



Farming in Drought:

Making the Most of Every Drop

CAFF Sonoma County VIP Tour 2022 | Panel and Interview notes

Preston Farm & Winery: Farm Philosophy

- ❖ Close knowledges of the community and response to their preferences
- ❖ As a small independent farm, not tied to direction from big farm companies
- ❖ Allowing for serendipity and experimentation

Preston Farm & Winery: Farm Practices

- ❖ Crops and animals are placed in the areas of the farm where they will thrive the best, including based on soil health and water availability
- ❖ Rotation is used to help keep soil healthy
- ❖ Multiple different production systems present including vineyards, orchards, grains vegetables, chickens, sheep
- ❖ Compost is produced on-farm to enrich soil
- ❖ Solutions aim to work with natural systems, for example avoiding anti-mildew sprays that harm beneficial insects, and using compost teas instead



Why do farmers grow food here in Sonoma County?

- ❖ Food security is important everywhere; Sonoma County is my home and I want to contribute to my community
- ❖ A diversified local farm system supports economic resiliency and keeps more food dollars local
- ❖ Growing food where people live protects food security and provides access to culturally relevant foods for different communities
- ❖ Having farms nearby can help local people understand the importance of local food & farming



Managing water

- ❖ Panelists use dry farming, drip irrigation, and soil health to conserve water
- ❖ Soil-health focused practices, applied over many years, can drastically improve production under drought conditions. Even in the short term there can be significant reduction in irrigation needs.
- ❖ Diversified farming systems help to build soil health, for example through compost application and rotational grazing

Water policy

- ❖ Water allocations need to be balanced, and include water for food production
- ❖ Important to consider how drilling of additional wells affects farms, and also how it affects public resources like rivers and streams
- ❖ Policies encouraging good soil health practices and discouraging poor water management would be beneficial
- ❖ Policies should be tied to implementing practices
- ❖ Farmers, including small farmers, have to be included in policy-making
- ❖ Don't just *invite*. Instead, *invest* in outreach.