

Heartland Celebration

of food, farming and healthy living
in California's Central Valley

May 15 - 16, 2004

Double T A-cres in Stevinson

Farm and Garden
Demonstrations
and Workshops



Children's Program
with Hands-On Ag
Education Activities

Barbecue and
Barn Dance

Farm Tours

Slow Food and
Wine Tasting

Now in its fifth year, the Heartland Celebration has become a Central Valley tradition, providing education and entertainment for the entire family. Join us in promoting sustainable agriculture in California's largest food producing region!

School groups welcome!

Hoes Down Harvest Festival

CELEBRATE RURAL LIVING



FULL BELLY FARM • YOLO COUNTY
October 4-5, 2003

**Saturday
Farm Workshops** Pruning, cow milking,
draft horses, herb gardening, sheep
shearing, small farm equipment and
more. Some workshops in Spanish.

Farm Tours On foot and by wagon
Children's Area Pumpkin carving,
homemade ice-cream corn husk dolls,
obstacle course, hay fort, and more.

Farmer's Market and Crafts
Help reduce waste and bring your own
forks, plates, cups, etc. No dogs or
outside alcohol.

Sunday - New!

Cow Pies and Country Ties

Visit other sustainable farms in Capay
Valley for hands-on workshops!

◆ Vineyard tour and wine tasting

◆ Bio Diesel fuel workshop

◆ Cache Creek wildlife raft trip

◆ Slow Food lunch

Pre-registration required

(Sunday only)

Volunteers still needed! Call us today!

Ecological Farming Association

406 Main St., Suite 313
Watsonville, CA 95076

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Bringing Sustainable Agriculture to You

Autumn 2003

EFA's Programs



Ecological Farming
Conference

Heartland
Celebration

Sustainable Ag
Conferences

Hoes Down
Harvest Festival

www.eco-farm.org

Organic Matters

An Annual Publication of the Ecological Farming Association- 2003

USDA Ministerial Expo:

Did the Meaning Get Lost in the Media Morass?

by Zea Sonnabend

Many of us heard the splash caused by the USDA Ministerial Expo on Agriculture, Science and Technology in Sacramento this June. The uproar caused by protestors outside the event and the militaristic police preparations to control it almost superceded the event itself. Most of the media coverage only focused on the act of the event and the protesters, and virtually ignored the reasons that the protests were held.

At the Eco-Farm Association, we decided that a good way to make our message heard was to participate on the inside of the event and try to interact directly with the ministers to present them with an organic alternative to what the USDA was "feeding" them with their food. We did have a presence in the protests outside which were a way to show strength for the movement against Genetically Engineered (GE) crops in this country. However, we made a tremendous impact from our decision to buy a booth in the exhibit hall and offer a display and sampling of the BEST organic foods and beverages, as well as extensive, detailed, factual information to promote organic as THE solution to the world's problems of malnutrition, poverty, environmental degradation, and genetic engineering.

We believe that direct engagement is the best tactic for changing the course of the US' foreign agricultural policy. The majority of the world's countries are NOT buying the USDA model for industrial biotech agriculture and so-called free trade. Many international delegates expressed dissatisfaction at the pushy tactics of the US government, both at the ministerial and in general, and they were relieved and surprised to find allies within the ministerial itself.

One of the main proponents of the government model of industrial agriculture gave a keynote address at the Ministerial. Dr. Norman Borlaug, the founder of the "Green Revolution," and now a proponent of the "Gene Revolution," talked about feeding the world through chemicals and biotechnology. Right after his talk, several ministers came to our booth and asked what we thought of Borlaug's comments. Since these points are at the heart of the differences between sustainable and industrial agricultural models, we present here a few rebuttals to Borlaug's arguments.



Greetings from EFA!

The last year has kept EFA busy with new and innovative programs and partnerships. EFA's existing programs, the Ecological Farming Conference, Heartland and Hoes Down (see inside), continued on strong this year as we expanded our efforts into some exciting initiatives. It was a thrill to combine efforts with many other groups and businesses to make a strong case for world-wide organic agriculture at the USDA-hosted meeting of agriculture and trade ministers from all over the world that took place in Sacramento in June (see article at left). Thanks to the many big and small donors that stood with us and supported this effort! Building on our work at the ministerial and our participation in California GE-Free, a coalition of 10 organizations that are working together to prevent the large-scale release of GE crops in California, we will expand our anti-GE work over the next critical year when the planned release of pesticide-resistant and pharmaceutical GE rice varieties threatens California's thriving rice industry. We hope that you'll get involved in the campaign to keep California GE free! Call us or check out the coalition's web site, www.calgeefree.org.

