



Small Farm News

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2003

SMALL FARM CENTER • COOPERATIVE EXTENSION • UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Mike Madison: Flower Grower, Visionary and Author

By Isabella Kenfield, research assistant, Small Farm Center, and Desmond Jolly, director, Small Farm Program, and extension economist, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, UC Davis

Farming is more than simply a way for Mike Madison to pay his bills and feed his family. From speaking with him, reading his books, and learning about his farm and home, it becomes apparent that to Madison, farming is a meditation on life. It is an expression of his values, beliefs, spirituality and creativity. "For anybody to go into farming today, it's not a rational economic decision," he says. "It's a decision based on some other thing. It has to do with some other set of values or how you want to live."

Before founding Yolo Bulb, in Solano County just outside of Davis, California, in 1986, Madison and his wife Dianne lived in Florida, where Madison managed a citrus farm and botanical garden. Despite this connection with agriculture, Madison's daily schedule involved a bus commute to an office where he was required to wear a tie. "That was like being in prison," he recalls. "I like being outdoors." The Madisons decided to move to California to start a flower farm. "No matter how badly things go on the farm," he says, "it's still better than working in an office."

Madison spent a large part of his childhood in Davis, and by returning to grow flowers he was returning to his roots in more ways than one. Both Mike and Dianne have horticulture in their backgrounds. Mike's father was a flower farmer when Mike was a child, and later, a professor of horticulture at UC Davis. Dianne's family operates a flower and produce business in Florida. "We have it from both sides," says Madison. "I've always been a flower-oriented individual."

Yolo Bulb is a self-sufficient enterprise, entirely dependent upon the labor of this husband and wife team. It is a small operation, and the Madisons want to keep it small in order to maintain both their independence and lifestyle. "There is no advantage in the flower business of being bigger," says Madison. Yolo Bulb is a 33-acre farm; seven of these acres are devoted to flower cultivation. Madison originally toyed with the idea of building a 10,000-square-foot greenhouse, "imitating that aspect of the flower industry" as he puts it, but then decided against it. "Once you have greenhouses," he says, "you will never get a day off. As it is now, we still get a couple of months off in wintertime. Having a greenhouse is like having a dairy. It's twice a day, 365 days a year." So Madison designed and built a smaller greenhouse — one suitable for Yolo

— CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



Ellen Straus. Photo by Marilyn Garry-Mulkeen

Pioneer Straus Leaves Legacy

The small and sustainable farming communities

mourn the loss of Ellen Straus, who passed away November 30, 2002. Straus was 75 when she died of cancer.

Straus' life represented innovation in farming, which encouraged an unprecedented alliance between farmers and environmentalists in Marin County. The results she achieved in environmental conservation for Marin County affected the national climate of environmental conservation.

Ellen Tirza Lotte Prins was born in Amsterdam, Holland, in 1927. In 1940, her family fled to New York just before the Nazis invaded. Straus grew up in New York, attending Bard College. In 1949, she met Bill Straus, whom she married only three months later.

Ellen moved with her husband Bill to a dairy farm near Tomales Bay, in Marin County, in 1950. As development in the region increased, Ellen became more involved with the fight to conserve farmland in the county. She was instrumental in creating the Point Reyes National Sea-

— CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

IN THIS ISSUE

1 Mike Madison: Flower Grower, Visionary, and Author

Pioneer Straus Leaves Legacy

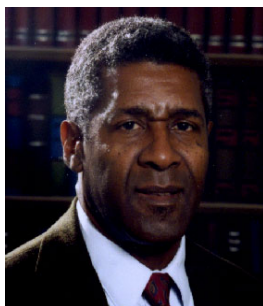
4 California Farm Conference

5 Pioneer Agriculturist Award

8 Managing Risks in Farming and Ranching

10 Farmers Market Manager Oversees Lively Asian Market

12 Specialty Crops Jamboree '03

*Director's Message***New Small Farm Program Grants Focus on Specialty Crops***Desmond Jolly*

We begin the New Year with some satisfaction regarding a number of projects and initiatives which were completed or moved forward last year. **The 2002 California Small Farm Conference**, for which we were a major sponsor, wrapped up the year for us on a high note. The Conference drew one of its largest attendances ever — more than 600 participants. The **Small Farm Program** co-sponsored an “Adding Value to Farm and Natural Resource Products” Short Course, that provided its participants with a cross section of valuable information covering a gamut of topics from production through marketing.

