

AGRARIAN ADVOCATE



COMMUNITY ALLIANCE WITH FAMILY FARMERS

"I Didn't Know You Could Eat These"

*Increasing Awareness & Changing Perceptions
in Esparto, California*

BY KELLY VAN BOXTEL

The cafeteria at Esparto Elementary has undergone some changes in the last couple of months. Brightly colored drawings of students' favorite fruits and vegetables decorate the walls, and there is a noticeable difference in what is on the lunch menu. In the past, lunch offerings have consisted of hot dogs, crinkle fries (which count as a serving of vegetables), canned peaches and snack chips. On a November day, the "garden ole" salad served in the cafeteria was made up of organic lettuce mix generously provided by a local grower in the Capay Valley. In the past, the salad consisted of iceberg lettuce and tasteless cherry tomatoes.



Esparto is a small, rural town in the Capay Valley, an area that is known for its richness in small organic family farms. In the Esparto community many children are connected to a local farm through their parents. "My dad grows those in the soil!" said Jose, a third grader at Esparto Elementary School, when a picture of a garden beet was held up during a "Harvest of the Month" (HOM) nutrition education presentation. It is one of many programs geared toward improving the overall health of students through Esparto Farm-to-School. HOM combines nutrition education with taste testing of local fruits and vegetables, movement exercises, and grade-appropriate curriculum, connecting the presentations to California curriculum standards. Students are taught in a style that allows them to use their senses in the learning process. During the taste testing children are encouraged to think and talk about the flavors and textures they experience.

See **Didn't Know** continued on page 7

The Next Step for Buy Fresh Buy Local: Compre lo Fresco de Nuestra Región!

by Marisol Asselta

The Central Coast "Buy Fresh Buy Local" (BFBL) campaign has had three years of increasing success in connecting local family farmers with community retail outlets and customers. BFBL is now expanding the campaign to include the region's dynamic and growing Spanish-speaking community.



The "Compre lo Fresco de Nuestra Región" (CFNR) is getting its start in Watsonville and Salinas. There are several strong sources of motivation for this campaign, but two particularly timely ones are 1) health and fitness concerns and 2) the need for a strong and stable local economy with corresponding employment opportunities. Many of the Spanish-speaking residents in the Central Coast are employed in agriculture, yet very often they have little or no access to the fresh, healthy food they help to produce. The obesity and Type 2 diabetes epidemic is hitting the Latino community hard, with many children struggling with weight-related health issues at increasingly younger ages, even down to the toddler years. In addition, many farm workers are subject to seasonal availability of jobs, with little assurance that they will be able to find dependable, year-round employment.

Small, local family farmers tend to hire workers directly and to offer employment stability, preferring to keep on good workers who are familiar with the operations of their farm. Providing a consistent market and support structure for these farms will hopefully translate into more opportunities for stable, sustainable employment in the farm working community. Smaller, local farmers are also able to interact more directly with their customers and employees, and are therefore presumably more likely to respond to their community's needs and concerns regarding worker treatment and responsible farming practices.

After an initial pilot phase, CFNR will be offered as a resource to partner BFBL organizations throughout the United States. To this end, CAFF and ALBA (Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association) are working to provide language translations that would be relevant to a wide and diverse Spanish-speaking audience.

ALBA is an organization that works primarily with limited-resource Latino farm workers who are in the process of becoming organic small farmers. Several of their members have been involved in the creation of CFNR and six of their farmers were the first to use the Spanish language materials, with great success, in the new Oldtown Salinas Farmers' Market.

On Tuesday, September 12, 2006, the City of Watsonville's mayor Antonio Rivas issued an official proclamation to make September "Local Food Month." The first official kick-off of this bilingual celebration was

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Cultivating healthy farms,
food & communities

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Web site: www.caff.org

Mission: CAFF is building a movement of rural and urban people to foster family-scale agriculture that cares for the land, sustains local economies and promotes social justice.

The Agrarian Advocate/Farmer to Farmer is the quarterly publication of the Community Alliance with Family Farmers.

Agrarian: 1. Relating to land or to the ownership or division of land. 2. Of agriculture or farmers generally. [From the Latin *ager*: a field or country]

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Food Safety and Sustainable Agriculture

BY DAVE RUNSTEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As I write this in early December, the days are growing shorter and the nights colder, and some much-needed rest for farmers approaches. The hired representatives of some groups of farmers are not resting, however, they are busy coming up with “solutions” for the *E. coli* 0157:H7 outbreak in Salinas spinach.

