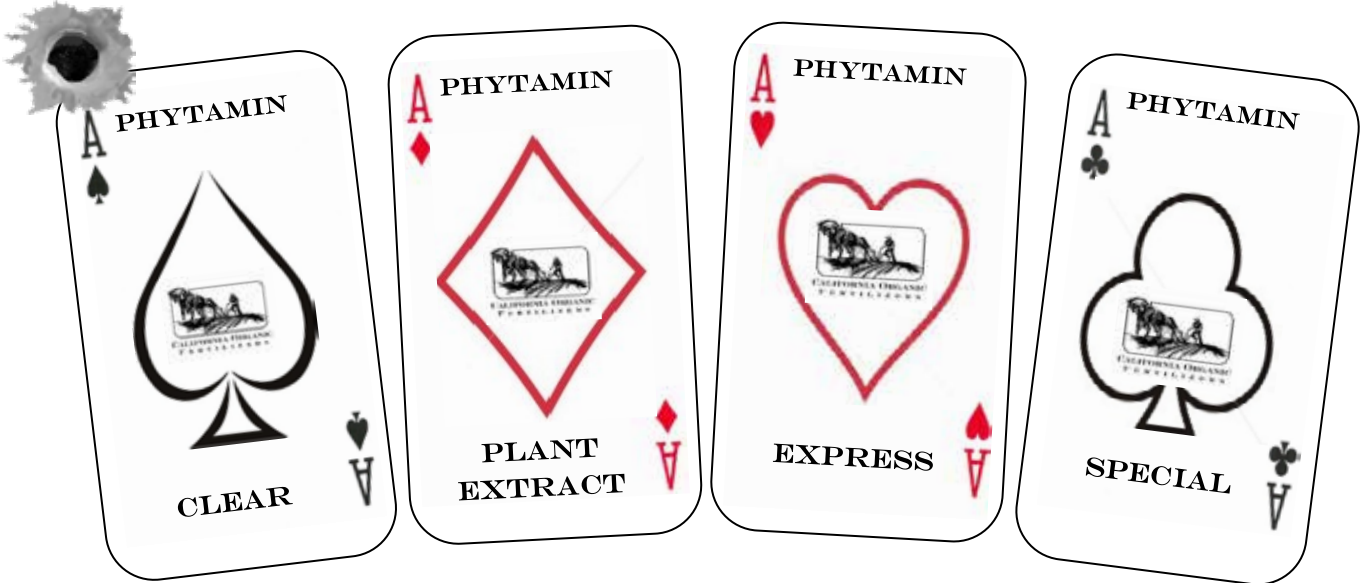


Lundberg Family Farms

In spring 2016, the CCOF Foundation and Lundberg Family Farms hosted a field day about growing organic quinoa in the Central Coast region of California. The collaboration—as part of the CCOF Foundation's ongoing series of Go Organic! field days—trained conventional farmers on how to transition to organic practices. The well-attended, day-long workshop focused on organic regulations and pest management strategies, along with information from Lundberg about market opportunities. After the event, Lundberg Family Farms' Small Grains Developer Fred Strachan said, "The CCOF Foundation was great to work with. Lundberg was able to connect with folks we could not have without the event."

The OTI will continue to offer a diversity of classes, field days and webinars designed to build community among organic producers and foster relationships with the broader agricultural community. If your business or organization is interested in partnering with the CCOF Foundation on an OTI event, please get in touch!

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Chapter Activity: Fall Highlights

Sierra Gold chapter members met in Grass Valley at the Briarpatch Co-op in early October. They discussed a wide range of issues, including water quality management requirements, the new state organic law, the local irrigation district's aquatic spray program, and the federal organic certification cost share program. UC Cooperative Extension Farm Advisor Cindy Fake presented information on the Asian citrus psyllid discovery in Lincoln that has since resulted in a quarantine on citrus trees and fruit in part of Placer County.

The **Fresno-Tulare** chapter met for the third time this year on October 20 in Selma. Board Representative Vernon Peterson reported on CCOF's growth in member numbers and in staff. He noted that CCOF grew from 1,400 members in 2011 to 3,384 members in 2016. Treasurer Eldon Thiesen gave the financial report. Chapter members discussed how to involve more members in the chapter and decided to send out a member survey to gather ideas.

The **San Luis Obispo** chapter held its second meeting of the year October 23 in Atascadero. CCOF's accounting specialist Michelle Giovannari attended and made a special presentation on applying for organic certification cost share reimbursement. She was able to correct one common misconception about cost share: you do not have to wait until you receive your inspection bill to apply. Cost share will re-open for applications in early 2017, and CCOF staff will be on hand to advise all members on how to maximize their cost share refunds. Chapter President and Board Representative Jutta Thoerner chaired the meeting, which also featured a treasurer's report by Eric Michielssen.