Through our Regional Sustainable Agriculture Series (S.A. Program), we worked closely with CAFF to present a conference
cont on back....

Greetings from EFA! contued from front...

series on sustainable dairy management in Merced County, and collaborated with UC SAREP to put on an organic strawberry production short course in Salinas. We also co-produced, with UC SAREP and ALBA, a pair of evening sessions for sustainable strawberries - presented entirely in Spanish! New relationships were forged in the Central Valley with winegrape growers and landscapers as we concluded a two-year educational series in Stanislaus and Madera Counties. Our grand finale was a fabulous new partnership with the Solar Living Institute at SolFest. Our SolFest pre-conference for farmers covered a diverse range of topics from solar water pumping and small-scale windmills to bio-diesel and vegetable oil for running tractors and trucks. The enthusiasm of the participants in the pre-workshop was matched by the warm reception we received from approximately 8,000 SolFest attendees, who filled the chairs at a series of food and farming workshops throughout the two-day event and formed a steady stream of visitors to our exhibitor booth which featured educational materials about sustainable agriculture from EFA and our sister organizations.

The S.A. Program looks forward to another busy year in 2004. We will continue our strawberry work with a conference in the Santa Maria area in the early Spring, present two more renewable energy workshops on the Central Coast and in the Central Valley late Spring (pending funding), and develop a sustainable winegrape event in Santa Cruz county for next winter (pending funding). Keep posted on the latest developments in this program by checking our web site.

Another activity that we will continue to develop over the next year is our on-going collaboration with the Sustainable Agriculture Working Group's Economic Viability sub-committee (www.calsawg.org). The committee is working on a policy initiative to promote direct marketing for farmers and a complementary communications collaboration to improve the communications capacity of California sustainable agriculture non-profits and put unified, effective messages out to the public. We believe that working together is the best way for all of us to be more effective in our work promoting sustainable agriculture, and we will continue to build new partnerships. We invite you to support our efforts through volunteering, contributing and participating!

Become a member of the Eco-Farm Association

- it's good for you, good for us, and good for sustainable agriculture! Your donation sent in the enclosed envelope is greatly appreciated.

Thank You!

Ecological Farming Association
406 Main St., Suite 313
Watsonville, CA 95076

(831) 763-2111, (831) 763-2112 fax

Email: info@eco-farm.org Website: www.eco-farm.org

Edited and published by: Jessica Miller

Contributions by Kristin Rosenow, Zea Sonnabend, and Lynn Wheeler.

Photos by Lynn Wheeler, Jessica Miller, and Zea Sonnabend..

Printed on 100% Post-Consumer Recycled Paper

In this issue...

Farms and Fishes, The Language of Flavor, USDA Ministerial, plus updates on the Eco-Farm Conference, Regional Sustainable Ag, Heartland Celebration, Hoes Down Harvest Festival, and more!

From Our Farms to the Oceans – Water is the Thread that Connects Us

By Katie Siegler

The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary protects 5,322 square miles of waters off the Central Coast of California and is home to numerous species of marine mammals, sea birds, and fish. The Sanctuary is nationally recognized for its biodiversity of wildlife and habitats and for its unique underwater geology. Millions of visitors come to the Central Coast every year to enjoy this national treasure. But California's Central Coast is also home to another national treasure, the agricultural lands in its rich coastal valleys. The region's unique soils and year-round mild coastal climate sustain a multi-billion dollar agricultural industry, which produces over 200 types of crops. Agricultural products from the region are shipped all over the nation and the world, and provide jobs for thousands of local residents.

The close proximity of a major agricultural area and a premier national marine sanctuary puts clear focus on the interaction between land and sea: as water flows from the mountains to the flood plains and rivers and then downstream to the sea, it connects the agriculture in our **watersheds** to our coastal estuaries and near shore environments, affecting the ocean environment and the critters that swim offshore. Likewise, watersheds throughout the country link agriculture with the health of streams, rivers, and ultimately, the ocean.