I approach this topic with a certain dread, because throughout the history of American agriculture, government-mandated food safety requirements have often made life difficult, if not impossible, for small family farmers. The loss of the ability to easily sell livestock products from the farm contributed to the decline of the diversified family farm and the rise of the enormous monocultures we see in the Midwest.

E. coli are everywhere and most are not a health problem. It is only certain mutant strains that make people ill, such as the one in the recent spinach case, *E. coli* 0157:H7, which is a combination of e-coli and a bacterial virus (from shigella bacteria). It is the shiga-like toxin produced by 0156:H7 that can harm or even kill you. *E. coli* 0157:H7 was first seen in the early 1980s in dairy cows, determined to be dangerous in the late 1980s, and then produced the Jack in the Box crisis of undercooked hamburgers of 1993. Where did it come from? No one knows. Perhaps as many as 100,000 people per year fall ill from these bacteria in the United States, most from meat, but an increasing number from vegetables.

Heat will kill it. Just as we heat up milk (pasteurization) to kill bacteria, so we now spray meat carcasses with steam and hot water for the same purpose, or we cook the hamburgers to well done. However, this is not really feasible with lettuce or spinach—or is it? *E. coli* O157:H7 in spinach can be killed by cooking at 160° Fahrenheit for 15 seconds. In most poorer countries, vegetables are cooked or pickled because of the danger of eating them raw.

Many people have been blaming the industrial food system for this *E. coli* outbreak. It appears to be a fact that if you feed grain to ruminants you increase the *E. coli* in their intestinal tracts by three orders of magnitude. Some studies of cattle have found as many as 58% contaminated with *E. coli* O157:H7. Since the bacteria live in animals, it is easy to see how meat can become contaminated in the slaughter process. But how does it get onto the vegetables? Apparently there are many possible ways, including cattle manure contaminating irrigation water, and sprinkling such contaminated water directly on the plants is the most likely source of the recent contamination.

Some have blamed wildlife for transporting the bacteria onto the spinach or being contaminated with it themselves. However, an excellent research summary from the Monterey County RCD notes that scientific studies have shown that only about 1% of wildlife carry any bacteria pathogenic for humans. So while it is possible that ANY farm could become contaminated with dangerous *E. coli* in this way—in fact flies could transport it—the probability that it is caused by wildlife is very low.

Already some commodity groups are calling for producers to rip out any habitat that might harbor animals. CAFF has been planting hedgerows and grassed waterways in an effort to increase species diversity and slow runoff on farms. Will this effort now be deemed risky and made illegal because it conflicts with the idea of “clean fields”? In fact, some studies show that these filtration mechanisms may actually reduce the levels of pathogens. And will food safety rules be devised that will be too expensive for small farmers to undertake?

Many farmers are still installing habitat throughout the state, including vegetable

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FARMER^{TO}FARMER

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

WINTER 2007

FARMER PROFILE

Juan Pérez, Salinas, CA

BY KRISTEN SCHROER

Last year, 23-year-old Juan Pérez convinced his father to enroll with him in the Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association's (ALBA) Programa Educativa para Pequeños Agricultores (PEPA). PEPA is a practical program that trains aspiring small farmers in sustainable production methods, as well as marketing techniques.

Juan's father, Pablo, had farmed before, growing conventional raspberries and flowers on five acres of leased land in the Central Valley. But Juan wanted to try his hand at organics, and he wanted to do it as a family. "I like to be outside; he likes to be outside," Juan explains. "I don't like to be in an office with four walls every day."

Upon completion of the PEPA program in April, Juan and his father leased a small plot of land from ALBA and named their nascent farm J & P Organics. "We started with one acre, me and him together, and now we're jumping to two acres," says Juan. Pablo and his wife, Juan's mother Florencia, spend most of their time working in the field.

"They like it," he says. "They like being their own boss." Besides, Juan adds, he wants "them to feel that [we] are together as a family."

Juan spends time cultivating and harvesting as well, and he's responsible for the bulk of their marketing and direct sales. The family grows basil, cucumbers, chard, cilantro, radishes, corn, summer squash, winter squash, beets, and a mélange of other herbs and vegetables. "The biggest challenge for me," Juan remarks, "was starting up and having so much produce and not being able to sell it. We know how to grow the stuff, but the problem is—who's going to take it?"

