

CONVERGENCE

Northern California's only ongoing forum showcasing the issues that intersect education, workforce development and the economy

05.18.2011

CONVERGENCE VI: FOOD, FARMING & AGRIBUSINESS

Presented By:



CAPITAL REGION: THE "SILICON VALLEY OF FOOD"

Over the last two years, the Convergence series has been examining industry sectors that are foundational strengths of our region's economy and seeking to identify future growth and related workforce demand.

Agriculture and its related economic activities are clearly a staple of the Sacramento region's economy however, business, education and civic leaders in the region's urban areas rarely consider agribusiness as a core economic sector worthy of investment and capable of creating additional wealth and jobs. All too often, ag is viewed simply as "open space" and a green buffer against urban development.

Today, agribusiness is gaining a significant amount of attention as a key driver of the Capital Region's economy as well as a strategy to enhance our region's environment and overall quality of life.

The May 18 Convergence focus on Food, Farming and Agribusiness was enlightening in a variety of ways:

- West Sacramento Mayor Christopher Cabaldon remarked that the Capital Region has the opportunity to be the "Silicon Valley of Food";
- Featured Speaker Craig McNamara noted that in the next ten years, the Capital Region will experience the largest property transfer in agriculture in our nation's history, citing the critical need to create a pipeline of farmers and agricultural operators; and
- Clare Hasler-Lewis of UC Davis' Mondavi Center for Wine and Food Science reminded participants that UC Davis is the number one food and agricultural research university in the United States, providing our region with a unique global competitive advantage.



(L-R) Rosa Escutia, LEED Board Member and Community Relations Manager, PG&E; David Butler, CEO of LEED; Craig McNamara, featured speaker and President, CA Board of Food and Agriculture; Christopher Cabaldon, Mayor, City of West Sacramento

What does this mean for our education and workforce systems? Attendees' initial reaction was "science education" and entrepreneurship. Speakers and panelists outlined several priorities and opportunities to leverage the region's ag industry to create economic opportunity for our region and its residents.

Craig McNamara, the owner of Sierra Orchards in Winters and President of the California Board of Food and Agriculture, served as the keynote speaker.

McNamara's 450-acre Sierra Orchards is a diversified farming operation that demonstrates both stewardship and prosperity, integrating habitat conserving practices with bottom line results.

His proactive investments have significantly enhanced the watershed on his land, improved water quality downstream and established thriving wildlife habitat.

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Sierra Orchard's organic walnut production and sales have steadily increased, demonstrating the integral relationship between economic success and sustained conservation.

Craig McNamara utilizes tried-and-true organic farming practices as well as the most recent technological advances. He has removed invasive plants, built tail water ponds, installed sediment traps and added hedgerow plantings to help ensure that that the farm conserves as much irrigation water as possible, while at the same time providing habitat for native species, including birds, mammals, and beneficial insects and pollinators.

He hangs more than 40,000 pheromone devices each year for pest control. He even uses composted table scraps from San Francisco restaurants as fertilizer.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS FROM CONVERGENCE VI: FOOD, FARMING & AGRIBUSINESS

Craig McNamara, owner of Sierra Orchards in Winters and President of the California Board of Food and Agriculture, reviewed California's role as the leading agriculture state in the US:

- \$36.2 billion in revenues.
- California produces 50% of the nation's supply of fruits, nuts and vegetables.
- 81,500 farmers in California and 90% of California's farms are owned and operated by families or partnerships.
- The average acreage of a California farm is 313 acres.
- The average age of a California farmer is 57. McNamara notes that in the next ten years, many of the state's farms will likely change hands, representing the largest land transfer in our nation's history.

To help develop a pipeline of future farmers, McNamara founded the Center for Land-Based Learning, A non-profit organization whose mission is to inspire and motivate people of all ages, especially youth, to promote a healthy interplay between agriculture, nature, and society through their actions and as leaders in their communities. With programs beginning in 1993, CLBL reaches more than 2,500 California students annually, teaching them about sustainable agriculture and environmental stewardship first-hand.

A video about the CLBL can be viewed by clicking [here](#).

West Sacramento Mayor Christopher Cabaldon discussed how his city has identified food processing and distribution as a primary economic opportunity. Given West Sacramento's geographic location in Yolo County and in the Central Valley, availability of transportation, including I-80 and the Port of West Sacramento, and the proximity of UC Davis, West Sacramento is well positioned to be a hub for food processing, distribution and research.

Cabaldon pointed to the recent announcement of Nihon Shokken Holding's decision to establish its US headquarters in West Sacramento as an example of this strategy. The Japanese manufacturer of blended seasoning products will occupy a 70,000 square foot facility in the Southpark Business Park, employing up to 100 people.

"Given our historic base of agriculture and the presence of UC Davis, the Sacramento region can position itself as the Silicon Valley of Food," Cabaldon concluded.

PANEL DISCUSSES ISSUES IMPACTING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY IN AGRIBUSINESS INDUSTRY

David Shabazian, Senior Planner for the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) reviewed the priorities included within SACOG's Rural Urban Connections Strategy (RUCS).

