

AGRARIAN ADVOCATE



GROWING FOOD, GROWING FARMS, GROWING COMMUNITIES

A Lasting Impression

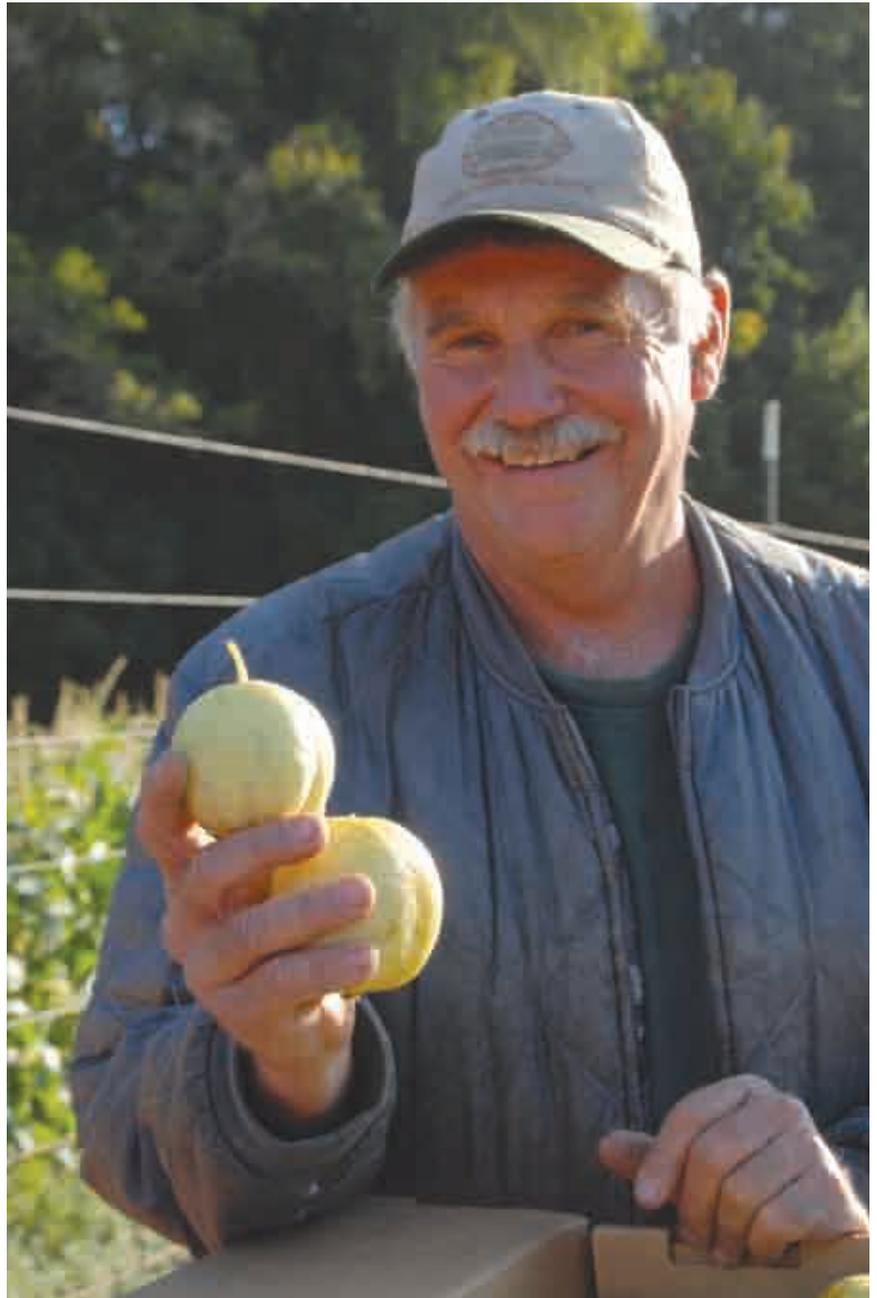
STORY BY SARA MOSSER

PHOTOGRAPH BY E. CHRISTIAN WISNER

Sitting through long city council meetings, writing meaningful responses to proposed policy changes, speaking in front of planning commissioners, and attending local organization meetings and events is not the glamorous side of being a local food systems advocate -- but John Laboyteaux is tireless in his work for small, family farmers.

