

# California Farm Futures

Fall 2010

The newsletter of California FarmLink, a non-profit organization working to promote family farming and preserve farmland through facilitating farm transfers



## Immigrant farmers in San Diego give a hand to even newer refugees

In August, California FarmLink had the opportunity to present on the topics of access to land and money, production and marketing strategies at workshops for two groups of refugee farmers in San Diego County.

We collaborated with the International Rescue Committee (IRC), an organization providing assistance to refugees who have fled from war or disaster. IRC staff in San Diego are helping East Africans from Somalia to settle, find emergency food assistance, and health services, and rebuild their lives. Many of these refugees were small farmers in their homeland, and are now able to take advantage of the IRC's agriculture training through the Refugee Entrepreneurial Agriculture Program (REAP).

REAP includes an initial four-month session where growers practice hands-on organic agriculture as well as classroom training. In a second three-month session, participants have access to land in the Pauma Valley, north of San Diego, which IRC leases from Tierra Miguel Foundation (<http://www.tierramiguelfarm.org/>). Participants select the crops and number of acres they feel comfortable with, getting help with transportation to the farm and with marketing to local restaurants and CSAs.

Eighteen Somalians attended FarmLink's workshop with IRC providing translation. "A big challenge for program participants", said REAP Program Coordinator Jaime Garza, "is identifying resources and land. The workshop provided a lot of good information in the transfer from training to working their own farm enterprises: understanding what a lease agreement is, what to look for in a lease, knowing that when the time comes, FarmLink can assist with the lease process." Garza has a background in ag business and viticulture and was an extensionist in Central America for two years.



*Jaime Garza of IRC talks to new Somali Bantu immigrants  
- Photo by Howard Lipin*

The second workshop was put on by volunteers with Sewa International's Bhutanese Refugee Empowerment Project, attended by 15 aspiring Bhutanese farmers. Workshop presenters included Garza who described the REAP program, Ramiro Lobo - Small Farm Advisor with UC Coop Extension in San Diego, and Steve Schwartz of California FarmLink. This was the first agricultural training the Bhutanese had received since their recent arrival to this country.

"It was impressive", said Schwartz, "to see immigrants who've not been here all that long be so willing to help the more recent immigrants get their hands back in the dirt, and farming in San Diego County."

### *Donate - How you can help.*

As a small non-profit organization, we welcome your support. Your contribution, no matter how small, makes a difference! You can now donate on line through PayPal, or by mailing your check to us at P.O. Box 2224, Sebastopol, CA 95473.

## From the Executive Director



In the month of August, I had two memorable opportunities to help new immigrants advance explore and advance their farming goals. Working with two new partners – International Rescue Committee (IRC) and SEWA International, I was invited to talk to

these immigrants on financing options, land access strategies, and FarmLink services. The topics were familiar, but the audiences unique: ethnic Nepali refugees from the small nation of Bhutan, and Somali-Bantu refugees. Bhutan, nestled in the Himalayas, has a very different type of agriculture than the new immigrants will be considering here. Still, working with Ramiro Lobo of UC Cooperative Extension we were able to discuss options for getting started with the crop diversity that can be grown in San Diego.

What struck me most that evening is the diverse culture that is evolving in America. One of the workshops was organized by a group of first generation Indian immigrants who were apparently doing well in industries that require high education levels. These immigrants - volunteers with SEWA like Srinivasan Tak and Barath Ramaswamy - are following an old American tradition by volunteering their time to help a group of recent immigrants 'pull themselves up by their own bootstraps'.

On the next night, I presented to Somali-Bantu farmers participating in Tierra Miguel Foundation's incubator farm (arrangement facilitated by the IRC). It was the first night of Rhamadan, and the last hour and a half of a day of fasting, still these farmers were engaged and hungry for information that would help them build a life in their new home. The program manager who had arranged this, Jaime Garza, was born and raised in a small town in the southern San Joaquin Valley. After a stint in the Peace Corps, Garza found himself helping Somali's. Ramiro, Rhepa, Garza and their colleagues represent America at its finest; people reaching out to help others in America's melting pot, to build the best quality life experience possible.

I'm proud that FarmLink's team plays a part in this and we look forward to more opportunities where we can be of service.

On another note, I want to recognize transitions occurring at California FarmLink - we're hiring new staff to better serve clients and advance our mission. We will sorely miss Andrea Krout, who took a position with a public relations firm. Andrea brought knowledge, enthusiasm, a great work ethic, and an expert's understanding of livestock to our organization. We wish her the best, and know she will continue her involvement in the agriculture community as both producer and advocate.

