



DECEMBER 2010

The 2010 Marin Agricultural Summit was deemed a success. Ninety ranchers, farmers, and ag friends spent a day going over what we can accomplish together to sustain a successful and profitable farm community over the next decade. The crowd was energetic and sharp, with many new voices joining in the big conversation. Old timers and legends, such as Merv McDonald, were present also. Merv and his sons currently run the largest cattle operation in Marin.

The theme of the power-packed event was: "What do you, your family and your community need to be successful in the next 10 years?" OK, that's a broad question and kind of unfair, since one may need months to figure it out and answer. But we did make some headway. (See Marin County Farm Advisor Director David Lewis' summary, page 2.) For the participants, thank you for coming prepared, positive, and solution oriented. For those who could not attend, you were missed. However, the Summit is a process, not limited to November 13th. Next steps will include putting time lines and partnerships to these initiatives so that they are implemented. This will be started by sharing Summit results with those of you who could not attend, and with other potential partnering organizations in Marin and beyond.

-- Steve Quirt, editor

Success in Agriculture: What is it?

Agriculture in Marin has changed in the last decade or so. What does that mean to producers? Is it better than the industry we had 15 years ago? Worse? The same? In the long run, the producers need to be successful, no matter what mix of marketing models they choose.

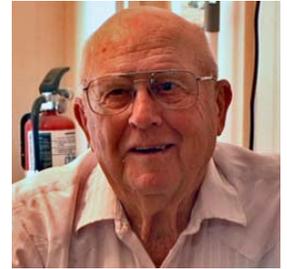
We asked local farmers and ranchers this question: "What is success in agriculture?" This turned out to be the fundamental discussion of the very successful 2010 Marin Agricultural Summit. The answers, as you would expect, were predictable and unpredictable, varied, and inspiring. Here are some thoughtful highlights:

Merv McDonald put it quite practically and reminds us of what our business, community, and personal relationships are all about: "Work; don't be afraid to work. Treat people like you want to be treated. And be honest. Otherwise, it will catch up to you."

Al Poncia: "Our success has not been without sacrifice, stubbornness and perseverance. Agriculture is always facing serious challenges, and needs to be ready to meet them. You need to make enough to raise your kids, and have some left over for retirement. But ultimately, if you are really lucky, you may be able to spend your life in the place you love, doing what you love, and being able to pass the whole thing on to your next generation."

Peter Martinelli: "You need to make enough to keep going. Farming is more than just a job. It's a whole way of life, so you need to enjoy what you are doing. Ultimately, it is a matter of personal fulfillment. For success to be real here in Marin County, I think we need a lot more farmers (row crop farmers) here in Marin. We can't provide the produce that is in demand by any means without more farmers."

Brigid Lunny: "Success to me would be carrying on this ranch the way my parents (Nancy and Kevin Lunny) and grandparents (Joan and Joe Lunny) have built and sacrificed for. I want to make them happy and proud of us for carrying on the ranch. They have all worked so hard. It's not always about the money though. This is our home, and I'll be here as long as the ranch is here."



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Farm Labor Compliance Workshop

Recent visits and fines by the California State Department of Labor Standards Enforcement (DLSE) to Marin and Sonoma Farms have stirred up the small farm community, resulting in some confusion and consternation. In response, UC Cooperative Extension Marin and partners put on a workshop on September 30, at the Dance Palace Community Center in Point Reyes Station, to sort out and clarify California farm labor law compliance. This was a follow-up to a similar workshop April 1, 2010, that UCCE and partners put on in quick response to the unannounced farm inspections and fines.

Marin and Sonoma row crop farms are very small by state and national standards. They are mostly family farms, run by family members, close friends, and informal agreements and handshakes. However, that is not how labor codes function to protect employers and employees. In the 1970s, farm labor protection laws were put in place to protect migrant and seasonal workers who were laboring under unfair conditions. Also in the early seventies, small organic farms began to spring up, bringing with them a different kind of labor pool, often with work exchanged for training and a farm experience.