Therefore, soil, irrigation, and pest management practices on farms in the watershed can directly affect wetlands, waterways, fish populations, and levels of toxic pollutants in water and sediment. Stormwater, flooding, and irrigation can all mobilize substances that may be beneficial while on-site, but become pollutants as they concentrate in neighboring streams, rivers, wetlands and near shore waters. Though each individual farm or ranch may contribute a relatively small amount of pollutants, the cumulative effects through the length of a watershed can be damaging. Fertilizer runoff can result in the concentration of nutrients in surface waters and result in the rapid growth of aquatic plants and plankton, decreasing biological diversity, clogging waterways and flood control channels and leading to the depletion of oxygen in the water. Nutrients may also infiltrate groundwater and become a public health concern when they show up in our drinking water.

High levels of erosion can also impact the coastal and marine environment. Accumulation of excessive amounts of sediment flowing off multiple farms may smother riverine, estuarine and marine habitats, killing benthic (bottom living) organisms, reducing colonization, interfering with feeding, covering spawning grounds important to fish such as steelhead and salmon, and reducing the number of plants emerging in wetlands. Sediment is also a main



USDA cont . . .

soils, but needed regular inputs of chemical fertilizers and pest controls in order to remain productive. Bred for conditions little resembling the varied and marginal environments in which most of the world's poor farm, the genetic similarity of the plants destabilized traditional cropping systems making them more susceptible to crop failure due to pests and disease. When the massive profits promised did not materialize, many poor farmers had to go deeply into debt to purchase the now necessary pesticides and fertilizers from the same companies that sold the false "Green Revolution." Add that to the effect of introduced varieties on the genetically diverse land races of the developing world, the negative ecological effects that a lack of crop diversity has on a region, and the fact that developments in post-harvest handling, local economics of food distribution and political awareness did not keep pace with the new varieties, and the result is a well-chronicled fiasco that has done little to alleviate hunger or poverty.

Groups such as the Institute for Food and Development Policy / Food First have shown repeatedly that hunger is not a problem of insufficient food production. It is more often a result of economic pressures that cause non-nutritive crops such as coffee or cotton to be grown for export instead of growing food for local consumption, problems with land tenure, distribution problems stemming from inadequate infrastructure (roads vehicles, and other modern necessities), poor food storage resulting in staggering losses due to rodents and other pests, and political decisions based upon personal gain, rather than the good of the people.

The Language of Flavor!

by Mark Mulcahy, Organic Options

Since the beginning of time there has been a language that has been part of every culture and generation. A language that is as strong as a gale or subtle as a summer breeze. One that isn't just spoken, but expressed through all the senses: touch, sight, smell, taste, and hearing. This language is as unique as the individual expressing it. What is this universal language?

THE LANGUAGE OF FLAVOR!

Unfortunately, the language of flavor hasn't been as prevalent in our culture during the past few decades. With the advent of food as just another commodity and our submission to an eating lifestyle dictated by advertisements that have narrowed down the field of flavor to sweet, salty and fat, we have significantly dumbed down our food sensibilities and created generations of maintenance eaters, who simply fill the void felt in their stomachs at mealtime with whatever food is quickest and easiest.

If we search a little, however, the language of flavor is alive and well, living in each one of us, aching to be expressed. As with any language, fluency depends on practice and dialogue with others. Flavor dialogues help us share our sensory experiences, and help us recognize for example the exceptional quality of color, texture, sweetness and smell found in organic produce. Together, with our family, friends, produce managers and local farmers, we can begin to rediscover the joys inherent in talking about good food.

So keeping the importance of our food choices in mind, let's ask the question everyone wants to know the answer to, how does it taste?

Of course, the easy answer is 'Good!' But how do we go deeper than this? How do we share our love of healthy, great tasting foods with others in a way that resonates with someone, makes them begin to salivate just thinking about it? Describing these subtle differences of sweetness between a blueberry and a tomato, for example, is not as hard as you may think. When was the last time you sat down and discussed the flavors of produce straight from the garden or your daily dinner? It only takes an invitation to dialogue and the opportunity to learn how to taste again.

