

# FARMER TO FARMER

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

SUMMER 2005

## Central Coast

### CAFF Booth at the Santa Cruz County Fair

For the eighth year, CAFF will have a booth in the Harvest Building at the Santa Cruz County Fair. This is the 110th annual fair. Thousands of people pass through the building, and many stop to look over our display, and talk with our members, staff, and volunteers about CAFF's work. Every year we have more than 40 people staffing the booth during the six-day fair. We also make our booth available to other sustainable agriculture nonprofits to display educational materials.

CAFF's involvement in the community is widespread, with our hedgerow and grassed waterway plantings on many local farms, our highly publicized *Buy Fresh Buy Local* campaign involving local farms and businesses, and the *Farm-to-School* program which brings nutrition education and fresh food into community schools while creating new markets for local farmers.

This year, the theme of the fair is: "110 Years of..." Evening entertainment features The Ramblers, White Album, Elvin Bishop, Greg Kihn Band, Cool Jerks, and Dr. Loco and the Rockin Jalapeno Band. The fair occurs during "Local Food Month," a countywide celebration of food and farming launched this year by CAFF's *Buy Fresh Buy Local* campaign.

Participating in the county fair is a rewarding experience for all of those involved in the community throughout the year. It is a unique opportunity to network and share experiences with many people in Santa Cruz County. This year, the fair takes place Tuesday, September 13 through Sunday, September 18. See you there! ■

## North Coast

### Homegrown Kids on the North Coast

BY CLARA OKRONGLY

Make good food easy to find, and we'll eat it. That's what Napa County Vintage High School students said at the Homegrown Kids: Building Farm-to-School Partnerships Conference this past May 24. Sponsored by CAFF and the Center for Food and Justice in Los Angeles, this all-day conference with 120 attendees, focussed discussion on how to bring healthy food to schools in the five northern counties of Sonoma, Marin, Lake, Napa, and Mendocino.

CAFF's North Coast representative, farmer Deborah Walton, coordinated the event, which was held at the Sonoma County Office of Education.



September is Santa Cruz Local Food Month.

Dr. Carl Wong, Superintendent of Sonoma County Schools, reminded attendees that good nutrition and good learning go hand-in-hand. The epidemic incidence of obesity and diabetes in school-age children is a reflection of poor nutritional habits—habits that can be broken when kids have access to fresh, local, flavorful fruits and vegetables instead of empty-calorie soft drinks and snacks.

Heather Fenney of the California Food Security Coalition gave a presentation on wellness policies that all school districts in California will have to adopt in the coming year. Many policies are being developed which say, "Whenever possible, put fresh fruits and vegetables in the school lunch menu." However, in the wake of budgetary demand, "whenever possible" often turns into "whenever we can afford it."

School districts receive food from the USDA, through the National School Lunch Program. The federal meal subsidies are minimal, with half going to labor costs, leaving very little with which to purchase a healthy meal for growing children and teenagers. Many school districts have resorted to inviting fast food companies and soft drink manufacturers to provide pre-packaged meals and vending machines on school properties. For this privilege, the school gets large sums of money.

Some ideas to get beyond such obstacles were: moving budget money around; having volunteers, parents and teachers prepare and chop veggies to cut labor costs; and selling the lunches to teachers and parents for a profit.

A panel of food service directors explained how they continue to make Farm-to-School work in their schools by reallocating more dollars to make purchases from local farmers and offering more interesting menu items that kids readily eat.

Four students from Vintage High School spoke about the impact of the Farm-to-School program in their school. They explained that kids eat junk food at school because it's there, and it's fast—but when given a salad bar option, they eat it, and really appreciate it. The students were a highlight of the event, and were truly inspiring.

At lunch break, conference attendees were treated to a delicious

## Enhancing Biological Control in Central Coast Vegetables

### Workshop, Tour, & Insect Identification

Sept 8, 2005 8 AM Salinas, California

Lunch Provided

A short course for PCAs and Growers

Location: Agriculture Land-Based Association (ALBA)

1700 Old Stage Road, Salinas. For more information, contact Sam Earnshaw (831) 782-5556 or Bill Chaney (831) 759-7350

## From the Farm...

Here's a glimpse of farm happenings in the Sacramento Valley this season. These excerpts are from local CSA newsletters.

### Riverdog Farm Veggie Box News

riverdog@yolo.com June 21, 2005

Field Notes: We did not accumulate any rain during the last storm but it was cool and misty for a few days. As with all things in life, there are costs and bennies.

Costs: Good Humus lost the latter half of their apricot crop and we lost the first 20% of our white nectarine crop to brown rot. Bacterial speck and blight continue to be concerns in the tomatoes; the summer squash is still not in blazing production.

