

California Farm Futures

Spring 2011

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



Celebrating
11 YEARS
of building family farming

At this year's 31st Ecological Farming Conference, FarmLink coordinated, presented and moderated more workshops than ever before



The Need for Information About Internships Continues

For the second year, Reggie Knox coordinated a workshop on the topic of "Training New Farmers - Internships and Labor Laws". For decades, practical farm internships have played an important role in getting new farmers trained and started. In the last few years, on-farm internship programs in California and Oregon have been fined for not meeting minimum wage and other labor laws, offsetting costs by using state approved methods to charge interns for room and board. Some farmers have re-structured their internship programs to be in compliance, while others have discontinued their programs.

FarmLink has been working with the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) and other groups that facilitate internships, to explore options and provide resources for farmers who offer internships. Look for written materials on this topic on FarmLink and NCAT websites in the future.

Central Coast farmer, Ron Skinner, and Capay Valley farmer, Dru Rivers, described how they brought their programs into compliance with minimum wage and other law labor laws.

The third panelist, Iowa farmer and attorney, Neil Hamilton, Director of the Agricultural Law Center at Drake Law School has been working on a "Farm School" approach to address the issue. Interns would be employed and paid according to state law and would also pay "tuition" in exchange for education, training and experience. The farmer would provide a bona-fide curriculum and plan for the internship and would use a portion of the income from tuition to cover the costs of complying with labor laws.

Value Added Marketing Tips

Three farmers, Becky and Al Courchesne of Frog Hollow Farm and Rebecca King of Garden Variety Cheese/Monkeyflower Ranch, shared their journey creating value-added products for their farms. Frog Hollow Farm grows a variety of tree fruits and began making jams and preserves in 2000. After experimenting with recipes in borrowed kitchens, they decided to build their own commercial kitchen.

King knew from the beginning she wanted to make sheep's milk cheeses. She studied various techniques and then began experimenting with small batch recipes on her stovetop. Once she felt comfortable with her cheeses, she built her dairy and started commercial cheese production.

The farmers spoke openly about their struggles and shared wisdom they'd gained, including that it's worth experimenting in existing facilities before investing in your own!

Glenda Humiston, State Director of USDA's California Rural Development (RD) program, rounded out the session with an overview of funding sources RD offers farmers and ranchers. She energized the room while still recommending realistic expectations. For example, since the Value-Added Producers' Grants are federally allocated, they are extremely competitive. Humiston encouraged everyone to take advantage of other programs allocated within the state and to go to the Rural Development website (<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/CA-Home.html>) or contact their local RD office for more information.

FarmLink also handed out resource packets summarizing the experiences of two other farmers with value-added programs on their farms (email Molly Bloom if you want a copy: molly1@californiafarmlink.org).

We will continue to add to this packet, available at upcoming Value-Added Production workshops. The packet also includes guidelines for how to apply for the value-added producers grant. FarmLink's Reggie Knox coordinated this timely, well-attended workshop.



Pregnant sheep belonging to Seana Doughty, another local cheesemaker

Editor's Notes

We hope you enjoy our Spring 2011 Issue. There's much to share about this year's Ecological Farming Conference workshops, where we had our biggest presence ever. We're also pleased to welcome our newest staff, Molly Bloom, North Coast Regional Coordinator, and a great addition to our team.

Check out our media section in this issue. FarmLink continues to attract increased attention from all kinds of media, demonstrating the growing interest in farmers and farmland.

Internally, we're in training mode, setting up the year's workshop schedules, and linking farmers to money and land. Our website will be getting a new look and

feel in the coming months, and we're streamlining our internal software systems so our interaction with you is timely and productive. We're wending our way through the process required to become our own lender, and will keep you posted on our progress. As you can tell, spring is in the air here at FarmLink!

Please contact us if you're receiving the hard copy version of our newsletter and would prefer to go digital! Look for us on facebook and "like" us.

We look forward to your feedback and suggestions.

– Linda Peterson



*Frosty morning in the garden,
photo by Whitney Hansen-Hiraki*

Seed Money: Investing in Sustainable Agriculture

This workshop is a new twist, exploring the role of equity investment as a source of capital for small and organic farms. Unlike taking on debt to finance your business, equity investment has the potential to strengthen your balance sheet, as well as your cash position and ability to expand the business. An equity investor might get an ownership stake in your business, a percentage of profits, a small dividend, or might not get anything until they leave. Many investors expect quick, high returns and are not suited to small, sustainable farms. However, there is increasing interest among investors in conserving farmland and supporting sustainable businesses, and some investors are willing to take lower returns to be part of this movement.