South Coast held a barbecue meeting at La Cumbre Canyon Ranch in Santa Barbara. Chapter leaders Harriet Sharp, Maren Johnston, and Nancy Callahan worked with Board Representative/Chapter President Allen Harthorn to organize the event. Harthorn presented an update to members. He plans to retire from the CCOF board after representing the chapter for nine years. The chapter will hold an election before the end of the year to fill his seat. Thank you for your service, Allen!

The **North Coast** chapter held its third meeting of the year in November in St. Helena. Chapter members are eager to establish a scholarship program to support students who are studying organic farming. Guest speaker Jessy Parr, assistant director of CCOF, was able to provide some tips based on her experience managing the CCOF Foundation's organic scholarship programs. Parr also gave an overview of upcoming CCOF events. Moriah Schalock of Evergreen Growers Supply gave a talk on utilizing beneficial insects to manage pests in organic crops.

At its November meeting, the **Kern** chapter held an election and re-elected its existing chapter leaders for the next two years: Ben Diesl, Grimmway, chapter president; Mark Campbell, Bel Lehr, vice president; Pete Belluomini, Bel Lehr, treasurer; Kim Dixon, Grimmway, secretary; and Malcolm Ricci, Bolthouse, board representative. Ricci gave a board update while Campbell presented the treasurer's report on behalf of Belluomini. CCOF staff Jane Sooby gave an update on a number of current policy issues including the use of produced water for irrigation. Guest speaker Aaron Hegde from California State University, Bakersfield (CSUB) gave a talk on CSUB's Agricultural Business Program, which partners with local businesses to provide students with hands-on internships.

The **Central Coast** chapter considered a number of weighty issues at their November meeting at the Aromas Grange. Chapter President Steve Pedersen provided an update on availability of organic strawberry crowns. A new company, Innovative Organic Nursery, produced 200,000 certified organic starts this year. Pedersen hopes that more certified organic crowns will be available next year. Pedersen also noted that the chapter has funds that could be used to support community projects. Consequently, the chapter voted to donate \$1,000 for scholarships to the EcoFarm Conference.

Board Representative Grant Brians offered a board update and asked for member feedback on the topic of certified organic hydroponics. CCOF Policy Director Kelly Damewood provided a policy update. Jennifer Evans and Matt Manfre of Sambriolo Packaging demonstrated their custom-designed CCOF packing boxes and asked for input on what dimensions would work well for members.

The majority of meeting time was devoted to a discussion of labor issues, particularly California's new farm labor overtime bill and the new minimum wage bill. Members expressed fear that increased labor costs will increase food prices, and may impact organic growers more than conventional because of organic's greater reliance on labor. Already, some growers are making plans to cut working hours, and some are starting to raise wages so the economic impact doesn't happen all at once.

To cap off the evening, University of California Cooperative Extension Farm Advisor Richard Smith gave a talk on organic weed control and Cathy Carlson presented information on food safety certification.

Let the CCOF community know what your chapter is doing!

