

Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau Ask Laura Newsletter Column  
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Q: I would like to attend the next California Small Farm Conference. Does your office have any information about it?

A: Yes, we do! The next California Small Farm Conference is being held at the Doubletree Hotel in San Jose from Sunday, March 6 through Tuesday, March 8, 2011. The theme this year is Small Farms Bright Futures, and it is sure to have something of interest for everyone.

The conference begins on Sunday with a number of tours and short courses that you may choose from that are related to organic production, direct marketing, resource management, animal agriculture, and agritourism. On Monday and Tuesday there will be educational workshops and speakers of note, including Craig McNamara, President and owner of Sierra Orchards, and founder and President of the Center for Land-Based Learning, both located in Winters, California. Sierra Orchards is primarily an organic walnut operation; the Center's goal is to assist high school students in building social and human capital in their communities and in learning about sustainable agriculture. Craig is recognized in California and the U.S. as a dedicated, innovative farmer and leader. You will undoubtedly enjoy learning about his work in agriculture and more broadly about his community-building activities.

Educational workshops are being offered on such diverse topics as:

- Preserving market integrity for farmers markets
- Using social media as a marketing tool
- Invasive species news and management
- Labor management and wellness
- Organic production for beginning and experienced farmers
- Specialty fruits
- Food safety basics
- New resources and strategies for successful farming
- Managing finances
- Reaching new markets
- Value added marketing

.... plus much, much more....

Registration, travel, and lodging information can be found on the conference's web site, <http://www.californiafarmconference.com/>. There is also a scholarship program to support the participation of eligible small-scale farmers, students, and farmers market managers. Please feel free to visit our office if you would like additional information about the conference or the scholarship program.

And last, but not least, there will be a much anticipated Regional Tasting Reception that showcases the culinary treats of the area, as well as exhibitors providing an array of information for small-scale farmers. We look forward to having you attend the conference!