

Grimmway Farms Donates \$5 Million to Cal Poly College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences to Establish the Center for Organic Production and Research

Donation will bring industry and academia together to solve challenges and prepare future leaders in organic production and soil health

SAN LUIS OBISPO, Calif. — Cal Poly is set to change the landscape of organic agriculture with a \$5 million donation made to the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences by Grimmway Farms, the global leader in organic produce and the world's largest producer of carrots.

With this gift, Cal Poly will expand its emphasis on applied research in organic production and soil health by providing a unique, collaborative platform for academia, industry and government from across California and beyond to come together to advance the organic industry.

Announced this week, the partnership between Cal Poly's College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences and Grimmway will establish a unique learning model that will enable research and innovation across disciplines, focusing on real-world issues that directly impact the state's \$10 billion organic industry. The Grimmway Farms donation will be used to launch the Center for Organic Production and Research on campus, as well as build the Grimmway Farms/Cal-Organic Soil Health and Sustainability Laboratories to provide research and teaching opportunities in topics related to healthy soils, water and air.

“Our partnership with Grimmway will facilitate bringing increased science and technology to the production of organic food,” said Andre Thulin, dean of the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences. “Cal Poly is at the forefront of using the power of collaboration to solve real world problems. This new center will integrate the greatest talents in academia, private industry, government and a wide range of disciplines to benefit the organic industry as a whole.” \

The need to increase focused efforts on organic research and create pathways for students to enter the industry is clear. The organic industry is one of the fastest growing agricultural segments in the United States, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. This emphasis on organic production and research is of particular importance in California, which accounts for 40 percent of all organic production in the nation.

"This is an amazing gift and investment in the future of California agriculture and a perfect match with Cal Poly's excellence in applied research and Learn by Doing model that prepares students for collaborative problem-solving in their careers," said Karen Ross, California Department of Food and Agriculture secretary. "I want to thank Grimmway Farms and the Grimm family for their generosity, leadership and confidence in the future of California agriculture – one that is built on innovation."

Nationally, consumer demand for organic products continues to grow – sales of organic fruits and vegetables in the U.S. reached \$18 billion in 2019, up nearly 5 percent from the year prior.

"We believe that lives are transformed through education, and that certainly applies to agricultural education," said Barbara Grimm Marshall, co-owner of Grimmway Farms and Cal-Organic. "Ever-evolving technologies and more sophisticated business practices mean that students who wish to pursue a career in agriculture must spend as much time in the classroom as in the field. We are thrilled to be providing an avenue for these students to work with the best minds in agribusiness and soil sciences today."

"With this commitment, the families and Grimmway Farms/Cal-Organic are affirming our belief that agriculture is the economic and cultural cornerstone of our future," said Brandon Grimm, grower relations manager and co-owner of Grimmway Farms and Cal-Organic. "Our company has been a leader in innovative and advanced farming practices since my father and uncle founded the company 51 years ago. Today we take the next step to build on that legacy by investing in vital organic and soil health research."

"The future of this industry depends solely on the ability to prepare, educate and excite the next generation of growers in organic production," said Jeff Huckaby, president of Grimmway Farms and Cal-Organic. "We look forward to partnering with this dynamic educational institution to cultivate those who will ensure we continue to meet the ever-growing demand for healthy and nutritious organic produce."

Cal Poly is uniquely positioned to drive these initiatives forward with its polytechnic educational model and more than 10,000 acres of land for hands-on research and learning. Cal Poly's location on California's Central Coast surrounded by a diverse number of specialty crops that are the foundation of the state's agricultural production, as well as the university's strong ties with industry, gives students and faculty the opportunity to work directly with companies such as Grimmway Farms and other top producers in the organic industry through internships, research collaborations and more.

"Our partnership will increase opportunities for students, faculty and staff to gain first-hand experience in the organic food industry and beyond," said Cal Poly President Jeffrey D. Armstrong. "This new center for organic production and research emphasizes our Learn by Doing philosophy and will give students the tools to lead impactful careers addressing the agricultural challenges that face California and the world."

The new Center for Organic Production and Research will serve as a hub for students to work with experts from across the industry to develop solutions to the most pressing issues related to organic production and agriculture. Research of soil structure and biodiversity, nutrient cycling, carbon sequestration, water quality, composting and organic matter and technology innovation will be at the forefront of the new Center for Organic Production and Research. The new Grimmway Farms/Cal-Organic Soil Health and Sustainability Laboratories will be located in Cal Poly's planned Plant Sciences Complex.

"Grimmway Farms' generous support of Cal Poly and its talented students embodies the increasingly vital partnership between the private sector and the California State University," said CSU Chancellor-select Joseph I. Castro. "I deeply appreciate Grimmway's partnership with several CSU campuses, including Cal Poly, and their strong commitment to supporting and preparing the next generation of our nation's agricultural leaders."

A national recruitment for a director to lead the center will begin in 2021. Cal Poly's model for the new Center for Organic Production and Research will emulate its demonstrated success with the Cal Poly Strawberry Center (strawberry.calpoly.edu), a collaborative partnership focused on increasing the sustainability of the strawberry industry through research and education that addresses the needs of the \$3.5 billion industry.

About Cal Poly's College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences

Cal Poly is a nationally ranked, comprehensive polytechnic university. The university's College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences is comprised of expert faculty members who take pride in their ability to transform academically motivated students into innovative professionals ready to solve the complex challenges associated with feeding the world in sustainable ways. Students have access to state-of-the-art laboratories, including organic and conventional crop land, orchards, vineyards, forests, and rangeland, all of which provide the basis for Cal Poly's Learn by Doing methodology. It is the fifth-largest college of agriculture in the country with more than 4,100 undergraduate students. For more information visit CAFES.calpoly.edu.

About Grimmway Farms

Family-owned and headquartered in Bakersfield, California, Grimmway Farms (grimmway.com) traces its roots to a produce stand opened by the Grimm brothers in the early 1960s. Grimmway is a global produce leader and the world's largest producer of carrots. Grimmway supplies more than 65 organic, USA-grown crops and brands include Cal-Organic Farms and Bunny-Luv. Grimmway is committed to caring for customers and employees, honoring sustainable practices and preserving natural resources for future generations. For more information visit Grimmway.com.