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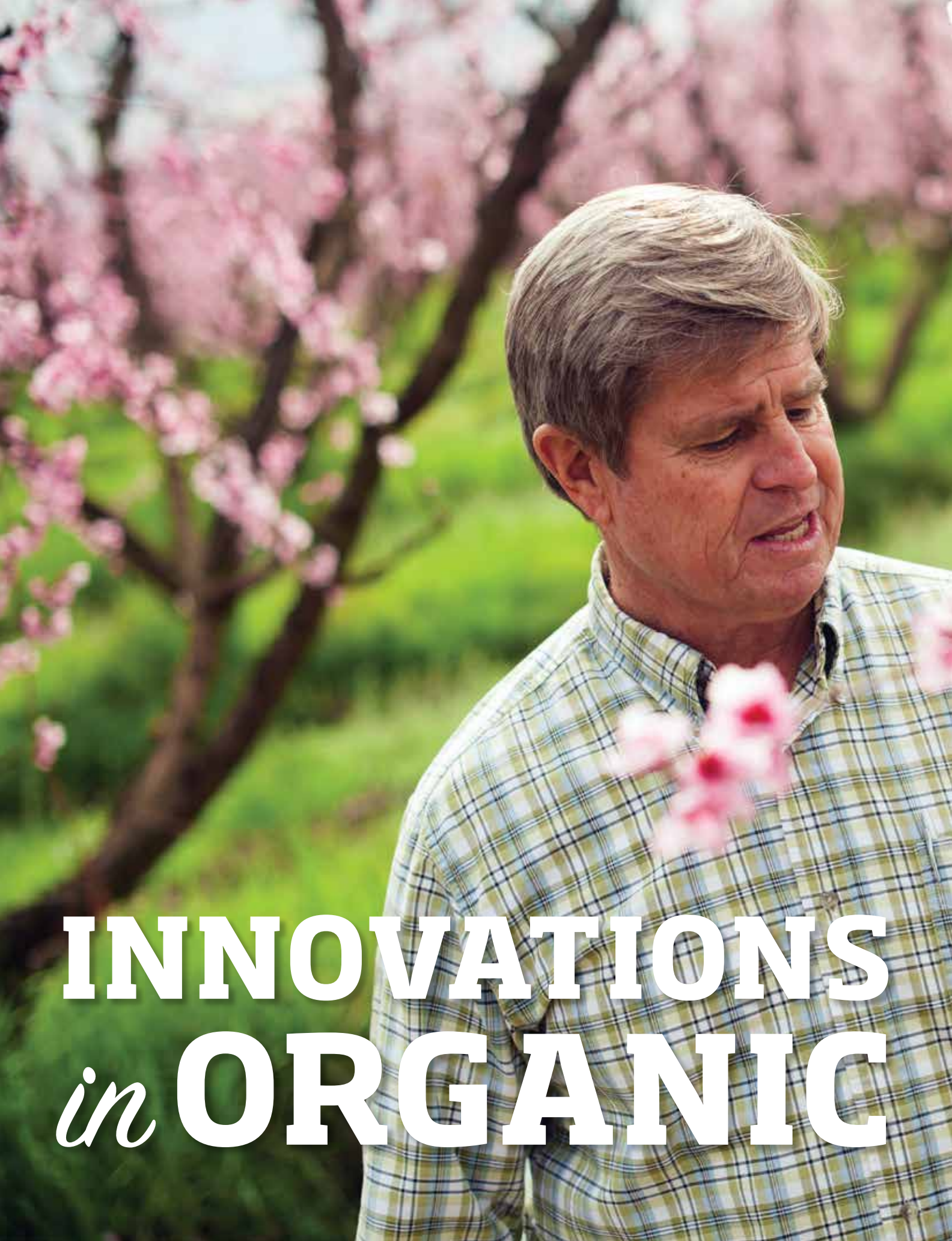
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WRITTEN BY Jamie Collins

CCOF's organic farmers, handlers, and processors build some of the most ingenious and innovative businesses around.

Deciding to become a certified organic operation in itself requires dedication to the process and keeping track of serious amounts of paperwork, and usually has higher production costs. Many of our certified organic operators and processors go the extra mile, continually reevaluating what it means to be a sustainable business. Whether it's collaborating with other farmers to become stronger together, creating healthful food products or an organic skin care line, sequestering carbon, harnessing wind energy, reclaiming and filtering water and releasing it back into the farm field, using animals to do the work instead of fossil fuels, or providing business shares to workers, these businesses all have one thing in common: a great commitment to organic raw products, the environment, and their community.

This article showcases a few of those unique operations and how and why they do what they do. Read on to learn more about how these CCOF-certified members are taking their organic businesses to new levels.

Alliances of Small Family Farmers

Abundant Harvest Farm is a CCOF-certified organic fruit tree farm that branched into a subscription delivery service called Abundant Harvest Organics (AHO), and most recently, Abundant Harvest Kitchen (a subsidiary of AHO). AHO collaborates with other family farmers to bring organic fresh produce to a large portion of California, and ships over 2,000 boxes of produce per week to its customers. With its newly-certified organic kitchen, AHO is able to make prepared meals, baked goods, and gluten-free and vegan options that can be added on to their produce subscription program, further utilizing farm-fresh, organic food grown by California farmers.

Vernon and Carol Peterson farm family land in Kingsburg, California, that has been in Vernon's family since 1892. They currently produce organic stone fruit, persimmons, pomegranates, and table grapes on 250 acres. Despite the success of their crops, the Petersons needed to make year-round income for the family farm to be financially sustainable.



In 2006 they built a packing shed, talked to neighboring farmers about transitioning land to organic and joining forces, and worked with these other farmers to start the CSA delivery model in 2007. “The CSA is the most fun of anything I’ve ever done before as far as business is concerned,” Vernon said excitedly. “It puts me in direct contact with my customers, something selling to wholesale accounts didn’t. I love hearing from them; we get a lot of wonderful feedback, which is rewarding.”