Until this year, this discrepancy went unnoticed. Now that DLSE has demonstrated that labor codes apply to all agricultural operations, area farmers needed compliance information, and to explore alternatives for training future farmers. The situation is more acute here in Marin, due to the high costs of living and labor, and lack of farm worker housing. Marin farmers are working diligently to comply with the laws and to stay in business.

The workshop gave everybody a good look at what farmers need to do to comply. C. Bryan Little, Chief Operating Officer, Farm Employers Labor Service, explained the rules in detail, and Leslie Ruhland talked about payroll services and showed examples of employee notification and payroll processing. Participants received templates of plans and reports required for compliance with labor codes and health and safety standards. The information from this and the April workshop is available at www.growninmarin.org, under the GIM Workshops link.



What a day! Marin Ag Summit 2010

Ninety-plus of the most passionate, well-spoken, and yes, sometimes opinionated folks gathered at Walker Creek Ranch on November 13 to represent the needs and opportunities for Marin's agriculture. Everyone contributed in group sessions,

setting the direction and priorities for continued success on our farms and ranches. The complete compilation of ideas, which the participants shared that day, will be available shortly in the Summit summary notes. Here is a sample of the suggestions and concepts put forth.

The day started with 16 small Agricultural Café discussions of five to seven people each discussing and answering the question: *"Where do we want Marin agriculture to be in ten years - for you, your family, your products, and the county?"* Responses included: having the true value of food be understood and supported; local, sustainable, organic; and *"We want ag in Marin County to be united and prosperous and supportive of one another."*

There was also time for livestock, dairy, row crop, and processors industry-specific group discussions. Each of the four groups compiled a list of seven key ideas for future attention. Examples from each group include:

- Dairies - Streamline permitting process for green energy projects or allow beta test without permits.
- Livestock - High-speed Internet for marketing and education.
- Processors - Shared packaging and distribution facilities on the 101 corridor.
- Row Crops - Work experience, career pathways, and on-farm training.

To wrap up the day, participants again worked in the small Agricultural Cafés to answer the question, *"What are the most important initiatives and ideas that will help us collectively reach our goals?"* The result is a list of initiatives and preliminary steps for implementation. Examples include:

- Develop a "Grown in Marin" label - (1) Explore what other regions are doing around local labeling, and (2) determine criteria for local labeling.
- Streamline agricultural project permitting - (1) Provide additional county staff education, and (2) support and add more capacity for project review and approval.

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"Success" continued from page 1

Richie Grossi: "The main thing about our success is that we like it. That's number one. But you have to be pretty tight on your management, because if you don't watch it, you're not in business. In the good years, you have to put some away, and that'll help you through the lean years."



Julie Rossotti: "To me, success is to produce a great quality goat meat, the best that I can put out on the market here in the Bay Area, and keep our operation really local. I think that we have a really great start on promoting something that people are just becoming aware of."



Bobby Foehr: "Success for me right now is trying to cut costs without touching my reputation for high quality layers and chicks. Quality is a huge part of my operation, the way I treat my birds and deliver them to customers. As a young farmer I have gotten enthusiastic support. I work every day, but it's on my own terms - sort of. Hey, it's better than working in the City!"



Liz Daniels: "I feel the success when we feed people. There is something so satisfying about knowing that your farm product is going out to so many people in Marin County. I'm passionate about it. That's what drives our success. Passion."



Ashley Arndt: "Success is different for everybody, since everyone's operation is a little different. For me, I want to follow in my grandfather Richie's (Grossi) footsteps. He has worked hard to be successful, and I don't want to change that. I get to do so much here on the ranch that other kids will never get a chance to experience. I love it here. I wouldn't change a thing."



Summit 1997 to Summit 2010

What has happened in Marin since the Agricultural Summit in 1997 and the first agricultural diversification workshop in 1998? Forty-one Marin dairies were still providing almost a quarter of the Bay Area's fresh milk. However, there was no real diversification into other specialty crops and only 312 acres were farmed organically. Land costs were climbing and more stringent water quality regulations were pressuring ranchers to do something.