*Steve D. Schwartz*

## Taking Mentorship Orientation on the road

FarmLink's Davis staff teamed up with the National Center for Appropriate Technology's ATTRA project this September, and hit the road to educate farm apprentices and employees in the Placer/Foothills area about their valuable services and resources. Visiting three farms in the region, FarmLink's Kendra Johnson spoke to the aspiring farmers about tools for securing land for farming, and beginning a farm business, while Marisa Alcorta from ATTRA, shared their business planning and marketing resources.



**Alcorta & Johnson scan Four Frog Farm's fields with Owner Myers**

Alan Haight, Riverhill Farm owner and former mentor to Andrew Myers (now with his own farm), shared with us, "For every group of interns that expresses the most earnest desire to learn how to farm, most are quickly disillusioned, or resort to what I consider

to be - fantasies about homesteading and self-sufficiency. For those who really want to farm and sustain that interest through months of repetitive work, the obstacles seem insurmountable. That's why someone like Andrew at Four Frog stands out in my mind as a success story..."

Haight's concern is one that often drives our work. With the help of organizations like ours and NCAT/ATTRA, these

obstacles become less daunting and the goal of being a productive farmer can be within reach for young farmers. Andrew Myers and Logan Egan of Penn Valley's Four Frog Farm are beginning farmers themselves; nonetheless, they're offering the next generation of farmers a chance to get their hands dirty and practice their craft. The result has been a bountiful 10-acre vegetable farm and CSA. Given legal concerns about internships these days, interns will insist that they're "visitors just passing through", but the value of their time at Four Frogs Farm is immeasurable; these hard working hands have plans of anchoring in their own soil one day.



**Four Frog Farms Interns Matt, Leda, Stephanie, farm manager Ryan, co-owner Myers**

The intent on this road trip was to acquaint farm employees and apprentices with our services, but it seems we were the most inspired. Johnson told FarmLink staff, "It was good to hear from the farm mentors, and a journey well worth repeating."

With opportunities like those offered at Four Frog Farm, the next generation of farmers will be smarter and more prepared for the challenges of the field.



**Messerli Family Farm**

### **Young, capital-ready hay/cereal farmer seeks 200-500 acres farmland for immediate lease**

Ruedi Messerli, an experienced young farmer from a multi-generational farming operation in Switzerland is planning to move to California's Central Valley (or other locale), and establish his own business. There is no longer room on his family farm, and he has long hoped to try his luck in the U.S. Currently employed by John Deere in Switzerland, Ruedi has visited and researched the Bakersfield area, and established mentors there, but willing to look other places. He's prepared an extensive business plan for this new venture, and has sufficient capital to invest in getting a modest operation up and running. He has everything in place to secure legal residency... except a farm to lease!

This determined young farmer has been working for almost a year with California FarmLink. The property he's been hoping to lease may be sold before it can be leased, so Ruedi is back to seeking a viable, irrigated piece of ground on which to grow grains and alfalfa.

FarmLink's Kendra Johnson is prepared to help Ruedi negotiate a lease and he is prepared to fly to California to finalize the process with a major rent installment. He would undertake fall planting either on that visit or via a contractor, and could move here permanently with his new wife as soon as this winter.

If you are interested in leasing to or partnering with this skilled, devoted, and capitalized young farmer, please contact California FarmLink's Davis office: (530) 756-8518 x32.

### **New Dairy Insurance Program introduced at three regional workshops**

On August 11- 13, with support from the USDA Risk Management Agency, California FarmLink helped the California Center for Cooperative Development (CCCD) host three workshops on how to access and use a new insurance program designed for dairy producers: "Livestock Gross Margin Dairy" insurance. The workshops in Petaluma, Modesto and Tulare targeted dairy producers and co-ops, insurance professionals, lenders and agricultural agencies.

The Livestock Gross Margin Dairy (LGM-Dairy) insurance program became available to California producers this summer. It is a new, unique tool for producers to manage price volatility of both milk and feed. LGM-Dairy differs from other price risk management tools in several important ways. It can be engaged throughout the year, uses low minimum volumes, addresses both feed and milk price risk, and has relatively low overall costs.