AHO’s subscription service sources all their produce, meat, poultry, eggs, dairy, and nuts from certified organic producers in California. The service ships to customers as far east as Mammoth Lakes and Bishop, as far south as San Diego, and to literal food deserts like Joshua Tree, covering the mid to south portion of California.

Bonnie Matulich, a CCOF-certified apple farmer in Aromas, California, sells her fresh eating apples to the Petersons. This year, AHO purchased 33 tons of Red Delicious and Gala apples from her for their online customers. “Apples wouldn’t be profitable to us without the option of selling them to Abundant Harvest’s CSA customers,” Matulich explained. Selling her apples to AHO fetches a far better price than selling the apples for juice.

Abundant Harvest’s business is now three-fold-and changing with the times to stay relevant as more busy people are looking for healthy, fresh food delivered right to their door. To continue meeting their customers’ needs, the Petersons converted their original fruit packing house into a 400-square-foot kitchen, jumping through all the regulatory hoops with county planning, the fire department, the Department of Health, and finally CCOF organic certification. A few years and \$150,000 later, Abundant Harvest Kitchen opened in 2014.

The kitchen produces certified organic meals under the culinary direction of Sarah Raimondi, a talented chef who worked in an Italian restaurant for 10 years before joining forces with the Petersons. The meals cater to people with food

allergies such as wheat or gluten, dairy, corn, nuts, and soy, as well as lifestyle diets like paleo and vegan. AHO’s meals are also, as Vern says, “for those that just want good ol’ organic mac and cheese.” Meals are prepared and frozen in the certified organic kitchen, then shipped with ice and packed the same way as the raw milk and frozen meats they deliver to CSA subscribers.

Some examples of the prepared meals include flour- or gluten-free chicken pot pies, chicken tikka masala, baked goods like peach cobbler and pomegranate cheesecake, and healthy snacks like vegan cashew queso. The meal “add-ons” are shipped with customers’ CSA subscriptions to AHO’s 171 drop spots in California.

Cooperation and support for fellow farmers is a hallmark of the organic community. AHO’s model is no exception, where farmers are helping other farmers move their product directly to consumers while paying them well for their produce. This may be especially important since the resurgence of various online produce and meal delivery services that may not all be as supportive of the producers they source from. At AHO, the alliances of small family farmers who produce the raw products are listed right next to the ingredients on the label—transparency their customers appreciate.

When asked how the competition of all the various online door-to-door produce and meal subscription businesses have affected his business and where he sees the future going, Vernon said he plans to stay ahead of the emerging economy and has some ideas he plans to put in action to stay relevant, such as quicker delivery times and more door-to-door service. Mostly, however, he plans to focus on nurturing his incredibly loyal customer base.

Good Neighbors Make Good Partners

Farmhouse Culture was founded by Kathryn Lukas in 2008 when she started producing several kinds of raw, probiotic-rich sauerkraut in a Santa Cruz, California kitchen. Her



company now sells via six weekly farmers' markets as well as grocery stores and retail outlets from California's Central Coast to the South Bay, including Costco.

Two years ago the company further strengthened their cabbage-buying partnership with Lakeside Organics when they grew into a new facility in Watsonville located adjacent to the rows of cabbage they use in their kraut products. Ultra-fresh cabbage gets processed in the next-door facility, reducing their carbon footprint by eliminating the need to truck the cabbage to their facility.

Another benefit of this collaborative partnership is that the water Farmhouse Culture uses in the processing facility is reclaimed and released back into the water table. The anaerobic materials are digested and filtered before being releasing into a separate gated leach field, which will eventually be used to water future cabbage crops.

Kraut is full of probiotic brine from the fermentation process, which Farmhouse Culture developed into a tasty product called Gut Shot that is available in the same zesty flavors as the kraut-classic with caraway, ginger beet, kimchi, garlic dill pickle, and my favorite, smoked jalapeño. Besides swigging or sipping straight from the jar, Farmhouse Culture suggests adding the liquid to salad dressings, for use in a Bloody Mary, or as a booster for smoothies.

The bottling of this product is not only fabulously beneficial for those who ingest it, but it is also a natural byproduct of the kraut process. A smart and lucrative production decision, the tasty liquid is a quick and easy way to ingest beneficial probiotics and enzymes while minimizing waste and utilizing every bit of product on the business end. Customers love it—some flavors of the Gut Shot have even surpassed kraut sales as more people look to build their inner ecosystem.

Farmhouse Culture is an example of a company grown on cabbage alone, although they are considering creating some other forms of fermented goodness, so stay tuned for their new product line.