The course drew on University of California experts such as Linda Harris, extension food microbiologist with the UC Davis Department of Food Sci-

ence and Technology; and Shermain Hardesty, director of the Center for Cooperatives and lecturer in the UC Davis Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics. Desmond Jolly served as course coordinator and moderator. Farmers rounded out the course presentations, drawing on their own experiences and visions for growing their businesses. These included **Talibah Al-Rafiq** of the California Cashmere Company, **Jamie Johansson**, an olive oil producer, and **Becky Smith** of Frog Hollow Farms.

The Small Farm Program was also a key contributor to the **3rd National Small Farm Conference** held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, September 17-20, 2002. That event enabled significant national and regional networking as well as facilitated participants learning from the best of our colleagues' efforts in other parts of the nation.

With three new grant-funded efforts, the Small Farm Program anticipates more breakthroughs in our ability to provide valuable products and services to our clients in 2003. Through a new \$150,000 competitive grant from the **California Department of Food and Agriculture's "Buy California" Initiative**, we will con-

duct field and post-harvest research on a large number of niche specialty crops (see back cover). Another \$80,000 “Risk Management for Specialty Crop Producers” grant will allow us to conduct focused outreach to specialty crop growers targeting risk management education and risk management products and practices. A third USDA grant will target management education for women farmers and ranchers.

So, we have a rather large portfolio of research and outreach activities planned for 2003–2004. Growers might keep your eyes open for field days, demonstrations, workshops and conferences where Small Farm staff will share up-to-date information on new crops and best practices. Also visit the SFC web site, www.sfc.ucdavis.edu, where thousands of articles and research reports on specialty crops can be accessed through the SFC On-line Library. A large number of these publications are now posted in PDF format, allowing you to download them from our web site. Or click on the Specialty Crops link on our home page to access our online Specialty Crops database. Happy New Year!

SMALL FARM CENTER WEB SITE TAKES BIG HITS

WEB SERVER STATISTICS for the UC Small Farm Center (SFC) web site indicate that a growing number of farm related information clients are being served through the SFC web site. A summary report for the period September 9, 2002, through January 28, 2003, provides these statistics:

(Figures in parentheses are for the 7-day period ending January 28, 2003.)

- **SUCCESSFUL REQUESTS: 801,000 (27,557)**
- **AVERAGE SUCCESSFUL REQUESTS PER DAY: 5,677 (3,936)**
- **SUCCESSFUL REQUESTS FOR PAGES: 141,216 (7,562)**
- **DISTINCT HOSTS SERVED: 56,889 (3,962)**

www.sfc.ucdavis.edu

program news

In Memoriam - Suzanne Vaupel (1948-2003)

Suzanne Vaupel, a long-time supporter and member of the **Small Farm Program Advisory Committee**, recently passed away after battling cancer for some time. We miss Suzanne badly; we loved her dearly. She was a pioneer in attending to the policy and regulatory aspects of organic agriculture and authored a Small Farm Center publication, *Marketing Organic Produce In Certified Farmers Markets*.

Using her legal training, Suzanne was involved in advocacy, consulting, and mediating on issues related to standards and equity in the development of the organic industry. For a more extensive article on the contributions and life of Suzanne Vaupel, please visit our web site: www.sfc.ucdavis.edu/news/news.html



Suzanne Vaupel

Randii MacNear Wins Award

On a more pleasant note, another member of the **Small Farm Program Advisory Committee**, **Randii MacNear**, was named Farmers Market Manager of the Year at



Randii MacNear

the 2003 National North American Farmers Direct Marketing Association (NAFDMA) Conference in North Carolina, February 3–9. MacNear is the market manager of the renowned Davis Farmers Market, which she has helped to develop as one of the flagship farmers markets in California and the United States. She also serves on the Board of NAFDMA and has been secretary of the California Federation of Certified Farmers Markets.

Marion Kalb Takes New Position

Marion Kalb, long-time member of the **Small Farm Program Advisory Committee** and former Executive Director of Southland Farmers Market Association, has left Southland to assume a position as the Farm To School Coordinator with the National Community Food Security Program. We wish her continued success in her career. Kalb helped Southland to become a leader in farmers market management. Southland is now regarded as a pacesetter in a number of areas – most recently in articulating a policy on ethics in market participation and management.

Leonard Diggs Appointed to RDC Board

Leonard Diggs, a long-time member of the **Small Farm Program Advisory Committee**, a small farmer and a faculty member at Santa Rosa Junior College, has been appointed to the Roots of Change Council, a coalition of foundations launching a new initiative to facilitate a greater transformation rate of California agriculture to a more sustainable framework. Also appointed to the council were **Desmond Jolly**, director of the UC Small Farm Program, and **Richard Rominger**, former USDA deputy secretary.



