

EMERGING TIMES

... growing toward the future

Emerging Leaders broaden horizons during trip to California



Class members enjoying a sunny day at Chalone Estate Vineyard with Gianni Abate.

Class 5 of FFVA's Emerging Leader Development Program finished up its year with a tour of farming and packing operations in California's Salinas Valley. The group visited large-scale operations of crops that many had not seen before, including artichokes, garlic and mushrooms.

The annual trip broadens the perspective of class members and allows them to hear from others - many of them CEOs of the companies visited - about pressing issues.

The packed agenda included tours of Uesugi Farms, Christopher Ranch, Gizdich Ranch, Monterey Mushrooms, Driscoll's, Ocean Mist Farms, DUDA, The Grower-

Shipper Association of Central California, Mann Packing, C.H. Robinson, Jackpot Harvesting/Growers Company, Taylor Farms, D'Arrigo Bros., Tanimura & Antle, Pryor Ranch and Chalone Estate Vineyards.

"The California trip is the highlight of the year," said Sonia Tighe, ELDP program director. "We are very grateful for our partnerships with Western Growers Association, the Grower-Shipper Association of Central California, and United Fresh Produce Association who assist us in locating innovative stops. The growers are extremely gracious with their time and tours, providing forthright information on their industries."



Uesugi Farms: A story of passion and innovation



by Kevin Yue
Lipman Produce

Our group reunited with Pete Aiello from Uesugi Farms on the first stop of the California production trip. The class had first met Pete when he was with the Western Growers' group that accompanied the ELDP on its South Florida production tour in March.

During this early morning stop, the class learned about the history, breadth and depth of Uesugi Farms. Its story is filled with hard-ship, love and dedication. George Uesugi, a Japanese-American, owned and farmed land before World War II. After the war, Uesugi was placed into an internment camp in a post-war paranoia even though he served in the U.S. military fighting the Japanese. The U.S. government took away his land, but he

was able to get some of it back after being released. The Aiello family helped Uesugi with farming operations, and eventually Uesugi granted them the farm. The operation thrived by outworking and outcompeting others. It was their dedication to these traits that helped Uesugi Farms expand and become a large grower of Napa cabbage, peppers and other produce.

Pete noted that the farm has sufficient water in all of its growing locations, but the thought of disappearing water is never far away. At its Brentwood location, the farm irrigates using surface water. In recent years, the cost per acre has increased over 25 times, a challenging restriction for Uesugi Farms and other growers. Uesugi also considers the costs of energy for its packing operations, and with the installation of a solar field it is able to reduce energy costs to cool corn by about 60 percent. It will be expanding the solar field in the near future to continue reducing energy costs. Uesugi Farms is an outstanding and forward-thinking operation, and we appreciated the opportunity to visit and reconnect with Pete.

Gizdich Ranch: A sweet treat



by Josh Temple
DuPont Crop Protection

One of the sweeter stops on our first day of touring California was Gizdich Ranch in Watsonville. There we were treated to an exceptional lunch from the farm deli. The homemade pies and fresh-squeezed apple juice were a big hit with the group. After a filling lunch, Vince Gizdich gave us a tour of the facilities and apple grove. He told a fascinating story of the transformation of the Gizdich Ranch from a traditional family farm to an agritourism attraction.

Gizdich Ranch is a fourth-generation, family-owned farm. The ranch was started in the early 1930s with 10 acres, five of which were an apple grove. The ranch began to grow in the 1950s when the family began planting the new olallieberry. The olallieberry is a cross between a Black Logan and the youngberry. In the 1960s, Gizdich Ranch was transformed into a tourist destination when it became a U-pick farm and began selling apples and berries directly to customers.

Today, people travel from all over California to have the "PIK-YOR-SELF" experience with their family. The ranch was further transformed in 1980 when the Eata Nita Pie Shop was opened. Originally specializing in fresh-baked apple and berry pies, the shop now bakes 16 different pies along with pastries and dumplings. The Ranch now encompasses the pie shop, antique shop, gift shop, sales barn, juice room, apple shed, picnic area and of course the groves of apples, caneberries and strawberries. After treating us to the rich history of Gizdich Ranch, Vince walked us through the apple-packing shed and showed us the process for making their world famous fresh-pressed apple juice. Gizdich Ranch's juice is marketed to select grocers from the Santa Clara to Salinas Valley. Gizdich Ranch makes for a great fun family outing but also serves a vital role in educating the consumer about the path of food from farm to table.



Class members got an up-close look at garlic being packed and processed at Christopher Ranch.