Olive Oil for Your Belly—And Your Body

McEvoy Ranch grows Tuscan varietal olives for olive oil and several varieties of grapes for wine on 550 acres in Petaluma, California; provides an olive oil press service for other growers; and offers olive consulting services to share their expertise with other olive farmers. Their olives, oil, and olive press services are all certified organic by CCOF, as well as one of their products in their 80 Acres beauty line, their Lavender Olive Oil Body Balm.

Tuscan olive varietals have a high polyphenol content, which lends more of a “green” flavor to the oil, with peppery undertones attributed to the early harvest of the olives when they are a mix of green and purple. The practice of an early harvest yields a more pungent oil from the olive varieties at McEvoy: Leccino, Moraiolo, Pendolino, Maurino, Coratina, Leccio del Corno, and Frantoio.

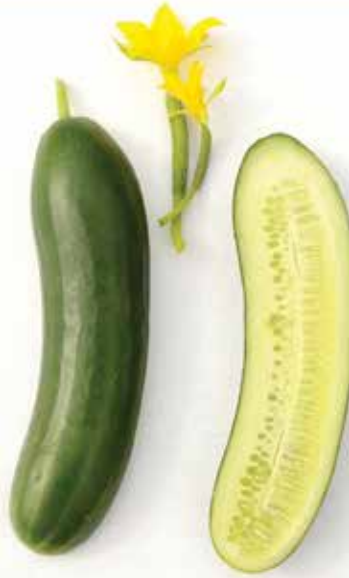
All of McEvoy's oils have been put to the extra virgin olive oil test by the University of California, Davis, using the guidelines of the California Olive Oil Council, which sets the standards for extra virgin olive oil. A certified extra virgin olive oil is cold-pressed at a temperature less than 80° F, has an acidity level of no greater than 0.5 percent, is free of any chemical processing, and has a flavor profile that meets the standards of the certified tasters.

A natural business progression to further utilize their oils, McEvoy's 80 Acres beauty line utilizes the extra virgin olive oil in almost all of their products, including their body balm and butter, lip balm, body wash, olive oil salt scrub, perfume oils, shampoo, conditioner, and bar soap. This extensive line of olive-based personal care products started when McEvoy began creating moisturizers for their employees in the gardens. Founder Nan McEvoy started by making the moisturizer in her kitchen, and the business saw an opportunity to share it with the world when their gardeners found it to be particularly healing.

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The line also blends in rich plant extracts and botanicals that are grown on the ranch, such as lavender, rose, and herbs. McEvoy is working towards certifying more of the 80 Acres beauty products as they secure supplies of organic ingredients they can't produce on the farm.

Certified as a B Corporation—the highest standard for both environmental and social business responsibility—McEvoy's goal is to maintain a balanced ecosystem, embracing diverse animal and plant populations while tapping into solar energy to maximize sequestration of atmospheric CO₂ in their farm products and fertile soils. Sheep seasonally graze the orchard and vineyard cover crop, facilitating nutrient cycling and soil fertility development and reducing the need for gas-powered mowers and fertilizers.

The ranch also produces their own compost from the by-products of their olive oil production, using the olive paste left over after pressing and the olive fruit liquid as a component in their composting project, along with livestock manure. The compost is added back to their 550 acres of soil to add nutrients, creating a closed-loop system not many mills are able to achieve. McEvoy also partners with local farms, including a neighboring goat dairy and a horse farm, to also utilize their waste and manure in the production of their compost.

Continuing to evolve in a sustainable direction, in 2009 the McEvoy's installed the first privately-owned wind turbine in Marin County. Construction of the windmill caused some initial push-back from neighbors and the county. However, after several consultations with the Point Reyes Bird Observatory, Golden Raptor Observatory, and meetings with biologists to ensure that the windmill's placement would avoid impact on birds, a 225 kilowatt Norwin Windmill was erected and placed on a hilltop where it would get adequate wind and avoid impact on wildlife. The windmill stands 97 feet tall with blades 40 feet long, and reduces the ranch's greenhouse emissions by 110 tons of CO₂ each year by meeting half of their electrical energy needs.

Inspired by Organic Innovations

These innovative CCOF members are leading examples of businesses that can both be lucrative endeavors and responsible stewards of the earth. We wish them continued success and congratulate them for their innovative efforts!

You won't want to miss Organic Innovation and Inspiration, CCOF's 2017 Annual Meeting and Conference, to learn from more of our innovative members in person at this special event. Visit www.ccof.org/2017 or read the feature on page 13 to learn more.

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Organic Standards Update

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In November, CCOF members and staff attended the biannual National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) meeting in St. Louis, Missouri. The meeting included a review of materials used in processing, such as carrageenan, and materials used in crop production, such as copper sulfate.