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The Small Farm Center links those who need information on small-scale farming with those who have the information. The Center produces publications and a newsletter; sponsors conferences and seminars; holds a library of periodicals, reports and books; gives referrals; and answers numerous requests for information.

Readers are encouraged to send us information, express views, and contact us for assistance. Mention of a specific product is intended for the reader's information or as an example of a similar product—not as a recommendation of that specific product.



California Farm Conference 2002

The UC Small Farm Program was a major sponsor of the 2002 California Small Farm Conference held November 17-19 at the Holiday Inn in Ventura. More than 600 participants celebrated the fruits of California's small farms, networked with each other and with agencies serving the small farm community, and attended a large menu of short courses and workshops on a variety of relevant topics. Key sessions provided by Small Farm Program advisors included workshops on farm management, specialty crops, innovative marketing, and organic agriculture.

A popular Short Course patronized by 50 participants was "Adding Value to Farm, Ranch and Natural Resource Products" and was sponsored by the Small Farm Center, the Center for Cooperatives, and the UC Davis Department of Food Science and Technology. The Short Course included presentations by farm operators: Jamie Johansson, Lodestar Farms olive oil producer; Talibah Al-Rafiq, California Cashmere Company cashmere goat rancher; and Becky Smith, Frog Hollow Farms organic grower.

The UC Small Farm Program also presented its *Kathleen L. Barsotti Pioneer Agriculturist Award* to George and Elaine Work of the Work Ranch in San Miguel, California. (See Page 5). ■



Farm advisor Paul Vossen presents information about olive oil production and processing in the Adding Value Short Course.



Conference attendees gather for the evening speaker meeting.



Speaker Talibah Al-Rafiq is introduced by Desmond Jolly in the Adding Value Short Course.



Shermaine Hardesty shows attendees a specialty food product label.



Becky Smith displays her jams.



A large group of conference participants attended the Adding Value Short Course.

Farm Conference continued Adding Value Short Course



Becky Smith discusses her specialty jams and pastries.



Desmond Jolly makes a point during the Short Course.



Jamie Johansson discusses olive oil production.

Fourth Generation California Farmer Receives Pioneer Agriculturist Award

By Isabella Kenfield, research assistant, Small Farm Center

More than 100 years ago, George Work's ancestors arrived in California as pioneers, eager to establish themselves as farmers on the California landscape. George and Elaine Work continue the pioneering tradition of the Work family today, with the same commitment to ranching and farming the land.

At the 2002 California Small Farm Conference, held in Ventura County in November, the Works' commitment to farming in California was acknowledged when they were presented with the Kathleen Barsotti Pioneer Agriculturalist Award. The Works received the award for the pioneering efforts they have made in the development of agritourism and ecological ranching.

When the UC Small Farm Program started its agritourism program in 1997 with the objective of enabling farmers, ranchers and natural resource owners to diversify their income streams through agritourism and nature tourism, the Works were among the first cooperators with that program. In his presentation of the award, Desmond Jolly, UC Small Farm Program director, stated that the Works "have been leaders in this new enterprise, sharing knowledge willingly and openly and taking leadership in the farmstay legislative initiative."

George Work was instrumental in helping to pass the 1999 farmstay legislation that eased visitor restrictions on farmers and ranchers, enabling them to more easily create and run agritourism ventures, thereby increasing their livelihood and security on the land.

The Works have created a farmstay component to their ranching business. Visitors stay with the Works in their home, and learn about ranching, the history of the Work Ranch, and how the Works are endeavoring to ranch in an environmentally friendly manner.

George Work was an early student of the Alan Savory method of range and livestock management and incorporated that knowledge into the management of his ranch. The Works practice dry farming grain, a system of farming that is low-impact and controls erosion. A recent profile in the *San Francisco Examiner* says that George is "one of the top agriculturalists in the nation and one of the first in the U.S. to practice holistic management. He is also an international pioneer in water and soil conservation, for which he received an award at the White House."

Work continues to provide leadership and is currently involved with his congressman and others in trying to get a mobile slaughtering facility for farmers and ranchers in his region. This facility would enable ranchers to reduce the trauma to livestock during transport because slaughtering would take place at the ranch. It would also reduce the costs of transporting the livestock and paying for off-site slaughtering. In addition, ranchers could serve their own beef to visitors when they come for farmstays.

The Small Farm Program salutes George and Elaine Work for their efforts to promote sustainable ranching and farming in California ■



George Work accepts his award from Desmond Jolly as a smiling Elaine Work looks on.

Mike Madison – FROM PAGE 1

Bulb's needs as a small farm. In addition, he built a shed, a cooler and even the Madison family's home.

