



After all, the food you produce is far more than just food, for it represents an entire culture – the culture of the family farm. It represents the ancient tapestry of rural life, the dedicated animal husbandry, the struggle with the natural elements, the love of landscape, the childhood memories, the knowledge and wisdom learned from parents and grandparents, the intimate understanding of local climate and conditions, the hopes and fears of succeeding generations. - Prince Charles

The Prince of Wales could very well be describing West Marin in this quote from a recent speech. The mixed tapestry of agriculture, the generational farming traditions and the real culture of agriculture that is still in practice on our farms and ranches, is a precious part of our heritage and future. Often threatened, often misunderstood, our farmers and ranchers are stewarding much more than landscapes, water, and food. They are stewards of culture, a culture so important to our character that, if it is lost, we may lose the most important building block of our heritage: the ability to feed ourselves and others from our own soil.

Today, across the country, con-

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Cooperative Problem Solving: the Marin County Livestock Protection Program

What happens when you bring together animal welfare activists, livestock ranchers, and county government? There are several outcomes from combining these diverse groups: conflict, conversion, or compromise, just to note a few. But in keeping with the tradition that we have here of forging alliances and working for the best solution for all parties, Camilla Fox, the Director of Wildlife Programs for the Animal Protection Institute, several traditional sheep ranchers like Bill Jensen, and the Marin County Agricultural Commissioner, Stacy Carlsen, and Anita Sauber worked hard to solve the real-life problem of livestock depredation by the growing population of coyotes.

The issue began when the animal welfare community began to question the use of taxpayer funds going to pay a full-time trapper who, traditionally, helped keep the coyote population down through lethal practices like snare trapping and poisoning. Public-sponsored killing of coyotes was a violation of the principles of animal welfare advocates.

Ranchers, on the other hand, already facing stricter regulations and dropping market prices, were reliant on the county-funded trapper to help them keep the predation of lambs in check.

Marin County, through the Agricultural Commissioner’s office, decided to hold roundtable meetings to deal with the situation. The meetings were contentious at the beginning, with both “sides” arguing their viewpoints. Both sides were dug in. Camilla said, “*Yes it was contentious at first, but everyone wanted a solution so we all decided to keep up the discussion.*” Bill Jensen commented, “*We could see the writing on the wall, and knew that we would have to compromise, so we stuck it out.*”

Stacy Carlsen and Anita Sauber continued to host the dialog, and several initial proposals were unsuccessful. Eventually the workgroup was able to take the budget (formerly allotted by USDA to the trapper) and transform it into a non-lethal pro-



Rancher Bill Jensen training his Pyrenees Hound guard dog at his ranch in Tomales.

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Renewable Energy on the Farm

"There is really no excuse not to switch to renewable energy," stated John Williams from Frogs Leap Winery, at the Renewable Energy workshop held November 10 in Point Reyes Station. John operates his winery from a solar energy system, and related to the audience of farmers that between federal, PG&E, and state funding sources, it was relatively painless to implement a renewable energy program. John is also installing a geothermal system in his new office building. From a business standpoint, it was a no-brainer.

Most of us are familiar with Albert Straus' innovative methane generator system. Albert explained how he powers his Blake's Landing Dairy from manure. He utilizes vegetable oil to run a generator for frequent West Marin power outages and he'll be using the vegetable oil for his feed trucks. With the subsidies that Albert received from government matching grants, he has paid back his investment in three years, and is now self sufficient.

Scott Mathiesson from Laguna Farm uses vegetable oil in his farm equipment, and powers his cooling system with the spent oil from restaurants. Scott is a leader in this kind of "reclaimed" technology, and explained how to source used vegetable oil and the refurbishing technology needed to convert tractors, automobiles and generators over to vegetable oil. Scott estimated that his fuel costs for vegetable oil are running about one dollar per gallon.

Gwen Johnson, with the Marin County Sustainable Energy Team, is an expert on subsidies and funding for renewable energy systems. She outlined some of the ways that federal, state, and local government can help cut the costs of installing renewable energy systems.