Benefits: A pea season that won't quit (though it is over now because there are no more peas on the vines!), fantastic onion and leek transplanting weather, great weather for doing strenuous work like hoeing and trellising tomatoes, two tasks that we have aplenty around here right now, and finally, the blueberries we planted earlier this spring have had a 100% take rate and look great so far. One of the bittersweet pleasures of being an extremely diversified farm is that almost no matter what happens, other than extreme weather, something on the farm is helped and something else on the farm is hindered. If the forecast for the week ahead is accurate, expect another round of lettuce next week. We plan on taking advantage of this unusual solstice weather and slipping in more carrots and parsnips, two crops that are often hard to germinate in the summer heat. Happy Summer Solstice — now button up that sweater!

### Eatwell Farm

www.eatwell.com May 11th, 2005

A fond good-bye and thank you to our first tractor. I know this may sound a little silly but I was upset last week to hear that it was headed for the bone yard. I sent it to Woodland Tractor over a week ago with the clutch not working. There was also a problem with the power steering pump.

The mechanic told us that the clutch needed replacing but the power steering pump problem was related to a loose crankshaft. Now, the grease monkeys among you will know, this is not good. The crank shaft and connected parts in the engine could fail at any moment. The mechanic said it could fail in 30 minutes or a year or more, who knows. The cost of the repair for the clutch is \$2,000. So Martin and I have decided not to repair it and send it to a better place where we are all destined to go one day. You will be happy to know that all its useable parts will be used to keep other tractors of its own ilk alive and running.

This tractor was bought by Frances and me in 1993. It has served us well and lasted beyond a tractor's normal life expectancy of 10,000 hours of working. We are happy that it lived to an old age and remember all the wonderful fruits, vegetables, and flowers it helped us grow.

salad bar lunch using fresh, local ingredients, and prepared by culinary arts students and their teacher Megan Donner from Casa Grande High School in Petaluma.

A panel of farmers who have been participating in Farm-to-School, including Sally Carstensen, Torrey Olson, and David Retsky, said delivery of fresh produce to individual schools has been very difficult to work out. One solution is for the schools to get organized and have standing orders for set numbers of cases of vegetables. That way, farmers can afford to sell for less — as long as somebody else takes care of the paperwork.

Deborah Walton said that most likely local farmers will start a farmers' collaborative, get a grant to purchase a truck, and hire a driver to pick up the produce from the farms and deliver it to the schools. Deborah strongly believes that we should continue to keep all five northern counties involved. Such a collaboration will be more efficient and will take advantage of the fact that each county has a different growing season, providing more variety of produce to the schools. ■

## Extending Hedgerows in California Ag

Since October 2003, CAFF has been working on a project entitled Extending Hedgerows in California Agriculture, with funding from Western Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Professional Development Program (WSARE).

Hedgerows are an important conservation and management tool that can reduce pesticide use, increase biodiversity and habitat for beneficial organisms and wildlife, reduce wind and water erosion of soil, diversify farm products, and beautify the environment.

This project's goals are to increase knowledge about hedgerows and to provide a resource base for agricultural professionals throughout the state. Using a combination of educational materials and on-the-ground projects, CAFF has been reaching these goals and bringing information about vegetation conservation practices to many people over a wide geographical area of California.

In the fall of 2004, CAFF held four "Train-the-Trainer" workshops with agricultural resource professionals in the Central Coast, the North Coast, the southern San Joaquin Valley and the northern San Joaquin Valley.

Some of the resource materials CAFF has developed include *Hedgerows for California Agriculture: A Resource Guide* (available on the CAFF Web site, a presentation on the benefits and technical elements of hedgerow installation), and a full-color brochure titled "Hedgerows: Benefits to Farmers, Benefits to Wildlife" (available from Sam Earnshaw, CAFF).

Grants were available to encourage farmers and farm communities to extend the knowledge gained in the workshops and establish their own hedgerow projects. Four grants were approved at the following locations:

- 1) The Miller Moth Ranch, in Southern Monterey County, is establishing hedgerows, grassed filter strips, and shrubs adjacent to wildlife water troughs and along farm roads.
- 2) The Summerfield Waldorf School and Farm in Santa Rosa is constructing a shade structure/nursery for the propagation of native plants, and is planting a 1,300-foot-long hedgerow on

their 14-acre certified biodynamic vegetable and grain farm, which serves over two hundred families.

- 3) The Lodi High School Agriculture Department is developing and maintaining a hedgerow and grass project on the school farm in conjunction with an environmental curriculum.
- 4) T & D Willey Farms, Madera, is planting two 600-foot-long beds of perennial shrubs along the edge of the farm fields, to prevent dust from Road 14 from coming on to the crops, as well as to create habitat for beneficial insects and to increase the biodiversity on their farm. ■

## Cotton in Holland?

BY MARCIA GIBBS

It seemed like an unlikely place to meet, but nevertheless, I was invited to attend a working meeting on cotton in The Netherlands. Here's how it happened.