Perez sells some of his harvest directly to markets and distributors such as Farm Fresh Produce and ALBA in Salinas and Elkhorn

See **Farmer Profile** continued on page 4

Terra Madre Unites Food Communities



CAFF sent a delegation to Terra Madre 2006.

by Anya Fernald

On October 24, 2006, nine people boarded a Lufthansa flight bound from San Francisco to Turin, Italy. Some had never been out of the country before; others had immigrated to the United States from countries thousands of miles from California. Between them, they spoke four languages: English, Spanish, Lao, and Hmong. This group comprised the Community Alliance with Family Farmers "California Ethnic Minority Farmers" delegation to Terra Madre, a world meeting of food communities hosted by Slow Food International.

Terra Madre unites a broad network of growers and producers, including seed savers, chefs, farmers, fishermen, wild product gatherers, breeders, and researchers. This year's event focused on strengthening the network of food communities, promoting agro-ecology, and sharing strategies for increasing market access for small-scale producers

CAFF's "California Ethnic Minority Farmers" were primarily growers from the Central Coast and San Joaquin Valley, although there were also representatives from the Fresno Economic Opportunity Council and National Hmong American Farmer. According to Anya Fernald, the delegation coordinator and Program Director of Community Food Systems at CAFF, ethnic farmers from these regions "remain limited by their relatively small size and lack of capitalization. The Hmong growers in the California tend to be new immigrants and to work farms that are a fraction of the size of most in San Joaquin."

If you are interested in attending this event, which is held every other year, please bookmark www.slowfoodusa.org for forthcoming application information. For more information on Terra Madre, visit www.terramadre2006.org.

Delegates: Anya Fernald, Delegation Coordinator, Community Alliance with Family Farmers; Blong Lee, Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission; Martina Martínez, Santa Rosa Organic Farms, Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association; Va Moua, small farmer; Joe Moua, small farmer; Juan Pérez, J & P Organics, Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association; Ali Shabazz, Redmound Botanical Garden, African American Farmers of California; May Yang Vang, National Hmong American Farmer; Cher Shoua Vang, small farmer; Cindy Mai Xiong, National Hmong American Farmer

Farmer Profile continued from page 3
 Farm and Mercantile in Castroville. He also began the process of forming his own subscription box service, also known as “Community Supported Agriculture” (CSA). Every Friday, Juan delivers as many as 45 boxes to homes in Carmel, Pacific Grove, Watsonville, Seaside, and Salinas. Some members get a box every week, others biweekly, and some just once a month. “I’m flexible,” he explains.

Both Juan and his members value the personal interaction the CSA provides.

“I get to meet them—they’re very happy about this produce coming to their door.” Members tell him what they liked best in previous boxes and share how they prepared their produce, and every week Juan tucks a newsletter containing simple recipes as well as a brief farm update into each box. It’s different than going to the store, Perez asserts, where fruits and vegetables “could be imported from who knows where...My customers like that it’s grown locally.”

Juan relies primarily on word-of-mouth advertising to promote his CSA program, although he does post information on the California State University Monterey Bay campus. He’s a senior there this year, majoring in Earth Systems Science and Policy with a thematic focus on Science and Social Justice. Slated to graduate in May, Juan anticipates expanding his acreage and applying his educational experience to the practice of sustainable farming. “I’ve been talking to my parents and the thing is, we want to buy our own farm—I don’t know how many acres—and raise chickens, cows, pigs, and have orchards—apple trees, peaches, and pears. I can see that happening in a couple years.”

Attending Terra Madre in October enhanced Juan’s understanding of sustainable agriculture and the greater food community. “It was my first time out of the country,” he says. “I met a lot of people from Spain, from Norway, from Cuba, from Peru, from Brazil, from Africa. It was great to get that experience, talking about other peoples’ culture, what they do, how they farm.” Juan participated in workshops on soil and water conservation, animal husbandry, and marketing. Overall, Juan says, Terra Madre taught him to “appreciate...life, conserve the land. Every year people are taking it away to put cement over it and it’s going to stay there for I don’t know how long.” Juan feels a strong responsibility to “try to protect this land, this environment we’re at.”