Not only a sustainable food and farming advocate, Mr. Laboyteaux has been a full-time local farmer in southern Humboldt County since 1980. His certified organic farm, Camp Grant Ranch, supplies row crop vegetables, hay, tree fruit and grains to several local markets. Like some sort of farmer superhero, John works his 75 acres of land and still makes time to be a very active member of the Humboldt Chapter of Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF), the Humboldt County Farm Bureau, and a Williamson Act Advisory Committee.

John also works as a conduit between many aspects of the Humboldt County farming scene including the North Coast Growers Association, Southern Humboldt Farmers Market, the North Coast Regional Land Trust, and the Humboldt County Conservation Resource District. He brings together the breadth of agricultural individuals to discuss land use planning and economic



Profile continued on page 5

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MISSION

The Community Alliance with Family Farmers advocates for California family farmers and sustainable agriculture.

MEMBERSHIP

CAFF is a nonprofit organization that relies on membership dues and donations. Become a member or donate to CAFF online at www.caff.org or by mail.

AGRARIAN ADVOCATE

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VOLUME 38, SPRING 2012
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Letter from the Executive Director

We are deeply thankful for the many farmers, businesses, and organizations that have contributed to CAFF over the years. With your support, we are able to provide programs and resources to thousands of people each year. This issue of the Agrarian Advocate highlights our program work and also recognizes our members and supporters that make this work possible. Community members like you are crucial to CAFF's ability to create vibrant regional food systems.

CAFF is the only sustainable agriculture organization that has had an effective presence in the California legislature since the 1970s. CAFF's direct political action on behalf of family farmers is funded by your support. Our policy work continues to address pressing issues including food safety, land use, water quality, and healthy school food. We have also hired a full-time food safety advisor who is available to assist small and mid-sized specialty crop growers (page 8) with their food safety planning.

Many of CAFF's farmer members are actively involved with our programs and events. John Laboyteaux, a Humboldt county farmer and an active member of our Humboldt Chapter, contributes his time and expertise to ensure a strong family farming community (see the cover story about this Farmer Superhero).

As part of our "Know Your Farmer" program, CAFF's Farm to School team brings local growers into classrooms to connect students with the people who grow their food. This winter on the Central Coast, farmers visited almost 40 fourth-grade classes (page 4).

Each year in Humboldt County alone, about 6,000 elementary school students participate in CAFF's "Harvest of the Month" program. CAFF expanded our Harvest of the Month program in March, to a new audience of eaters: children, ages five and under. (The full story is on page 6.)

CAFF is working hard to represent the interests of family farmers. In the words of Wendell Berry, "eating is an agricultural act" and with your support, you are choosing the type of agriculture you want to support. We're glad to have you as part of our community and thank you for your support!

Diane Del Signore
 Executive Director

CAFF Presents at the EcoFarm Conference



STORY BY JOSH EDGE

**PHOTOGRAPH BY BROKEN BANJO PHOTOGRAPHY/
ECOLOGICAL FARMING ASSOCIATION**

At this year's EcoFarm Conference, which is held annually at the Asilomar Conference Grounds in Pacific Grove, CAFF presented, moderated, and/or organized a wide range of workshops. These included the Farm Tour before the conference began (Sam Earnshaw), workshops on Fixing School Food (Diana Abellera), "Food Safety Concerns for Small and Mid-sized Growers" (Dave Runsten) and "Pest and Animal Control without Poisons" (Earnshaw). CAFF maintained its important role at the conference, sharing information and organizing the community on critical issues facing California's family farmers.

Two additional workshops were organized with the support of CAFF's Lighthouse Farm Network (LFN) project. The LFN brings Central Coast farmers together to discuss/learn new techniques and growing practices, and to address critical environmental challenges facing the state.