Recently, I had the opportunity to lead several of these flavor dialogues, attended by a wide variety of people. First off, I make sure that everyone knows there are no right or wrong answers and that everyone has something valuable to share. Then I request that each of the participants be willing to taste again for the first time. *Just because you may think you don't like tomatoes, doesn't mean you don't. Perhaps it's because you've never a tried really a good tomato. If your only tomato experience is the slice of pink tennis ball with the texture of Styrofoam that you get on your burger during the winter, then you could be in for a welcome surprise.* Next is for everyone to use each of their senses with each bite of produce they take. And finally, I ask that all be willing to describe and share their experience with the group. Everyone agreed.

And so we begin the language lesson with blueberries from two different states that had both been brought in fresh that day. What was the color? *Blue!* someone answers. Blue like my jeans? *No, more like the midnight sky!* Anyone else? *Grey blue!* How about the smell? *Earthy!* Then at the same time from opposite sides of the room *"Grandma's house!"* A local food writer says, *"As soon as I smelled and tasted these I was transported back to my grandmother's house."* The produce manager echoed the thought saying, *"we used to eat blueberries behind my grandma's house until we nearly got sick."*

How about the red delicious apples? *"You know I stopped eating apples for about 20 years because I thought that all apples had this mushy texture and it wasn't until I tried a Braeburn a couple of years ago that I realized that apples could be enjoyable."* A testimonial! Are you being served by your market if that's your experience? *"Nooooooo!"*

And so the tastings went on and everyone proceeded to get bolder and more animated with each item tasted, smelled and felt. Then someone said, *"This is fun and quite eye opening, but how do we know what's good at the store or farmers' market?"* Ask for a sample! *"But often there's no one around. . ."* *"Or they don't know anything about the food."* I call this all dressed up but no one is home. Find a new place to shop or bother the store manager, after all, the squeaky wheel gets the grease.

Isn't eating one of the most important things you do each day? Then why shouldn't you be able to try before you buy? You try on clothes before you buy them right? Your fresh food should be no different.

Consider this: by tuning into the language of flavor, you develop a personal relationship with your food. Once you have a relationship with your food, if you appreciate it for the quality and the flavor and the sustenance that it provides, then your relationship with the folks who provide you that food is just as important. I think Tom Willey, farmer and organic pioneer, may have put it best when he said: "We must consider it a scientific fact that you are what you eat. The same molecules that make up the food we consume become the molecules of our minds and bodies. So unless you are your own farmer, you should choose one as carefully as you choose your doctor or pastor. Therefore, it is fitting that farmers, like doctors, lawyers, professors and pastors, should command a high level of respect and income, commensurate with this level of responsibility."

If you're not buying directly from the farmers (preferred), then you should develop that relationship with your produce manager. Just as we expect to have great tasting food from the farmers' market, produce managers in turn have the obligation and responsibility to provide you with the best tasting and freshest food possible. And the ones who have passion for what they do (a dying breed in many areas) and consider it an honor to serve their communities by choosing this livelihood, should command the same respect as the above mentioned professions. After all, aren't some of these folks the most important person in many consumers fresh food lives? I say absolutely, yes!

Everyone has a role in creating a sustainable, flavorful, nutritious food system. Farmers in the growing and harvesting, produce managers in receiving, displaying, and educating consumers about quality and seasonality, and consumers who should demand the best flavor but also be willing to pay a fair price for it. If it's a bargain you're looking for, consider that a lousy apple for 50 cents a pound cheaper is still a lousy apple. Buying seasonally when the supply is high and the price is more competitive offers better flavor and value. So I say we should all do our part to continue the dialogue, share our favorite flavors and bring the language of flavor into our everyday life.

