

1978

Founded in Yolo County, California, as the California Agrarian Action Project (CAAP). Organized demonstrations and sit-ins in support of farmworkers in dire economic straits because of unemployment. The job loss is due to the use of the mechanical tomato harvester.

1979

CAAP files landmark suit against the University of California for using taxpayer dollars in the creation of technologies that benefit large farms, and hurt small farms and farm workers. Known as the Research Priorities (or "Tomato Harvester" or "Mechanization") Lawsuit.

1980-1985

CAAP organizes pesticide poisoning victims who help write and lobby for a slate of pesticide legislation that remains the toughest in the nation.

1980-1985 legislation includes:

- Senate Bill 950, The Birth Defects Prevention Act, which requires mandatory testing of pesticides for potential to cause mutagenic/birth defects and chronic health effects.
- Assembly Bill 2033, the Right to Know Act, which allows the public to review pesticide safety studies.
- Assembly Bill 2021, The Pesticide Contamination Prevention Act, which restricts groundwater contaminating pesticides and requires pesticide manufacturers to test their products for soil penetrability and groundwater intrusion.

1982

To promote ecological agriculture, CAAP helps organize the Ecological Farming Conference, which has been held annually since then.

1983

- CAAP publishes the first National Organic Directory, allowing vendors and farmers in the fledgling organic foods industry to find each other.
- California Association of Family Farmers is founded to address problems faced by family farmers.
- CAAP organizes first statewide conference on pesticides and politics.

1984

- California Association of Family Farmers members help organize the Second Annual California Farm Conference in Modesto. CAFF will continue to play a major role in the yearly conference.

1985

- CAAP and California Association of Family Farmers spearhead an organizing effort to create funding for sustainable agriculture research at the University of California. Senate Bill 872, which creates the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SAREP), passes in 1986.

- CAAP organizes first statewide conference on pesticides and water quality.

- CAAP cofounds the Toxics Coordinating Project.

- CAAP chapters in Davis, Salinas, Fresno, and Bakersfield reorganize as the California Action Network (CAN). CAN activists help pass Proposition 65, which requires labeling of and disclosure about cancer- and birth defect-causing chemicals.

- The Research Priorities Suit, filed in 1979, is decided in our favor in 1986, but later lost on appeal to the California Supreme Court in 1989. Nonetheless, in response to the suit, the University creates the Small Farm Center and hires Spanish-speaking Coop Extension agents, and the Fair Political Practices Commission requires that professors reveal personal financial interests that may involve conflict of interest with their research. Around the country, other land grant university reform groups model their campaigns on ours.

1989

- CAN and California Association of Family Farmers launch a campaign to compel the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to limit federal water subsidies to corporate agribusiness. In a federal lawsuit, we successfully argue for tightened loopholes so that taxpayers are not subsidizing corporate windfalls and family farmers see the benefits intended by the law.

- CAN's Farmers for Alternative Agricultural Research sparks the idea of providing support services to farmers working to reduce chemical pesticide and fertilizer use on their farms.

1991

- Founding of CAN's Lighthouse Farm Network.

- CAN hosts first tour of farms managed with reduced-pesticide practices for top UC scientists and administrators.

- CAN & California Association of Family Farmers together establish the Rural Water Impact Network (RWIN) to protect water for use in rural communities.

1993

- Members of CAN and the California Association of Family Farmers vote to unite into a partnership, the Community Alliance with Family Farmers. This decision greatly simplifies our case of AGA (Acronyms Gone Amok).
- Launching of CAFF's Biologically Integrated Orchard Systems (BIOS) program.
- Inaugural issue of Farmer to Farmer, a magazine highlighting the best sustainable agriculture growers and practices.

1994

- Founding of CAFF's CSA West.
- Legislation passes establishing the state's Biologically Integrated Farming Systems (BIFS) program.

1995

- CAFF publishes the first California Farm Fresh Directory, the guide to buying food directly from farmers.
- CAFF co-sponsors the first Western Regional Community Supported Agriculture Conference in San Francisco.

1997

- A CAFF-led coalition succeeds in forcing the California Department of Water Resources to back down from a plan that would have resulted in groundwater mining in the Sacramento Valley. The coalition – made up of county and city governments, agricultural and local business groups, water districts and environmental groups – opposed the Department's plan to replace 200,000 acre-feet of transferred surface water by pumping groundwater.
- The first annual Great San Joaquin Valley Chip-Off showcases in-field orchard brush chippers and shredders for a crowd of 250 in Merced County. Chipping is a desirable alternative to burning orchard prunings, as the technique provides organic matter for soil improvement, rather than creating air pollution.
- Publication of Learning from the BIOS Approach: A Guide for Community-Based Biological Farming Projects, a collaborative effort between CAFF and the World Resources Institute.

1998

- CAFF marshals key state legislators to speak out in defense of California's organic law, threatened by the USDA's proposed national organic standards. The USDA received an unprecedented number of public comments – well over 300,000 – about the proposal.

