

“GROWING OUR FUTURE FARMERS” PROJECT
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MASTER CLASS 39

PURPOSE:

- To develop the next generation of entry-level farmers in the organic farming industry
- To encourage and inspire local Marin farmers to participate in the first piloted “Organic Farming Apprenticeship Program” approved by the State of California
- To educate and support local farmers with knowledge and understanding of how the program works
- To support the sustainable and organic food industry

GOAL:

To create an informational forum for local Marin farmers, in which each representative (from the suggested panel) presents their part in the “Organic Farming Apprenticeship Program” to educate farmers about how the program works, to disseminate facts, to answer questions, and to encourage their participation in the program. The goal is to inspire, energize and support local Marin farmers about the apprenticeship program so that they will share their skills and farming practices and grow the next generation of farmers.

Suggested Forum Panel:

College of Marin: Nanda Schorske, Dean of Workforce Development, College and Community Partnerships

UC Extension: David Lewis, Department Head for County of Marin

Fresh Run Farm: Peter Martinelli, farmer, owner, first Apprenticeship pilot participant
Participating apprentice at Fresh Run Farm: (student)

DAS (Department of Apprenticeship Standards, State of California): representative

BACKGROUND:

Historically the State of California has been focused on enforcing labor laws regarding “apprentices, interns, or volunteers” working on farms. This has dissuaded farmers from participating in these mutual work relationships because the costs and potential penalties have outweighed the benefits. Recently however, the State Department of Industrial Relations through DAS (Department of Apprenticeship Standards), has begun a pilot “Organic Farming Apprenticeship Program”. It is the first in California and has been granted locally to Fresh Run Farm in Bolinas. It is a collaboration between the farmer, the apprentice, the College of Marin (with the support of the UC Extension) and DAS. I spoke to David Lewis from UC Extension who informed me that local farmers who showed interest, would be welcome to participate in the pilot program. When the pilot becomes a permanently sanctioned program by the State, California farmers will have the first legitimate pathway in which to train apprentices. Though there will still be costs to

bear, an approved program with effectively communicated guidelines and the support of a learning institution like the College of Marin, can help to circumvent barriers. There are real economic concerns for farmers, yet they must be encouraged and supported toward a more altruistic purpose: the growing of the next generation of farmers. California is the leader in the organic farming industry. In 2008, thirty-six percent of organic produce sold in the country came from California. The demands for organic food are increasing. The way to meet that need is by training entry-level farmers. The participation of farmers in the Organic Farming Apprenticeship Program will help create an entry point for younger farmers to learn the practices and skills necessary for the future growth of the organic farming industry.

SCOPE AND MILESTONES:

EFM team will research, meet with, and interview suggested forum panel and external partners and sponsors, to create most effective plan/outreach. Team will coordinate and plan the details of event in collaboration with an identified supporting farm organization. By March 20th there will be a plan in writing with confirmed date, time, location and participants of event. If the event has already happened, outcome and future follow-up ideas or plan will be reported to class.

SIZE OF TEAM/SKILLS NEEDED:

3 people in total...The skill sets are flexible as each person will bring their unique experience and attributes...suggested skills: organizational ability, researching, collaboration skills, some event coordination, mostly a willingness and desire to work together to make the project come to fruition!

EXTERNAL PARTNERS AND SPONSORS:

Identify and speak to a representative from the Department of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS) to understand the process and/or timeline, considerations for adopting the “Organic Farming Apprenticeship Program”.

Work with the College of Marin to better understand the apprenticeship program and the developing work-study program (credit-based student participation at a local farm), and to explore the possibility of apprenticeship scholarships which will assist the program, the farmer, and the apprentice.

Collaborate with a well-respected organization in the organic farming industry who is interested in “informing, encouraging and getting the message out” to farmers, and working together on an educational forum/event. (Maybe *MALT*, or Marin Organic, local Farm Support organization, or educational agency).

Talk with Farmers or interns directly to get their input, create interest.

