

Small Farms and Specialty Crops

Helping small-scale family farms thrive economically through extension support, bilingual and culturally relevant training, research on specialty crops, and policy engagement



Bilingual and cross-cultural training

Our diverse clientele includes Latino and Southeast Asian immigrant and refugee farmers, African-American and urban farmers, and small-acreage and emerging specialty crops. Many small farms are diversified and sell to direct and niche markets. Workshops are attended by an average of 275 farmers yearly, with 500-600 farmers receiving one-on-one assistance. Specialized outreach and training for Hmong farmers is based on 25 years of trusted relationships in the Southeast Asian community, with a weekly Hmong language radio program and bilingual workshops.

Helping farmers save water and energy

With assistance from the Small Farms and Specialty Crops team, 23 small-scale farmers applied for and received state grants to improve their on-farm water and energy efficiency. Water and energy improvements will reduce groundwater pumping, greenhouse gas emissions, and utility bills. These changes will help limited-resource farmers prepare for future droughts as well as regulation under California's new groundwater law (SGMA).



Researching new specialty crops

Moringa is gaining popularity as a superfood for its high nutrient and antioxidant content. It is already grown in Fresno by Southeast Asian farmers and sold fresh to specialty ethnic markets. Value-added products could boost income for small family farms. Our team developed a washing, drying, and packaging process for dried moringa leaves and powder. Current research supports moringa production by identifying optimal practices for pruning, irrigation and fertilization.

Engaging with policies affecting small farms

State regulations require farmers to report nitrogen fertilizer use, but this reporting is far more difficult for small and diversified farms and limited-English farmers. Based on comments from the Small Farms Advisor, the State Water Resources Control Board adopted alternate reporting requirements for small-scale, socially disadvantaged farmers and highly diversified farms. These changes will result in more accurate reporting and reduce time and costs of compliance for small-scale farmers.



UCCE Fresno County Small Farms and Specialty Crops

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