“I know I’m not going to do a lot,” he says, “but...it will make a little bit of difference.” ■



Juan Perez and his father operate an organic farm in Salinas.

The *Buy Fresh, Buy Local* program aims to raise the visibility of agriculture within the county, and ultimately improve the economic viability of agricultural growers and producers. Growers such as those involved in Harvest Time (a group of 38 u-pick and direct marketing growers) face increasing developmental pressures, and *Buy Fresh, Buy Local* provides a lynchpin for discussions around the future and potential of the agricultural community. Brentwood-Contra Costa county is a leader in expanding our Buy Fresh, Buy Local campaign and will be part of our planning

process for upcoming work in the Bay Area, which is comprised of a nine-county region including San Francisco, Marin, Sonoma, Napa, Solano, Contra Costa, Alameda, Santa Clara and San Mateo counties.

In collaboration with the Brentwood Agricultural Land Trust (BALT), The Contra Costa Wine Grape and Olive Growers Association, and Harvest Time, of Brentwood. Check out our *Online Local Food Guide* for the list of participating farmers from this historically agriculture-rich community. ■

For more information:

- Online local food guide—www.buylocalca.org
- BALT—www.brentwoodaglandtrust.org;
- Harvest Time—www.harvest4you.com

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farmers. Of our current list of 40 farmers slated for hedgerows, only two have shown some hesitancy, saying they want to wait until the dust settles. In reality, the attention that will be focused on this issue has the potential to strengthen farmers’ interest in installing habitat and increasing biodiversity. As scientific research continues to show the low risk plus the benefits of habitat plantings, more growers will feel confident to have them on their farms.

The population of bacteria doubles every hour on spinach at room temperature. This makes me wonder if those bags in the industrial system are really a hothouse for bacteria when they are not kept cold enough. Many people just dump the bags into a bowl without further washing them. Of course it only takes 10 bacteria to make you sick. In any case, since *E. coli* multiplies, the sooner you buy and eat the produce the better. Buy Local! 🌱

Resources:

- Radio interview with two researchers: www.metrofarm.com/mf_Food_Chain_Radio.php, (select show #519 on *E. coli*).
- Diana Stuart, Reconciling Food Safety and Environmental Protection: A Literature Review. Salinas: Monterey County Resource Conservation District. October 2006.

A Summary of above:

Diana Stuart, Carol Shennan, and Martha Brown, Food Safety versus Environmental Protection on the Central California Coast: Exploring the Science behind an Apparent Conflict. Santa Cruz: UC Santa Cruz Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems Research Brief #10. Fall 2006.

Buy Fresh Buy Local Roll Out in Brentwood and Contra Costa

by Anya Fernald

The Community Alliance with Family Farmers rolled out the new Buy Fresh, Buy Local label for the Brentwood and greater Contra Costa farming community on September 18. The program commences with 17 farmer partners and one retail partner—Raley’s, of Brentwood.

Growers Collaborative Sacramento Valley

BY TEMRA COSTA

Through the interest of the grower community, retail and institutional markets and Farm-to-School programs, CAFF has been exploring the possibility of a Sacramento-based Growers Collaborative distribution hub. Growers Collaborative is a marketing company that sources fresh foods for foodservice markets from small and medium-sized family farmers across California who practice sustainable agriculture. Over the past two years, we have been working diligently to increase the connections for local growers, while assessing potential supply and demand needs for a regional consolidation point for seasonal, local product.

This is a very exciting time of our food systems work. By surveying the farming community in the Sacramento region we have found that 70% of farmers would utilize a consolidated distribution service if they had the opportunity. We also surveyed 20 institutional buyers of fresh foods and found that 100% would purchase more locally grown product if they had access to a system that provided one source for ordering. Customers of these same institutions have indicated that freshness, nutritional value, and price are extremely important factors when they buy produce.

To get an overview of what the collaborative has done since its inception in 2003 in Ventura, visit the Growers Collaborative website at www.growerscollaborative.org.

This work is made possible by funding from the USDA, and by our partnerships with several regional organizations, including Capay Valley Vision, the Food Bank of Yolo County, UC Cooperative Extension, and the Yolo County Housing Authority.



Visitors at the Fall Farm Tour & Tasting.

