

## Sustainable Community Food Systems in Marin County: Connecting the Dots

This local food systems project focused on organized on-farm tours and trainings for interested food service workers and stimulating producer interest in the growing market of school cafeterias. Two events took place—the *Food Service Workers on the Farm* workshop and the *Farmers in the Cafeteria* lunch—to increase communication between food service workers and farmers and a commitment to use healthy local farm products in school cafeterias. Cafeteria staff toured Star Route Farm during a staff training day. Food service workers heard presentations related to farm-to-school initiatives and learned about the production and post-harvest practices of small farms. Farmers were able to hear from food service workers directly what they value in a finished product and what their needs are for fresh produce in school lunches. During the *Farmers in the Cafeteria* lunch, local farmers were able to talk to the student body about the benefits of organic produce and the ways in which organic farmers protect the environment. The students were educated about healthy eating as they enjoyed a lunch prepared from fresh, local, organic ingredients. The event was an opportunity for farmers to see the effects of their products and create new partnerships with school districts.



Miguel Villarreal, Food Service Director for the Novato and San Rafael school districts, speaks to food service workers during a staff training day at Star Route Farm in Bolinas

### Project Impacts:

- The *Food Service Workers on the Farm* workshop drew 35 food service staff from the Novato and San Rafael Unified School Districts.
- The *Farmers in the Cafeteria* lunch was served to 400 school children at San Pedro School in San Rafael during an educational event featuring three local producers.
- The workshops and school lunch resulted in an expansion of both the Marin Organic School Lunch Program and the Food Service Program. The amount of food provided by Marin Organic producers doubled from \$16,000 in food orders in 2006 to more than \$35,000 in 2007.
- The program increased from 30 schools and 8 community centers receiving local food deliveries in 2006 to 42 schools and 11 community centers in 2007.
- The results of the project were reported in the Grown in Marin newsletter and presented at Grown in Marin workshops during 2006-2007.

- The school lunch event at the San Pedro School was featured in the *San Francisco Chronicle* on August 26, 2007.

### Next Steps:

- The staff started a 6-acre farm and garden project at the local community college with conservation corps members and University of California Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners.
- Cooperative Extension created a half hour HD DVD, “Hidden Bounty of Marin” highlighting local farmers and food connection.
- Marin Farmers Market Association developed a proposal for a permanent farmers market pavilion in Marin.

### More Information:

For a listing of Marin County agricultural events, resources for farmers and educators, and other information related to Marin farms, ranches or businesses that support sustainable agriculture, please visit [www.growninmarin.org](http://www.growninmarin.org).



Students eat lunch during the *Farmers in the Cafeteria* event at San Pedro School

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