In the foreword to the 1988 book, *Farming on the Edge*, about Marin agriculture, Wendell Berry writes about his wish " - as this Marin conversation continues - that it might involve more thought about the value of locally produced food."

Today there are 52 certified organic farms on 18,000 acres in Marin. Many ranches and farms have sprung a new generation of young ranchers and farmers growing and direct-marketing more than 40 types of unique products. Dairy and livestock operations are diversified: growing and direct-marketing pastured poultry and eggs, farmstead and artisan cheese, and organic and grass-fed beef. Marin and the North Bay have become the Normandy of the North Coast, where quality artisanal and farmstead products are ubiquitous.

Marin Agriculture Statistics	1997	2009
Gross value	\$57.3 million	\$52.7 million
Organic farms	29	56
Acres certified organic	312	18,033
Acres in organic pasture	0	17,649
Acres in organic row crop operation	312	384
Organic production value	\$3.1 million	\$13.9 million
Value of direct market	\$800,000	\$1.6 million
Number of farmstead/artisan cheese makers	1	8
Number of cow dairies	41	23
Value of pastured poultry operations	\$2.2 million	\$6.8 million
Number of MALT easements	38	66
MALT protected acreage	25,500	41,892

Figures obtained from CDFA, Marin Ag Commissioner Crop Report, MALT, and UC data archives.

-- Ellie Rilla, UCCE Marin



"Marin Ag Summit" continued from page 2

Next steps will include putting time lines and partnerships to these initiatives so they are implemented. This will be started by sharing Summit results with those of you who could not attend and with other potential partnering organizations in Marin and even beyond.

Again look for the summary notes, as well as video capture of the day to be available soon at the Summit website (<http://ucanr.org/sites/2010AgSum2/>). In closing, a very sincere thank you goes to all Summit participants, Partners & Sponsors, as well as the Table Hosts, Facilitators, and Moderators for making the Summit possible.

-- David Lewis, UCCE Marin/Farm Advisor

Go to <http://ucanr.org/sites/2010AgSum2/> to read about the Ag Summit.



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Marin Farm News:

☞ **Pey-Marin Vineyards** was honored on **September 29** at the **James Beard House**, New York City, when its 2008 Pey-Marin Riesling was served at a dinner celebrating Marin-grown produce.
 ☞ **Cowgirl Creamery** has just opened **Sidekick**, a cheese and dairy-centric eatery, at a space next to their cheese shop at the Ferry Building in San Francisco.

Upcoming Events - Save the Dates:

☞ The **Annual Grafting Workshop** will be held **February 24, 2011**, at Indian Valley College. More info to come.
 ☞ **Sonoma County Food Forum, February 24, 2011, 8:30-4:30**. Call UCCE Sonoma, 707-565-2621, for information.

Publications and Websites:

☞ Newly-published poisonous plant leaflet: <http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu/pdf/8398.pdf>.
 ☞ Smartphone app delivers soil data to growers in the field: <https://www.soils.org/files/publications/sssaj/abstracts/74-5/s10-0144nabs.pdf>.
 ☞ USDA Specialty Crop Report: <http://www.rma.usda.gov/pubs/2010/specialtycrop.pdf>.
 ☞ Weed Photo Gallery: http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/weeds_intro.html

Two important items from Ag Commissioner/Marin Organic Certified Agriculture (MOCA):

☞ Ag Commissioner/MOCA has just hired a new Inspector Trainee to help with organic/MOCA inspections and weights and measures inspections. MOCA is accepting organic certification applicants. For organic certification applications or questions, please call 415-499-6700 and speak to Anita Sauber or Jeff Stiles.
 ☞ USDA has provided funds to the CDEFA Organic Program for organic certification cost share reimbursement. All operations that have been certified by a USDA-accredited certifier are eligible for certification reimbursements. Eligible entities will be reimbursed up to 75 percent of their organic certification costs, not to exceed \$750 for the period of 10/1/2010 to 9/30/2011. Applications can be downloaded at the CDEFA website at: http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/is/i_e_c/organic.html.

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