

CALIFORNIA FARMFUTURES

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



California FarmLink hosts farm transition organizations from around the country in Modesto for their annual summit

By the time you receive this newsletter we will have hosted the annual gathering for members of the International Farm Transition Network, representing 22 states, Japan and Canada - held this year in Modesto. The Network's mission is to "support programs that foster the next generation of farmers and ranchers".

During their conference, members shared updates on their various projects; discussed policy and legislation, strategized funding opportunities, and participated in professional development training focused on inter-generational and intercultural transitions.

Getting out on the farm: Members had the opportunity to explore Burroughs Family Farms: <http://burroughsfamilyfarms.com>, a multi-generation diversified operation that includes an organic dairy, cheese-making, almond and olive orchards, and eggs. Their strategy for bringing on the next generation has included expansion into new enterprises – contracting with Organic Valley Coop and installing solar panels at five different sites to power water pumps and reduce electricity costs.

For more information on the International Farm Transition Network: <http://www.farmtransition.org>



Across the state: Wrap up on value-added workshops for farmers & ranchers

Eric Winders

Last fall, California FarmLink received USDA funding to work with farmers on value-added production. This spring and summer, CFL staff hosted six workshops for farmers, a train-the-trainers session on USDA Rural Development's Value-Added Producer Grants (VAPG), and helped a number of farmers with the value-added producer application process.



Lani Weigert CEO of AK Lavender, tells Hawaii farmers about their operation – photo by Eric Winders

Workshops took place in Pescadero, Santa Rosa, Modesto, at the Eco-Farm Conference and on the Hawaiian Islands of Hawaii and Maui. The Hawaii trip was an added bonus to our California work, with staff members Reggie Knox and Eric Winders working with local farmers, and learning about their version of "local" food production (over 2,000 miles from the mainland).

Although value-added production can be complicated and costly, we offer a few "take-home" strategies from value-added producers to help farmers who are considering expansion of their operations:

Regulations

- You are responsible for making sure inspectors understand what you're doing and for knowing what the proper regulations are. Know more than the regulators do about regulations, and play by the rules (it doesn't pay to go "guerilla style").
- Take the time to be educated on Food Safety.

Profitability

- Make sure the new product actually adds value. Part of this is making sure your product can scale up to a size that makes money (and makes sense).

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EDITOR'S NOTES



Here in Sonoma County, we've had our first rainfall of the season, and it seems that fall has arrived. FarmLink has been busy these past several months, and we've added staff: Nicole Alvernaz -Program Associate in the Central Valley, Karen Adler – as a consultant on grants & programs,

and most recently, Anthony Chang – Lending Director for our loan programs. Please welcome them – they are key to the growth of the organization and we're very happy to have them!

In this issue, you'll see we've had some great workshops and conferences, including more value-added workshops, which have been well attended. The International Farm Transition Network held its annual conference in Modesto

hosted by California FarmLink. You'll also find an update on FarmLink's transition and what's ahead from Brett Melone, Interim Executive Director.

On our website: <http://www.cafarmlink.org>, you can access the three regional blogs now on-line. They're full of great information, most of which is region specific.

We hope to continue to lessen our ecological footprint with fewer hardcopy versions of the newsletter. If you have an email, please contact us, so we can switch you over to the email version! You can email me directly: linda@cafarmlink.org.

Thanks very much for your continued support!

– Linda Peterson

FROM THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Change is in the air, and...also at California FarmLink. Many of you may already know that the organization's founder Steve Schwartz stepped down at the end of August as the Executive Director after 13 years leading the organization. I served as board member during half of that time, and personally want to thank Steve for his vision and service. Under his leadership, California FarmLink (CFL) brought the issues of farm succession planning and beginning farmers under one umbrella. Among the many trails CFL has blazed, Agricultural Individual Development Accounts are now recognized by federal legislation as an equity building strategy for beginning farmers. We are a go-to resource for farmers in California, as well as groups around the country seeking to emulate our programs.

