

Short Courses

The Short Courses at the 2009 California Small Farm Conference offer an opportunity for an intensive educational experience on specific topics of importance to today's small farmers.

The field-based Short Courses are designed to give conference participants an opportunity to learn from practicing farmers and technical support experts about various aspects of successful agricultural business.

Space in all Short Courses is limited and will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis. The Short Courses are not included with the cost of conference registration. The cost for a Short Course is \$50 which includes transportation from the Radisson Sacramento and lunch. On Sunday, please plan to arrive at the Radisson Sacramento in time to check-in at the conference registration desk before your Short Course. There you will receive your name badge and Short Course ticket. Buses will leave promptly.

Please wear appropriate field attire (warm jacket and walking shoes).

Short Courses planned for the 2009 California Small Farm Conference are:

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 Transitioning to Organic Farming: The Real Dirt
 8:00 am-4:00 pm, (bus tour 10:00 am-4:00 pm)

This short course and tour will begin with discussions of the organic products market and where it's going, the USDA organic certification process and rules, and the resources available to help you transition to organic farming. New federal Farm Bill programs now available to help organic farmers and those transitioning to organic farming will be covered. You'll visit three USDA-certified organic farms including Pacific Star Farms, a 38-acre mixed fruit and vegetable operation; Fong Farms, a 500-acre farm that produces processing tomatoes, corn, alfalfa, grains, dry beans and asparagus; and Dixon Ridge Farms, a 290-acre walnut orchard that also has a certified organic huller/sheller facility. The farmers will share their histories including why they decided to go organic, the challenges they faced during the transition process, and the challenges of maintaining their organic certifications. They will describe the various changes to the land and resources that they have subsequently observed and will talk about their various marketing strategies. Participants will receive an Organic Resource Booklet.

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 Small-Scale Livestock Production and Niche Meat Marketing Concepts
 8:15 am-2:15 pm

This 6-hour short course and field tour will address production issues, land management and resource conservation, animal husbandry, business trends such as grass-fed beef, marketing ideas such as the new "Meat Buyers Club", technical resources available to you, and key regulations pertaining to raising livestock for meat, eggs, and fiber. Guest presenters will cover topics that pertain to several livestock types including beef, swine, lamb, goat, and poultry. Tour highlights will include visiting a small-scale mobile poultry processing facility and at least two small-scale, family-owned ranching operations where beef, swine, and lamb are raised.

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 Farmers Market Innovations
 8:30 am-3:30 pm (bus tour 8:30 am-12:30pm)

This short course will explore innovative programs that farmers' markets have undertaken to better understand and respond to the demands of farmers' market shoppers. The short course will begin with a visit to the Sacramento Farmers' Market to see how an awkward space under a bridge was turned into a popular agricultural marketplace. Back at the hotel, the Ferry Plaza Farmers' Market will provide an overview of its comprehensive market greening program which seeks to reduce waste and increase recycling and composting on behalf of both farmers and shoppers. And the Pacific Coast Farmers' Market Association will present the results of its study of farmers' market shoppers that interviewed over 4500 shoppers in eight Bay Area farmers' markets over two years, asking about everything from their buying habits to their media usage.

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 Cherry Production and Marketing: Avoiding the pits, reaping juicy rewards
 8:30 am-4:00 pm

We will cover the basics of cherry production and marketing for small acreage producers in this short course. We will tour an organic cherry orchard and learn about the specific challenges in organic cherry production from the farmer. Other topics will include: cherry industry overview and trends; cherry varieties and rootstocks; site selection (soil, water, climate); pest and disease management; postharvest management and packaging; marketing cherries—conventional and alternative channels; and a financial analysis of establishing and producing a sweet cherry orchard.

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Exploring Creative Agriculture Enterprises via the Beautiful Back Roads of the Sierra Foothills

10:00 am-4:00 pm

This 6-hour tour will focus on the "value added" side of agriculture while exploring the beautiful Sierra foothills. We'll travel to several sites throughout Placer County and learn about creative and exciting agriculture tourism ventures, diversifying your product line or marketing options, and why "buying local" is gaining favor. We'll explore how PlacerGROWN supports local producers and what its members have to offer. While exploring the back roads of Placer County, we'll stop for lunch at High Hand Café, and you'll have plenty of sightseeing and shopping opportunities, including wine tasting, at our stops along the way.

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Farming In and Around Cities

9:00 am-3:30 pm (bus tour 10:30 am-3:30 pm)

This tour will start in the classroom with a discussion led by Kristin Reynolds of the UC Davis, Small Farm Center about the significance of urban agriculture in northern California and beyond. Additional speakers will discuss policies that help and hinder food production in and around cities. We'll visit three urban and urban-edge farms in and around Sacramento to see how farmers adapt production and marketing strategies to take advantage of their space and location and hear about the challenges they face and how they resolve them.