

Fact sheet: University of California, Santa Cruz

THE ORIGINAL AUTHORITY ON SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

UC Santa Cruz has been a leader in sustainable food and agriculture systems research, education, and public service for more than 45 years. The [Center for Agroecology & Sustainable Food Systems \(CASFS\)](#) at [UC Santa Cruz](#) has developed cutting-edge programs in food systems and organic farming research and extension, national and international work in agroecology, and a renowned apprenticeship program.

Recognized as the original modern authority on organic and sustainable agriculture, the program has grown from the first teaching garden in 1967 into an internationally known center based at the 30-acre farm on the UC Santa Cruz campus. CASFS is dedicated to increasing ecological sustainability and addressing social justice in the food system, while creating the next generation of farmers and leaders in sustainable agriculture.

It has led campus efforts to raise awareness of food systems issues through undergraduate classes, campus events, and publications reaching 10,000 students annually, and has worked with [UC Santa Cruz Dining Services](#) to increase local, organic food procurement on campus. Center staff and UC Santa Cruz students are leaders in the Real Food Challenge, a nationwide program that brings food produced in a sustainable, fair, and humane manner to college dining halls.

The nearly 1,500 graduates of its Apprenticeship in Ecological Horticulture have carried hands-on experience into teaching, farming, and advocacy positions worldwide for more than 45 years.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH AT UC SANTA CRUZ INCLUDE:

- More than 30 undergraduate classes, plus internships, service learning, and campus events that reach thousands of UC Santa Cruz students;
- Six-month [Apprenticeship in Ecological Horticulture](#), a certificate program;
- 12-month advanced apprenticeship for eight apprenticeship graduates;
- Organic community gardening workshops, events, and tours that bring thousands to the Farm annually.
- An on-site affiliate, [Life Lab](#), uses the Farm for K–12 school tours, teacher trainings, summer camps, and the “[Food What?](#)” youth empowerment program.

RESEARCH

With a blend of natural and social sciences staff, faculty partners, and students, UC Santa Cruz supports research and community engagement on the basic ecology of agricultural systems with the goal of designing farming methods that conserve resources, maintain yields, and protect the health of surrounding natural landscapes. This agroecosystem approach, based on ecological principles such as nutrient cycling, biodiversity, and predator-prey relationships, is critical to developing an agriculture that can be maintained into the future.

Projects are designed to improve organic farming practices and increase the sustainability of local food system. Partners include members of farming, environmental, policy, and community groups interested in sustainable agriculture, and food systems. CASFS researchers experiment with growing practices to improve yields, optimize nutrient use, decrease off-farm impacts, and reduce or eliminate reliance on synthetic chemical inputs. Much of this work takes place with growers on their farms and on the UC Santa Cruz Farm, often funded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the California Department of Food and Agriculture.

Examples:

- A [four-year \\$2.6 million USDA-funded](#) study at the Farm to develop organic alternatives to the banned soil fumigant methyl bromide (used primarily in strawberry production). This research has already resulted in changed practices on 800 acres in the Monterey Bay region.
- A team led by a professor of agroecology in the Environmental Studies department has received nearly \$400,000 from the California Department of Pesticide Regulation to expand research into non-chemical methods of controlling insects and disease in some of California's most valuable crops.
- [Another 2013 USDA grant](#) will expand opportunities for UC Santa Cruz students studying sustainable agriculture, and for Central Coast junior college and high school students who might not otherwise have considered a career in agriculture.
- The program also helps the Center prepare well-trained new farmers for sustainable production and small farm viability, to support these farmers in their early years of operation, and to build a mentorship and peer farmer network that will help ensure their long-term success.

FARMING

Apprentices and staff grow more than 40 different fruits and vegetables on the 30-acre farm and market them through a 120-member Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, farm stand cart, and UC Santa Cruz dining halls.

SUSTAINABILITY

CASFS and UC Santa Cruz leadership in sustainable food procurement has led to a UC system-wide commitment to 20 percent sustainable food purchasing by 2020. In 2012, Chancellor George Blumenthal signed the [UCSC Real Food Campus Commitment](#)—a pledge that by 2020 sustainably sourced products will make up 40 percent of UCSC Dining Service purchases, representing more than \$3.5 million annually.

COMMUNITY HEALTH/NUTRITION

CASFS has taken a lead to bring fresh, local, and more sustainably produced foods to the region's school cafeterias. The Central Coast School Food Alliance (CCSFA) is a collaborative initiative that serves school children fresh and wholesome food in Santa Cruz, San Benito, and Monterey counties. Stakeholders include food service directors, non-profit leaders on community food systems development, researchers, educators, as well as elected local, state, and federal officials.

BACKGROUND ON UC SANTA CRUZ FARM

news.ucsc.edu/2014/06/breaking-ground.html