Bruce Shimizu, Chief Operating Officer, left his position with the organization at the end of September. During his two years with CFL, Bruce took on a broader role, creating a team approach to working with and motivating our geographically dispersed staff. Thanks largely to his efforts, we have committed and knowledgeable staff poised to support anticipated organizational growth.

That growth will be in two primary areas. The first is our Loan Program, which now has an experienced Director of Lending - Anthony Chang, who started with us October 3rd. Chang brings a decade of micro and small business lending experience from his work at Opportunity Fund in the Bay Area. He will lead CFL's efforts to help farmers access capital more readily. Currently we offer two programs: USDA FSA guaranteed loans, and micro-loans (up to \$50,000) through the USDA Rural Microenterprise Assistance Program. Contact our Regional Coordinators for more information.

The second area of growth is Agricultural Individual Development Accounts (IDAs). CFL received a USDA grant under the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development

Program to develop a national learning community around agricultural IDAs. This is a three-year project during which we will train organizations in eight states to get their nascent programs off the ground. At the same time we will also be expanding our own IDA program.

In late September, I attended the CDFA State Board meeting, and spoke on a panel discussing the education needs of the next generation of farmers. I commend the Board, including Chair Craig McNamara, and Secretary Karen Ross, for their vision in taking on this question of what we must do as a state to support the next generation of farmers. Clearly, access to land and capital are key elements of any strategy. CFL also plays an important role by supporting community efforts to connect farmers with needed resources.

I have been honored to serve as Interim Executive Director. I will step down from my day-to-day duties on October 14th, as I embark on a new adventure to work with Friends of MarViva Foundation, supporting marine conservation and sustainable fisheries in the Eastern Tropical Pacific. However, I will remain on the Board, and continue to provide significant support during the transition. CFL's Board will be seeking the next Executive Director, who we hope to have on board by January 2012. Board member Jeffrey Westman will step in for me, as Interim Executive Director for CFL for the next few months while the search is underway. He brings a wealth of private sector management experience, and a deep commitment to sustainable and family farming.

Please join me in wishing Steve and Bruce well, and welcoming Anthony and Jeffrey! By the time you receive the next issue of our newsletter, we hope to have our new organizational leader on board, ready to support our anticipated growth. Thank you for your support of and commitment to California FarmLink!

– Brett Melone

Value-Added Workshops – continued from page 1

- A new venture won't save a sinking ship.
- It'll cost twice as much as you think, and take twice as much time. Be prepared for anything and everything to go wrong.
- A value-added venture will add value to your community and your farm.

Business Planning

- Start small and consider leasing a kitchen or co-packing first.
- Adding value is not just about strawberry jam and cheese- think outside the box (be creative and research the amazing different possibilities of adding value).
- Love what you are doing.
- As a businessperson, which you are,(in addition to being a farmer) you need to be professional and easy to work with.
- "Value-added" is not farming in the eyes of the IRS.

Financing

- The Value-Added Producer Grants (VAPG) are not suitable for everyone, but can be a great way to



Hawaii Value added workshop – Tour Guides Harrison & Pomei (who received VAPG) from AKL Maui Lavender Farm & Reggie Knox, photo by Eric Winders

jump start a value-added venture if you are serious and have the drive to make it happen. Additionally, VAPG applications require significant research on the market and business end of your venture, so be prepared to do your homework.

- There are many and differing alternative finance options out there: Kickstarter, community/customer fundraising, Lending Club, some grants (though they're hard to find--SARE, grants.gov, etc.). Don't limit yourself.

REGIONAL NEWS

~ CENTRAL VALLEY ~

CENTRAL VALLEY: MARY JUNQUEIRO & NICOLE ALVERNAZ

Two Part Family Farm Succession Conference in Modesto

The average age of California farmers continues to rise, and beginning farmers face increasing barriers to entry. If you're a farm owner, who will run your farm when you retire or are no longer able to farm? What can you do to help ensure success? If you are a young farmer looking to get started or expand, how can business planning prepare you for success? What programs and strategies will help finance your farm or ranch enterprise?

These are some of the issues that will be addressed during a two-part conference hosted by California FarmLink this fall,



Farm Transition - families sharing experiences about how to pass on the family farm

with support from the US Department of Agriculture. The first day of the conference is Saturday, October 15, and the second day is November 19, 2011 at the Doubletree Hotel in downtown Modesto.

