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December 13, 2013

### In Celebration of CalCAN Partnerships

When we describe the work of CalCAN — the only coalition in the country focused on serving as the voice of sustainable agriculture on climate policy — we always emphasize the critical involvement of our many partners and farmer leaders. It is your involvement in supporting sustainable agricultural solutions to climate change that truly makes our work powerful.

Here are just a few of the ways some of our partners and allies have helped us magnify CalCAN's messages and campaigns in 2013:

- Ward Burroughs, dairy and almond producer near Modesto, authored an opinion piece in the Modesto Bee called ["Agriculture has shovel-ready climate solutions"](#)
- Anne Coates at the Cachuma Resource Conservation District helped organize a roundtable of agriculture and environmental groups in Santa Barbara to discuss climate change and agriculture. The event was attended by Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson.
- Bill Martin at the Central Valley



Farmland Trust helped organize a [farm tour near Stockton](#) with Assemblymember Talamantes-Eggman, author of a bill co-sponsored by CalCAN to establish standards for farmland protection.

- Jean-Pierre Wolff hosted a farm tour and workshop at Wolff Vineyards in San Luis Obispo that provided agricultural conservation professionals with tools for growers on adapting to climate change.



These partnerships and many others like them are invaluable. If you have ideas about how to collaborate with us, please let us know.

Of course, we also need financial support. While the vast majority of our funding comes from charitable foundations, contributions from our network help us stretch our resources and grow our network.

Can you help us be successful in 2014? [Gifts of all sizes are welcome and appreciated.](#)

We have big plans for the coming year...

... We are co-sponsoring a state bill to strengthen farmland protection.

... We will continue to advocate for the allocation of cap-and-trade revenue to fund a California Program on Agriculture and Climate to support farmers in transitioning to climate-friendly farming practices.

...We will continue our efforts to remove barriers to on-farm renewable energy production and increase grower access to energy and water efficiency resources.

...And we will stay engaged at the federal level to protect Farm Bill conservation and organic programs.

[Please make your contribution today!](#)

Thank you for all that you do. And happy holidays!

Warmly,

Renata Brillinger, Executive Director  
Jeanne Merrill, Policy Director  
Adam Kotin, Policy Associate  
Dru Marion, Communications Intern

*CalCAN Executive Committee:  
California Certified Organic Farmers • Community Alliance with  
Family Farmers • Ecological Farming Association •  
Occidental Arts and Ecology Center • The Center for Food Safety*

**Climate Leader:  
Farmer Al Courchesne at Frog Hollow Farms**

Out of a love of food and a desire to provide his community with a fundamental human need, “Farmer Al” Courchesne started farming in 1976 on 13 acres of land in Brentwood. The operation has grown into the 133-acre [Frog Hollow Farm](#), home to hundreds of trees bearing fruits such as cherries, apricots, peaches, nectarines, apriums, plums, pluots, Asian and European pears, olives, persimmons and apples.



The commitment to sustainable farming comes naturally out of Al’s dedication to the sustained health of his family, community and business.

“All I can do,” he says, “is a better job of what I do here – grow food.”

This includes ensuring that his trees can withstand unpredictable and sometimes extreme weather conditions. Already, a marked decline in the number of annual chill hours — in which temperatures fall below 45°F — has impacted fruit tree varieties whose successful physiological development depends on a certain amount of cold weather each season. Al is seeing significant decline in productivity of cherry crops that depend on winter chill. Unusually warm, wet weather in the winters of 2010 and 2011 also caused catastrophic loss of apricots.

Al’s strategy for dealing with climate change impacts is to grow trees that “will be able to better protect themselves against catastrophic weather events just because they are healthier.”

Key to this strategy is the annual application of four thousand tons of compost that he produces on site. Frog Hollow’s compost is made from tree prunings, food waste from the commercial kitchen where they produce value-added products, and shed waste (including cardboard boxes), plus horse manure from neighbors. Adding compost, with its high levels of humus, microbes and fungi, provides tree roots with more accessible nutrients and increases the water-carrying capacity of the soil. There is good evidence that soils high in organic matter sequester more carbon, removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere where it traps heat.

Farmer Al takes steps that demonstrate his commitment to using resources practically, creatively, and with an eye towards ecological sustainability. This includes becoming organically certified in 1989, crop

diversification, providing wildlife habitat and the use of solar power. In 2014, he plans to produce a carbon footprint analysis of his operations.

All in all, it's no wonder Frog Hollow Farm is known not only for its high-quality fruit and popular value-added products, but also for its role as a pioneer within the sustainable agriculture community over the past thirty years.

## Funding

### **Conservation Stewardship Program: Applications due Jan. 17th**

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has opened the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) for new enrollments for federal fiscal year 2014. The program emphasizes conservation performance — producers earn higher payments for higher performance. In CSP, producers install conservation enhancements to make positive changes in soil quality, soil erosion, water quality, water quantity, air quality, plant resources, animal resources and energy. Some popular enhancements used by farmers and ranchers include:

- Modifying water facilities to prevent bats and bird species from being trapped
- Burning patches of land, mimicking prairie fires to enhance wildlife habitat
- Rotating feeding areas and monitoring key grazing areas to improve grazing management

A CSP self-screening checklist is available [online](#) to help producers determine if the program is suitable for their operations.

## Events

### **EcoFarm Conference**

#### **Jan. 22 – 25, 2014 in Pacific Grove**

The EcoFarm Conference is tailored to those looking for a technical edge: organic and ecological farmers and ranchers (large and small), handlers, marketers, students, educators, researchers, activists, and governmental agencies. The conference provides an opportunity for our attendees to add to their toolkits. Workshops feature cutting-edge systems, ideas, and perspectives for a range of topics, including: water and soil management, processing and distribution systems, habitat restoration, livestock and range management, regional food systems, food safety, food and agriculture policies, and much more.

Click [here](#) for more information.

### **Communicating Climate Change: Climate Engagement Strategies and Problem Solving**

#### **March 4th in Oakland and March 6th at Elkhorn Slough**

Most Americans accept the reality of climate disruption and climate

impacts are beginning to act as a wake-up call for many. Engaging key stakeholders and the public in preparing for and reducing the risks from these impacts is essential. This engagement requires approaches that recognize how people process risk, such as the importance of values, identities, and peer groups. Join environmental communication expert Cara Pike for an in-depth training in public engagement best practices for climate change. Participants will have an opportunity to design strategies for reaching and motivating target audiences, and be part of a unique problem-solving approach where a common public engagement challenge is tackled collaboratively.

Intended Audience: Coastal resource managers, government staff, public engagement staff, outreach specialists and environmental interpreters

Click here for more information:

[March 4th in Oakland](#)

[March 6th at Elkhorn Slough](#)

#### **Organic Seed Growers Conference**

**Jan. 30 – Feb. 1, 2014 • Corvallis, Oregon**

This conference brings together hundreds of farmers, plant breeders, researchers, university extension, certifiers, food companies, seed production and distribution companies, and other organic stakeholders for two days of presentations, panel discussions, and networking events.

Click [here](#) for more information.

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