Community Alliance with Family Farmers
2009 Annual Report

growing farms • growing food • growing communities
CAFF has been a driving force in the sustainable agriculture movement for more than 30 years. We care about California’s farmers, food, and communities, and promote sustainable agriculture through our four programs.

**Biological Agriculture** pursues innovative soil and pest management initiatives, promoting sustainable and profitable practices that protect the community, the environment and the livelihood of the family farmer. We meet farmers where they are in terms of their growing practices and help them transition to sustainable models.

Our **Farm to School** education program unites students and agriculture, introducing young people to the producers of their food and teaching them about nutrition as well as agriculture’s role in environmentally healthy and socially sustainable communities. Learning these skills helps students make healthier eating choices—and creates a new generation of leaders in the fields of agriculture and the environment.

**Local Food Systems** reconnects communities with the farmers who grow their food. The program reaches hundreds of thousands of California eaters each year through its Buy Fresh Buy Local educational and marketing materials, including the regional editions of Eater’s Guide to Local Food. In 2009, our local distribution entity, Growers Collaborative, evolved to its next phase: community aggregation hubs where established distributors can purchase value-added, locally branded produce from family farmers. We have established our first Aggregation Hub in Northern California and plan to have three more functional by the end of 2010.

The **Policy** program reinforces the work of our three on-the-ground programs by advocating for the rights of the family farmer to farm sustainably and profitably. Through our legislative work we address pressing issues including food safety regulations, land use and healthy school food. As a founding member of the California Climate and Agriculture Network (CalCAN), the California Agricultural Water Stewardship Initiative (CAWSI) and the California Roundtable on Agriculture and the Environment (CRAE), CAFF is swiftly responding to the emerging issues facing family farmers.
Dear Friends,

Although the world of food and farming is much different today than it was when the Community Alliance with Family Farmers began in 1978, the fundamentals of our work have remained constant—and our work is more important than ever.

CAFF's programs address the food and farming challenges that are foremost in our minds today: declining public health, loss of biodiversity, agricultural water shortages and climate change. Researchers are beginning to demonstrate that whole farm management practices have the potential to reduce the carbon footprint of agriculture—and CAFF's award winning Biological Agriculture program has been working directly with farmers for decades to implement these practices on the farm.

Other recent accomplishments include:

- Provided more than 50,000 Farm to School lessons throughout California and helped 20 food service directors add local produce to their school cafeteria menus;
- Published over 150,000 Eater's Guides to Local Food for three regions and created strategic partnerships to create guides in three additional regions in 2010;
- Helped growers plant hundreds of acres of cover crops and hedgerows to create habitats for wildlife and native pollinators;
- Collaborated with groups around the country to minimize the impacts of new federal food safety legislation concerning family farmers and local food systems;
- Launched a Punjabi-language pesticide reduction campaign targeting an estimated 600 Punjabi-American growers in the Sacramento Valley;
- Completed a project that encouraged growers of high-quality cotton in the San Joaquin Valley to adopt biological farming practices—which resulted in the elimination of the 13 most toxic pesticides in cotton and a 70-80 percent increase in beneficial insect populations.

However, CAFF’s work comprises much more than a list of facts and figures. In the next pages, we will introduce you to some of the people who exemplify the spirit of our mission and the impact of our efforts. These people are part of a growing movement and CAFF is growing with it. With your support, we look forward to pursuing a shared vision of local economic vitality, improved public health and long-term sustainability.

Thank you for joining us!

Diane Del Signore  
Executive Director

Carol Presley  
Board Chair
Students help to plant a hedgerow in the Sacramento Valley.

Photograph by Gilbert Mohtes-Chan
Innovative Farming

Although Kris Dhanota and his family emigrated from India nearly four decades ago, he did not leave his agricultural roots behind. It was only natural for them to continue the tradition in the Sacramento Valley, starting their own farm with 40 acres of peaches and prunes. Years later, Kris continues to spend 10-hour days at least six days a week in his orchards, now spread across Sutter and Yuba counties.

“I am still going. I will keep farming,” the fourth-generation farmer said. Kris prides himself on his ability to grow his business despite the never-ending economic and environmental challenges affecting agriculture. Today, he grows 165 acres of walnuts and another 235 acres of peaches, prunes and pomegranates.

“In the past, labor was cheap and there were not too many restrictions. We now see all these rules and regulations on pesticides.” Yet Kris has adapted, embracing new farming practices and innovations. “I’m always trying to do something different. I’m trying different crops and different methods so we can stay in business.”

Emphasizing sustainability and profitability, CAFF’s Biological Agriculture program understands the priorities of today’s family farmer. “We base our work on proven methods developed by the University of California Statewide Integrated Pest Management Program,” says Marcia Gibbs, program director at CAFF, “helping growers implement practices that reduce the environmental impact of farming while allowing them to remain economically viable.”

Through his participation in the Tree Crops Project, Kris recognized the importance of farmers becoming environmental stewards and how pesticide run-off into local waterways affects the water we drink and the fish we eat.

Marcia adds, “By working directly with growers, we encourage them to have the confidence to make changes on their farms that benefit the land, water and air, ensuring that our farms will feed us for generations to come.”