The Madisons rely on no hired labor. At one point, when they were experimenting with wholesaling and developing market niches, they did have hired help. "I hated it," recalls Madison. "I hated being a boss. Nobody worked nearly as fast as I did and they didn't have the interest.

So we got rid of our employees and we got smaller." Having a larger operation was not worth the headache of managing employees.



Mike Madison stands amidst his flowers.

In his new book, *A Sense of Order-The Rural Landscape of Lower Putah Creek*, Madison describes the social structure between managers and employees on mainstream, industrial farms in the Lower Putah Creek District. He writes, "the land is worked not by farmers but by workers, who have no ownership and no tenure. The farmer is the manager. And so there is a long history of a division between management and labor that foreshadows the industrial model of farming." Besides freeing him from having to manage anyone, his decision to keep his operation small and not use hired labor has a socio-political dimension as well.

Prospects are Good

Madison feels the opportunities for small-scale flower farms are "excellent" right now. At the 2002 California Small Farm Conference in November, Madison spoke on the two strategies that, in his

view, work best for small flower farms. The first, which is the strategy he himself utilizes, is to market directly to a relatively small market over a long season. All of Yolo Bulb's flowers are sold within eight miles of the farm. Two-thirds are sold at the Davis Farmer's Market, and the other third goes to the Davis Food Co-op and three Nugget markets in Davis and Vacaville. Nearly all of Yolo Bulb's sales are to repeat, loyal customers who buy flowers weekly; this testifies to the quality of the flowers Yolo Bulb produces.

The Madisons try to harvest three to four hundred bunches of flowers per week over a 44-week season. To supply flowers for such a long season, Madison grows more than 200 flower species, including forsythia, lilac, gerbers, hydrangea, sunflower, iris and cala lily. The constant production of a small amount of flowers keeps labor needs to a minimum and maintains a constant source of income.

The second strategy, which Madison doesn't use, is to cultivate one or a few specialty crops that are not in regular commodity markets. "If it's fast and easy, it's likely others will grow it and prices will



Madison sells regularly at the Davis Farmers Market.

fall," he says. "If it's slow and difficult, you'll have the market all to yourself and you can get an excellent price." Examples of such hard-to-grow flowers are daphne, clematis and fruiting branches.

While acknowledging that his flowers could bring more money if he was willing to drive to Sacramento or even to the San Francisco Bay Area to sell them, Madison is adamant about keeping his

own operation local. Madison regards a local farm economy, in which local farms supply the agricultural needs of local communities, as an intrinsic facet of a healthy agrarian landscape. "One benefit of this is decreased dependence on fossil fuels and a decrease in the number of trucks on the road," he writes. "Also, carbon, nitrogen and other nutrients are kept within the district rather than exported, as with hay sent to distant dairies. More important, local production builds the sense of



Yolo Bulb farm borders Putah Creek and a riparian forest that provides pest control.

community. School children visit the dairy, they understand where their milk comes from, they feel a social connection to the dairyman and his family."

By keeping dependency on fossil fuels to a minimum, Madison believes small farms are more economically and environmentally sustainable. Yolo Bulb has one tractor with about 15 different components, and the majority of the labor is done by hand. Yolo Bulb also is environmentally sustainable in other ways. Madison's clementine groves are organically certified. Though the trees are still too young to be highly productive and therefore profitable, Madison hopes to start making a return on his investment in the next year or two. He has already found an organic distributor who will buy his clementine when his trees start to produce.

The geographic location of Yolo Bulb farm supports ecologically sound farming. Putah Creek borders Yolo Bulb farm on one side. Some of the flower beds lie on the floodplain of the creek, which has in-

credibly rich, moist soil. This floodplain was the primary factor in Madison's decision to buy the land. In addition, the riparian forest that fringes the creek provides an efficient pest control program based on biological control. The forest is a nesting ground for bats, owls, and predatory insects like beetles and lacewings, all of which prey on pests. "We have virtually no insect problems," he boasts. "I haven't used insecticides in years. It's partly philosophical, but mostly because I don't need to."

The downside of the forest is that the rich diversity of fauna makes for a terrible vertebrate problem. These are primarily gophers, along with birds and rodents. During the season that he planted his clementine trees, Madison lost 28 out of 200 trees to gophers. He claims he loses 15 percent of his product to gophers — a large percent of his potential profit. For gophers, he uses traps instead of poison.

Yet weeds are the single biggest problem facing Yolo Bulb. To deal with weeds, Madison employs a combination of tactics. He starts his seeds in the greenhouse and waits to plant the seedlings until they can "compete" with the weeds with a four to six week head start. He also burns regularly. When a flower bed has produced its full potential for the season, Madison allows it to dry out and then burns the entire cover on the bed, thereby burning the weed seeds.