"The long-term future of your family farm depends to a large degree on when you start talking about, and planning for, that future," says Schwartz former Executive Director of California FarmLink. "This conference will help farmers of all ages clarify goals and identify tools that can help, whether or not they have another generation of family members committed to farming."

Speakers at the event will offer expertise in estate and tax planning, farm business and management transfers, farmland conservation, and family communication. During the first day of the conference, families will begin setting goals and learning how to hold effective family meetings. They will be asked to do "homework" during the month in between conferences; during the second part, families can expect to make significant progress on a real plan for keeping their land and businesses healthy and viable for the next generation.

To register on-line: www.brownpapertickets.com/event/198738
Or contact Nicole Alvernaz - nicole@cafarmlink.org, by phone: (209) 525-4720.

~ NORTH COAST ~ MOLLY BLOOM



Mentee/Mentor discuss crop health – photo by Liya Schwartzman

Progress continues with mentoring programs

The North Coast Farmer Network, an online mentorship and discussion tool for beginning farmers created earlier this year, has started to pick up steam. We're now up to 16 members, with more coming on, steadily. The current group of farmers is mostly focused on mixed produce operations (with some cut flowers as well). If I find enough interest in creating a network for beginning ranchers or beginning dairy operators, I will happily help coordinate that as well. For now, though, the group has 14 or so new farmers, with three experienced farmers providing their insights. September 26th marked the first in-person meeting, and we predict that conversation will continue to build speed after having talked and shared a meal together. New members are welcome at any time! The criteria are simply (1) the group members must be members of California FarmLink and (2) they are currently operating their own farm business or managing a farm for someone else.

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>

Cielo Azul Cooperative Farm started by day laborers in Sonoma County

A few months ago, Leticia Romero, a community organizer with St Joseph's Health System, contacted me to see if I would meet with a group of Fulton Day Laborers that have started a cooperative farm. I jumped at the chance; since that has not been a population I've had much access to, given my rudimentary Spanish speaking skills and lack of connections thus far in that community. Meeting with them, I discovered an incredibly vibrant group of gardeners and landscapers who are passionate about growing food for their families and the community.

The group currently farms at a local church property in Santa Rosa, growing enough to feed themselves, their families, and donating to the local food bank.



Photo courtesy of Linda Peterson

The cooperative receives some support through Letitia's organizing skills. Last year they were able to get a couple of small grants, totaling less than \$10,000. The core group of about eight members meets every other week. They charge a one-time fee of \$50 to join. Contact info: cieloazulfarm@yahoo.com.

FarmLink's goal is to provide them with workshops on setting up their business structure as a collective (through SBDC), accounting practices, and how to market their products – i.e. u-pick. They've had one workshop so far, with Luis Sierra of the California Center for Cooperative Development.

They are just in the beginning stages of considering different business models, and I look forward to working with them and our consultants to coach them on their business enterprise options. With their enthusiasm and dedication, I have no doubt that their business will be thriving within the next couple of years.

Immigrant farmer overcomes big hurdles to farm in the U.S.

Two years ago, California FarmLink received a letter from a young farmer who grew up on a dairy in Switzerland. He found us on the Internet. Here's an excerpt from his letter.

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am 26 year old Swiss farmer, and my goal is to get a job as a farm manager or similar on a row crop or hay farm. Currently I have an off-farm job as a product manager for John Deere tractors. Maybe I have to give you some reasons why I want to come to the US. At the moment I have a really good paying job in Switzerland. But my goal is to work on a row crop farm and it's not possible to make a living farming without dairy or beef.

That was the beginning of quite a journey for FarmLink staff and for Ruedi Messerli that ended with him and his wife Aline finding a 100-acre property in Lassen County where they now grow alfalfa/hay mix.

It was challenging, but Ruedi was highly motivated, and with strong support from two of our most seasoned Regional Coordinators, they helped him navigate the issues for an immigrant moving to the U.S. to buy land, as well as business planning, finance and more.