“Who will provide pollination services as the honey bee populations crash? Farms that have hedgerows are growing their own pollinators, and CAFF has been teaching farmers about the use of hedgerows as habitat for years.”

- Judith Redmond
CAFF Board Member and Farmer
Amy Murray, co-owner of Venus Restaurant in Berkeley, features fresh, local produce in her menu. Photograph by Koren Reyes Photography
Sustainability: A Matter of Taste

Stroll into one of Berkeley’s farmers markets and you’ll likely spot chef Amy Murray on her bicycle or electric buggy loaded with fresh fruits and vegetables. The co-owner of Venus Restaurant and an adopter of CAFF’s Buy Fresh Buy Local (BFBL) campaign, Amy is proud to “feature a broad spectrum of seasonal vegetables and fruits.” On any given day Venus customers may dine on potatoes from Full Belly Farm, heirloom tomatoes from Riverdog Farm, sweet corn from Terra Firma Farms or salad greens from Happy Boy Farms.

Amy’s approach to food evolved during two years touring rural China, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia, Pakistan and Burma. She says, “I was really interested in the ancient way of living—how to live in small villages—and I really fell in love with the world of food.”

Although Murray’s story is unique, her commitment to fresh and local produce is shared by all partners in CAFF’s BFBL campaign, which include grocers, caterers, food artisans and institutional kitchens.

“We help businesses source local foods from family farmers and market their efforts to consumers,” states Ariane Michas, manager of CAFF’s Local Food Systems program. “Amy and other Buy Fresh Buy Local businesses are at the forefront of a food revolution that is attempting to meet both human and environmental needs and address profound sustainability challenges.”

Bringing the local food education and advocacy full circle, BFBL also produces regional Eater’s Guides to Local Food, which are available to consumers in print and online.

Chef Murray, who has opened a second restaurant, Revival Bar + Kitchen, in downtown Berkeley, heartily approves. “It’s great,” she remarks, “letting people know where to get fresh and local food.”
On a cool September morning, a small group of energetic youngsters gathered at the Redwood Roots Farm children’s garden, ready to harvest the produce they planted earlier in the summer. The crew carefully plucked a rainbow assortment of red, orange, green and purple sweet peppers and dug up fingerling and blue potatoes, laughing and shouting at the oddly shaped buried treasure.

Within a few hours, these children from Arcata Elementary School had reaped more than 100 pounds of fresh produce bound for Food For People, the Eureka-based food bank. The class had planted and tended the garden in June and July before returning in the fall to pick the crops and donate the produce.

This unique Farm to School project, which combined experiential education and volunteerism, was the result of a partnership between CAFF, Redwood Roots Farm and Food for People. “I was really excited about what CAFF was doing,” says Jason Whitley of Food for People. “It’s great to work with people who support local farms.”

“It’s also practical and effective,” says Michelle Wyler, CAFF’s Humboldt County program manager. “In a remote rural area where access to goods and services can be extremely limited, working with other organizations can extend our reach and our impact to the benefit of the whole community.”
A Taste of the Farm in the Classroom: Spotlight on CAFF’s Harvest of the Month Project

Suzanne Laurens, a teacher at Lincoln Elementary in Salinas, believes connecting kids and agriculture is fundamental to teaching children—and their parents—to eat better and stay healthy.

That’s why Suzanne subscribed to CAFF’s Harvest of the Month delivery program. CAFF’s Harvest of the Month kits contain tailored educational materials about nutrition and local agriculture, as well as a sample of the month’s featured produce item for each student. CAFF delivers Harvest of the Month kits to Suzanne’s first-grade class and five other classrooms at Lincoln Elementary.

While some of her students have parents working in the nearby fields, most of them are not exposed to a wide variety of produce and don’t know the farmers or farms where their food comes from.

According to Farm to School program director Ildi Carlisle-Cummins, “The Harvest of the Month program makes it easy for teachers to get their students thinking about good nutrition, the environment and local agricultural communities.”

Suzanne agrees. “It’s a really fabulous program and it’s not very expensive. Parents are buying into it. I get a strong response from the kids. I was able to get the whole staff involved. It brought an awareness to our whole school community.” The monthly produce tasting generates excitement, surprises and smiles. “A lot of the children inevitably will taste things and want more of it—even peas,” Suzanne notes. “They can educate their parents in a very subtle way as they try new things.”

“One in three California children is at risk of obesity or is already overweight. CAFF’s Farm to School program educates students about healthy eating and improves fresh food access in their cafeterias and communities.”

- Erin Derden-Little
CAFF Staff Member
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"For almost 30 years, CAFF has been promoting the ideas of sustainable agriculture in Sacramento. If CAFF didn’t exist, small farmers in particular would have no one to defend them."

- Pete Price

CAFF Board Member
“CAFF has always supported an effort to develop a set of basic food safety practices—such as monitoring prior land use and activities on adjacent land or periodically testing water sources—that would be applicable to all farms growing produce. We believe that specialized rules to control risks for special markets—such as the fresh-cut processing industry—should be confined to farms producing for those markets. The industry should not be able to force every farmer in America to abide by the same metrics.” Testimony of David Runsten, Director of Policy for the Community Alliance with Family Farmers, at the Monterey hearing on the proposed National Leafy Green Marketing Agreement in September 2009.

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