

## History of the Farm Conference

The roots of the California Small Farm Conference go back more than 20 years. It was started by the Small Farm Center at the University of California at Davis and a coordinating council of organizations working with small farmers. It was then that a direct marketing conference was started for farmers's market managers and supporters and farmers who sold at farmers's markets and who sold at their farms (farm stands, u-pick, etc.). This conference grew out of the efforts by the newly created Direct Marketing Program in the state's Department of Food and Agriculture and also the newly created California Direct Marketing Association. In 1982 a Small Farmers Conference was held for the first time in Stockton, CA. It was started by the Small Farm Center at UC Davis and a coordinating council of organizations working with small farmers. It was believed that many of the needs of the small scale farmers are unique and there were few forums where these needs and their solutions were discussed and experiences shared—especially experiences of those farmers who were finding success in coping with small farm issues. Both conferences existed side by side for several years. During this time definite overlaps in attendees, sponsors and in workshop topics were noted and this led the two conferences merging in 1985. Since 1985, some 20 California Small Farm Conferences have been held around the state. Over the years an estimated 7,500 farmers have attended the events and benefited from the program information. In 2002 the California Farm Conference convened in Sacramento, California, in conjunction with the North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association conference. In 2005, the Farm Conference convened in Ventura, California from November 13-15. The Farm Conference most recently convened in Monterey, California, from March 4-6, 2007.