Humboldt Chapter Happenings

BY MICHELLE WYLER

Farming is grueling work, filled with long days and unpredictable weather. Farming also brings many joys—some as basic as the sight of a perfect summer peach or the smell of a newly tilled field. Humboldt



The Farm to Table calendar is available now.

County residents recently experienced these joys during the annual Fall Farm Tour and Tasting, held October 1. The tour offered a behind-the-scenes look at working farms, complete with music, wine tasting, and samples of regional foods. Included on the tour were: a nursery operation, a community farm, a large row cropping operation, a land trust, a small poultry operation and a farm stand.

Almost 300 people had the opportunity to meander through fields, talk to farmers and sample the harvest. The annual tour helps connect tour-goers with the faces and places that feed them. The tour was one of many community food system education activities of the new Humboldt CAFF chapter.

Also hot off the press in the far north, is the Farm to Table calendar. This is more than a calendar; it is a photo essay highlighting the diversity of local food production in Humboldt County, from oyster farming and Community Supported Agriculture to organic dairying and beekeeping. What's more, the calendar comes complete with seasonal recipes from Humboldt's finest restaurants. For information on ordering calendars, contact michelle@caff.org or visit www.caff.org/humboldt. ■

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Tuesday, February 20 7:45 am to 3:00 pm Rain or Shine!

Irrigation and Nutrient Management Meeting, Monterey County Agricultural Center, 1432 Abbott Street, Salinas

Cultural Practice Demonstration and Discussion on How to Control Storm Water Runoff and Sediment Loss, USDA Spence Vegetable Research Station, 1572 Old Stage Road

Sponsors: University of California Cooperative Extension; United States Department of Agriculture (USDA); Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF); and Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association (ALBA)

Continuing Education, Certified Crop Advisor and Water Quality Credits have been requested.

For more information call Michael Cahn 759-7377 or Richard Smith 759-7357

Post Workshop Tour, Tembladero Wetlands Demonstration Site, 3:30 to 5:00

Call Sam Earnshaw 831-722-5556

Sustainable Cotton Project Hosts Tour

BY DAWN VAN DYKE

On a sunny October morning, nearly 100 people equipped with cameras, hats and sunscreen boarded two large red buses in Fresno and headed out for a tour of cotton farms in the San Joaquin Valley. The annual Sustainable Cotton Project farm tour has become a tradition, connecting farmer to industry by inviting those who spin and sew cotton garments to meet those who produce the fiber. *Eileen Fisher*, a company that produces high-end women's clothing, including organic cotton items, and *Del Forte Denim*, which is introducing a new line of organic cotton denim, co-sponsored this year's tour. Representatives from the apparel and textile industries, designers, students and small business owners attended.

The tour covered over 100 miles of winding roads, surrounded by row crops such as broccoli, tree crops such as almonds and of course, field after field of cotton.

Program Director Marcia Gibbs, Program Director Mark Cady and Marketing Consultant Lynda Grose and Kevin Long of Calcot, explained to the tour-goers that cotton is one of the most chemical intensive crops in the world. In the BASIC (Biological Agriculture Systems in Cotton) program, SCP supports farmers in an effort to reduce the amount of pesticides they use on their cotton and encourage biologically based growing practices. In addition, SCP staff is working to find a market for this "cleaner cotton."

A highlight at this year's tour was a visit to Windfall Farm's 40-acre organic cotton field. Growers Frank Williams and Mark Fickett, who have been in the BASIC program since 2002, utilized completely organic methods in their field of high-quality Pima cotton. With the San Joaquin Mountains and a bright blue sky forming the backdrop, Frank and Mark shared their perspectives on the future of organic cotton in California.

"We didn't think we could grow a plant like this organic, but we did," said Mark. However, he explained, the challenge is finding a market for domestic organic cotton that will make it worth the work it took to produce the cotton. The two said even conventional cotton acreage in California has decreased because growers can grow other crops, such as almonds, and make more profit. After an animated question and answer session, visitors wandered into the field, took photos and picked cotton. Many enjoyed talking with SCP Field Scout Luis Gallegos about the organic methods, such as the release of beneficial insects, used during the growing season.

BASIC grower Stanley Silveira met tour-goers in his Firebaugh field to share his insights and motivation for growing cotton using sustainable methods. Many attendees reported later that his passion and desire to care for the earth was an inspiration to them.