Chris Larson, Director of Real Assets and Sustainable Agriculture for New Island Capital Management, explained equity investing, discussed what equity investors are looking for and how they evaluate the business management and investment opportunity. FarmLink's Dwayne Martin covered loan programs for farmers as well as innovative financing models including the Equal Exchange cooperative and microloans provided by the Carrot Project in New England. Reggie Knox moderated.

Latino Pre-Conference

FarmLink joined Eco-Farm, the Agriculture and Land Based Training Association (ALBA) and the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) in organizing a pre-conference for Latino growers. The day's programming was delivered in Spanish. An additional session in Spanish took place the next day as part of the regular conference. ALBA and Eco-Farm funded 50 scholarships for Latino growers for overnight accommodations, meals, reception and two days of conference workshops. NCAT provided a workshop on soil management, organic practices and water quality. FarmLink and ALBA presented on land leases and getting prepared to receive financing. The Santa Cruz Resource Conservation District presented on managing a farm's water resources.

Speed Dating for Farmers

California FarmLink and World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF) again hosted their famous annual Mixer. More than 80 aspiring farmers and landowners showed up to meet and browse the hors d'oeuvres. WWOOF, FarmLink, and special guests - the Greenhorns, explained their programs, and then opened it up to the guests to share aspirations, land opportunities and farm internships.

Help the next generation of farmers: Join FarmLink's Mentorship Network!

With USDA support, FarmLink is building a mentorship network for beginning farmers that will include individual and on-line components. If you want to participate as a mentor farmer or be mentored by an experienced farmer, please contact your FarmLink Regional Coordinator now!

We hope to facilitate 5-10 one-on-one new individual mentorships in each of our three regions this year. To participate, beginning farmers must already be farming. A basic individual mentorship consists of quarterly visits by the mentor farmer to the beginner's farm, visits to the mentor's farm, and trouble shooting phone conversations. FarmLink staff will help structure mentorships so it works for both parties, establishing a mentorship agreement at the outset. FarmLink is particularly interested in working with mentor farmers who will share information about the business aspects of farming including accounting, financing, insurance and planning.

We are also developing regional on-line mentor networks in the North Coast and Sacramento/San Joaquin Valleys, modeled after the existing Farmer's Forum in the Central Coast. In these regional groups, experienced farmers respond to questions from beginning and intermediate level farmers on-line.

Meet FarmLink's North Coast Region Coordinator

Molly Bloom grew up in the Oregon High Desert, surrounded by wheat fields and ranch land. Wanting her own farm someday, she worked on CSA farms, completed her B.A., and then set out to learn what it takes to be a successful farmer. She apprenticed for two years on Sauvie Island Organics farm outside Portland. Confident in production, but lacking in farm business skills, she joined Eatwell Farm and managed their CSA program for four years. She learned some bookkeeping and a lot about customer service and running a business. Last fall she and her partner moved to Sonoma County, where she enrolled in small business management and accounting classes at Santa Rosa Junior College and worked for Tierra Vegetables. Bloom continues to hold a dream of owning a farm and, for now, is excited to help others learn the skills they need to be successful.



Check out the #OT New Land Opportunities

~ Central Valley ~

Yolo County ID #1265: 10+ acres & renovated tank house for lease west of Woodland. For reduced rent (\$550), beginning farmer can live in a 3-story, 1/bd renovated tank house, and farm in exchange for light caretaking duties on this 90 ac ranch. Property currently being grazed sustainably to promote native vegetation. Large sheep barn, equipment barn & horse barn with 4 paddocks in good condition, available for equip. storage or housing animals. Some fencing may be necessary for animals. Soil is gravelly loam, & well water is accessible, pump just needs to be setup. Drip lines currently used for trees and shrubs.

Sutter County, ID #1165: 13.5 acre farm FOR SALE in Meridian. Property fronts Sacramento River. Owner currently growing organically managed Asian vegetables & water buffalo for meat (has 4 steers). Ten+ acres fenced, level pasture. Property has 100 3-year old pomegranate trees, 30 mixed fruit trees & 3,500 sq. ft. solar-powered home. Property has old riparian rights and well with 2.5 HP pump producing @ 100gpm. Price reduced from \$700,000 to \$499,000 for FarmLink buyers.

Yolo County # 1215: 22 ac chestnut orchard for partnership/share lease.

Due to the chestnut blight of the early 1900's, there are few chestnut farms in the U.S. This orchard of 'Colossal' chestnuts, planted by a renowned UCD chestnut expert, is one of the largest. Owners also produce prunes on 18ac. Soils - Brentwood Loam & Capay Clay. Orchards drip irrigated from ag well. Tractor & refrigerated cooler on farm. Owners have worked hard to develop markets for their nuts, & looking for experienced, responsible farmer with whom to partner. Possible opportunities for farm office & housing on site.