- A Santa Cruz County superior court judge rules in favor of the CAFF-led Campaign to Save Pajaro Valley Farmlands and Wetlands in a lawsuit challenging the city of Watsonville's plans to annex 646 acres of coastal farmland and wetland.
- Watsonville Farmers' Market opens, marking the culmination of a major effort by CAFF to revitalize the local economy after the city's downtown was leveled by the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. The city of Watsonville issues a proclamation commending CAFF members for their continued dedication and commitment to agriculture, local farmers and the entire community.
- Assembly Bill 1998 allocates \$1 million in new state funding for Biologically Integrated Farming Systems projects through UC SAREP and \$1 million for research and demonstration projects on methyl bromide alternatives.
- First Annual Family Harvest Festival in San Francisco draws thousands of participants interested in learning more about Bay Area farming and healthy food choices. The festival is organized by CAFF, Mothers and Others for a Livable Planet and the Public Market Collaborative/Center for Urban Education about Sustainable Education.
- Publication of *This Land Shall Be Forever Stewardied*, by Jered Lawson, about the community purchase of Live Power Farm in Covelo.
- A series of professional development workshops are offered to ag professionals, so that they can provide better service to growers who want to move toward biological crop management. The trainings are presented by CAFF's BIOS staff in conjunction with USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program.

1999

- CAFF's Central Coast Chapter releases the Pajaro Valley Futures Study, in collaboration with regional agricultural, environmental and business leaders, city planners, and urban design consultants. The report offers alternatives for economic development in the Valley.
- California EPA's Department of Pesticide Regulation awards grants to a number of commodity boards to develop and demonstrate reduced pesticide risk systems. CAFF is included among the stakeholders in the Almond Pest Management Alliance and the Walnut Pest Management Alliance.
- Assembly Bill 1258 legalizes agricultural homestay establishments, allowing farmers to accept a limited number of paying guests in their homes.
- CAFF wins the coveted Governor's Environmental and Economic Leadership Award, recognizing our innovative work to promote ecological farming and the sustainability of farming communities.

2000

- After surveying its members, CAFF adopts a strong position against the use of genetic engineering in food and agriculture unless several criteria are met. CAFF was the first California farm-based organization to declare its reasons for opposing biotechnology. CAFF assists in efforts leading to the passage of Assembly Bill 2663, which establishes the State of California's intention that the University of California provide permanent and adequate funding to sustainable agriculture research and education. Publication of the California Farm Fresh Guide by CAFF features farmers who sell direct to consumers.

2001

- CAFF works with the Sonoma County Grape Growers Association and the No Spray Action Group to develop common ground on a regional response to the glassy-winged sharpshooter, a potentially serious vineyard pest. As a result of the collaboration, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors directs the agricultural commissioner to use least toxic methods to control the pest. The policy is submitted to California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) as a model for other counties dealing with exotic pests.

- CAFF's Watershed Stewardship Program promotes sustainable agricultural practices for soil & water conservation.

- CAFF's Farm-to-School Program begins in Davis and Ventura. These programs connect school cafeterias with local farmers, who provide fresh lunch ingredients, explain how food is grown, and conduct tours of their farms for the school children.

- Adoption of the Small Farms Initiative, a collaboration between CAFF, California FarmLink and Sonoma County Open Space District, allows small farmers to lease publicly designated open space land.

2002

- CAFF sponsors Senate Bill 1372 to let growers adopt innovative practices that eliminate off-farm drainage into rivers and streams.

- Farm-to-School expands to the Central Coast.

- CAFF becomes a founding member of Californians for GE-Free Agriculture, a coalition dedicated to keeping California agriculture free of genetically engineered crops.

- The Buy Fresh, Buy Local campaign kicks off on Central Coast.

- CAFF's Hedgerow and Habitat project begins on the Central Coast, the North Coast, and in Stanislaus County. The program demonstrates the importance of growing native plant hedgerows to provide habitat for wildlife and beneficial insects.

- Watsonville voters pass Measure U, the Urban Growth Management Initiative, spearheaded by Action Pajaro Valley, with the work and support of CAFF members. The passage of this measure marks a milestone in the struggle led by CAFF to protect farmlands and wetlands in the Pajaro Valley.

2003

- CAFF helps Capay Valley Vision create a Capay Grown label.
- Partnering with USDA Risk Management Agency, CAFF presents risk management workshops to improve small farm business practices in six regions.
- The Merced Farm-to-School project begins with local produce in the cafeteria, a school garden, and nutrition education connecting children to the food they eat.
- CAFF becomes one of the founding members of the California Food & Justice Coalition Steering Committee.

2004

- CAFF works with Ventura County growers to develop a distribution business that sells their produce to local schools. Stands to be a model solution for connecting institutional cafeterias with fresh, local food, while offering a healthy financial return to family farmers.
- Through partnership with a major healthcare organization and other community organizations and agencies, opens farmstands in Richmond, CA to increase access in an economically challenged community.

2005

- Hedgerows plantings surpass 50 miles around the state, improving water and air quality, reducing erosion, and increasing beneficial insect habitat.
- Produce and distribute practical manuals promoting biological management techniques, including “Hedgerows for California Agriculture”, “Solano Conservation and Restoration Manual”, “BASIC Cotton Manual”.
- The Sustainable Cotton Project provides on-the-ground assistance to cotton farmers to reduce chemical inputs in Central Valley. Participates in setting global standards for “better cotton” at high-level meetings in Turkey, Holland, France, etc.

2006

- Forms a Humboldt chapter and opens up a new office in Eureka
- Expands the Growers Collaborative distribution company from Ventura to serve growers in two key agricultural areas of California, opening hubs in Fresno and the Sacramento Valley

- Launches the Gravenstein Apple Presidia project in collaboration with Slow Food USA, California's first Slow Food marketing project in defense of heirloom varieties
- CAFF works with Kaiser Permanente to develop a pilot sourcing program to provide fresh, local produce for 19 Northern California hospitals