

Stewardship Leaders in Agriculture

Organic Farming

Jacobs Farm

With 300 acres of crops and an additional 1 million square feet of greenhouse space, Jacobs Farm has become one of the nation's leading organic herb growers with 60 varieties of common and specialty herbs and edible flowers. What began as a small family farm in 1980 near Pescadero, CA has since expanded to include ten coastal farm sites, including greenhouses in Freedom and Watsonville. The farm is run by Larry Jacobs and his wife Sandra Belin, both of whom have a lifelong commitment to organic and sustainable growing practice.

Organic Pioneers

Shaped by an exposure to toxic pesticide, Metasystox, that caused him to pass out, Mr. Jacobs made a commitment to never use pesticides on his crops. This commitment coupled with a degree in soil science from California Polytechnic State University led Mr. Jacob to become a very early adapter of organic practices in the mid-1980s. A highly scientific approach is taken in the use of cover crops with soil analysis performed on a regular basis to monitor ammonia and nitrite levels. An integrated pest management approach that is consistent with the farms Oregon Tilth organic certification consists of plant agitation and vacuuming to remove pests, sticky traps, innovative mustard seed soil amendments, and cultivation of beneficial insects. Jacobs Farm is working with Dr. Jeff Aldrich, an entomologist and specialist in how plants and insects communicate, to develop pesticide-free tools for farmers to increase populations of beneficial insects used to decrease populations of plant feeding insects. Glass greenhouses with computer regulated humidity and climate control allows for year round cultivation with minimum irrigation and a new hydroponic system is being used to start seedlings.

“Our vision has always been to farm in a way that allows us to produce fresh, high quality, delicious food without damaging the environment.” – Larry Jacobs



Photo courtesy of Chad Sawyer and the SAWYER Agency

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Natural Resource Defense Council's 2013 Growing Green Award winner in the Business Leader category
- 2009 Ecological Farming Association's (EcoFarm) Stewards of Sustainable Agriculture award
- 2007 Organic Trace Association's Organic Farming Leadership Award
- 2005 Sustainability Award from the County of San Mateo
- Founded the nation's largest fresh culinary organic herb farm
- Started the Del Cabo Cooperative, a 1,000 family farmer-strong partnership supporting organic farming in Baja, Mexico



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Farm Fuels Inc.

Founded by Larry Jacob and colleagues in 2007, Farm Fuel Inc. is a farmer-owned distribution, marketing and research company that uses oil from different mustard plants to form a renewable biodiesel fuel. Working with Joji Murimoto and Carol Shennan, researchers at University California Santa Cruz, along with Robert Van Buskirk, a scientist at Lawrence Berkeley Labs now with DOE, and Dr. Matt Mora at University of Idaho, an expert in mustard plant chemistry; Farm Fuel has developed a mustard plant biodiesel and, more revolutionarily, a mustard plant based soil amendment that appears to create soils suppressive to fungal diseases and nematodes that is an alternative to Methyl Bromide.

PROJECT DETAILS

PROJECT PARTNERS

Organic Trace Association

County of San Mateo

Dr. Matt Mora, University
of Idaho

Dr. Jeff Aldrich. USDA
Invasive Insect Biocontrol
and Behavior Laboratory

Ecological Farming
Association

Joji Murimoto and Carol
Shennan, University
California Santa Cruz

Pesticide Action Network
North America

Natural Resources Defense
Council

Oregon Tilth

Robert Van Buskirk,
Lawrence Berkeley Labs
now with DOE

WorldVison.org

“Food for Us”

Jacobs Farm employs 105 field workers and 5-acres of land has been set aside for a “Food for Us” program that is devoted to growing tomatoes, potatoes, radishes, and other vegetables for the field workers to take home to their families. In addition to this program, field workers are paid above minimum wage and are offered health care, dental care, and a 401(k) plan along with paid time off and end-of-year bonuses. Workers on the Pescadero farm live in solar-heated homes on the same property as Larry Jacobs and his wife, Sandra Belin.

Del Cabo Cooperative

A trip to Mexico in 1985, where Jacobs and Belin met a community of struggling subsistence level farmers, led to the creation of the Del Cabo Cooperative, a program that teaches organic growing practices and provides funding, management, and organizational skill to a cooperative of small farms in Baja, Mexico. The program was extremely successful and farmers saw up to a 10x increase in profits. Del Cabo is now operated by the farmers in Baja and the 400-500 families that compose the cooperative continue to expand the program and its profits.

Pesticide Drift

In October 2006, trace levels of pesticides were detected in the fields of Jacobs Farm organic sage, rosemary, and dill. Coastal fogs had carried the organophosphates from a neighboring property ruining a year’s worth of organic crops. The Pesticide Action Network North America’s Drift Catcher air monitoring devices were used to collect chemical sample that provided evidence that the pesticides has traveled significant distances from the application site, exposing a recreation area, neighborhoods, and the Jacobs Farm. In 2010 the pesticide applicator, was found liable and had to pay a \$1 million fine. The groundbreaking case not only protects Jacobs Farm, but has set a precedent to protect all farms from pesticide drift.

Continuing To Spread the Organic Message

Jacobs and Belin have shown a tireless dedication to spreading organic farming techniques and raising local farmers’ standard of living with the Del Cabo Cooperative. At the invitation of WorldVison.org, Jacobs and Belin relocated in the summer of 2013 to Tanzania where they are working to create more productive and sustainable farming systems for local farmers.