Planning Ahead

Looking to the future, Madison has planted 1,200 olive trees on six acres, and hopes to be harvesting olives within two years. Olive trees thrive in the dry, sunny and warm climate of the Lower Putah Creek district. But olive trees aren't cultivated in the region (and nationwide) because the cost of picking has never made olive cultivation profitable. Though new technology allows for mechanized harvesting, Madison has a different vision for his olives: He hopes to create an olive oil cooperative which relies on hand picking the fruit.

"I'm choosing the solution that is technologically backward but sociologically advanced," claims Madison. His co-

operative will recruit urban people to come to the farm and pick olives. Instead of being paid in cash for their share of the harvest, they will be paid in olive oil. The pressman, bottler and farmer will also get a share of the oil. Madison believes it will work because it will offer urban people a "primal satisfaction" in harvesting their own food, in addition to the pleasure of working outdoors with family and friends.

Madison views this venture as a way to reconnect urban and rural people, whom he currently sees as socially and geographically divided. The olive oil cooperative, he imagines, "would foster an engagement of town people with the countryside, both in the harvesting of the



Yolo Bulb flowers grace this bouquet.

fruit and in the enjoyment of the oil. By having a tangible stake in the countryside," says Madison, "urban people would become partisans of farming and powerful allies in the preservation of the rural landscape."

Mike Madison is a visionary. In every aspect of Yolo Bulb's operation, he is making a conscientious decision based on how he wants to live his own life, and the contribution he wants to make to society. By being a small farmer and utilizing sustainable farming practices, Madison makes his own rules and takes more control over the impact he has on the community and environment around him. Additionally, through his farming he is working to create the social, environmental and economic atmosphere that he would like to see in modern farming. This is an atmosphere of social justice, environmental health and the unity of rural and urban America.

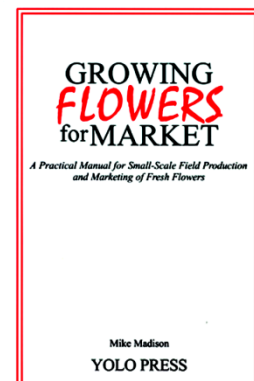
Ellen Straus — FROM PAGE 1

shore, which preserves 17 ranches. In 1980, she co-founded the Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT), which, as the first agricultural land trust in the country, pioneered the concept of conservation easements. MALT buys development rights to farmland from farmers, legally stipulating that farmland must always remain agricultural.

Since its inception, MALT has succeeded in putting about one-quarter of Marin's privately owned farmland into easements, representing 32,000 acres on 47 ranches.

In 1992, the Strauses used money from their own agricultural easement to make their dairy farm the first organic dairy west of the Mississippi River. As they transitioned to organic in 1994, they launched the Straus Family Creamery, changing their dairy from one that provided raw milk to a wholesaler to a dairy that produces and packages its own value-added products on the farm itself.

In 1998, Straus was presented with the Washington-based American Farmland Trust's *Steward of the Land Award* to recognize her efforts to support family farms. Straus' important contributions to sustainable family farming in California and nationwide will not be forgotten. ■



Check your local bookstore for Mike Madison's publication, *Growing Flowers for Market: A Practical Manual for Small-Scale Field Production and Marketing of Fresh Flowers*. ■



Managing Risks in Farming and Ranching: Setting Shared Goals



While no two people share the same goals in life, all of the people involved in a family business must share *some* common goals. Identifying those shared goals, involving everyone in the goal-setting process, and then acting together to achieve those goals should be a serious effort that focuses both the individual and the organization. After all, a family business cannot be successful if it does not help fulfill the individual dreams of everyone involved.

Many times, the hardest thing about setting risk management goals is reconciling different views about risk. People have different answers for the same fundamental questions: What are my risks? What are our risks? What is an acceptable level of risk? What should we do about the risks? Recognizing and acting on *opportunities* as well as trying to *minimize* losses can help shape agreement on fundamental risk management goals.

Benefits of Goal Setting

- Reflects your values, interests, resources and capabilities. An honest goal-setting session for yourself, your family, and your business will cause you to take inventory of those things.
- Provides a basis for your decisions and a focal point for everyone involved. Well-understood organizational goals allow every individual in the organization to set realistic personal goals.
- Establishes priorities for the allocation of scarce resources. What things will you do today and what things will you do in the future? For example, what priorities have you established for using net farm income? Will you buy land, pay for college, or pay down debt?
- Provides a means for measuring progress. Which decisions made progress toward your goals, and which decisions need to be reevaluated?