Presenter, Dr. Brian Gould of the University of Wisconsin, has extensive experience with the program and has developed web-based software to help insurance professionals and producers optimize their use of LGM-Dairy Insurance. Participants had use of laptops in the workshop to practice this tool. Dr. Gould also compared LGM-Dairy with the proposed National Milk Producers Federation revenue insurance program, to help participants prepare for upcoming decisions they will need to make. The workshops were well-attended by both producers and insurance professionals looking to take advantage of this new product.

CCCD is a 501(c)3 nonprofit promoting and supporting the myriad of cooperatives in California, including agriculture, with start-up, management, and other technical assistance.



## *FarmLink's New Land Opportunities*

### **Central Valley:**

#### **Well established, organic, 35 acre Capay Valley farm ready for lease or partnership - Yolo County ID #145:**

One of Yolo County's first certified organic farms, is ready to make way for a new farmer(s). Located in Brooks, land and facilities would lease for \$800/month, and the house at \$1,500/month. 30 of the 35 acres are suitable for vegetable or other crops, and already planted with several fall/winter crops. Tehama Loam soil has been under organic management for over 25 years and produces gorgeous vegetables. Abundant, quality well water available (500gpm) for irrigation, two barns, a packing shed and two coolers, tool-shed and a 20' x 60' ft. cold frame. Wide range of farm equipment also for lease, and many packing supplies remain in inventory. The owner is dedicated to keeping the land in agriculture and open to discussing lease-to-own options.

Alternatively, a qualified farmer might buy up to 49% of existing shares in this S-corp and assume management responsibilities for an operation that has a 25 year reputation for excellent quality produce. Capitalize on existing seniority at farmers' markets and widespread name recognition in the greater Davis, Sacramento and bay areas. A farmer would have the benefit of a mentor as retiring farmer moves into town to open a restaurant this fall, which will be associated with the farm. Greater share ownership in the business and interest in the landowning partnership are future options for the right person. Salary (negotiable) and free housing provided.

**Mariposa County—ID# 1105** - This remote, 120-acre ranch in the Sierra foothills has about 20 farmable acres. It is off the grid (operating on hydroelectric and solar power), below the snow line, and eight miles from Yosemite National Park. Owner seeks experienced farmer to partner with, or to take over existing organic produce operation and possibly sheep or goat venture.

The land was in oat hay, now in vegetables, and has potential for orchards, seed production, bees, livestock, and more. The owner has been producing vegetables on just under an acre for about 4 months, and already grossed about \$12,000, and thinks there's more potential. Existing markets include restaurants and farmers market. Additional markets could include a CSA (about 50 potential customers already identified), or additional restaurants and stores serving park tourists.

Sandy loam with year-round, gravity fed spring water. 600-ft barn, small buck barn, workshop, equipment shed, house and office, as well as 300 sq ft solar greenhouse, and 35ft trailer, in good shape and available for farmer housing.

Owner willing to invest in infrastructure improvements such as additional irrigation, water storage, and farm equipment. Meanwhile, she is currently reforesting a good portion of the property through EQIP and seeking permission to run goats in adjacent national forest for fuel load reduction and marketable meat.

The intention is for a long-term partnership.



**ID# 1105**

### **Central Coast:**

**San Benito County ID #1199:** 280 acres row crop land two miles south of Gilroy, small or large leases available in November. Some land currently in organic and conventional salad greens and cole crops.

There is a buried mainline and three wells, totaling 3,000 gpm. The property is protected by an agricultural conservation easement. Landowner is open to all ideas, including farmer training programs, negotiable lease, and possibly providing operating capital or partnering in a joint venture. Owner is interested in investing in the right farmer and considering adding a barn and cooler facilities/ packing shed.



**ID# 1199**

**Riverside County #1110:** 400 acres currently available for lease. 60-80 acres can be irrigated, remainder in dry-farmed grains. Well, 700 gpm, (\$150 per acre/ft well water fee plus electric cost) and year round spring with reservoir, holds

1,200 to 1,500 acre feet. Buried mainline. Two homes on ranch are currently rented. Outbuildings and barns on property. Formerly in Korean vegetables, potatoes, onions, heirloom tomatoes and cucurbits. Lease rate negotiable.