RUCS is the complement to SACOG's Regional Blueprint Initiative which produced a region wide transportation

and land use strategy intended to ensure the region's future development maximizes high density transit oriented development and leverages existing transportation infrastructure. RUCS is a regional strategy to protect ag lands from being developed by ensuring they are economically viable.

Through RUCS, SACOG will make recommendations concerning infrastructure, regulations, land use conservation, economic opportunities and forest management. 70% of land in the Sacramento Region is in ag production or open space and

agribusiness is a \$1.66 billion industry in the Capital Region. The RUCS strategy hopes to increase locally consumed ag products from 2% to 20% creating new markets for restaurants, ag tourism, processing, transportation and distribution. For more information, visit www.sacog.org/rucs/.

Patrick Mulvaney, owner of Mulvaney B&L, has been promoting locally sourced, eco-friendly produce and meats in local restaurants for over ten years. Known as the "Slow Food Movement," the goal of Mulvaney's and similar culinary operators is to serve high quality meals while at the same time, opening up markets to area farmers and ranchers. "Whatever comes in the front door, goes on the plate," said Mulvaney. Visit www.mulvaneysbl.com.

"Given our historic base of agriculture and the presence of UC Davis, the Sacramento region can position itself as the Silicon Valley of Food,"
Christopher Cabaldon
Mayor, West Sacramento

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CONVERGENCE PROJECT



Panel Members of Convergence VI: Patrick Mulvaney, Owner, Mulvaney's B&L; Mary Kimball, Executive Director, Center for Land-Based Learning; Clare Hasler-Lewis, Executive Director, Robert Mondavi Center for Wine and Food Science at UC Davis; David Shabazian, Project Manager, Sacramento Area Council of Governments.

Clare Hasler-Lewis serves as Executive Director of the Robert Mondavi Institute for Wine and Food Science at UC Davis. Hasler-Lewis pointed out that UC Davis is the number one ag research university in the United States and #2 in the world.

UC Davis agriculture research and innovation is known throughout the globe, in capitals of European nations and in remote villages in Africa and Asia.

The Mondavi Institute facilities will serve as a global innovation center for scientists, researchers, engineers, entrepreneurs and technologists from UC Davis and around the globe to develop and market breakthroughs in wine, ecology and food.

For more information, visit www.robertmondaviinstitute.ucdavis.edu

Mary Kimball serves as the Executive Director for the Center for Land-Based Learning in Winters. Working from their statewide headquarters at the Farm on Putah Creek, CLBL serves approximately 1,500 high school students from 25 high schools throughout the greater Sacramento region.

Working through a variety of hands-on, interactive programs including the FARMS Leadership and SLEWS Programs, students learn about agriculture, environmental stewardship, teamwork, leadership development and career exploration.

CLBL activities support students' academic coursework and result in actual habitat restoration and completed community projects. For more information, www.landbasedlearning.org.

Dr. Angela Fairchilds, President Woodland Community College, serves as moderator for the panel. Woodland Community College and its parent, the Yuba Community College District, provide a variety of programs in agribusiness and environmental and veterinary sciences.

For more information, please visit www.yccd.edu.

EMPLOYER/EDUCATOR ROUNDTABLE

Roundtable participants discussed strategies on increasing food, farming, and agribusiness opportunities in the Capital Region:

Participants observed the following:

- There is a high number of pending retirements and overall lack of succession planning.
- Returning vets are interested in pursuing farming as a career.
- The urban outreach program seems to be a success, but we need more programs like that.
- Goodfoodjobs.com is a great website for those that have a background in agriculture.

Participants discussed the following education/training strategies:

- Connect agricultural programs to culinary programs – students grow the food, students cook the food, etc.
- Raise money through plant sales or food sales.
- Integrate green technology, such as solar panels, to reduce the cost of running the program.
- Integrate other academic topics (math, geography, nutrition) into existing agricultural programs.
- Teach nutrition and food handling in the classroom to promote healthy living.
- Educate students about career opportunities
- Replicate successful ag programs throughout the region.
- Teach ethics of sustainable agriculture
- Expose students to careers through internships, job shadowing, job rotations, etc.
- Promote trainings and certifications that give students a competitive advantage in the workplace (i.e. higher pay, promotional opportunities, etc.).
- Promote transfer programs among public and private universities; develop credit articulation for high school programs with community college programs
- Encourage students to participate in resume building, interviewing and other related workshops hosted by EDD.
- Encourage students to access available resources, such as training funds through the One Stop Career Center
- Develop a regional internship program and advisory committee (credits could be offered for internships).
- Teach entrepreneurship skills

SAVE THE DATES

2011 CONVERGENCE OPERATION: INDUSTRY PIPELINE CONTINUES

September 16th: FIRE-Finance, Insurance & Real Estate

December TBD: Higher Education

7:30-11:15 am

7:30-9:30 am Program

10-11:15 am Employer/Educator Roundtable

Radisson Hotel, Sacramento