Ruedi eventually connected with Ag real estate broker Jim Wirth (specializing in ag properties for many years), who took him under his wing, impressed with Ruedi's persistence and experience. There are no credit ratings in Switzerland, so they had to do a "character loan". To cover the rest, he was lucky to have a successful farming family in Switzerland, and be able to get his share of family inheritance early.

SWITCH TO E-NEWSLETTERS

As a recipient of our hardcopy newsletter, we are asking you to help us save paper. You can do that by sending us your email address. Please email me at linda@cafarmlink.org and we'll convert you. It's that easy!

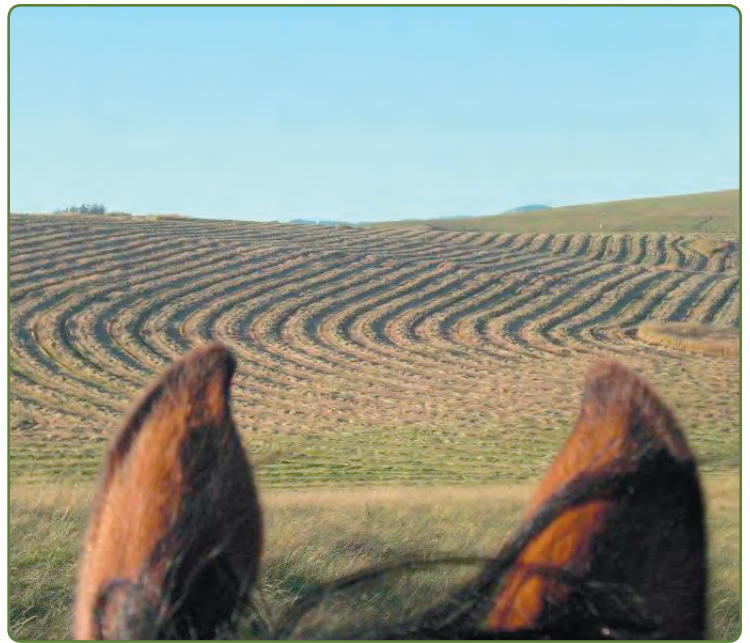


Photo by Nathalie Guion

The property – which has plenty of infrastructure – two houses, barn and equipment, sold for \$650,000.

Ruedi is in Switzerland finishing his college finals, while Aline oversees the third cutting of their crop with help from their Mennonite neighbors. They've converted their irrigation pump to electric, hay prices are good, and they seem to be thriving on their new farm.

CALIFORNIA FARMLINK & CLIENTS IN THE NEWS

1. Maui Weekly:

Farmers Benefit From Value-Added Products

www.mauiveekly.com

2. Western Farm Press:

CDFA meeting to focus on age of California farmers

<http://westernfarmpress.com/government/cdfa-meeting-focus-age-california-farmers>

3. San Francisco Chronicle:

Funding challenges keep number of new farmers low

4. Modesto Bee:

Value Added workshop in Central Valley

<http://www.modbee.com/2011/07/03/1760593/making-harvest-yield-more-dollars.html>

LATEST LAND OPPORTUNITIES ACROSS THE STATE



Got Land? Know Someone Who Does?

California FarmLink is seeking landowners who are interested in leasing or selling land to aspiring farmers. No piece of land is too small or too large, so please contact us today to see if we can connect you with a farmer interested in raising food on your land! Contact the appropriate Regional Coordinator with your land opportunity!

~ SOUTH CENTRAL VALLEY ~

Kern County ID #1330: 160 ac with water rights available on Twisleman Road and I-5.

Land traditionally farmed in row crops; most recently cotton. It comes with 395 acre-feet of annual water contract from the Lost Hills Water district. It is currently set up for flood irrigation. No buildings on the property. Owners prefer long-term lease and pistachio trees be planted, but are open to discussion on any crops including an annual row crop lease. Owners are motivated to start right away. A full water allocation remains available for this year. Surrounding properties have pomegranate, pistachio and almond orchards.

~ NORTH CENTRAL VALLEY ~

Nevada County ID #1321: 12ac farm & 2-story Geodesic dome for sale, \$200,000.

