

Hidden Bounty of Marin: farm families in transition

A film on land stewardship and the importance of knowing and supporting the farmers who bring food to our tables.

How to use this DVD documentary

FOR CLASSROOM AND COMMUNITY DISCUSSIONS

This documentary focuses on the lives and work of several farm families and producers in West Marin. Many topics are covered that offer a stimulating view into key concepts such as:

❖ different production methods ❖ the social & environmental values/impacts of agriculture ❖ working landscapes systems ❖ local food business succession ❖ land stewardship ❖ and more.

The documentary is organized by **chapters**. The discussion leader can select a specific family story to discuss with a group. The following talking points can be adapted for student learning outcomes from middle school grades 5-8, to high school, college university, and community groups.

Potential learning outcomes:

Students learn about agricultural in their lives.

Students relate to the rich historical and cultural heritage of Marin's past and how it affects them today.

Students understand the processes, economics, and skills needed in agriculture.

Students understand the interdependence of sustainable agriculture systems and a healthy ecosystem.

Chapter 1: Bill Jensen - sheep & cattle rancher

1. For farmers like Bill Jensen, what is their most valuable resource?
2. Discuss ranchers' role as "stewards" of their land. How could this benefit the biodiversity of the property? How could it harm it?

Chapter 2: Liz Cunninghame & Dan Bagley - Clark Summit Farm

1. Discuss the economic and cultural value of keeping the family farm viable for today and future generations.
2. What does it mean to "diversify" a farm? Why would you do so?
3. What is the value of "knowing your farmer?"

Chapter 3: John Finger - Hog Island Oyster Company

1. What kind of inputs are needed to farm oysters?
2. How does water quality affect farming oysters in Tomales Bay?
3. How long has oyster farming been going on in Tomales Bay?
4. What makes oyster farming different from terrestrial farming?

Chapter 4: Mike and Sally Gale - Chileno Valley Ranch

1. Discuss the difference between locally produced and marketed grass-fed beef and conventionally produced grain-fed beef.
2. Examine the interdependence of local farmers and their customers. What values other than commerce are in play?

Chapter 5: Albert Straus - Straus Family Dairy & Creamery -

1. Discuss advantages & disadvantages of organic dairy.
2. What does an agricultural land trust like Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT) do? How do MALT easements affect conservation practices in Marin? How do easements help or hinder the farmer?

Robert Vallejo - Straus Family Dairy & Creamery

3. Hispanic farm workers do most of the heavy lifting on Marin farms and ranches. Discuss the role and contribution of farm workers in relation to their wages and working conditions. How much do you know about this issue? Is this important to you?

Chapter 6: Cowgirl Creamery

1. What is an "artisanal" product?
2. Marin is home to a growing number of "artisanal" producers. Discuss the role of marketing for these businesses.
3. Discuss the economic and cultural advantages these producers and distributors have by being in the greater San Francisco Bay Area.

Chapter 7: Bob Giacomini & Lynn Giacomini Stray - Giacomini Ranch & Point Reyes Blue Cheese

1. What is "farmstead" cheese?
2. Discuss "adding value" to a commodity like milk.
3. Generational succession is a challenge. Discuss the challenges and opportunities of inheriting a farm.

Chapter 8: Warren Weber - Star Route Farms

1. What is USDA organic certification?
2. Where does organic row-crop farming in Marin rank in production value? Compare crop production with livestock production.
3. Compare today's row crop production with that of 10 years ago. How has it changed?

Chapter 9: David Evans - Marin Sun Farms

1. Discuss the role of community in food production.
2. How many cattle remain in Marin for local processing and marketing? How many are shipped to midwest feed lots?
3. Discuss the challenges of creating and supporting a local food system. What infrastructure is required?
4. Talk about the "true value" of locally produced fresh food, and the economic challenges of shopping and buying local.