### **North Coast:**

**Sonoma County ID #1224:** 15 out of 159 acres available for lease on northeast edge of Petaluma. Currently in pasture, it's ideal for row crops. Mostly flat, south facing, with good soils. Owner has applied for organic certification. Busy traffic (11,000 cars per day) two-lane commuter road, great for farm stand with high visibility. Potential advertising on water tower tank. New 160 gpm well, 3-phase power, with new 22,000 gallon galvanized steel storage tank; needs irrigation development. Potential small house available with storage buildings on site. Extra bthrm w/shower attached to side of building by the field. On-going source of compost available from local horse stables. Cattle rancher, excavation contractor, and Dahlia grower use other parts of property. Dahlia grower already has sales stand. Owner looking for long-term mutual commitment.

**Sonoma County ID# 1228:** Two acres for lease/partnership south of Sebastopol. Owner is looking for a farmer for possible joint-venture/mentorship to help develop agricultural potential of land. Land is sandy loam, currently fallow, and flat with good exposure. Ag well is being drilled. Six foot fencing around property and there is storage shed.

## *California FarmLink & Clients in the News*

### **Cheesemaker's plan paying off with Garden Variety Cheese**

[http://www.santacruzsentinel.com/localnews/ci\\_16018025](http://www.santacruzsentinel.com/localnews/ci_16018025)  
An update on FarmLink client Rebecca King who continues to grow her sheep and cheese operation in central coast area.

### **Weirauch dairy, creamery to launch**

<http://www.northbaybusinessjournal.com/24120/weirauch-dairy-creamery-to-launch/>  
More on the Weirauchs, another dairy sheep and cheese operation in Sonoma County (who was recently featured on Fox News)

### **California 'incubator' nurtures young farmers**

<http://www.sacbee.com/2010/08/22/2974316/winters-farmer-bucks-the-graying.html>

### **Family Farms--Can We Keep Them from Disappearing?**

The VoiceAmerica Talk Network  
<http://www.voiceamerica.com/voiceamerica/vepisode.aspx?aid=47638>  
Approximately 60 minute interview with FarmLink Regional Coordinator Kendra Johnson and Rex Dufour of NCAT, talking about beginning farmers getting access to land and transferring the farm to the next generation.

## *California FarmLink Upcoming Workshops and Events*

During the upcoming workshop season, we will conduct 36 workshops from October 2010 through March 2011. We've listed the first ones in the lineup.

### **Central Valley:**

**Friday, October 8, 2010.** "5th Annual Sustainable Agriculture Workshop: The Future of Agriculture, Food, and the People Who Grow It." Plumas County Fairgrounds, Quincy, CA. California FarmLink presents a business-planning workshop called "**Nuts and Bolts of Small Farm Startup**."

**Mid November 2010 (TBA) –New Farmer and Value Added** workshop in Watsonville

**Thursday, November 18, 2010: Beginning Farmer Mixer.** Hosted by The Greenhorns, who will debut their new film – "The Greenhorns" at the beautiful Center for Land Based Learning in Winters, in collaboration with California FarmLink.

### **North Coast:**

December 9, 2010 in Humboldt Co.: - Beginning farmer topics (specifics TBD): financing, cooperatives, linking.

### **Statewide:**

#### **January 26 -29, 2011: Eco Farm Conference:**

Don't forget to **apply early for a scholarship or work trade** ([www.eco-farm.org](http://www.eco-farm.org)). CA FarmLink and Worldwide Workers on Organic Farms (WWOOF) will once again host a Reception and Mixer designed to link landowners and farmers with those looking for farmland, partnerships or apprenticeships. FarmLink will be helping organize the new and beginning farmer content this year at Eco-Farm and there will be nine workshops in the beginning farmer track.

#### **FarmLink's Eco Farm Workshops:**

- Innovative Value-Added Farms, Grants, and Loans
- Supporting Interns on Farms
- Access to Land
- Organic Farming 101 for New Farmers

#### **March 6-8, 2011: California Small Farm Conference:**

Sessions on Access to Land and Capital. Details in the upcoming winter issue!



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### *FarmLink Programs*

- Linking beginning farmers and ranchers to landowners and retiring farmers
- Farm Opportunities Loan Program – infrastructure, equipment, land purchase
- Technical Assistance – including business planning and finance, land tenure, farm transition/succession.
- Workshops and conferences on above topics

For current information, go to our website:  
<http://www.californiafarmlink.org>

#### **Editor Note:**

**Please let us know if you would prefer to receive your newsletter by email and save a tree! Send me an email at: [linda@californiafarmlink.org](mailto:linda@californiafarmlink.org) and we'll make sure you get the digital version next time!**

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