The first workshop, "On-Farm Habitat Diversity for Bees and Beneficials," featured Sam Earnshaw and John Anderson, owner and operator of Hedgerow Farms in Yolo County (www.hedgerowfarms.com). The two gave detailed explanations of the various benefits of increasing on-farm native habitat to an audience of over 100 participants. Sam focused on his specialty: hedgerows, with their many benefits

from increasing biodiversity and habitat, to protecting soil and water. Sam's presentation, which included an extensive collection of before-and-after images of his hedgerow projects, is now available on the Lighthouse Farmer Network webpage (www.caff.org/programs/bio-ag/lighthouse-farm-network).

The second workshop, "Organic Orchard Management and IPM," was over capacity with more than 120 attendees. The engaging workshop featured two long-time CAFF farmers, Torrey Olsen of Gabriel Farm and Greg House of Coco Ranch, as well as Fresno County UC Cooperative Extension Adviser Richard Molinar. Greg detailed his growing practices on his 40-acre ranch (www.cocoranch.org) and his marketing strategies for the different sizes, types, and grades of fruit that he grows.

With just 14 acres to work with, Torrey's trees on Gabriel Farms have to produce, or he pulls them out and replaces them with those that will. Torrey also increases the efficiency of his farm by adding value to his fruits through processing his pears, plums and other crops into juices, jams, and an amazing Asian pear brandy (www.gabrielfarm.com). Copies of their presentations are also available on the CAFF web page listed above. Following the closing remarks, there was a flood of questions for the presenters on very specific on-farm challenges ranging from codling moth, how to deal with molds and fungus organically, irrigation and other practices for their own farms. 🌱

CONNECTING CHILDREN WITH LOCAL AGRICULTURE

usted trabajando en la granja



"You work on the farm."

STORY BY HILARY DOLSTAD

ILLUSTRATION COURTESY OF ALISAL UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

"I want to be a farmer when I grow up!" announced a fourth-grade student as the class waved goodbye to the farmer who had visited their classroom that day. As part of CAFF's Know Your Farmer program, our Farm to School team brings local growers into classrooms to connect students with the people who grow their food.

Winter and early spring are ideal times of the year to get farmers out of the field and into the classroom to teach the next generation about where their food comes from. Last school year over 2,300 students were visited by farmers in their classrooms as a part of CAFF's Know Your Farmer program. This past winter on the Central Coast, farmers have visited almost 40 fourth-grade classes in the Alisal Union School District (AUSD) located in east Salinas. These visits give students a direct connection to their regional food systems, and reinforce nutrition education programs occurring in many schools, while promoting positive relationships between youth and local family farmers.

Farmer visits to the classroom turn local growers into superstars, and usually start with a short lesson about where our food comes from and how it's processed. Students learn that food that comes directly from the farm without a lot of processing is better for their bodies and better for farmers. Farmers bring a wide range of materials to these visits including that morning's harvest, planting tools or plastic dioramas of the watershed. Children exclaim in amazement when they are introduced to produce like Dinosaur Kale and inevitably want to know about the animals on the farm: "Are there pigs? What about cows? Horses?" The questions and surprised faces from children are an indication that many are out of touch with what a working family farm is actually like. These visits help put a face to the people who help grow and harvest our food, and give them an idea of what really happens on a farm.

During our farmer visits with the Central Coast in the AUSD, CAFF has had the opportunity to work with farmers from a variety of cultural backgrounds. This year, several of the participating farmers in Salinas spoke to the classes in Spanish while a Farm to School staff member translated

for any students who did not speak Spanish. Many of the children in Salinas come from Spanish-speaking households, and they were excited to have the opportunity to ask the farmers questions in either Spanish or English. Still other farmers were born and raised in Salinas; one had even had the same teacher as a group of fourth-graders for whom she presented!

By educating classes about food systems and creating a connection between students and farmers, CAFF encourages healthy eating and promotes consumption of local fruits and vegetables at home and in the cafeteria. Making connections in the cafeteria is especially important in a district like Alisal, where most students receive free and reduced lunch through the National School Lunch Program. Qualification for the subsidized lunch program means that the family's income is between 130 and 185 percent of the federal poverty level. Our Know Your Farmer Program that includes these farmer visits to the classroom complements our Farm to Cafeteria initiative, in which we work with farmers and food service staff to bring more local food into school cafeterias.

