

COVID-19 stories from UC ANR Small Farm & Food Advisors: March 2020

Farmers markets

In Placer and Nevada counties, both farmers markets remain open-for business. UC ANR Small Farm advisor helped get information to the counties' Board of Supervisors to ensure that farmers markets were included in their directive as essential businesses. Business at farmers markets was booming, WITH social distancing.

Training on safe food handling for urban farmers and gardeners during COVID-19

UC ANR Specialist at UC Berkeley compiled and shared food safety resources and materials for small and urban farms and gardeners including a [PowerPoint presentation](#), and [downloadable how-to guidelines and checklists](#) for augmented best practices in cleaning and sanitizing, and good health and hygiene during COVID-19.

Two Zoom workshops reached 35 East Bay farmers and gardeners, and resources were shared via [UCANR Urban Ag Blog](#), and posted on partner websites including the *NorCal Resilience Network*, *East Bay Urban Farmer Network*, *Davis Student Farm*, *California Alliance of Farmers' Markets*, *Community Alliance with Family Farmers*.

The UC ANR Specialist at UC Berkeley is working with UC Gill Tract Community Farm in ramping up their food safety procedures following COVID-19 guidance to provide free fresh produce to food pantries, and hot meals that feed the unhoused and food insecure.

Support for local farmers, food system workers, the unhoused and food insecure

UC ANR Specialist at UC Berkeley compiled and distributed widely a set of resources for how the public can support local farmers and the most vulnerable members of our communities impacted by COVID-19 disruptions. [Resources](#) include how to support BIPOC food businesses, food system workers, local farmers by purchasing CSAs and shopping at farmers' markets, and how to donate or volunteer.

UC SAREP reached out to California food hubs both individually and via the CA Food Hub Network list-serv (ca-food-hub-network@ucdavis.edu) to share coronavirus resources such as [UC Davis Food Safety info guides](#) and [American Farmland Trust's Farmer Relief Fund](#). Provided a small amount of one-on-one support and remain in communication with food hubs and responsive to their needs to the best of our ability.

CALIFORNIA FARMER INNOVATION

In Nevada and Placer counties, farmers are ramping up production and collaboration with other food vendors (e.g., a bakery or local produce store) to produce more take-out foods. More customers are committing to buying local food take-out regularly to support local businesses.

In Santa Clara County, *Veggielution*—an urban farm—has partnered with *Spade & Plow* on [Eastside Connect](#), a new emergency response program to deliver free farm boxes to 40 food insecure families in East San Jose. *Veggielution* is hoping to expand the program to employ local food entrepreneurs to cook meals with local produce for hot meal delivery to East San Jose senior centers.

In San Mateo County, *Fresh Approach* and *Pie Ranch* have partnered to develop an emergency local food hub in response to COVID-19. Their [Farm Fresh Food Relief](#) program proposes to distribute free pre-bagged fruits and vegetables at school meal distribution sites, providing culturally relevant, nutritious food to food insecure families while helping to maintain the financial viability of local farms during the pandemic.

In Yolo County, *Fruit Culture* farm and *Guru Ram Das Orchards* started the [Foodshed Response Network](#) listserv, designed to connect stakeholders throughout the food system to work cooperatively to analyze and resolve COVID-19 issues.

The [Farm Operations Procedures Template](#) created by UCCE Placer/Nevada counties is in high demand, especially for small farm sole proprietors trying to plan for COVID-19 impacts. It incorporates emergency procedures and standard operating procedures. Advice from UCCE Small Farm Advisor: "Don't get bogged down in trying to do the whole plan now, but focus on what is critical, which is keeping the farm running. First, making connections for back-up people outside of the farm—other farmers, family members, friends, etc. and showing/training them what has to be done on the farm, how to operate irrigation systems, equipment, etc., where the keys are, and who to call."

Support for farmers participating in direct markets, consumers

UC SAREP's [site promotes](#) local CSAs, farm delivery & pickup services, local food access, emergency programs, farmers' markets, etc., for consumers.