The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), Pro Forest and Rabobank International were commissioned by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and World Wildlife Fund-U.S. (WWF-US) to research the environmental and social issues associated with the production of a wide range of agribusiness commodities.

After collecting basic data and industry intelligence on each of ten commodities, the IFC and WWF-US selected four commodities (cotton, palm oil, soy, and sugar) for further investigation. Each commodity was to undergo a review to determine if the development and application of better management production practices would help to mitigate the environmental impacts of producing these commodities.

To understand why they chose cotton, here are a few facts about its production:

- Cotton is the largest moneymaking nonfood crop produced in the world.
- Cotton's production and processing provide some or all of the cash income of over 250 million people worldwide.
- Grown on farms in more than 100 countries, world production in 2000 was 19.1 million metric tons.

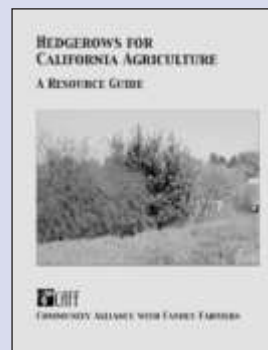
The first meeting of the cotton group was held in October 2004 and was organized by WWF-US. Group members included progressive retailers, farming groups, and involved investors. Participants agreed on the implementation of a global *Better Cotton Process* and identified four key issue areas: water, chemicals, soil, and labor practices.

I was invited to the second meeting in The Netherlands, which brought together partners from around the world. The meeting was organized and facilitated by Jason Clay from WWF-US, Rebecca Callahan Klein from Organic Exchange and Charles Arden-Clarke from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Cotton producers were CS Pawar from India, Allan Williams from Australia and Marcia Gibbs from the U.S. Industry representative were from the Gap, Adidas, and IKEA. Our hosts were the Dutch group ICCO, an organization dedicated to reducing world poverty.

The aim of this meeting was to agree to and develop a plan of work for the creation of a global *Better Cotton Standard*, which would encourage the approximately 400 buyers of cotton to support the use of this *Better Cotton*. The plan will be geared towards the wholesale buyers of cotton and not to the consumer. There is strong evidence

## CAFF Publications

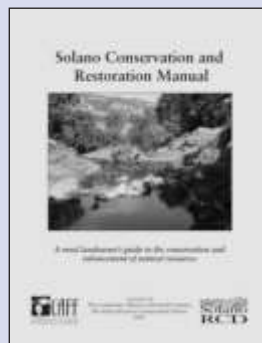
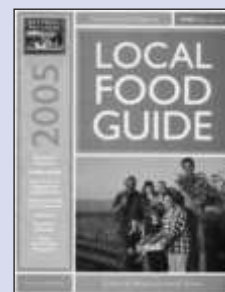
**Hedgerows for California Agriculture.** This manual will help you choose and care for regionally appropriate plants that attract beneficial insects and prevent erosion. It lists native plant nurseries and consultants/contractors specializing in hedgerow and other restoration projects. Download it at [www.caff.org](http://www.caff.org).



**Making the Farm Connection.** This manual is designed to let farmers know what to expect when hosting a farm visit. The booklet is also very useful for teachers and classes so that they may get the most out of their farm visit. Download at [www.caff.org](http://www.caff.org).

**Central Coast Local Food Guide.** A free booklet from the *Buy*

*Fresh Buy Local* Campaign, this will tell you where to find seasonal, fresh, locally-grown food, including farmers' markets, CSAs, restaurants, and family farms. Available at various locations. Call (831) 761-8507 for details.



**Solano Conservation & Restoration Manual.** Do you constantly battle unwanted weeds on your land? Are you tired of watching the stream carry away your land? Worried about that gully that grows larger every year? Find the solutions to these and other resource concerns in this manual. Establishing native grasses, managing rangeland, pond habitat, hedgerows, grassed waterways, riparian practices, prescribed burns, and much more. 145 pages, easy to use, update and share. \$15. To order, e-mail [marcia@caff.org](mailto:marcia@caff.org).

**BASIC Cotton Manual.** Practical Lessons Learned from the Sustainable Cotton Project's Biological Agriculture Systems in Cotton (BASIC) Program, San Joaquin Valley, California, 2001 to 2004. This manual describes management and marketing options for cotton production systems that use bio-intensive, integrated pest management to reduce chemical inputs. \$15. To order, e-mail [marcia@caff.org](mailto:marcia@caff.org).



that the business side wants to participate because it is the right thing to do, rather than merely a marketing gesture.