These growers are positive role models for students, demonstrating the value of a strong work ethic and of contributing positively to society through sustainable agriculture. After one visit, a class took it upon themselves to write thank-you notes to the farmer. One student wrote, in Spanish, "Thank you for telling us about your job and what plants, fruits and vegetables you have on the farm. Thank you for the good advice you gave us." CAFF looks forward to continuing to connect young people with local family farmers through field trips, Harvest of the Month, Farm to Cafeteria, and more farmer visits to the classroom. 🌱

Profile continued from page 1

development issues, and organizes farmers and farm advocates to make position statements when necessary.

Over his tenure as a farmer, John has become well acquainted with land use policies, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), water and air quality issues, and rural farming economics. Recently, he has been heavily involved in the Humboldt County General Plan Update (GPU) where he emphasizes agricultural land conservation. After nearly 10 years of planning, the Humboldt County GPU is near completion; John has played a pivotal role in unifying farmers and their message: keep agricultural lands in agriculture land use designations to ensure a strong farming community for the future.

What's next for Mr. Laboyteaux? He currently spends his "free time" working with a network of grain growers whose goal is to revive local grain production. Recently presenting their idea at EcoFarm, this group of Humboldt and Mendocino County farmers, bakers and grain experts research and experiment with historical grain varieties and growing techniques in order to preserve traditional grain production knowledge.

John Laboyteaux is a trusted part of our farming community and many look to him for guidance and support. CAFF honors you, John! 🌱



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Growing Healthy Children

Harvest of the Month Expands to a Younger Crowd in Humboldt



STORY BY MICHELLE WYLER

Every year about 6,000 elementary students in Humboldt County learn about the origins of their food by participating in a program called Harvest of the Month (HOTM).

HOTM is a national program that motivates and empowers students to increase their consumption and enjoyment of a variety of fruits and vegetables. Each month a different fruit or vegetable is highlighted, and oftentimes locally grown produce is given preference.

CAFF operates HOTM in numerous regions throughout the state. In Humboldt County, the program took shape in 2004. The North Coast Co-op partnered with the Humboldt County Office of Education (HCOE) to assist in its implementation. Information about seasonal produce is presented in a classroom setting and students learn how plants grow and where the featured produce item originates. Best of all, students are able to sample the highlighted fruit or vegetable.

Since the HOTM program began in our northernmost region, CAFF has augmented our partner's nutritional lessons with farm-based messages by: hosting farm and farmers market tours, providing farmer profiles, conducting food systems lessons, bringing farmers into classrooms and providing technical assistance to food service directors who want to source local for school meal programs. With this collaboration, the HOTM program reaches over 300 students each month in the region and has been overwhelmingly successful in encouraging children to eat more fruits and vegetables.

Extending the Message

CAFF is excited to extend HOTM programming to a much younger crowd: children age zero to five and their families.

Thanks to a new partnership with First 5 Humboldt, and funding from the Network for a Healthy California, CAFF will be able to share local produce with this younger age group.

Research indicates that children who are exposed to fresh fruits and vegetables are much more willing to taste them, leading to healthier food choices. What's more, experiences during the first five years of a child's life shape many of their behaviors so this is an opportune time to introduce young children—and their parents—to fruit and vegetables in an exciting, hands-on way.

To reach these little ones, CAFF will be conducting HOTM taste tests, reading food related story books, and providing recipes to parents at eight playgroup locations throughout the county. Playgroups are organized sites where parents and their children (usually under five years of age) meet regularly to socialize. First 5 Humboldt operates 17 weekly playgroups throughout Humboldt County serving over 1,300 children age zero to five annually. Playgroups are just one of First 5 Humboldt's services that improve the lives of California's young children and their families.

Beginning this spring, we will start conducting HOTM activities at the following sites: Arcata Play Center at D Street Community Center Arcata, Tiny Tots Arcata, Fun Center Eureka, Parents in Partnership at the Manila Community Resource Center, Rio Dell Playgroup, Hoopa Playgroup, Orleans Playgroup, and Trinity Valley Playgroup in Willow Creek. For more information about Humboldt County playgroups please visit www.humkids.org.