the 24th annual Ecological Farming Conference January 21 - 24, 2004

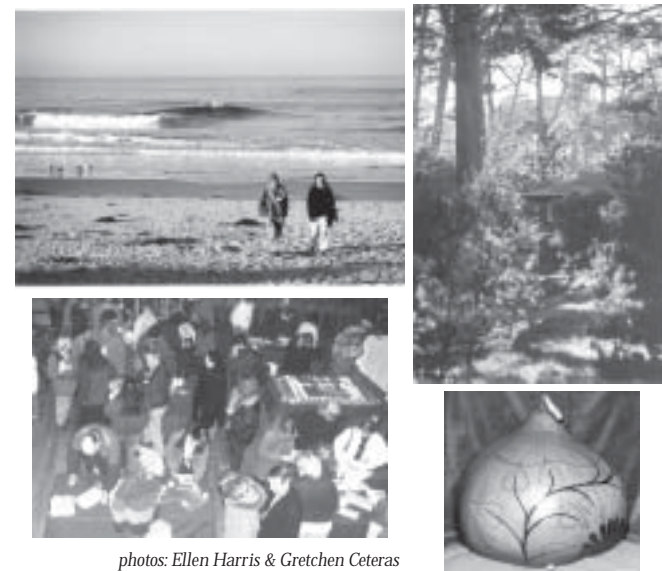
Asilomar Conference Center, Pacific Grove, CA

2004 Theme:
**"Real Security Begins
with Healthy Farms and Clean Water"**

Agenda available Nov. 1st.

Call or write if you are not on our mailing list.

The annual celebration of farmers, marketers, and activists exploring who we are, where we are, why we're growing/selling/eating healthy food, and what may blossom in the future.



photos: Ellen Harris & Gretchen Ceteras

Look forward to 2004! Pre-Conference on Farms & Fishes

We are working on a special pre-conference event on Wednesday, January 21, 2004 that will feature the relationship between sustainable agriculture and the marine and fresh water environment. Plan to come to Asilomar a day early to participate in special events celebrating the aquatic and terrestrial relationship, including an evening at the Monterey Bay Aquarium.

Does Money Keep You Away from Eco-Farm?

We know the conference costs a lot. However we are committed to enable folks to attend the conference. Here are several ways to keep the costs down:

- Apply for a farmer, student or educator scholarship. We get relatively few applicants for the two overnighters which are allocated to farmers. You could have a good chance of getting one!
- Use our Farmer Discount. Full-time, low-income Farmers get \$60 off on overnight stays, and \$15 off on conference only.
- Volunteer. We have some easy and satisfying volunteer opportunities which still let you see much of the conference for reduced cost.



USDA cont . . .

3. Genetic Engineering is the way of the future.

Borlaug stated, "Science and technology are under growing attack in the affluent nations where misinformed environmentalists claim that the consumer is being poisoned out of existence by the current high-yielding systems of agricultural production. While I contend this isn't so, I often ask myself how it is that so many supposedly "educated" people are so illiterate about science?"

We who are the alleged science "illiterates" are educated enough to look critically at the problems that have resulted from the Green Revolution in the last 30 years. We see that many of those problems developed because the technological advances were not evaluated in a more holistic context. Instead of just looking at one single criteria, improved yield, the overall effects on the agroecology, resource management, biodiversity, and even social and economic fabric of a region should be studied before adopting technologies in agriculture.

The "Gene Revolution" is following the failed model of the "Green Revolution" all over again, but using more dangerous components. Combinations of genes that never would occur together in nature are being released without comprehensive studies or adequate public and regulatory oversight. Borlaug claims by inference that Rachel Carson was in favor of using Bt instead of pesticides and therefore it is carrying out her wishes to insert Bt into corn. We want to know what happens to insect resistance to Bt when it is introduced so widely? What happens to the beneficial insects? What happens to soil microorganisms when the Bt crop residues are turned into the soil? What happens to local farmers when they have to buy seed every year from a multinational corporation instead of saving their own seed? And what happens to you and me and the baby-sitter when we eat corn with Bt in it, especially in the long term?

Many of the ministers were very glad to hear our rebuttals. Knowing that there are alternative approaches in the US that are more sensitive to the agricultural situations in their own countries, including meeting US people who were respectful of the desire to decide for themselves on the success or desirability of GE crops did more to open up relations than the countless meetings and forceful presentations that the USDA did. And mostly, the delegates were glad to taste organic cherries and strawberries as exquisite proof of the success and possibility of organic production.

Many thanks to all the businesses, organizations, individuals and communities who donated money and product to support this effort.

"Agriculture in the 21st Century: Vision for Research and Development", from a speech delivered March 21, 2000, By Norman E. Borlaug & Christopher Dowsnell on the web. http://www.agbioworld.org/biotech_info/topics/borlaug/agriculture.html