Garlic capital of the world



by Leigh Ann Wynn
Warner University

"There are five elements: earth, air, fire, water and garlic." - Louis Diat

For more than 50 years, the Christopher family has been growing superior California garlic from its farms in Gilroy. Don Christopher experimented with garlic cultivation with varieties of garlic that produce more flavorful, larger bulbs, particularly the Italian and French varieties.

The family co-founded the popular Gilroy Garlic Festival in 1978, the annual event which transformed the town into the "Garlic Capital of the World." Before the festival, garlic consumption averaged one pound per person annually; after the first festival, consumption rose to three pounds per person. Christopher Ranch farms over 4,000 acres – more than half in garlic. Other crops include cherries, bell peppers, sweet corn, pearl onions, shallots and ginger. The operation employs more than 500 full-time employees, and that number grows to over 1,200 during their busy season.

Our group toured the packing facility and learned more about Christopher Ranch by talking with Patsy Ross, the veteran marketing director, and Pat DeStasio. We were greeted in the parking lot by beautiful floating garlic skins, a byproduct of the processing going on inside. It looked like snow! We learned about the different sizes of garlic bulbs, including colossal, jumbo, giant and elephant.

Two of the issues facing the garlic industry in this area of California include dwindling available land for garlic production as well as an issue Patsy called "bulbing," which may be caused by too much water in the field.

Today, founder Ole Christopher's great grandson Bill is at the helm of Christopher Ranch. With the same tenacity of his forefathers, he is tending the seed stock which is now their designated heirloom. Bill focuses on what lies ahead for the next 50 years of family farming in the Santa Clara Valley.

Hitting the Jackpot to see asparagus



by Casey Simmons Runkles
Simmons Farms, Inc.

The last stop of our California adventure was to Jackpot Harvesting, which packs asparagus. We got there just as the crew was finishing up for the day. Matt Caraccioli of Jackpot and Mike Drew from the Growers Company gave us a tour of the facility and explained the process. Product comes in from the field in lugs and is washed several times and sorted according to size using a camera system. It is then bound in a group according to the buyer's specifications and sent to the cold box for shipping.

All asparagus is hand-harvested. Workers

can pick the same field every other day — asparagus literally grows overnight. Fields are harvested for about 4½ months, and replanting is needed every 14 to 16 years. Jackpot grows two varieties — the "114" and the "127." Once the harvesting is finished harvesting for the season, fields are then left to just grow. After the first frost of the season, the plants are cut down and prepared for the new season.

Asparagus has a shelf life of about 21 days. It is very similar to a flower and needs to be placed with water covering the ends to extend that life. More than half of their product is exported to Switzerland and Japan. They ship their exported products in wood crates; domestic product is kept in cardboard packaging.

Jackpot Harvesting packs both organic and conventionally grown products. They also pack for several outside growers. The company was founded in 1992 and has about 4,600 acres in production.



Asparagus is hand-harvested every other day and fields generally don't need to be replanted until they are 14 to 16 years old.



Mushrooms begin with great compost



by Marshal Sewell
Seminis Vegetable Seeds

One of the growers we visited was certainly no fan of fungicides. Mark Streig of Monterey Mushrooms gave us a behind-the-scenes tour of a commercial-scale mushroom farm. Monterey Mushrooms was established in 1971 and has since grown into a vertically-integrated growing, packing and shipping operation. Monterey Mushrooms provides products for wholesale, retail and foodservice markets internationally.

The Watsonville location we toured boasts a 27-acre production capacity, where roughly three acres are replanted every week. Mark said the production process starts with great compost, with compost preparation typically beginning weeks before planting. Once the compost is ready, the material is inoculated with mushroom cultures and the fungi begin to grow in dark, damp, climate-controlled facilities. According to Mark, Monterey Mushrooms produces nearly 800,000 pounds of mushrooms weekly. About three-quarters are white mushrooms and the rest are brown. Additionally, Monterey Mushrooms offers oyster mushrooms as a niche product. Oyster mushrooms represent a small portion of their total volume – about 2,000 pounds a week.

Once the mushrooms are harvested, they are sent to the processing portion of the facility. There they are washed, sorted and prepared for packing. One interesting fact is that these mushrooms are also passed through UV lighting before being processed and packed. The UV light exposure increases the Vitamin D content of the mushrooms and creates a more nutritious product. Finally, the mushrooms are either sliced or packed whole in trays and bags to be sent to market.



Monterey Mushrooms produces nearly 800,000 pounds of mushrooms every week.



