

Stewardship Leaders in Agriculture

Combining Stewardship Practices

LIMONEIRA COMPANY- SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Limoneira Company grows a variety of fruit and nut crops on nearly 8,000 acres in Southern California. The company specializes in lemons and avocados, with roughly 3,000 acres of those two crops in production. In their other orchards they grow walnuts, pistachios, cherries, pluots, and specialty citrus varieties, like cara caras, blood oranges and valencias. As a 120-year old company, sustainability is and has to be a high priority. They have installed two solar farms that supply a third of their energy, regularly mulch their orchards and use efficient irrigation methods. The company's commitment to being responsible land stewards and their partnerships with other California organizations has allowed them to remain an innovative and successful agricultural industry leader.

“As we add the organic matter, we are adding benefits to the soil structure; improving soil tilth and microbial populations. We are getting better intake of water and better intake of nutrients, which in turn gives us better root systems.”

*-Gus Gunderson,
Head of Southern Farming Operations*



Photo credit CIRS

Gus Gunderson, Head of Southern California Operations, and Ely Key, Special Operations Manager

ACHIEVEMENTS

Their solar farms supply a third of their energy

Awarded the Integrative Pest Management Innovator Award from the California Environmental Protection Agency

Limoneira Company has been voted one of the Best Places to Work for the last seven years



Photo credit: Limoneira Company

Limoneira receives free mulch by providing Agromin with land to use for mulch production.



Photo credit: Limoneira Company

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP: LIMONEIRA COMPANY

BEGINNINGS: MOTIVATION AND BARRIERS

Limoneira is committed to new technology and agricultural practices, which has allowed them to be at the forefront of the avocado and citrus industry. As such a large company, access to resources and partnerships has enabled them to implement environmentally friendly practices into their operation, and has made them an example for the agricultural industry of California and the United States.

PROJECT DETAILS

IMPLEMENTATION AND MANAGEMENT

In 2004, Limoneira Company partnered with Agromin Corporation in response to the Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989. Limoneira provides Agromin, a manufacturer of soil products and the green waste recycler for many communities in Southern California, with 10-acres in which to receive and process green materials from the area into mulch. In return, Agromin provides Limoneira with free mulch for their orchards, which curbs erosion, reduces weeds, improves water efficiency, and moderates soil temperatures. This partnership is not only beneficial to both companies, but also reduces the amount of waste entering landfills. Limoneira uses no-till farming methods in their orchards, which helps reduce soil erosion and improve moisture-holding capacity in the soil. To help the state meet the goal of the California Solar Initiative, in 2008, Limoneira created two solar farms that provide over 30 percent of their energy, and is used to power their lemon packinghouse and storage facility, as well as some of their irrigation pumps. They have estimated that in the 25-year lifespan of the solar panels, they will have generated 84 million kilowatt hours and have saved 64,000 tons of greenhouse gases. Their solar farms also have a grazing group of English miniature sheep to control the vegetation growth. Additionally, Limoneira managers schedule production during non-peak energy times. Fruit Growers Laboratory is contracted by Limoneira Company to regularly monitor the soil and water quality, to evaluate soil moisture levels and ensure they are not contaminating groundwater. They use efficient low-flow micro-sprinklers and modified furrows with micro-tubes emitters to irrigate the orchards, which reduce water runoff.

FOSTERING SUCCESS

For Limoneira, sustainability doesn't stop at environmental stewardship; they believe that caring for their employees plays a large role too. They provide their employees with benefits like housing, and funds for educational and community programs. They are very proud of the fact that many of their employees have been with the company for over thirty years. Their company practices have not gone unnoticed: for the last seven years they have been one of the winners of the Best Place to Work award, and in 2013, they were awarded the Integrated Pest Management Innovator Awards by the California Environmental Protection Agency's Department of Pesticide Regulation. The company's commitment to new technology and practices, and desire to create beneficial relationships, ensures that they will continue to be at the forefront of the agricultural industry.

"If you include the cost of water, the energy to pump the water and the time to go out and check the sprinkler systems, it adds up really quickly."

-Gus Gunderson

Project Partners

Agromin Corporation, Fruit Growers Laboratory, California Institute for Rural Studies

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