

FARMER^{TO}FARMER

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD Jan/Feb 2004 Issue 36

Salatin's Sharp Observations Close Eco-Farm

Joel Salatin – a third-generation farmer/philosopher in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley – closed this year's Eco-Farm conference at Asilomar with a speech he called "Holy Cows and Hog Heaven."

Wrapped in the fast-paced speech were a number of challenging questions and sharp observations on the dominant industrial food system that daily sacrifices America's farmers on the altar of cheap food, while deceiving consumers that the junk food it produces is actually safe.

Taking comprehensive notes was impossible, but some of his remarks that burned brightest included:

"Paradigms always exceed the point of their own efficiency just before collapsing. Using the language of e-coli, salmonella and BSE, nature is telling us the industrial agriculture paradigm is exceeding its point of efficiency."

"The government has become the lackey of corporate conquistadors. Why would anyone trust the government with our food supply? A government that can't be trusted to pick our religion can't be trusted to pick our food."

"Agricultural research always looks at how, rather than why, so we've become very good at hitting the bulls eye on the wrong target."

"The government's cheap food policy dishonors the stewards of our natural resources."

"When did the organic movement become the organic industry? Turning organic into just another industrial commodity is giving our soul to the devil."

"You cannot certify integrity!"

"Empire by any other name is still empire."

Water Quality Monitoring of Ag Waste Discharge Set to Advance

Last July the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board issued a conditional waiver of waste discharge requirements for discharges throughout the Central Valley. Included in the waiver were monitoring and reporting requirements for farmers. On January 22, the State Water Resources Control Board is set to endorse the regional board plan, with minor changes based on petitions from both agricultural and environmental interests.

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Ninth Annual

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Moth Madness and Fungus Among Us Apple Meeting

WHEN: Friday, March 19, 8:30 AM - Noon

WHERE: UCCE Auditorium, 1432 Freedom Blvd, Watsonville

Farm Tour and Lunch, Noon - 2:00 PM, Prevedelli Ranch.

Speakers:

Sean Swezey, UC SAREP; Dave Moeller, Santa Cruz County Ag Commissioner; Bill Coates, San Benito County UCCE; Bill Denevan, CF Fresh, Santa Cruz; Don Thomson, DJS Consulting, Seattle Rachel Elkins, Lake County UCCE (invited);

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT SAM EARNSHAW AT (831) 722-5556

The proposed conditional waiver for irrigated agriculture marks a decisive change in the regulation of water pollutants discharged from farm fields into surface water. Historically waste from irrigated fields has not been regulated as have other water pollutant discharges from, for example, industrial facilities. The federal Clean Water Act, in fact, creates a complete exemption from permitting for irrigation return flows. In 1982, the Central Valley regional board acknowledged that agriculture was technically subject to a waste discharge permit (WDR) by granting a waiver of WDRs for irrigation return water.

Over the years, evidence has amassed demonstrating the significant effects of agriculture on water quality in the Central Valley from the discharge of pesticides, sediment and both organic and inorganic materials. The regional board lists a variety of pesticides as well as pathogens, sedimentation/siltation, nutrients, selenium, and boron among pollutants that impair water bodies.

Legislation in 1999 required the longstanding waivers to be terminated or readopted by 2003, forcing the board to decide whether to adopt a new waiver or impose WDRs for farms. The result is the conditional waiver adopted by the regional board last summer, but with conditions requiring that farmers – individually or in “coalition groups” – monitor water for designated pollutants and report the results to the board. The conditional waiver requires more extensive monitoring and reporting by coalition groups, but the board expects costs per farmer still will be lower in groups than individually, which it hopes will encourage the formation of coalition groups.

Although the conditional waiver also requires farmers to evaluate how effective their management practices are in reducing pollutant discharges, few specifics are attached to this requirement. Many CAFF farmers farm organically or implement a number of management practices that significantly reduce pesticide use, sediment runoff, and other polluting practices. But the regional board has not recognized these sorts of practices as inherently “best management practices” that might relieve farmers of more burdensome requirements under the conditional waiver. In fact, environmentalists criticize the waiver for including no milestones for achievement of BMPs or for meeting water quality standards.

More information on the status of the conditional waiver can be found at www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb5/, link to Agricultural Runoff Waiver.



Buy Fresh, Buy Local Campaign Enters its Second Year

As spring approaches in the Monterey Bay region, farmers, retailers, and CAFF staff are gearing up for another year of grassroots organizing and local advertising aimed at teaching consumers about the benefits of supporting local growers.

Why buy local?

Food grown in your local community was probably picked within the last day or two. It's crisp, sweet and loaded with flavor. When you shorten the journey from the farm to your fork, your food is simply more nutritious and better tasting.

Buying locally grown food also helps preserve genetic diversity because delicate, rare heirloom varieties that cannot withstand shipping can be transported gently and quickly to your table. Local food from family farmers is also GMO-free.

When you spend your money on local food, you ensure the viability of farming families, thus building community, preserving open space, and caring for the environment. Finally, local food keeps your taxes in check, because farmland, forests, and open space cost less to maintain than suburban development.

