

Workshops

On Monday, March 2 and Tuesday, March 3, 25 workshops will be offered for conference participants. Each of these 90-minute workshops feature industry experts sharing their experience and lessons with other conference participants.

The workshops are organized under five thematic tracks:

- Track 1: Preserving Resources for this Generation and the Next
- Track 2: Opportunities and Innovations for Farmers’ Markets
- Track 3: Good to Grow – Production Strategies for Small Farmers
- Track 4: Hot Topics in California Agriculture
- Track 5: Sell what you Sow – Marketing Techniques for Small Farmers

Participation in the workshops is included as a part of conference registration.

Track 1: Resource Conservation for this Generation and the Next

Session 1: Water Conservation and Soil Quality

Monday, March 2, 10:30am-12:00pm

Water conservation and improved soil quality go hand-in-hand as you’ll learn in this session. Using water efficiently is ever important in California and successful farmers will need to learn to adapt to reduced water supplies in drought years. Participants will also learn about soil management technique, and other strategies to help stretch water supplies while maintaining soil health.

Session 2: Agriculture’s Opportunities for Improving Air Quality

Monday, March 2, 1:15pm-2:45pm

The quality of the air we breathe can be affected by agricultural operations – soil erosion by wind, air-borne agricultural chemicals, smoke, engine exhausts, and harvest activities, just to name a few. You’ll learn about on-farm techniques to minimize these air pollution contributors as well as technical resources and programs that can help you get a handle on minimizing air pollution.

Session 3: Energy Conservation and Reducing Fuel Consumption

Monday, March 2, 3:00pm-4:30pm

Saving energy is more important than ever and farmers can make on-farm changes to reduce their fuel consumption – and even save time and dollars! Energy conserving crop production activities including conservation tillage will be discussed as well as new off-the-grid opportunities for on-farm energy generation including solar, wind, and ground source heat pump technologies.

Session 4: “Farmscaping” for Pollinators and Biodiversity

Tuesday, March 3, 9:15am-10:45am

Small farms and communities depend on biodiversity to sustain the pollinators and other beneficial insects and animals that contribute to sustainable crop production and pest management. Learn how to improve habitat for these important agricultural wildlife species, including native bees, bats, and birds, while strengthening the biodiversity – and sustainability - of your farm or ranch.

Session 5: Innovations in Weed and Pest Management.

Tuesday, March 3, 11:00am-12:30pm

Creating and managing on-farm habitat for beneficial insects and reducing competition from weeds play important roles in reaping a productive harvest. This session will focus on the basics of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques that will help you reduce your dependency on expensive pesticides and herbicides while saving you time and money. We’ll show you how to get the help you need to be successful using IPM on your farm or ranch.

Track 2: Opportunities and Innovations for Farmers’ Markets

Session 1: How Green Can You Go?

Monday, March 2, 10:30am-12:00pm

Customers are demanding options with less environmental impact and farmers’ markets are responding. Managers from around the state will share strategies for going green and crafting zero waste solutions for farmers’ markets.

Session 2: Hit or Miss

Monday, March 2, 1:15pm-2:45pm

Pick up some great new marketing ideas as we discuss what farmers’ market programs and events wowed them and which ones did not. Come prepared to brag about your own successes and share stories of your own challenges over

the past year.

Session 3: Market Managers' Roundtable

Monday, March 2, 3:00pm-4:30pm

Have questions about insurance, regulations, inspections, marketing, or other market management issues? Then be a part of the Market Managers' Roundtable for a very interactive discussion of topics affecting management of farmers' markets.

Session 4: New Programs and New Revenue Opportunities

Tuesday, March 3, 9:15am-10:45am

The recent passage of AB 2168 may open up new opportunities for small farmers and farmers markets. The new WIC food package will allow traditional WIC coupons to be spent on fresh fruits and vegetables in farmers' markets. Learn what these programs are all about and what you need to do to take advantage of these new opportunities.

Session 5: Bringing Farmers' Markets to Colleges and Universities

Tuesday, March 3, 11:00am-12:30pm

The popularity of farmers' markets continues to grow and colleges and universities are the latest 'communities' to seek their own markets. Two farmers' market managers that have successfully partnered with schools in the UC system to bring farmers' markets to their campuses, will share the lessons of their projects to help you understand what it takes to operate markets at college and universities.

Track 3: Good to Grow: Production Strategies for Small Farmers

Session 1: Organic Nutrient and Orchard Floor Management in Orchards and Vineyards

Monday, March 2, 10:30am-12:00pm

Two of the biggest challenges of organic tree and vine crop growers are controlling in-row weeds and providing adequate nitrogen. Learn about the many options available and their cost-effectiveness including mulches, organic herbicides, manures, compost, and specialty fertilizers.