Amanda McClure samples product fresh from the field at Tanimura & Antle.



Mark Reasons explains the hydrocooling system used by Ocean Mist Farms.

Fresh Leaf, Mann Packing show off patented cutting



by Lauren Graham
The Andersons, Inc.

Loori Koster, CEO of Mann Packing, and Mike Costa, grower for Fresh Leaf Farms, met with us on a windy afternoon to discuss how their business models work. Mike is a contracted grower for Mann Packing.

Fresh Leaf Farms is a whole leaf operation. Its products are used for sandwiches in restaurants such as Denny's and Arby's. Mike's dad started with 160 acres, and the ranch has remained in the family. Mann Packing is over 77 years old and is a third-generation family business.

Even with all of the wind we encountered, Mike mentioned that water runoff is a bigger issue. There was a creek at the edge of the field, which was no longer in use. With new laws, Mike was forced to catch water in other areas. One effect the wind does have on growing is that it dictates the way the sprinklers need to be set.

In the field, we had the opportunity to see Fresh Leaf Farms' patented carousel cutting machine. The lettuce was put on the carousel and sliced there. The slicing could be adjusted according to how and where the lettuce needed to be cut, which changes upon the time of year.

The lettuce was packed in the field after it was washed and dried, where crews were averaging around 800,000 to 900,000 pounds per week.

We also toured the processing facility where the company packages all of its bagged lettuce as well.



C.H. Robinson makes shipping easy



by Bradley Ferguson
Straughn Farms

The group was hosted by sales manager Rob Lynch and sales executive Trevor Fletcher at the C.H. Robinson offices located in Monterey. Rob and Trevor gave the group an overview of the services provided by C.H. Robinson.

C.H. Robinson is a global third-party value-added logistics company that specializes in managing all the details of shipping. Their mission statement is, "Our people, processes and technology improve the world's transportation and supply chains, delivering exceptional value to our customers and suppliers."

C.H. Robinson manages the FFVA Transportation Program, which is an exclusive benefit for FFVA members. Some of the benefits of the program include:

- Logistics services with no volume or financial commitments
- Around-the-clock operations
- LTL and freight consolidation solutions that improve efficiency while managing cost, risk and change
- Cold chain logistics
- Assumption of all liability for transportation related loss and damage on shipments via its carriers.
- Shipments can be tracked through their website from start to finish

An account manager is assigned to each shipper who can develop an overall logistics program tailored to each shipper's needs. More information about the program can be found at www.ffva.com/services.

Ocean Mist is king of artichoke market



by Amanda McClure
West Coast Tomato/
Building Cleaning Solutions

Ocean Mist Farms has been in business since 1924, farming more than 25,000 acres throughout California and Arizona and Mexico. Its largest crop is lettuce. However, it is the largest grower of fresh artichokes in the United States, producing 85 percent to 90 percent of all artichokes in the United States year-round. Each winter, the company moves its entire operation to Yuma, breaking down all of its equipment and

loading it onto 16 tractor-trailers bound for Arizona.

Artichokes take 140 to 190 days to produce and are harvested in the field every week for seven weeks. They are harvested based on maturity, not size. All artichokes are packed for particular orders as opposed to being grown on spec. Each artichoke is tagged in the field. Once cut from the stem, a four-hour window begins in which the artichoke must be placed into a cooler.

In 1997, Ocean Mist moved into a new, state-of-the-art cooling facility. This facility has 25 loading docks and supports the loading of 250 to 300 trucks a day. Ocean Mist takes pride in maintaining the "family" environment among employees. It has become a tradition that on any holiday in which the facility is up and running, Ocean Mist has a cookout for all employees working that day.



Ocean Mist Farms is the largest grower of fresh artichokes in the United States, producing 85 to 90 percent of the national supply of artichokes each year.



GSA tackles key issues on behalf of growers



by Ben Lahr
Driscoll's

Jim Bogart, president of the Grower-Shipper Association of Central California, gave us a brief introduction to the association. The GSA started in 1930 with 15 shippers representing the area. Today, there are about 375 members in four counties: Monterey, Santa Cruz, San Benito and Santa Clara. The GSA covers a wide array of issues to help benefit growers, including legal services, human resources, monitoring issues and labor relations. The biggest issues it deals with are water and farm labor. A key initiative is working to put more produce in schools. The GSA has launched a salad bar program in which people and companies sponsor

a salad bar at a local school, providing students with fresh and healthy eating options.