How Buy Fresh, Buy Local works

In the past year, our Central Coast CAFF membership grew by nearly 30 percent, largely due to the vigorous outreach efforts for the Buy Fresh, Buy Local campaign. We place beautiful ads



Through a statewide network of monthly meetings and field days, the Lighthouse Farm Network (LFN) provides technical assistance and support to all those interested in biological farming practices.

Biologically Integrated Orchard Systems program, or BIOS, offers technical assistance to growers who want to adopt an approach to orchard management that reduces their reliance on agricultural chemicals.



The LFN and BIOS come under the umbrella of CAFF's biological farming program, providing technical support, services and assistance to farmers, commodity boards, agricultural professionals and communities about biological farming practices.



Cultivating healthy farms, food & communities

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(530) 756-8518 Fax: (530) 756-7857
E-mail: caff@caff.org Web site: www.caff.org

We use farm field days, tours, collaborative projects and informational materials to demonstrate an increase the implementation of biological farming practices.

Mission: CAFF is a nonprofit membership organization building a movement of rural and urban people to foster family-scale agriculture that cares for the land, sustains local economies, and promotes social justice.

CAFF encourage contributions of any size to support our work. Contributions to CAFF are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by the law.

Many thanks to our funders: Patagonia, Farm Aid, USDA-EQUIP, Cal Fed Bay/Delta Accord, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Center for Ecoliteracy.

Editing: Will Stockwin

Design and production: Will Stockwin and Timothy Rice

This month's contributors: Sam Earnshaw, Liv Nevin, Will Stockwin, Pete Price

featuring farm families in local papers, hold events dedicated to raising consumer awareness, advertise on the radio, and distribute thousands of Buy Fresh, Buy Local labels, T-shirts, totes, hats, and magnets to the public.

When farmers sign up to participate in our program, they can be identified on the shelf at markets and use the Buy Fresh, Buy Local label for their own promotional efforts. Retailers, such as New Leaf Community Markets, sign up to participate and label local farm products in their stores. Community members can also join, helping CAFF get the word out about local farms.

This year we look forward to working with Central Coast chefs to promote locally grown produce in their restaurants. We will also be busy working with our dozens of farmer members to create new direct marketing opportunities throughout the region.

Support this campaign by joining the Central Coast Chapter of CAFF. Call 831-761-8507 to speak with Liv Nevin for more information.

Bio-Tech Front Group Bet \$150,000 Against Mendocino Anti-GMO Measure

CropLife America, a Washington-based industry lobbying group representing biotechnology giants Monsanto, Dow and DuPont corporations among others pumped \$150,000 into a campaign to defeat a Mendocino County ballot measure that would be the first

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Upcoming Meetings

North Coast

Santa Rosa: For more information on upcoming LFN meetings and regional events, contact Mark Cady at (530)756-8518, ext. 20.

Central Coast

Watsonville: For more information on upcoming LFN meetings and regional events, contact Sam Earnshaw at (831) 722-5556.

South Coast

Ventura: For more information on upcoming LFN meetings and regional events, contact Judy Blue at (805) 684-1997, or e-mail judy.blue@verizon.net.

Sacramento Valley

Yolano: For information on upcoming LFN meetings and regional events, contact Marcia Gibbs at (530) 756-8518, ext 34, or e-mail marcia@caff.org.

San Joaquin Valley

Modesto: For information on upcoming LFN meetings and regional events contact Mark Cady at (530)756-8518, ext. 20.

Lindsay: Meeting on the third Wednesday of every month, Olive Tree Inn, 340 N. Hwy 65, 7 a.m. Contact Cliff Loeffler, (559) 568-1525.

Farmscaping for the Future: Hedgerows, Grassed Waterways, Pollinators and Trap Crops

WORKSHOP AND FARM TOURS

Watsonville: *Friday, April 9, UCCE Auditorium, 1432 Freedom Blvd.*

9:30 AM -11:30 AM

Farm Tour and Lunch, Noon - 4:00 PM.

Speakers

Sam Earnshaw, CAFF; Josh Fodor, Central Coast Wilds; Janet Bryer, UCSC;
Tamara Doan, Coastal Watershed Council; Mace Vaughan, Xerces Society;
Sean Swezey, UC SAREP; Dave Moeller, Santa Cruz County Ag Commissioner

Co-sponsored by

SWRCB, UC SAREP, Xerces Society, ALBA, Santa Cruz County Agricultural Commissioner

Call Sam Earnshaw for information at (831) 722-5556.

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Bio-Tech Front Group (cont.)

in the nation to ban the “propagation, cultivation, raising and growing” of genetically engineered crops.

It was the largest contribution ever made to a Mendocino County campaign, according to County Clerk, Marsha Wharff.

In 2002, CropLife ponied up \$3.7 million in Oregon to defeat a ballot measure that would have mandated the labeling of foods produced from genetically engineered crops. That money turned the tide on a measure that went from a 70% voter approval rate to just 30% weeks before the election.

Supporters of Measure H, which does not address the in-store labeling issue, have raised only \$18,000 but remained confident of a victory.

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