Owners would like this property to be purchased by someone who wants to live and farm, improving the land. Property features a 1,600 sq. ft., 2-story geodesic dome with solar panels, loft, fireplace, 4 BR, 2¼ bthrm. Back deck has views of the valley and a creek runs through the lower part of the land. There are septic tank, raised flowerbeds, and a well. The soil has been amended over the last 22+ years by a dedicated gardener. Additional features include large metal barn with workshop & tack room, pump house, propane tank and cement slab for future construction. Included in the sale is a tractor-needing repair, tools, and some lumber.

Placer County ID #1327: 7ac organic farm available for lease.

These retiring farmers would like to see their land stay in crop production and are willing to mentor a new generation of farmers. The property has a conservation plan and there are several NRCS projects in place that require maintenance. One of those is hedgerow project, with marketable products such as lilacs, pomegranates, lavender, and rosemary. The property features a barn set up for chickens, two greenhouses (one of which is fully automated), wash station and cold storage. 1.5 ac is planted in figs, pomegranates, Meyer lemons, mandarins, and apricots. Owners purchase 3 “miner’s inches” of water each year, and soil is clay that has been cover cropped for 18 years. Also included in the lease are a tractor with rototiller, mower, transplant apparatus, plastic mulch layer, seeder, and hand tools. In the past the farm has produced winter squash, melons, starts, and ginger (in greenhouse).

~ NORTH COAST ~

Sonoma County ID#1338: 8.3-acre certified organic turnkey farm operation FOR SALE near Santa Rosa

2BR, 2BA home and various outbuildings (packing shed, shop, 40-foot trailer, barn), irrigation infrastructure in place (100 GPM) come with the property. Also for sale are farming equipment and the establish farm business (at an additional cost). Farmer/owner is willing to lease

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back from the buyer, to explore other options on the property, or to join a bigger farm operation. \$350,000 is the bank-approved short-sale price. If interested, please contact Tom Trine at 510/593-8135.



Sonoma County ID # 1260

Sonoma County ID #1260: Beautiful property FOR SALE. Half interest as joint tenancy in 62-acre farm in Healdsburg area.

The 31 acres include six + prime acres bottomland and two plantable acres hillside, with small orchard (180 heritage apple, pear, plum, and peach trees). 2100 square-foot house up on a hill, plus 1200 sq. ft. barn with cold storage, 2 year old 4kw solar chicken coop, two wells (low flow at the end of summer), 1.5 acre-foot pond, intermittent stream, wooded hill with great view. Successful crops grown on this land include wine grapes, fruit trees (especially pears), vegetables, raspberries, sugar pumpkins, tomatoes, and flower seeds. Fourteen and a half acres vineyard on other half of property. Bottomland soil is clay loam. The property also boasts a heritage tree. One acre includes deer fencing. There is some old deer fencing around two sides of the rest of the property. Owners are asking \$1.15 million for this prime property. Business Arrangement: Buy/Sell

~ CENTRAL COAST ~

Santa Barbara County #1297: Industrious Ag Collective is a 20-ac greenhouse and row crop property on bluffs overlooking the ocean in Santa Barbara, California.

They seek independent farmers to help transition this productive food-producing property. There is over 250,000 sq. ft. of greenhouse space in one of the best climates in the US. Ideally situated between San Francisco and Los Angeles markets and restaurants, close to Hwy 101. They seek experienced and/or enthusiastic farmers to fill the greenhouses with sustainable produce, an aquaponic facility, worm farms, chickens, tropical fruits, mushrooms, and more. They offer a stable and affordable growing space, ag-rate water, and on-site wholesale produce distributor who could potentially sell your crop before it's harvested. They supply local restaurants, school districts, UC Santa Barbara, and area hospitals with fruits and vegetables from their farm and other local operations. Seven farmers markets take place every week within 15-miles of the farm for direct sales to area residents. Four independent farmers and the wholesale produce distribution company currently operate successfully out of the greenhouses, fields, and packing shed. There is room to grow and a supportive, non-competitive environment.

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 :

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