Abby Taylor with GSA spoke about the multitude of projects she has worked with regarding water projects and compliance issues. These range from water use to water quality, as well as recharging the Salinas River system. Another challenge is keeping members updated on new regulations, which has been an ongoing process.

Eric Lauritzen, Monterey County commissioner of agriculture, discussed the economic contributions of agriculture from Monterey County as well as some of the projects they are working on. Some of the biggest challenges they have in the area are communication and awareness regarding pesticide use around dwellings. There have been several meetings regarding buffer zones around schools. Eric and his team have recently been negotiating with anti-pesticide activists who wanted a one-mile buffer around schools and a seven-day notification of fumigations. Such a buffer zone would be a difficult challenge for an area where agriculture has a huge presence.

On the cutting edge of celery innovation



by Ashley Layson
Farm Credit of Florida

Singer-songwriter legend Bob Marley once said, "In this bright future, you can't forget your past." Nowhere is that more true than at DUDA's Salinas research facility.

DUDA started out as a celery farm in 1926, and while the first acres were purchased in Florida, DUDA now owns and leases over 45,000 acres across the United States. This fifth-generation company also includes Duda Farm Fresh Foods, which in addition to celery supplies fresh-cut vegetables and citrus, and DUDA Ranches, which produces sod, sugarcane and cattle.

At first glance, the company's unimposing building in California looks like any other corporate agricultural headquarters. But hidden inside its walls is a treasure trove of inventive celery seed varieties dating back decades. Hundreds of thousands of celery seeds are kept safely tucked away in this vault in case a virus tolerance is needed years down the line. Recently, DUDA experienced a virus in one of its California fields, and the company was able to use this resource by planting a disease-resistant seed from the 1990s.

"The advantage of this vault gives us the ability to go back when something happens to find something that works, and we've kept everything that we have available," said Dr. Larry Pierce, manager of seed research.

While DUDA keeps a reminder of the past in the form of seed stock, it also is constantly working to create the next celery craze. The company is developing celery straws to use in juice or Bloody Marys as well as different hues for celery in red, pink and white. Can't wait to see that in my next can of Campbell's soup!



Dr. Larry Pierce explains the cultivation of DUDA's new celery varieties to class members.



Driscoll's: The host with the most berries



by Casey Simmons Runkles
Simmons Farms, Inc.

Driscoll graciously hosted Class 5 for a tour of its tissue culture facility, a raspberry farm visit and a delicious dinner at its corporate headquarters. From its humble beginnings in the 1920s, the Driscoll Company has grown into one of the world's largest year-round supplier of berries (consisting of strawberries, raspberries, blueberries and blackberries). Their berries are grown on family farms in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Chile and Argentina.

In their state-of-the-art tissue culture laboratory, researchers develop plants to meet Driscoll's high standards. When your goal is to be the "World's Best Berry," only the best root stocks will do. During the course of a year, researchers may introduce about 2,000 new selections or varieties of strawberries, with only one to two of those making it to the next round. It then takes one to two years as a test plant in greenhouses and another three to five years to make it to planting in the fields -- if it even continues to that stage. Blueberries are a faster process, going from lab to greenhouse in about four months. Daniel Torres does an excellent job with the laboratory. In the few years that he has been employed with Driscoll, productivity and output samples have increased tremendously.

Nathan Godinez, blackberry production specialist, gave us a tour of one of his fields. The blackberries were still a few weeks off from harvesting but he was able to explain the process. Seven farms grow blackberries in the area. The operation expects to yield 5,000 to 6,000 crates per acre on the top varieties. Some of the growers will use canopies for protection from sun and rain. Blackberry plants are harvested for six to 10 years before the grower must replant at a cost of around \$25,000 per acre.

Our last stop was at Driscoll's fabulous

office in Watsonville. Emmett Linder and Linda Moore treated the class to a delicious meal and a sampling of their berries. I think we would all agree they were definitely some of the best we've had. Emmett gave us a brief overview of where the company started and what the future holds.

'Andy Boy' brand still strong after 80 years



by Leigh Ann Wynn
Warner University

D'Arrigo Bros. was founded by brothers Stephen and Andrew D'Arrigo, immigrants from Messina, Sicily, after a wine grape buying trip to central California in 1925. The brothers noticed the rich farm land perfect for growing vegetables, and soon after they were in business. They started by planting a 28-acre broccoli crop from seeds from the old country.

Because there was no easy way to transport vegetables across the country, the brothers pioneered using the new railroad system to ship produce to the East Coast. They also created the first brand of fresh vegetables in the United States, "Andy Boy," to differentiate their produce from other California produce. "Andy Boy" was named after Stephen's 3-year-

old son and is still sold in retailers around the world today, more than 80 years later.