Lunch was authentic Mexican food and seasonal produce served at Firebaugh's city park. Featured speakers were Dr. Marcia Sablan, Dr. Pete Goodell and Firebaugh City Manager Jose Antonio Ramirez. After lunch the crowd headed for Firebaugh's Panoche Gin,

which included a tour of the gin and an up-close look at the ginning process and formation of cotton bales.

Other tour stops included Grueloff Aviation, Terra Nova Ranch, and a visit to a cotton field to watch bolls being harvested. After a long day, visitors boarded the buses and headed back to Fresno armed with new information and perhaps, a new way of thinking about cotton.

One attendee later remarked that she was surprised at how small the percentage of organic cotton is in California, "BASIC is really the way to go to have a more overall positive impact on the environment." ■

Propane Defoliator Tested in California Cotton Fields

BY MATT VALDIN

In October 2006, the Sustainable Cotton Project (SCP) participated in a groundbreaking on-farm trial of technology for organic cotton farming in California. Dr. Paul Funk of

the USDA ARS Southwestern Cotton Ginning Research Laboratory brought a recently constructed propane defoliator to be tested in an organic cotton field in Firebaugh. The defoliator was also tested in a field in Dos Palos that is enrolled in SCP's biologically intensive BASIC program. Extensive research has been done by the Southwestern Cotton Ginning Research Laboratory, although this was the first time the machine was used to defoliate cotton commercially.

Defoliation is the process by which the leaves and plants are dried before harvest. This keeps the chlorophyll pigment in the plants from staining the cotton fibers and substantially lowering the quality. Organic cotton producing states such as Arizona, New Mexico and Texas, have an advantage in this department, as seasonal frosts kill plants and defoliate them naturally. Central Valley cotton farmers can't depend on a fall frost, and must defoliate through other means. This is one of the obstacles to large-scale organic cotton production in California.

The propane defoliator works much like an oven on wheels; the propane is used to heat air, which is then directed down over the plant, "cooking" and killing it. The leaves dry up and the plant is ready to be harvested in three days. Since the machine was only designed to defoliate two rows at a time and moves at around 4 mph, the process is slow. A six-row model is being constructed by Ag Industrial in Lodi, for use in California where organic growers currently have no other means of organic defoliation.

This innovative machine created quite a buzz in the cotton farming community. A small gathering of farmers came to see the device operate, indicating that there is a high degree of interest in the practical application of this technology. ■



The propane defoliator was tested in California in October, 2006.



Over 100 people attended the SCP Farm Tour in October, 2006.



CAFF APPRECIATES THE SUPPORT

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Robert Steinberg

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In another sense, a lot has changed. Thanks largely to term limits, 36, or almost half, of the Assembly members in the new legislative session will be freshmen. More than half of the Assembly Democratic caucus (25 out of 48) will be in their first term. And except for three termed-out Senators who were elected to an Assembly seat, all the new members will have no state legislative experience.

In the Senate, conversely, term limits have created a very different result. Twelve of the 20 seats up for election will be filled by freshmen—not surprisingly since a Senator is limited to two four-year terms and therefore only runs for re-election to the Senate once.

But of the twelve newly elected Senators, 11 are former Assembly members who will enter the Senate with legislative experience.

One of the many effects of term limits has been to widen the differences in the two houses. Since Assembly terms are only two years and all 80 seats are up for election, most new candidates first run for the Assembly. The fewer opportunities to win a four-year Senate term mean that they are usually sought and won by former Assembly members from the same area, who have established their name and record with the voters. As a result, the Senate has much more combined legislative experience than the Assembly. 

Didn't Know continued from page 1

In spring of 2007 children will have the opportunity to participate in food production when the Esparto "VIVA" garden project begins. This gives students the opportunity to move outside the classroom walls to plant and harvest the foods that later appear in their lunch at the cafeteria. Students will be inspired to make healthy food choices through positive interactions around growing and eating fresh food, showing them the link between what they grow, what they eat, and how they feel. Gardens are a direct form of education, where children will have real and tangible hands-on experience in the outdoors.

"I didn't know you could eat these!" exclaimed Veronica, a fourth grade student at Esparto Elementary when she was given her first opportunity to taste a Fuyu persimmon. That afternoon Veronica went home from school and picked as many persimmons as she could from the tree standing in front of her house. She brought some "delicious, ripe persimmons" to school the next day to share with her teachers.