The workshop was so successful that UC Cooperative Extension, the County of Marin, and the Renewable Energy Program from the Ecological Farming Association are planning a follow-up session for those producers seriously interested in installing renewable energy systems on the farm. We'll keep you posted as to the date and time.

\$10 Million to Help California Dairy and Confined Animal Operators Protect Water Quality

California dairy producers and confined animal operators may apply for assistance through a \$10 million initiative to share the cost of structures and management practices to protect water quality. USDA's Environmental Quality Incentives Program provides the resources for this effort.

"Our dairymen and animal feeding operators are facing challenges in keeping their businesses profitable and sustainable, and I believe it is time to accelerate assistance to them," said Lincoln "Ed" Burton, State Conservationist for USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

"We're pleased to partner with the USDA in addressing environmental issues in California," said California Department of Food and Agriculture Undersecretary A.J. Yates. *"Consistent with the Governor's commitment to the environment, we are working aggressively to leverage federal dollars and improve California's environment."*

"California Resource Conservation Districts are proud to work in partnership with NRCS to help producers meet the challenges of new environmental regulation," said Brian Leahy, Executive Director, California Association of Resource Conservation Districts.

To protect water quality, there are a number of conservation practices producers can use to safely store and treat manure and apply it to land at rates that provide crop nutrients without harming groundwater. NRCS will cost share many of these practices through the initiative, with the producer and the agency each paying half. Some of these practices include manure storage; manure treatment such as composting and other forms of digestion; manure transfer; storm water control features such as berms, diversions, gutters, and other heavy use area protection structures; nutrient management; fertigation practices; and land treatments such as manure runoff control.

"We certainly encourage producers to develop a comprehensive nutrient management plan to help them assess their needs and select the best practices to manage their business while protecting natural resources," said Burton. *"And that is something we can also help them with."* -Jessica Sternfels, National Resource Conservation District

To apply for the cost share assistance, dairymen and other confined animal operators are encouraged to contact Becky Deniz at (707) 794-1242 x118 at the Marin and Sonoma NRCS office in Petaluma before December 2, 2005. For additional information on EQIP and other NRCS programs and activities, see www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov.

West Marin Gets the Royal Treatment

On a typically gorgeous West Marin November afternoon recently, some 2,500 locals and tourists alike lined the streets patiently awaiting the arrival of Their Royal Highnesses, the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall. When the royal couple stepped out of their limousine in front of the Pt. Reyes Farmers' Market, the crowd erupted into cheers. The future king of England and his bride then spent the next hour and a half roaming the market at a leisurely pace, tasting produce and greeting the vendors. With a cadre of national and international reporters pressed up against barricades, the world spotlight was focused on the efforts of Marin Organic and the many other organizations in Marin County which work to protect sustainable agriculture.



Prince Charles and his wife Camilla were greeted by Helge Hellberg, Executive Director of Marin Organic, Ellie Rilla, Director of UC Cooperative Extension, Stacy Carlsen, Marin County Agricultural Commissioner, Steve Kinsey, County Supervisor, and Bob Berner, Executive Director of Marin Agricultural Land Trust.

The royal couple was relaxed and warm, shaking hands, inquiring about products and growing methods, and sampling several items. At Sandy and Dennis Dierks' stall, Camilla wasted no time, reaching right into a basket of apples and munching away. Later, one of Mimi Luebermann's goats returned the gesture by snatching a few bites of the small bouquet of flowers the duchess was carrying. The couple seemed to genuinely enjoy themselves and each other at the market, and ended up spending twice as long there as originally planned. After a quick pint at the Western Saloon, the prince and the duchess continued on their way for a tour of three Bolinas farms: Peter Martinelli's Fresh Run Farm, Sandy and Dennis Dierks' Paradise Valley Produce, and Warren Weber's Star Route

Farms. An avid organic farmer himself, Prince Charles showed a passionate and sincere interest in growing methods, soil amendments, and crop rotation practices used by the growers.