Questions for Your Risk Management Check-up:

- Are my goals written, reasonable, and measurable?
- Are my goals attainable in my lifetime?
- Have I shared my goals with everyone involved in the business and have they shared their goals with me?

What is your risk tolerance?

Your risk tolerance is reflected in the ways you choose to manage risks. Understanding your choices and considering each of them may cause you to change your management style to more closely reflect your tolerance for risk.

Benefits of Identifying Your Risk Tolerance and Assessing Your Risks:

- Allows you to identify and exclude those alternatives which expose you to unacceptable risks.
- Helps guide providers of risk management services to the best options for you.
- Ensures that your insurance dollars will be spent wisely.
- Increases the likelihood that you will select the best combination of risk management strategies.

Some Questions for Your Risk Management Check-up:

- Have I identified my risk tolerance?
- Have I communicated my tolerance for risk to the professionals who provide me with risk management services?
- Which risks can keep me from attaining my goals?
- Which risks am I comfortable retaining and managing with my own resources? Which risks will I shift to others? Which will I avoid?
- When was my last insurance check-up for health, life, casualty, property, disability, long-term care, Medicare/Medicaid and crop insurance?
- Have I established a confident relationship with my risk management advisers, so that they can help me assess my business and personal risk exposure?

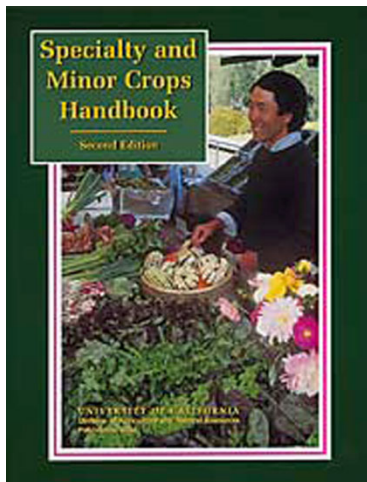
For a detailed breakdown of risk-management alternatives for California farmers, contact the USDA Risk Management Agency Regional Office, 430 G St., Davis, CA 95616-4168; (530) 792-5870; rsoca@rma.usda.gov; http://www.rma.usda.gov/aboutrma/fields/ca_rso/

resources



Specialty and Minor Crops Handbook

Updated and expanded from the first edition, the *Specialty and Minor Crops Handbook* contains 63 crop profiles, a comprehensive bibliography, a glossary of Asian vegetables, and an index to common and scientific crop names.



To order: Call the Small Farm Center at (530) 752-8136.

Cost: \$35 plus tax and shipping.

Small Farm Handbook

This practical guide covers topics including livestock and crop production, buying property and equipment, dealing with taxes and regulations, and marketing.

To order: Call the Small Farm Center at (530) 752-8136.

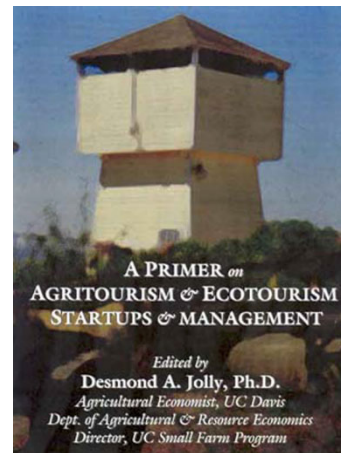
New price: \$15 plus tax and shipping.

A Primer on Agritourism and Ecotourism Startups and Management

This publication offers farmers and ranchers an introductory view of the issues involved in starting an agritourism or ecotourism enterprise. Produced by the UC Small Farm Center and the Agritourism and Nature Tourism Workgroup, the publication is in binder format and includes handouts and other information shared at agritourism workshops.

To order: Call the Small Farm Center at (530) 752-8136.

Cost: \$20 plus tax and shipping.

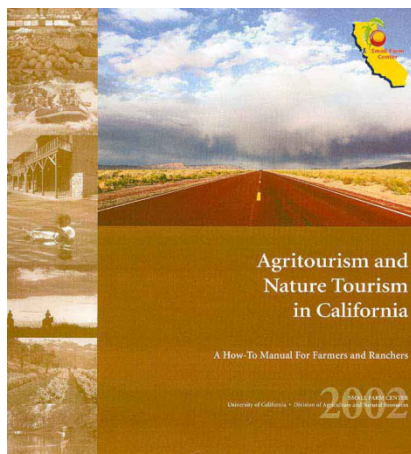


Agritourism and Nature Tourism in California

This how-to manual is for farmers, ranchers, and the professionals who work with them. Useful as a train-the-trainer tool, the publication walks readers through the process of starting and maintaining an agritourism or nature tourism enterprise. Details range from a current evaluation of California tourism trends to evaluating your farm or ranch as a potential agritourism or nature tourism enterprise.