Additionally, the NOSB heard public comments on the relationship between hydroponic and container-based systems and certified organic production. For more information on the outcomes of the NOSB meeting, visit CCOF's blog at www.ccof.org/blog/nosb-fall16-summary.

The meeting opened with the announcement of five new appointees to the federal advisory committee. The NOSB was established by the Organic Foods Production Act to advise the National Organic Program on materials allowed in organic production and other organic issues. The NOSB is composed of 15 volunteers from around the country and includes four organic farmers; two handlers; three experts in environmental protection and resource conservation; three representatives of public interest or consumer groups; an expert in toxicology, ecology, or biochemistry; an organic retailer; and an organic certifying agent representative.

The new NOSB members are Sue Baird, Missouri Organic Association, consumer representative; Asa Bradman, School of Public Health, University of California, Berkeley, environmental protection representative; Steve Ela, Silver Spruce Partners, Colorado, farmer representative; Dave Mortensen, Weed and

Applied Plant Ecology Lab, Pennsylvania State University, scientist representative; and Joelle Mosso, Olam International, Ltd., California, handling representative. Mosso previously served as secretary of CCOF's Processor/Handler chapter.

The new members replace five members whose terms expire in January 2017. Members leaving the board include CCOF inspector and policy specialist Zea Sonnabend, who filled the scientist seat.

For a full list of current NOSB members and to learn about opportunities to serve on the NOSB, please visit www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/organic/nosb.

Public participation is key to NOSB meetings and the development of organic standards. It is critical that NOSB members hear directly from farmers, handlers, and retailers. Every meeting has opportunities for written and oral public comment. The next NOSB meeting will be held in Denver, Colorado, April 19-21, 2017.

California State Organic Program Update

Last year, Governor Brown signed into law the CCOF-sponsored California Organic Food and Farming Act (COFFA). This law updates the California State Organic Program (SOP) to end duplicative paperwork and help reduce State Organic Program fees for organic growers by allowing organic certifiers like CCOF to complete registration on behalf of their clients. The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) will administer the changes made under COFFA and is in the process of developing systems to allow organic certifiers to complete registration.

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To prepare for the next Farm Bill, we encourage all producers and handlers to take the Organic Trade Association's Farm Bill survey.

CCOF is highly engaged on this issue and will keep members informed on any updates through the CCOF e-newsletter. For questions or more information, please contact policy@ccof.org.

Participate in the California Organic Products Advisory Committee (COPAC)

As part of the changes made under COFFA, the existing California Organic Products Advisory Committee (COPAC) will now advise the California Secretary of Agriculture on programs, outreach, and other support for organic producers in addition to their traditional role in advising the Secretary on enforcement of organic standards. COPAC is a 15-member committee of volunteers appointed by the Secretary, and applications are accepted on an ongoing basis. Positions may be open for growers, handlers, retailers, consumers, and other members of the public. For current openings and information on how to apply, contact policy@ccof.org.

The next COPAC meeting will be held on Thursday, January 26, 2017, in Pacific Grove, California at the annual EcoFarm Conference. The meeting is open to the public, with the opportunity to ask the committee questions and present comment. An important topic at the upcoming meeting will be implementation of COFFA and how CDFA will make ongoing improvements to the administration of the SOP. If you plan to attend EcoFarm or if you are in the area, please consider attending. Your participation is critical to supporting a streamlined SOP and state policies in support of organic producers.

Getting Ready for Farm Bill 2018

The national Farm Bill is one of the most important pieces of national legislation for the agricultural sector. The Farm Bill provides funding for an array of programs that serve farmers and ranchers. It comes up for renewal by the United States Congress every five years. To prepare for the next Farm Bill, we encourage all producers and handlers to participate in the Organic Trade Association's (OTA) Farm Bill survey available at www.surveymonkey.com/r/OTAFarmBill. Participation in this survey provides feedback to OTA on new policy priorities for the 2018 Farm Bill. CCOF will be engaging with OTA and other organizations like the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition to represent the needs and interests of CCOF's members. Each survey is confidential and contains questions specifically focused on producers and handlers. Please complete the survey

at your earliest convenience or submit feedback directly to us at policy@ccof.org.

CalCAN's 5th Climate and Agriculture Summit

CalCAN's 5th Climate and Agriculture Summit will take place on February 28, 2017 at the University of California, Davis Conference Center with a full day of workshops and presentations exploring the science, policy, and practice of climate change and agriculture in California. Participants will include farmers and ranchers, agency staff, agricultural professionals, policymakers, and advocates.