Solano County ID#1261: Organic Farmer Needed to Develop 20-Acre Property in Jameson Canyon. Five flat acres for lease - currently in meadow and 10ac hillside for grazing or farming. Property is between Fairfield and Napa. Limited pond & city water irrigate the property. 1bd apt over the barn available to rent. Caretaker position may be available for farmer interested in maintaining property & main house while owners are away.

~ Central Coast ~

Los Angeles County #1211: 249 Ac Historic Ranch, Santa Clarita. Beautiful Boquet Canyon ranch in Western Los Angeles County with opportunities for enterprising farmer/rancher. Area known for pre-prohibition wineries would make great destination winery, located close to major wine market. Originally homesteaded in 1885, the ranch supported orchards of many types- almonds, apples, pomegranates, and olives. Field crops like alfalfa and sunflowers were cultivated as well on good alluvial soil. Seven miles inland and located in an east-west canyon at 3,000 ft, ranch is chaparral & influenced by maritime weather. Two ranch houses onsite as well as 9,000 sq. ft. of available structures. Two 2 wells on property (22-25gpm), year round spring, seasonal stream & a 3rd well not in use. Both water & soil have been tested & are high quality. Six miles of irrigation piping (unused in 50 years) may be available. Kubota tractor & some seeding & disking equipment available. Owner is open to innovative ideas, lease or possible sale.

Santa Barbara County #1271:

94 Ac for Lease, Santa Ynez Valley

Flat row cropland: tomatoes, tomatillos, & peppers in the past. Eligible for organic. Would like to lease out entire 94, but would consider splitting for two interested parties. Well 400-600gpm. 2nd well needs work, but has been dug. Good drainage. No housing or buildings on site. Looking for \$450-500 per acre/year. Farm has been in same family for over 100 years.

Santa Clara County ID#1274: 62.5 ac available for lease or other arrangement in Morgan Hill

Land has not been cleared for a long time - owner is willing to help. Owner has equipment to share (trucks, grader, electric fence, water troughs, irrigation pipes) & looking for someone to grow vegetable crops or small livestock. Water on property, but no power. 2500 gal. storage tank. Two 6KW generators available for use. Housing available, and owner prefers to have someone live on site.

~ North Coast ~

Sonoma County ID #1155: Large ranch in Bodega leasing small orchard in exchange for care, as well as 6-10 acres for row crop, bee, fruit tree, or flower production.

Owner would like to see property kept in production. Along with land for lease, this large ranch supports sheep ranch and biodynamic pinot noir vineyard. Housing not currently available. Water supplying ranch primarily sourced from developed springs.

Mendocino County ID#1276: Five acres of land for lease just north of Point Arena. A small animal operation or field crops are possibilities. Current well at 3 GPM, & landowners will install another if needed. Some equipment & storage facilities available. Off grid. No housing yet. Landowners open to possibilities and crop share or work-trade arrangement would be fine.

Marin County ID #1113: 20 ac Nicasio Ranch property for lease. Has been grazing land for past 4 years and landowners are looking for farmer or rancher. Three springs on property, but need to be developed in order to farm there. No fencing. Total property is 120 ac.

Mendocino ID#12: 115-acre historic homestead with 3 bd farmhouse, camping cabins, barns & outbuildings, alternative energy, orchard, gardens, pastures, & redwood forest. Property is in Williamson Act for low property taxes. Same family has owned property for nearly 40 years & used as family home, organic farm, and vacation camp. Available for variety of partnership arrangements. Owners interested in having someone re-start ¼ ac market garden, with possibility of long-term options. Owner willing to mentor. In addition to market garden, heirloom fruit and nut trees - in need of renovation, & potential options for small amounts of livestock. Land mostly steep & forested. 70ac of timber available for sustainably harvested value-added products. Farmstead is completely off-grid & rustic. Housing available, though limited in terms of modern conveniences. Water is spring-fed, & flows low during summer. <http://highlandponies.com/>

Sonoma County ID #949: Approximately 10 ac. available in Santa Rosa for ranching and grazing. Landowners live on property & are interested in partnering with farmer. Particularly interested in goats. Soil is loam & there is one 9gpm well. Property next to approx. 300 ac of preserved open space & seasonal stream. Some fencing is installed but needs more work. Landowners potentially interested in work trade for help with fencing.