The majority of the foods in school cafeterias, like the one at Esparto Elementary, come from large central suppliers, a great distance away, with ingredients from surplus US commodities sources. Within this system it is expected that all ingredients will be available all times of the year. The Esparto Farm-to-School program hopes to change this current method of procurement for school meals and rely on buying fresh, locally grown, seasonably available foods from smaller family farmers.

The Community Alliance with Family Farmers' Esparto Farm-to-School Project was initiated to improve the overall wellness and health of the residents of Esparto. The program provides nutrition education and taste testing in the classroom, increases awareness of where food comes from and how it is produced, enhances the offerings of local and seasonal produce items in the school meal program, and provides support and new income for local farmers. 

For more information on Farm-to-School in Esparto or Davis contact Kelly van Bostel, CAFF Esparto and Davis Farm-to-School Coordinator, kelly@caff.org, (530) 400-5922, or (530) 756-8518

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on Friday, September 22, 2006 with the raising of a 24-foot banner over Main Street in downtown Watsonville.

The banner design is in the style of Pajaro Valley's old-time food crate labels. It is emblazoned with the BFBL logo and the words "Celebrate Locally Grown Food and Support Our Farming Community!" on one side, and the CFNR logo and "Celebre lo que Cultivamos Aquí y Apoye a Nuestra Comunidad!" on the other, with the Spanish translation of CAFF's name on the bottom (Comunidad en Alianza con Fincas Familiares), representative of a timely and exciting expansion in CAFF's continuing mission to serve beleaguered, yet crucial, facets of the Nation's food systems network.

To join the Compre lo Fresco de Nuestra Región campaign, please contact Central Coast Coordinator Marisol Asselta at 831.761.8507 or by email at Marisol@caff.org.

This work is made possible by funding from USDA, Repass-Rodgers Fund, the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County, Columbia Foundation, and Food Route Network, and by our partnerships with Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association (ALBA) and our national partner Food Routes.



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California Food & Farming Policy Update

BY PETE PRICE

Final Legislative Action

The Fall edition of Capitol Update described a number of bills that CAFF tracked and lobbied during 2006, including three bills passed by the Legislature and awaiting Governor Schwarzenegger's signature or veto. The Governor took the following actions on these bills, all of which were supported by CAFF:

Assembly Bill (AB) 32 (Nunez and Pavley)—As he promised even before the legislative session ended in August, the Governor signed AB 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act, into law. As a result, California will reduce its emissions of global warming gases to 1990 levels by 2020, a reduction of about 25% over status quo projections. CAFF was the only statewide agricultural organization to support AB 32, recognizing that global warming is the pre-eminent environmental and economic challenge to our future and that sustainable agriculture can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

AB 1147 (Leno)—Not surprisingly in an election year, the Governor vetoed AB 1147, which amends the existing legal definition of marijuana to exclude industrial hemp. AB 1147 rested on a recent federal appeals court case that found the federal definition of marijuana explicitly excludes non-psychoactive hemp. The Governor's veto message concluded the court decision clouded rather than clarified the status of industrial hemp and also cited concerns by some law enforcement agencies. CAFF supported the bill's market-expanding opportunities of

hemp, which the Governor also cited even as he vetoed the bill. **SB 1347 (Machado)**—As expected, the Governor signed SB 1347, which expands the ability of farmers to implement an Integrated On-Farm Drainage Management program on their farm. The bill allows multiple contiguous farms to build and use a single system, lowering costs and economic risks. IFDM reduces off-farm water quality impacts from salt and selenium and restores salt-degraded land and contaminated groundwater tables. CAFF sponsored the original IFDM bill in 2002 and strongly supported SB 1347.

Meet the new Legislature, same as the old Legislature
 In one sense, the November elections brought almost no change to the Legislature: out of 100 legislative seats up for election (all 80 Assembly seats and 20 of the 40 Senate seats), only one changed parties—maybe.

In the election to fill an open seat in the 34th Senate district in Orange County, termed out Republican Assemblywoman Lynn Daucher got 13 more votes than former Democratic Assemblyman Lou Correa. If Daucher's advantage survives a re-count, the seat will shift from the Democrats to the Republicans, reducing the Dem majority in the Senate to 24-16. In the Assembly, every one of the 80 districts will stay in the hands of the same party, maintaining the 48-32 Democratic majority from the 05-06 session.

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