

Marin County Department of Agriculture Weights and Measures Marin Organic Certified Agriculture

Newsletter Fall 2004 Vol. 1, No. 3

County of Marin Mission Statement

The mission of the County of Marin is to provide excellent services that support healthy, safe and sustainable communities; preserve Marin's unique environmental heritage; and encourage meaningful participation in the governance of the County by all.

Newly Certified Members

Marin Organic Certified Agriculture would like to welcome our newest members:

Ronit Kakon & Shuli Madmone

Whole Spice
San Rafael, CA

Whole Spice is a split handler operation moving towards the goal of being 100% organic. The operation specializes in the selling of various types of spices. Currently they are marketing 52 different types of certified organic spices.

Albert Straus

Blake's Landing Farms
Marshall, CA

Albert has organically certified his dairy livestock and 660 acres of pastures with MOCA. He was previously certified with QAI. The Straus Dairy became the first organic dairy west of the Mississippi. Albert has been an organic dairy producer for over a decade.

Joe and Kathy Tresch

Joe Tresch Dairy, Inc.
Petaluma, CA

Joe and Kathy have organically certified their dairy livestock and 2,120 acres of pastures with MOCA. They were previously certified with QAI. The Tresch Dairy has been certified organic for the last 10 years. Their dairy livestock breeds include Holstein and Jersey and a mix of both.

Lunny Family

Lunny Ranch
Inverness, CA

Kevin and his family organically certified 1400 acres of pastures earlier this year, now the

Lunny's have taken an extra step by certifying organic 200 of their beef cattle. In addition, the Lunny Family's beef cattle herd is the first in Marin and Sonoma Counties to become Grass Fed Certified through the Marin-Sonoma Counties' Grass Fed Certification Program. Now the Lunny's look forward to expanding their organic grass fed beef operation.

Re-Certification Notices

Is it that time of the year to get ready for re-certification again? See if your name is listed in the reminder list below and you can get a head start preparing the documentation our inspectors will need for re-certification such as **planting records, harvest records, input records, compost records, seed invoices, storage records, sales records and labels.**

Name	Year 2004
Peter Martinelli	October
Randy Lafranchi	October
David Retsky	December
Margaret Elliot	December

It Has Been a Successful Year for Marin Organic Certified Agriculture

Marin Organic Certified Agriculture (MOCA) has had a very successful year in 2004. Our organic certification program began the year with 29 certified operations in Marin and Sonoma Counties and this year we have increased our program by certifying eight more operations. MOCA is currently certifying 36 organic operations in Marin and Sonoma Counties. We have expanded our services with the certification of organic livestock. In the last couple of months MOCA has certified three different organic livestock operations (the Straus

Dairy and Tresch Dairy – dairy livestock and pasture and the Lunny Family – beef livestock and pasture). We foresee continued growth of the organic program and further expansion into the certification of more local livestock operations in the near future. MOCA is well prepared to continue growing and with the help of Marin County Biologist Amanda Stephens, who brings her organic and livestock knowledge to the program, we will be able to continue to provide quality services to our local organic industry. 2004 has been a terrific year so far and we look forward to continuing this trend and supporting sustainable agriculture and the local organic industry. We would like to give special thanks to the Marin Organic Board and Helge and Wendy for their support, without it these accomplishment would not be possible.

“Ecosystem Engineering”

Intercropping systems or polycultures benefit from the advantages that biodiversity in such systems offers. Growing two or more different crops together can result in beneficial interactions which increase beneficial insect populations, reduce external inputs to control pests and disease and creates stability of the system(1). If we take the previously mentioned ideas and build upon them to increase biodiversity, then the system will become more stable. This notion of ideas applied to a farming system as a whole can also be referred to as “farmscaping” or “ecosystem engineering” since it generally involves designing a farming system in a manner that more closely resembles naturally occurring ecosystems. More appropriately, farmscaping can be defined as “the use of hedgerows, insectary plants, cover crops, and water reservoirs to attract and support populations of beneficial organisms such as insects, bats, and birds of prey (2).” And to expand upon that definition, farmscaping also needs to focus on taking care of the soil and its organic matter to increase and support the complex food webs and diverse beneficial organisms that are found there. Many organic farmers incorporate these practices into their farming operations, the idea being not only to create a more eco-friendly farming operation but to create an Integrated Pest Management Program (IPM) through the interactions of

natural enemies of pests, beneficial soil microorganisms, native plants and planted crops found in that agroecosystem. An agroecosystem can be defined as interactions of plants and animals in an environment that has been modified or designed by people for the production of commodities for human consumption or use. These type of changes can have an adverse effect on the biodiversity of the agroecosystem and it is therefore very important to design environments which will protect and/or enhance biodiversity. “Ecosystem engineering is the most promising in harnessing the inherent strengths that emerge when agroecosystems are designed following agroecological principles(3).” “The design of such systems is based on the application of the following ecological principles(4):

1. Enhance recycling of biomass and optimizing nutrient availability and balancing nutrient flow.
2. Securing favorable soil conditions for plant growth, through management of soil organic matter and enhancing soil biota.
3. Minimizing losses due to flows of solar radiation, air and water by way of microclimate management, water harvesting and soil management through increased soil covers.
4. Species and genetic diversification of the agroecosystem.
5. Enhance beneficial biological interactions and synergisms among agrobiodiversity components thus resulting in the promotion of key ecological processes and services.”