The final product of two days of meetings was a set of principles, criteria and standards for *Better Cotton*. The resulting draft focuses on measuring results, rather than adopting practices, but the criteria and standards are workable, assuming that future meetings set realistic baselines and targets for individual cotton-producing regions.

The *Better Cotton* group will meet again this fall. It was an amazing group that all spoke perfect English and understood the importance of cotton in the global economy. Look for future updates. ■

## The Capay Valley Regional Farmers' Market, Esparto Pedaling for Produce

BY MARCIA GIBBS

It was a perfect ride. While everyone else I knew was off riding a 400 kilometer, time trial or other serious ride, I donned my backpack, made a quick stop at the auto-teller to fill my pockets with cash and headed north up the Valley on my bicycle. I set a leisurely pace out of Winters and made my way via Buckeye Road, stopping at the plaque marking the original town of Buckeye. I went along Road 29A to Road 88 and on to the town of Esparto. The day was beautiful, sunny and warm and it gave me a chance to unwind and see the farmers at work. My destination was the Capay Valley Regional Farmers' Market in Esparto. Created by Capay Valley Vision to showcase and support Capay growers, this new market boasts everything a shopper could want. Featured were delicious local fruits and vegetables, nuts, jams and jellies, honey, local artisan goods and crafts, breads, and music.

After viewing all the vendors and talking with the locals, I purchased fresh bread, eggs, tomato plants, strawberries, and carrots and carefully layered them in my pack. I then headed for home. My return trip included a stop along Road 23 where I settled on a large, warm rock on the side of the road and proceeded to eat the entire basket of strawberries along with a large piece of bread and a carrot or two. The view of the Blue Ridge Mountains was in the background and bees buzzed in the tall mustard and grasses growing alongside the road. The farmer working his land waved and smiled and I felt somehow part of a larger system.

Open only the first Saturday of the month from 10 A.M. to 2 P.M., this new market needs you. We all need to do our part to support locally grown food and the farmers who keep our region one of the finest for living and eating. So, mark your calendars

and plan to spend the first Saturday of the month making a trip to the market. You can add it on to the R.H. Phillips lunch ride, but just be sure you get there.

For more information, you can contact the market manager, Temra Costa at (530) 756-8518 x18 or email [temra@caff.org](mailto:temra@caff.org). ■



## Getting Back to the Farm at the Hoes Down Harvest Festival

Eighteen years ago, a group of farmers in Northern California decided to plant a special seed in the heart of the Capay Valley. Their hope was to bring people back to the country, to help them remember the rural way of life, and to teach them the significance of organic agriculture—all the while showing them a good time. Through the years, that seed germinated, sprouted, and has blossomed into one of the biggest organic events in the state of California.

The Hoes Down Festival seeks to honor and promote sustainable rural living through inspiration and education, by connecting urban-dwellers with the people and places that grow their food and by spreading knowledge, insight and appreciation of farming. It is a fundraiser, and all proceeds go to worthy projects benefiting sustainable agriculture and rural communities, including Community Alliance with Family Farmers. This is a community effort put on with the help of hundreds of volunteers. It is a project of the Ecological Farming Association.

What can you do at the Festival? Eat the freshest and tastiest organic meals. Tour the farm on a hay ride, pulled by a team of draft horses. Attend hands-on workshops on an array of topics, such as cow milking, tree pruning, herb gardening, and compost making. All day long and into the evening, you can dance your socks off and listen to local bands playing on a solar-powered stage.

A craft marketplace showcases farm-made products and an all-organic farmers' market boasts the bounty of the season such as fresh picked almonds and walnuts, a huge variety of melons, apples and, of course, pumpkins! The children's area has been described as the best in the state, with arts and crafts, storytelling and music, a petting zoo, and lots of games and contests—all with an agricultural theme. Kids will have a chance to watch a cow being milked, make felt out of wool and grind their own corn. No one should miss the Manure Pitch-Off, which really lets

you get your hands dirty! Watermelon eating contest, creek frolicking, tortilla making, and hip shaking are all a part of the fun.

The Hoes Down Harvest Celebration takes place on October 1, 2005, beginning 11 A.M. on Saturday and ending at 11 P.M. The festival continues on Sunday, with a locally grown, organic breakfast. There will be hands-on activities, including a scenic rafting trip down Cache Creek, lessons on fruit tree pruning

and making bio-diesel, and listening to farmers from the Republic of Georgia tell how to care for your vineyard. You will need to pre-register for Sunday activities. For more information, including costs, directions, and volunteer possibilities, visit the Hoes Down Web site at [www.hoesdown.org](http://www.hoesdown.org) or call (800) 791-2110. ■