North Coast Chapter Update

By JANUS HOLT MATTHES

Local and regional policy issues continue to dominate chapter activities. Although we had some successes in strengthening protections for farming on Sonoma County's urban fringe, Farmstays in the AR zone will need to wait until the next round of zoning changes. A segment of county government still does not seem to consider small acreages to be "real" agriculture, in spite of the recognition that locally produced and consumed food is good for local economies and the support on all levels for more "sustainable" agriculture and food systems.

Linda Peterson, formerly with California FarmLink and a long-time CAFF member, is now working with Sonoma County Co-op Extension on the Beginning Farmers and Ranchers program in partnership with Santa Rosa Junior College, Latino Service Providers, Sonoma County Ag & Open Space District, to mentor and support young farmers and ranchers on land trust properties in Sonoma County. This is a three-year USDA NIFA Beginning Farmer & Rancher Training Program. Each year the program will train up to 25 beginning farmers and ranchers. The nine-month training includes a broad spectrum of agriculture operations, time with mentors, and business and finance planning. Graduates will have access to leasing county lands for farming. The USDA funded project for Sonoma County is expected to grow more farmers and ranchers and strengthen our local food system. Since 2002 farmer markets have doubled nationally with a recorded 17% increase from last year alone (USDA). The beginning farmer program in our county will help us keep up demand for local produce, provide 1.3 full time jobs compared to 0.9 for farmers who sell through traditional wholesale markets and have the potential to grow higher value crops that generate greater sales per acre—\$590 per acre versus \$304 for the average farm (USDA). For more information, please visit www.nifa.usda.gov/fo/beginningfarmerandrancher.cfm.

Linda and Wendy Krupnick are also participating with both the Sonoma County Food Systems Alliance

(SCFSA) and the North Coast Regional Food Systems Network (NCRFSN), which is being funded by a \$300,000 USDA Rural Development grant. The SCFSA is working on a Policy Action Plan to guide local governments, agencies and businesses to strengthen local food system issues. The NCRFSN is focusing on marketing efforts including branding foods produced in this region, as well as policy issues.

In addition, State Senator Noreen Evans is actively working to reduce regulatory burdens on small-scale food farmers.

Our chapter's Annual Meeting in January featured keynote speaker, Dr. Lisa Micheli, with the Pepperwood Foundation and North Bay Climate Adaptation Initiative, who gave us an excellent and sobering presentation on climate change models for temperature, precipitation and soil moisture for this region (see www.northbayclimate.org). Our area will experience shorter and heavier rainfalls with hotter temperatures drying our soils out earlier in the season.

After sharing a wonderful potluck dinner, Bob Corshen summarized the services that the new produce processing, aggregation and distribution center, People's Harvest in Petaluma, will be offering. The center will offer in and out storage, re-packaging and other services (see www.peoplesharvest.com).

A farm day titled, "Adapting to Change in North Coast Vineyards and Farms", is planned for late June at Front Porch Farm in Healdsburg. This fully diversified farm moved the vineyard off the bottom land to the hill in order to grow biodynamic heirloom grains, beans, vegetables, olives, and livestock. For more information please visit www.caff.org/about/northcoast/

We are also now involved with proposed changes to the Sonoma ordinance governing development of orchards and vineyards to include regulations for tree removal on slopes to prevent erosion. 🌱

Policy Update

BY DAVE RUNSTEN

Food safety update

We are still waiting for the draft produce rules for the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) to emerge from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA). They will not take effect for some years, but they will dictate what the law will require every produce grower and handler to do for food safety.

Large commercial producers are engaged in extensive food safety programs and audits that often go far beyond what FDA will require. Many of these engage private third party auditors, but concerns have arisen over the objectivity of such audits. In California, both the California Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement (LGMA) and the California Tomato Farmers (CTF) cooperative use the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA—as an agent of USDA) to oversee and audit their food safety Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs). CDFA is in discussions with several other commodity groups to provide similar services and has applied to FDA to allow these programs to qualify as complying with FDA requirements.