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>

California FarmLink Upcoming Workshops and Events

North Coast Region:

- **Business Planning and Farm Financing Workshop** Tuesday, March 15, 2011 from 9-11am UCCE Mendocino Office – 890 N. Bush St., Ukiah, CA Co-hosted by North Coast Opportunities in Willits \$20 to attend
- **Land Tenure workshop in Spanish** March/April: Date/time TBA
- **Value-Added Production workshop** Santa Rosa early May, exact date/location TBA

Central Coast Region:

- **Farm Finance Expo** Tues. March 29, 2011, 12-5pm Corralitos Grange – 165 Little Corral Way, Watsonville
- **Adding Value & Profits to your Farm Operation** Thurs. April 14, 2011, 9-5pm (morning workshops, afternoon value-added facility tour)

Central Valley Region:

- **Grand Opening of new Modesto Office!** April 22, 2011, 4-6pm 3800 Cornucopia Way, Suite A, Modesto
- **Access to Land – May, specific date/location TBA**
- **Value-added workshop** Modesto, June – date/location TBA



Craig Ramini's water buffalo – mozzarella coming soon, we hear!

Full Complement of Services Boost Farmers' Success

Reggie Knox

With a little help from CA FarmLink, Tomatero Farm in Watsonville has grown into a strong, direct market operation. Owner Chris Tuohig, after working for several local organic farmers, started his own farm in 2003. Tuohig and co-owner Adriana Silva have been working long hours to grow from an initial lease of four acres to 50 acres of organic mixed vegetables, including 40 varieties of tomatoes and strawberries last year. Tomatero sells produce through farmers' markets, and bay area grocery stores and restaurants.

Tuohig and Silva discovered FarmLink through one of their farmer's market customers in 2007 when they were farming 12 acres, and in expansion mode. He called FarmLink to explore financing opportunities, and to find land they could lease or purchase. By 2008 Tomatero was farming 22 acres on four leases with 15 employees.

In the fall of 2008, Chris found a 26-acre farm for sale on FarmLink's website. The farm had been brought to our attention through Santa Cruz realtor and FarmLink associate Shane Scott. Tuohig and Silva worked with FarmLink and Scott to put in an offer. FarmLink Coordinator Reggie Knox helped draft a letter to the sellers requesting owner financing at 5%, plus a substantial down payment. "We proposed a loan structure that would provide the elderly sellers with strong monthly payments to meet their cash flow needs but also be in line with the farm's cash flow", said Knox. The letter proposed that a portion of the loan be fully amortized over five years with the remainder due at the end of five years as a balloon payment, giving Chris and Adriana time to expand cash flow and save funds for the balloon payment. The owners accepted the offer and the deal closed in January of 2009.

The buyers were able to use \$500 of FarmLink technical assistance funds to hire a local farm/real estate attorney (from FarmLink's referral list) to review purchase documents, and prepare a deed of trust and installment sale note.

Once the deal closed, the growers were able to focus on soil building with winter cover crops and infrastructure. Much of the land would not be available for organic certification for two to three years.

FarmLink encouraged the growers to contact local NRCS District Conservationist Rich Casale, to look into cost share funds through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. Tomatero applied for and received funding to install buried irrigation mainline. FarmLink also encouraged Chris to contact Sam Earnshaw with Community Alliance with Family Farmer's "FarmScaping Project", who provided funds for the installation of native hedgerows.

In 2009, FarmLink linked the couple with a nearby landowner, who provided them with a home to lease near their farm.



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California FarmLink & Clients in the News

YOLO COUNTY, Calif. – Alexis and Gillies Robertson have heard their share of negative comments on the subject of profit in agriculture. But the newly married couple – Alexis, 26, and Gillies, 32 – describe two factors that have pushed them past all the discouraging talk and into a small, diversified ranching operation.

<http://capitalpress.com/newest/ws-young-ranchers-121010>

Queens of Green – 960 AM radio:
Deborah Koons Garcia interviews Steve Schwartz

<http://thequeensofgreen.podbean.com/2011/01/03/january12011-steve-schwartz/>

Unaffordable land stunts new generation of small farmers in California

http://www.mercurynews.com/san-mateo-county/ci_17178407?source=rss&nclick_check=1

<http://kalwnews.org> – podcast of above story

Charles Nziramasanga of Sacramento commutes every day to work as an asset administrator for Wells Fargo Bank in Oakland. But his heart is in farming, his family's livelihood in his homeland, Zimbabwe.

So Nziramasanga, 43, is doing exactly what farm officials are hoping more young local residents will do. He and his wife are leasing 40 acres on Florin Road in south Sacramento to raise chickens for free-range egg production.

<http://www.sacbee.com/2011/01/22/3342766/hed-here.html#ixzz1FZFTSkT2>

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