The strategies and approaches that can be used to apply these principles are many and as mentioned before can include the use of hedge rows, use of cover crops, perennial crop plantings, creating permanent habitats and so on. The ultimate goal of these applications is to increase the activity of natural enemies of pests, provide food sources and overwintering sites for beneficial insects, increase the ability of crops to resist insect pests with the help of a healthy soil with high organic matter and a diverse microorganism population. It is up to individual farming operations to continue

exploring the different techniques and methods that can be used to design an agroecosystem which can eventually become self sustaining.

CAFEE

Small farmers, organic farmers and food processors in PG & E's service areas can get breaks on installing energy efficient equipment. The **California Agri-Food Energy Efficiency Program (CAFEE)** assists organic farmers, food processors and small farmers in becoming more energy efficient. Qualified operations can get paid up to 50% of the installation cost of certain energy efficient equipment such as lighting, ventilation fans, refrigeration, pumps, motors and food processing systems and equipment. To participate in this program you must meet condition 1 and either A or B below:

1. *You must be a PG & E customer paying the California public goods charge and located in a rural area,*

And either:

- A. *Operate a small farm or agricultural product processing facility – defined as one consuming 29,700 kWh or less of electricity per year (roughly \$600/month for electricity on the AG-1A tariff),*

or

- B. *Be a certified organic producer.*

For additional information about this program you may contact Russ Goold or Mark Reedy at 925-284-3780 or through e-mail at mreedy@gepllc.com

Organic Cost Share Program

Just a reminder to all certified organic operations, do not forget to take advantage of the Federal Organic Certification Cost Share Program. This program offers to reimburse up to 75% of certification costs (maximum \$500) to certified organic operations. Any certified organic operation that receives their certification by September 30, 2004 or before qualifies. For more information about this program and to obtain a copy of the application form you can call the Marin County Agriculture Department

at 415-499-6700 and ask for Anita Sauber. Don't miss out on this great opportunity.

Taking Charge of the Future

The University of California Cooperative Extension, the Taking Charge of the Future (TCOTF) Steering Committee of young farmers and ranchers and the Farm Bureau are putting on "**Taking Charge of the Future: Today's Challenges and Opportunities for Tomorrow's Agricultural Leaders.**" This day long event features thirty-one speakers in nine concurrent workshops and presentations, along with a trade show, agricultural community mixer and an end of the event "free raffle" with great prizes donated by local businesses. Spread the word out about this event to any young farmer, rancher or young adult interested in making a career in agriculture. There is no charge for this event which is scheduled to take place Saturday, October 9, 2004 at Walker Creek Ranch. You can get more information about the program sessions and register on-line at www.tcotf.org

Organic Strawberry Planting Stock Now Available

Attention organic growers, CCOF has recently announced the availability of **certified organic strawberry crowns**. The following two producers are certified organic and carry several commonly planted varieties:

Prather Ranch: James Rickert
530-941-0810 e-mail: rickertjames@yahoo.com

La Vetta Nursery: Ron Hathaway
541-882-8097 e-mail:
ron.Hathaway@oregonstate.edu

To get more information about available varieties, price and to arrange order deliveries please contact these growers.

Marin County Agriculture Department News

Marin-Sonoma Counties Grass Fed Livestock Certification Program

The Marin County Agriculture Department is ready to grant grass fed certification status to any livestock operation in Marin and Sonoma

Counties that meets the requirements. The main purpose of the Marin County Agriculture Department Grass Fed Livestock Certification Program is to provide the local livestock industry with incentive to pursue innovative and sustainable animal agriculture principles, encourage sustainable agricultural and management practices, increase marketing opportunities, and promote more natural animal practices. For more information about this program and its participation requirements contact Anita Sauber at 415-499-6700.

It Has Been an Honor

Hello everyone, I would like to announce that I have accepted a job offer working in the Santa Cruz County Agriculture Department. I am looking forward to working in Santa Cruz but at the same time I am saddened that I will be leaving Marin County. I would like to take a moment to give thanks to all the people that have made my experience working here in Marin a very memorable one. I would like to give special thanks to Marin Organic, Stacy Carlsen, Fred Crowder and Anita Sauber for making it possible for me to have had the opportunity to become exposed to local organic agriculture through their support of my position as Sustainable Agriculture and Organic inspector in the MOCA program. While in Marin County, I have had the opportunity to learn many new things, help with several fascinating projects and I have had the chance to get to know and work closely with the local organic community. I would like to thank all the local organic operations from whom I have learned many organic concepts and ideas and thanks to all the staff in the Marin County Agriculture Department and the Marin UC Cooperative Extension, your help and support have been invaluable. It has been a tremendous honor to serve the local organic community and to have met and worked with some very fine individuals. Thank you all.

Sincerely,

Juan Hidalgo

References.

- (1). Kantor, Sylvia. Intercropping. (1999). Retrieved November 2003 from <http://www.metrokc.gov/wsuv2Dce/agriculture/PDFs/Intercropping.pdf>
- (2). Dufour, Rex. Farmscaping to Enhance Biological Control. (2000). Retrieved December 2003 from <http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/farmscape.html>
- (3). Altieri, Miguel and Nicholls, Clara. (2004). An Agroecological Basis for Biological Control Through Conservation. California Conference on Biological Control IV (CCBC IV), 28-36. Department of Entomology, University of California, Riverside.
- (4). Altieri, Miguel. Agroecology: Principles and Strategies for Designing Sustainable Farming Systems. (2000). Retrieved November 2003 from http://www.cnr.berkeley.edu/~agroeco3/principles_and_strategies.html



U.C. Berkeley Professor Miguel Altieri picks a dry farmed Purple Peruvian organic potato plant from David Little's farm.