The FSMA includes an exemption from federal regulation for farms that sell more than 50% of their produce directly to local consumers, retailers, and restaurants (they define local as within the state or less than 275 miles) and have gross sales of less than \$500,000. These farms are not required to register. They do have to either put a label on or display a sign with the farm name and address. However, they will have to comply with any state and local regulations, and California fully intends to devise some basic GAPs and require them of all produce growers. At this early stage, it looks like these smaller, direct-market farms will be able to self-certify that they are abiding by these GAPs.

CAFF has hired a full-time food safety advisor, Cathy Carlson, who has worked in LGMA compliance and has also been a small farmer. She lives in Aromas and works out of our Watsonville office. She is available to assist small and medium-sized specialty crop growers in California to develop their own on-farm food safety plans. She can point farmers to various GAPs, advise them as they develop their plans,



and even come to their farms to help identify potential food safety risks. You can contact her at cathy@caff.org or 831-818-4109.

CAFF is also working to add food safety material and links on our website and we will try to keep it up to date as these processes continue.

Sacramento

We have put a table of some 2012 legislative bills on our website (at www.caff.org/programs/policy/ca-state-legislation), which we will update every few weeks. We have not taken any positions yet, but we are likely supporting AB 1616, the Cottage Food bill, which seeks to allow the production and sale of certain low-risk foods from home kitchens, as well as some reform to the fertilizer program. As we write letters of support, these will also appear on this web page.

We are also participating in some task forces at CDFA that are (1) revising regulations for direct marketing, (2) trying to legalize small-scale raw milk dairies, and (3) making recommendations to implement the Healthy Food Financing Initiative to improve food access. As draft proposals become more refined, they will be posted on our website at www.caff.org/programs/policy/direct-marketing.

As one part of the direct marketing revisions, it is likely that Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs) will be subject to some regulation, which they have thus far escaped. The County Environmental Health Officers are concerned that as CSAs have expanded to serve thousands of customers there is no one monitoring their food safety practices. One

multi-farm CSA was shut down in the San Joaquin Valley by the County, which deemed it a food retailer lacking the proper permits. In order to exempt CSAs from such permits, the task force is recommending that CSAs register with the local agricultural commissioner, self-certify to some basic GAPs, and provide complete traceability for all products in their boxes.

The raw milk issue is more complicated. State law currently states that no milk of any kind can leave the farm where it is produced without a state-issued permit. Only two raw milk dairies have such permits, Organic Pastures in

Fresno and Claravale Farm in Paicines. However, there are many other farms selling raw milk, often through herd share arrangements. The state has issued cease and desist orders to some of these unlicensed operations, but the Brown administration is seeking a way to legalize them, through an agreement to follow some best management practices, test the milk regularly, and perhaps register. Some progress has been made but there is still a long way to go to reach a compromise that will be acceptable to all parties. CDFA is to be commended for their efforts. 🌱



In 1993, New Leaf Community Markets started their "Envirotoken" program. For each grocery bag customers re-use, they receive 10¢ tokens to give to local, non-profit environmental organizations. The program helps conserve resources by encouraging recycling and by supporting local non-profits working to protect the environment. Every spring, New Leaf publishes a ballot and customers vote for their top six candidates, and this year CAFF is on the ballot! Vote for us here:

tinyurl.com/NewLeafToken

Two Research Studies for Interested Farmers

- California Heat Illness Prevention Study (CHIPS)

The purpose of this study is to collect scientifically accurate data of the exposure of California agricultural workers to heat. For more information, contact: Diane Mitchell, Study Coordinator, (530)752-1810, dcmitchell@ucdavis.edu or Marc Schenker, MD., Principal Investigator, (530) 752-5676 mbschenker@ucdavis.edu.

Please visit www.caff.org to download a PDF with more information about this study.

- Solar Energy in Agriculture Study

This study is designed to understand the rationale and motivations that are part of the decision making process about on-farm electricity generation and use. The ultimate purpose of this research is to reveal barriers to the use of renewable energy on farms. Your participation in this study will help determine how best to reduce those barriers.

To participate in this study, please visit: tinyurl.com/SolarEnergyInAg



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- Buy local whenever you can - use the Buy Fresh Buy Local guide to find local produce near you!

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