To order: Call the Small Farm Center at (530) 752-8136.

Cost: \$25 plus tax and shipping.



Risk Management Publication

Ag Help Wanted

Guidelines for Managing Agricultural Labor

This book provides methods for improving management policies and procedures of agricultural employers. Produced by the Western Farm Management Extension Committee, the publication covers topics including legal considerations, organizational planning, staffing the farm business, supervising agricultural work, managing employee performance, and communication and problem solving.

To order: An online order form is at www.aghelpwanted.org, or for more information, e-mail: information@aghelpwanted.org.

No phone number was available at press time.

Cost: Print publication \$25. CD-ROM version \$10.

Farmers Market Manager Oversees Lively Asian Market

by Susan McCue, contributing editor, *Small Farm News*



Carlos Dutra smiles from his market van.

In the cool shadows under a downtown Stockton bridge, one of California's largest and liveliest Southeast Asian farmers markets bursts into life every Saturday morning. A soft breeze blows while manager Carlos Dutra calmly watches over a hectic scene of 76 vendors selling exotic products ranging from fresh octopus and live chickens to horny skinned bitter melons.

As foreign as it sounds, this Southeast Asian market had a very local beginning. Launched in 1979 with help from the American Society of Friends, or Quakers, farmers joined Friends members to start a traditional market that provided the farmers with a new local marketing venue and offered inner city residents fresh produce.



Market shoppers buy greens in massive quantities.

Initially, around 30 farmers sold at the market, but most of them are gone. "Back in the '80s," Dutra says, "it started changing from a regular farmers market to a Southeast Asian farmers market ... because San Joaquin County, especially Stockton, has a large Asian community."

Many of the current vendors are Southeast Asian themselves, and understand and cater to their customers' tastes. Live poultry and fresh fish are only part of their offerings. Asian vegetables, like daikon and gailon, also are on display, as well as massive bunches of mustard and pumpkin greens that customers haul away in large plastic bags and steam at home.

Farming Background Helps

Dutra fills his position with an ease borne of decades in the agricultural industry. He joined the market as a farmer/vendor in 1985, selling cherries and okra, and now manages all four Stockton certified farmers markets as well as one in Tracy. Somehow, he still finds time to farm cherries and other crops on nine acres in Stockton, and recently opened a nursery on the city's Main Street.

As for the city's support of this market, Dutra says, "The downtown people should be very happy, because every Saturday we bring about 9 to 10,000 people down here."

Marketing Strategies

Dutra promotes all five markets together, using print and radio to advertise events such as the Carmen Miranda contest he recently hosted at the Friday Stockton market. As for holding special events at this busy Saturday market, Dutra says, "There's no time to do anything. They shop so fast it's amazing."

A Farmer's Perspective

Socheath Sar, owner of Sar Farms, proudly displays a table loaded with long beans and dai gay choy (Chinese mustard greens), which are just a fraction of the stunning array of Asian vegetables and fruits he grows on 14 acres in Fresno. "I like to farm, because the farm supports my family," says Sar, who's been in the business for 11 years.



Fresh fish sell quickly at the market.

Sar has been selling at this Stockton market for two years, but his primary market is to wholesale buyers in Los Angeles. This is the only farmers market he attends. "Before I tried to get into other markets, but [there was] no space."

Although he sells predominantly to wholesalers, Sar notes that prices at the farmers market are "more consistent." His gross sales vary widely each market day, from \$500 to \$800, and he estimates that his customers spend an average of \$5 to \$10 per person.

One of those customers is Arsenio Siojo, a spry older gentleman carrying several bags of produce as he peruses the aisles. "I have a small farm but no more energy to do it," says Siojo, who owns 2 1/2 acres in south Stockton where he used to grow onions and corn. Why does he come to the market? "It's cheaper here, and you meet friends," smiles Siojo. "This is a great place for the community." ■



Arsenio Siojo shops early on Saturday.

calendar

APRIL

5

**Strawberry Fumigation Outreach for Mien Farmers
Stockton, CA**

For Mien speaking growers, topics will include weed control and plastics.
Contact: Benny Fouche, farm advisor, UC Cooperative Extension, San Joaquin County, 420 S. Wilson Way, Stockton, CA 95205; (209) 468-9491; e-mail: bfouche@ucdavis.edu

April

Date - TBA

**Irrigation Field Day
San Diego, CA**

Research updates and field demonstrations.
Contact: Ramiro Lobo, UC Cooperative Extension, San Diego County, 5555 Overland Ave., San Diego, CA 92123; (858) 694-3666; e-mail: relobo@ucdavis.edu