Keynote speakers California Secretary of Agriculture Karen Ross and Vice President of the University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources Glenda Humiston will discuss their vision for viable, resilient, and ecologically sustainable agriculture in California in the face of climate change.

The Summit will cover a range of topics including farmland conservation as a climate strategy, California's new Healthy Soils Program, and prioritizing organic farming when developing climate mitigation policies. For more information, visit www.calclimateag.org/calcan-summit-2017.

See You at EcoFarm!

Every year, the Ecological Farming Association's renowned EcoFarm Conference is held in Pacific Grove, California. EcoFarm Conference workshops cover a range of topics, including practical farming skills, business management, and advocacy issues. This year, the meeting will be held January 25-28, 2017.

At the conference, you can connect with members of the CCOF Board of Directors, CCOF chapter leaders, and CCOF staff, who are all participating in a wide variety of important workshops and panels. Here is a glimpse of some of the workshops CCOF will participate in:*

- Cultivating Organic Leaders
- Organic Check-Off Program
- National Organic Program Update
- The Future of Organic Supply
- Keep GMOs Out of Organic
- All About Food Safety and Organic Standards
- Growing Organic Acreage

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- Equivalency arrangements
- Data to support business case for exporting



New Guide: Trade Information on Global Organic Markets

The Organic Trade Association (OTA) has unveiled a new and enhanced International Organic Trade Resource Guide at www.globalorganictrade.com. This valuable resource, accessible online to all at no cost, provides the most comprehensive and up-to-date market, policy, and trade information on global organic markets available for American organic exporters and importers.

The enhanced guide features in-depth information for 40 countries and 38 trade regions along with key marketing and policy data on each specific region. From the trade guide's interactive map, users can pick a country and quickly understand the growth and demand for organic products, top retailers and brands, and consumer demographics in that market. This data will help exporters strategize for success and compare high opportunity regions with consistent data points across the regions.

The guide also provides organic businesses participating in the international market—and those businesses just beginning to explore opportunities outside the United States—with the latest data on a country's organic regulations and standards, special requirements for imported organic products, certification information, contact connections for government agencies, and more.

“Around the world, the desire for traceable, sustainably produced food is growing, and global demand for U.S. organic has never been stronger,” said Laura Batcha, CEO and executive director of OTA. “One of OTA's most important missions is to promote organic, and part of that mission is helping to connect U.S. farmers, ranchers, and businesses with international buyers who are eager to bring the USDA organic seal to their market. The better the set of data that organic businesses have to work with, the better able they are to connect with those global buyers and to compete on the world market.”

The new guide contains specific country pages that include current qualitative and quantitative market information, educational infographics, detailed and in-depth policy information, and informative “Go to Market” reports. It integrates data and analysis relevant to the organic sector from the respected Euromonitor, the world's leading independent provider of strategic market research.



“Around the world, the desire for traceable, sustainably produced food is growing, and global demand for U.S. organic has never been stronger.”

Funding for this significant upgrade to the resource guide was provided by the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Market Access Program and the department's Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops program.

Demand for organic in the United States has been booming, with organic sales in 2015 hitting a new record of \$43.3 billion. Demand for organic around the world has been exploding as well; U.S. organic exports in 2015 reached \$3.2 billion. The United States has organic equivalency arrangements with Canada, the European Union, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, and Switzerland. These arrangements allow organic products certified in one country to be labeled and sold as organic in another country without additional inspections or paperwork, and without compromising the organic integrity of the products.

“The complex task of understanding foreign government regulations, along with the challenges of obtaining accurate information about a non-U.S. market and the difficulties in locating and connecting with buyers, are all frequently cited as barriers to organic exports,” said Monique Marez, director of international trade for OTA. “The new Global Organic Trade Resource Guide equips U.S. businesses with a baseline for success.”

Since the mid-1990s, OTA has worked to help promote organic agricultural products in global markets and to connect buyers and sellers. OTA has been an official cooperator in USDA's Market Access Program since 1999. OTA's membership represents about 85 percent of U.S. organic exports. The market promotion activities administered by OTA are open to the entire organic industry.

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Looking Forward to 2017

CCOF Certification Services is looking forward to an exciting year in 2017. It is an honor to work with so many great farmers, processors, retailers, and others. As a certification organization we are constantly trying to improve what we do and how we do it. In 2017 we hope to make important strides. Here are some highlights from our 2017 workplan:

National Organic Program (NOP) accreditation: We expect to undergo our five-year reaccreditation audit from the NOP.

Field Evaluations: In the coming year we will perform field evaluations of every CCOF inspector to improve performance and meet NOP requirements.

