



# UCCE Stanislaus & Merced

Providing Resources to Schools, Teachers, Parents and Children!

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## The Program

"Dirt Fresh News" is part of a Farm to School program that pairs local farmers with local schools. The newsletter encourages children and their families to increase consumption of fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables, and introduces them to the farmer who grew them. Started in 2009 with 500 students, the program now serves 6000 students and their families.



Local farmers like Frank Ratto from Ratto Bros, the Shiraz Ranch partners in Stanislaus county and Bill Thompson and Cindy Lashbrook of Riverdance Farms in Merced County collaborate with the Dirt Fresh News program, donating fresh fruits and vegetables to our students. Below, UCCE staff harvesting grapes.



## The Newsletter

The newsletter "Dirt Fresh News" is a bilingual newsletter printed each month and sent to elementary and junior high school students in Stanislaus and Merced Counties. The newsletter includes a bio on the farmer, nutrition data about the produce, how and where the produce is grown, and a healthy recipe as well as puzzles for students. The games and puzzles are linked to the California State Standards for Education.



UCCE Stanislaus Program Representative Dennis Carrasquilla works on the educational puzzles and games of the newsletter, while other staff members provide useful articles which are also translated into Spanish for parents to read. The newsletter features donated produce information, recipes and tips for increased consumption of fruits and vegetables in the children's diet.



UCCE Stanislaus and Merced Nutrition Educators Javier Miramontes, Houa Lee, Dodi Bridges and Marc Sanchez sort, pack and deliver the donated produce along with Dirt Fresh News to 6,000 students in both counties.



## The Classroom



Students report taking the newsletter home and sharing the articles, puzzles and games with their families, as well as asking their parents to purchase and prepare the featured recipe.

Each month, UC CalFresh Educators deliver locally grown donated produce to classrooms in Stanislaus and Merced Counties. Teachers use the produce and newsletter to develop lessons and discuss the articles and taste the produce with the students.



On the label China, Japan, North and South Korea, where persimmons originated.

## The Cafeteria

This past year we expanded our program to include School Nutrition Services. Tastings of new produce and Farmer's Market style produce carts have been introduced to some school sites. UC CalFresh staff actively participate in the development of the Nutrition Education and fun.

UC CalFresh research surveys discovered that 91% of students report they are willing to try new vegetables and fruits

because of their participation our nutrition program. Teachers have stated they believe much of the change in attitude is due to the exposure students receive through this program.



The Dirt Fresh Program is made possible through the creative and hard-working effort of the entire UCCE Stanislaus & Merced counties staff, donors and local farmers.



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