MAY

15

**Blueberry Field Day
Kearney Ag Station, Parlier, CA**

Research results, marketing and tasting.
Contact: Benny Fouche, farm advisor, UC Cooperative Extension, San Joaquin County, 420 S. Wilson Way, Stockton, CA 95205; (209) 468-9491; e-mail: bfouche@ucdavis.edu

28

**Blackberry/Blueberry Field Day and Demonstration
Kearney Ag Station, Parlier, CA**

Research update and field demonstration.
Contact: Manuel Jimenez, farm advisor, UC Cooperative Extension, Tulare County, 4437 S. Laspina St., Suite B, Tulare, CA 93274; (559) 685-3309; e-mail: mjjimenez@ucdavis.edu

JUNE

Date - TBA

**Squash Field Day
Kearney Ag Station, Parlier, CA**

Research update and field demonstrations.
Contact: Manuel Jimenez, farm advisor, UC Cooperative Extension, Tulare County, 4437 S. Laspina St., Suite B, Tulare, CA 93274; (559) 685-3309; e-mail: mjjimenez@ucdavis.edu

JULY

10

**Specialty Crop Field Day
Kearney Ag Station, Parlier, CA**

Crops include peppers, tomatoes, and tomatillos.
Contact: Manuel Jimenez, farm advisor, UC Cooperative Extension, Tulare County, 4437 S. Laspina St., Suite B, Tulare, CA 93274; (559) 685-3309; e-mail: mjjimenez@ucdavis.edu

JULY

Date - TBA

**Lichi/Longan Field Day
San Diego, CA**

Research update and field demonstrations.
Contact: Ramiro Lobo, UC Cooperative Extension, San Diego County, 5555 Overland Ave., San Diego, CA 92123; (858) 694-3666; e-mail: relobo@ucdavis.edu

July

Date - TBA

**Alternatives to Methyl Bromide
Fresno, CA**

Research update.
Contact: Richard Molinar, farm advisor, UC Cooperative Extension, Fresno County, 1720 S. Maple Ave., Fresno, CA 93702; (559) 456-7555; e-mail: rhmolinar@ucdavis.edu

AUGUST

Date - TBA

**Asian Specialty Crop Conference and Tasting
Fresno, CA**

Research updates, workshops, and tastings.
Contact: Richard Molinar, farm advisor, UC Cooperative Extension, Fresno County, 1720 S. Maple Ave., Fresno, CA 93702; (559) 456-7555; e-mail: rhmolinar@ucdavis.edu

September

Date - TBA

**Cucurbit Field Day
Stockton, CA**

Research update and field demonstrations.
Contact: Benny Fouche, farm advisor, UC Cooperative Extension, San Joaquin County, 420 S. Wilson Way, Stockton, CA 95205; (209) 468-9491; e-mail: bfouche@ucdavis.edu

SEPTEMBER

Date - TBA

**Weed Management School
Kearney Ag Station, Parlier, CA**

Workshops on management techniques.
Contact: Richard Molinar, farm advisor, UC Cooperative Extension, Fresno County, 1720 S. Maple Ave., Fresno, CA 93702; (559) 456-7555; e-mail: rhmolinar@ucdavis.edu

OCTOBER

25

**Specialty Crop Field Day
Woodlake, CA**

Research updates and field demonstrations.
Contact: Manuel Jimenez, farm advisor, UC Cooperative Extension, Tulare County, 4437 S. Laspina St., Suite B, Tulare, CA 93274; (559) 685-3309; e-mail: mjjimenez@ucdavis.edu

Add your event to our online calendar at <http://www.sfc.ucdavis.edu/calendar>

Jamboree

Specialty Crops Jamboree '03

The Small Farm Program recently launched its special initiative — **Specialty Crops Jamboree '03** — a cornucopia of activities including research on new, niche crops; outreach to small farmers; tastings for consumers, the media and chefs; and recipes and demonstrations.

New crops being studied for adaptation to California or for improvement include: blueberries, pitahaya, guavas, guayabas, papayas, mangoes, Thai chili, jocote, edamame, Szechwan peppers, capers, water chestnuts and water



Pitahaya is one of many new crops being researched by the Small Farm Program. Photo courtesy of Ramiro Lobo.

spinach, jujube, nopales, pineapples, longans, litchi and tea.

Black tea is being tested in four coastal regions to assess its potential in different agro-climatic zones. Seeds have been donated to the Small Farm Program by Karahan Mete, who brought back a supply from the Black Sea area of Turkey. With the burgeoning interest in tea due to its many health benefits, the Small Farm Program hopes to help create locally based brands. Stay tuned!



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