Session 2: Producing Marketable Crops: Know and Grow What the Market Wants

Monday, March 2, 1:15pm-2:45pm

Exciting new market opportunities are emerging to support small local farmers. How can you better match what you grow and how you grow it with this new market demand? Learn specifics about desirable production and handling practices to capitalize on these profitable new markets.

Session 3: Specialty Vegetable Crop Selection and Production

Monday, March 2, 3:00pm-4:30pm

Speakers will share ideas on specialty vegetable crops and their production and marketing challenges

Session 4: Least Toxic Tree Fruit Pest Management Methods

Tuesday, March 3, 9:15am-10:45am

Learn about the best and most cost-effective IPM and organic practices to manage insect and disease pests of stone fruits and pome fruits. Key practices include mating disruption, spray timing, and least toxic products.

Session 5: Specialty Fruit Crop Selection and Production

Tuesday, March 3, 11:00am-12:30pm

Eating foods with high antioxidant content has been shown to improve the immune system and reduce the chances of getting cancer. Several crops, such as pomegranates and blueberries, are packed with antioxidants and demand for them is high, but how do you grow them successfully?

Track 4: Hot Topics in California Agriculture

Session 1: Innovations in Equipment for Small Farms

Monday, March 2, 10:30am-12:00pm

The latest innovations in equipment for small farms will be explored in this workshop. Speakers will show how they have adapted tractors, developed new equipment for weed control, and other innovations in production and post-harvest technology.

Session 2: Managing Risk on the Farm: Crop Insurance and Farm Loans

Monday, March 2, 1:15pm-2:45pm

Understand how to use the federal crop insurance program as a safety net that can protect and ensure the survival of your farm business. The USDA Farm Service Agency will share the latest information on what services they offer in getting farm loans.

Session 3: Urban Agriculture: Strategizing for Sustainable Urban Food Production

Monday, March 2, 3:00pm-4:30pm

Urban agriculture can contribute to a number of social and environmental benefits for farmers and urban residents. This participatory workshop will address challenges and opportunities in urban food production, and provide opportunities for farm-to-farm knowledge exchange. The session will begin with a presentation of recent developments in urban and urban edge agriculture, followed by a small group activity that matches experienced urban farmers and advocates with aspiring urban producers.

Session 4: Slow Food/Artisan Food

Tuesday, March 3, 9:15am-10:45am

With the recent success of Slow Food Nation in San Francisco and the current high cost of artisan foods imported from Europe, new opportunities for local artisan food production have appeared. Connections with Slow Food chapters and access to artisan food markets will be discussed.

Session 5: Land Access, Farm Succession, and Financing:

Tuesday, March 3, 11:00am-12:30pm

This introductory workshop will introduce a host of tools to help beginning and younger-generation farmers get on solid ground. Tips and resources will be offered on securing land (leasing, leasing-to-own, purchasing, and more), assuming ownership of farm land and businesses in transition, and accessing loans and other financial resources to get those farm businesses over the threshold into sustainability. A panel of speakers will join us with their own land, succession and financing stories, and exciting new opportunities will be emphasized.

Track 5: Sell What You Sow - Marketing Techniques for Small Farms

Session 1: CSAs: Bundled, Meat, Regular

Monday, March 2, 10:30am-12:00pm

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is becoming an important marketing tool for many small farmers in Northern California. Weekly vegetable CSAs are typically the most common but some growers are finding they can sell other products such as grains, eggs, meat and flowers. In this workshop you'll hear from new and veteran CSA farmers about their successes and challenges using this unique marketing strategy.

Session 2: Collaborative Strategies Exemplified: Cooperatives, Collaboratives, and Joint Ventures

Monday, March 2, 1:15pm-2:45pm

An introduction to the art of developing business with other growers to reach more and larger markets and reduce their operating costs. We'll highlight formal cooperatives and joint ventures as well as informal collaboratives to show participants how they organized, how they do the work, and what benefits they receive. Marketing, transportation, and other services like processing and purchasing materials will be discussed.

Session 3: Farmers' Perspective on Farm Stands

Monday, March 2, 3:00pm-4:30pm

The passage of Assembly Bill 2168 opens up new opportunities for farmers to market directly to consumers. Farmers will share their experiences on what works and what does not work when setting up farm stands and farm retail stores.

Session 4: How Communities Support Their Region's Agriculture

Tuesday, March 3, 9:15am-10:45am

Regional marketing programs build relationships between growers, consumers, retailers, restaurants and institutions. Hear from a producer, regional grocer and government agency about the benefits of their regional marketing programs.

Session 5: Buy Local. Source Identified

Tuesday, March 3, 11:00am-12:30pm

The Buy Local movement is really taking off, with even Wal Mart and SYSCO starting to source local foods. Various efforts to make these connections in California will be discussed, including CAFF's Growers Collaborative, ALBA Organics, and Marin Organic