Next, a group of local farmers, ranchers, and agricultural leaders including Patrick Holden, the Director of the Soil Association in England, shared a rousing discussion of the threats facing small scale organic producers around the world over lunch at Weber's historic farm house. Both Mr. Holden and the prince stressed the urgency of promoting and protecting small scale family farms and organic agriculture, pointing out that the health and survival of our society depends on the survival of our non-industrial agricultural producers.

By all accounts, the prince and duchess enjoyed their tour of West Marin immensely and as a result of the visit, Marin Organic was invited to attend an organic conference in London next January, taking yet another step toward fostering a strong alliance between organizations around the world that focus on sustainable food production. - Wendy McLaughlin, Marin Organic

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gram that provided partial funding for fencing, guard animals, enclosure practices, and indemnification for loss of animals to predation. After overcoming many roadblocks, the program has taken hold. Eighteen producers representing 80% of the sheep in Marin are enrolled in the Livestock Protection Program. Anita Sauber states, "Every year we brace ourselves, because the coyote problem is not going away. We have done a good job so far, but at any time the predation could increase."

The example set by this loose coalition of animal welfare groups, ranchers, and county government is a positive statement that differences can be overcome, and hard work, patience, and an ability to stand in others' shoes can yield lasting results. Camilla Fox states, "I learned how powerful it is to listen to the other side," and Bill Jensen says, "We knew that we would have to work with them. I brought Camilla out to the ranch and showed her what we were up against. We had long talks, and began to understand each other."

Today, ranchers share in the ownership of the program, and Camilla and Stacy have offered the program as a positive model to other counties. The needs of the conservationists as well as the ranchers have been met through dialog and compromise, and new friendships have been forged across belief systems. Bill says, "Camilla and I still don't see things eye-to-eye, but I consider her a friend and she calls here every once in awhile." Not a bad ending for a few years' hard work.

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sumers and citizens are becoming increasingly aware that food and products grown close to home represent much more than health and good taste. Self-reliance, sound economic practices, and pride in regional identity contribute to an atmosphere of true sustainability rooted in the land.

Perhaps Prince Charles and Camilla, the Duchess of Cornwall, chose Marin County for their visit because they sensed that much of the prince's vision of agricultural pride and sustainability is so alive here. I am quite sure that his interest and best wishes extend far beyond those with whom he visited, and out to all those ranches and farms that make up the "ancient tapestry of rural life," that we all work to protect.

- Steve Quirt, Editor

Sally and Mike Gale and their (now deceased) heirloom heritage turkeys.



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News from Marin County Farms, Ranches and Producers

- ☞ Marvin Nunes, from A Ranch on the Point Reyes peninsula was voted "Dairyman of the Year" at the World Dairy Expo in Madison, Wisconsin.
- ☞ The first-ever Marin Organic Farmer Calendar is available online at www.MarinOrganic.org The calendar presents farmers of sustainable agriculture in Marin.
- ☞ UC Cooperative Extension has produced a ten-foot banner detailing the history of agriculture in Marin. The banner can be viewed and downloaded at www.growninmarin.org. The banner is available for educational events. Call 415 499-4204 for details.
- ☞ The Marin Resource Conservation District has received the Governor's Environmental and Economic Leadership Award for Ecosystem and Watershed Stewardship.
- ☞ Warren Weber of Star Route Farms, in Bolinas, was awarded the Excellence in Agricultural Viability award at the Marin Economic Commission's Awards Luncheon that took place November 18.
- ☞ Marin Organic Certified Agriculture reports that it has certified 34 growers with 11,178 acres organically certified.
- ☞ The USDA has just released their new budget for the grant/loan program that provides funding assistance for developing renewable energy. The Renewable Energy and Energy budget is : \$200,698,080. For a good overview of the USDA program, visit: http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ia/rbcs_RE-EE_Fact_Sheet.pdf

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