Process Improvements: We plan to continue to build on the new Compliance Report and other efficiency projects we launched in late 2016. Look for better tools and greater efficiency in the system.

Compliance Processes: During 2017 we will continue to refine and implement detailed mediation, settlement agreement, and adverse action processes that more fully meet NOP instructions.

Online Organic System Plan (OSP): CCOF is exploring technology options that may support the development of an Online OSP portal. Our hope is to continue to revolutionize how you work with us to save you time.

Standards Implementation: We hope to implement new standards when the final animal welfare rule is released by NOP. Additionally, we plan to explore ways to address the National Resources and Soil Conservation guidance proactively, creatively, and with integrity while minimizing costs to growers.

Three Ways to Make Scheduling Your Inspection Easier

CCOF Certification Services (CCOF CS) must ensure that every certified operation is inspected at least annually. With the high numbers of inspections that we coordinate, a given operation will typically have their annual inspections anywhere between seven and 16 months apart. Independent inspectors and inspection operations staff strive to plan and schedule efficient trips, which frequently requires scheduling multiple inspections per trip in order to substantially reduce the travel cost billed to each operation. Our inspection operations team bundles inspections in efficient groupings, then inspectors plan their trips as economically as possible and contact clients to secure appointments.

1. Be flexible! For routine inspections, CCOF CS tries to reasonably accommodate client scheduling preferences. However, the more flexible and accommodating you can be to the inspector's desired appointment date and time, the better the chance that the inspector will be able to assemble a travel schedule that optimizes the travel cost per client.



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2. Stay in touch. Scheduling inspections requires two-way communication. Timely communication is key for your inspector to be able to successfully optimize travel plans. The sooner you return their email or phone call, the less expensive your prep time charges and travel charges are likely to be. Once the time and date are confirmed by both you and the inspector, the inspector will usually work in other inspections around it. Therefore, cancelling or changing an inspection appointment is likely to disrupt the flow and efficiency of an entire inspection trip, affecting not only you, but also all the other clients involved.

3. Keep your contact information up to date. Check your MyCCOF page to review and update your contact information, or update it by emailing inbox@ccof.org with your operation name/code in the subject line. Provide details about the email address(es) and/or phone number(s) you need to update, and indicate which are the primary or first choices. We will capture and update this information so it is available to inspectors when they attempt to contact you.

The majority of CCOF CS operations cooperate in a timely manner to schedule inspections. In order to encourage cooperative and reliable scheduling, and to recoup a portion of costs associated with scheduling disruptions, CCOF may charge for time and expenses incurred plus a \$50 penalty for inspections cancelled by the client with less than 48 hours' notice. Additionally, at the second request to schedule an inspection, the client has five working days to respond, or CCOF CS may bill a \$50 penalty. Continued failure to schedule an inspection results in a notice of noncompliance that must be resolved to maintain certification.

Inspections provide the backbone of credibility for your organic certification. This value is reflected in their expense and effort. Inspector travel and prep time impacts the final cost. By being flexible and responsive when scheduling your inspection, and by keeping your inspection appointments, you'll be able to keep your inspection travel costs as low as possible.

Noncompliance & Mediation Costs

The vast majority of CCOF operations are timely and responsive. Unfortunately, some operations fail to respond to minor requests or arrange payment plans prior to their account becoming delinquent. The cost of managing these processes and reminders, and implementing and managing mediation processes, is increasing substantially. Therefore, CCOF fees for minor issues that escalate to noncompliance or proposed suspension based on no response are increasing to \$150 per instance. Similarly, operations that progress to proposed suspension and seek mediation will be assessed a \$300 charge for CCOF-managed informal mediation.

CCOF will in all cases issue several reminders and would prefer not to utilize any of these fees. Over time we have found that costs of follow-up, escalation, and management of these issues are borne by the operations themselves, not all CCOF clients.

An advertisement for Homegrown Organic Farms. It features a logo with a house and a plant, the text 'HOMEGROWN ORGANIC FARMS™', and 'Your organic marketing specialists'. Below this is a paragraph about the company's philosophy. Contact information includes a phone number (559.306.1770), a fax number (559.782.3047), and social media links for Facebook and Twitter. A USDA Organic seal is also present. At the bottom, there are images of blueberries, peaches, and oranges, and the website 'www.hgofarms.com'.

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Your organic marketing specialists

Homegrown Organic Farms consists of growers like owners John and Cindy France. Their stories are as diverse and unique as the produce we offer but maintain a common thread of inspiration and conviction that provides the foundation for our success. For us, it's not just a number on a balance sheet; it is a part of who we are and how we live. We believe in organic produce and the change in farming philosophy that it represents.

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