The third generation D'Arrigo family members are currently at the helm of the West Coast operations, which our group visited in Salinas. They farm more than 30,000 acres of fresh vegetables including cauliflower, broccoli, broccoli rabe, romaine hearts, butter lettuce, artichokes, fennel and more.

With more than 2,000 employees, the company is the largest grower/shipper in the valley. D'Arrigo Bros. packs and ships over 35 million cartons of vegetables a year, adding strawberries and raspberries this past year, resulting in an additional 13.5 million retail trays.

The operation is completely vertically integrated, beginning with their seed research with plant physiologists to their growing, cooling, packing and shipping operation. The cold storage facility we toured was more than 150,000 square feet, where they ship out around 400 truckloads a day.

Mark Houle, operations manager, gave our group a behind-the-scenes tour of the state-of-the-art cooling facility built in 2006. Over half of the berries from the Salinas Valley come to D'Arrigo Bros. Most product is in and out of the entire cooler within three days.

Mark showed us the Hydro-Vac system, the hydro-cooler, and the Modular Automated Cooling System cooler, where it takes only about two hours to cool down eight pallets to the perfect temperature. The tour was great, but we were definitely ready to step out into the sunshine to thaw out when it was over!



The Modular Automated Cooling System at D'Arrigo Bros. only takes about two hours to cool eight pallets worth of product.



Tanimura and Antle: Grown with family pride



by Josh Temple
DuPont Crop Protection

Our last stop in Salinas was Tanimura and Antle, where we were met by Helena Beckett and Mark Adamek, general manager of lettuce production. Helena and Mark took us on a field tour to see their Artisan Lettuce being harvested and field-packed. The crews were packing mixed red and green petite lettuces, with two of each packed in a clamshell. It was very interesting to see up to six different lettuce varieties being grown on a single bed. The product is shipped all over the United States and sold at numerous major retailers, including Costco, Walmart, Aldi, Whole Foods, and Kroger.

Mark said T&A is constantly evaluating new lettuce varieties for the area to deliver a consistent, quality product to customers. T&A is a very progressive growing operation that has invested significantly in new agriculture technologies. One of these technologies is Plant Tape. With Plant Tape, the company can now plant 25 acres a day with a single machine and three employees versus a traditional transplanter, which would plant only 10 acres a day with 15 employees.

T&A grows around 40,000 acres a year of mostly lettuce. Other crops include broccoli, cauliflower, onions, celery, asparagus and spinach. After our field tour, we were treated to lunch in the company's boardroom catered by its own Wharf Marketplace restaurant. The food was amazing but second only to the view of lettuce fields with the Santa Lucia Mountain Range in the background.

The Tanimura family and Antle family both have rich histories in growing, packing and marketing. In 1982, the Tanimuras and the Antles officially created a partnership, which brought together a blend of Tanimura's farming expertise and Antle's harvesting and marketing expertise. After 34 years of the partnership, T&A continues to lead the industry in innovation, sustainability and progressive employee practices.



Mark Adamek shows class members T&A's innovative packaging of two petite red and green lettuces.



One thing that makes T&A so unique is that they grow six different varieties of lettuce on one bed.



Taylor Farms uses a high-pressure water jet harvester on a portion of their lettuce crop.

Innovation vital for efficiency



by Kevin Yue
Lipman

Class 5 met with Chris Rotticci of Taylor Farms in Salinas to observe an automated lettuce harvester in action and to get an overview of the farming operations. Taylor recently began using a completely stainless-steel lettuce harvester to reduce the need for workers having to continually bend down to cut the lettuce. The company invested in the development of a mechanized harvester that uses a high-pressure water jet to slice through and cauterize the stem of the lettuce head to prevent potential exposure to contaminants. The harvester then collects the cut heads and conveys them to the bulk packages for transport to the packing shed.

At a speed of about 1 mile per hour, and only using 900 gallons of water per day, Taylor can reduce the required number of people for harvest. This reduces the overall cost of harvesting and cuts the number of accidents due to the safety measures installed. Although Taylor doesn't expect to transition completely to mechanized harvesting, its goal is to improve the consistent quality of the harvested lettuce.

Rotticci spoke to the class about the different varieties of lettuce and other produce that they harvest and gave an overview of Taylor's operations in the Salinas area. As in most leafy green operations there are leftover leaves after harvesting, and Taylor is evaluating how to best manage this portion of the lettuce. Innovative thinking and technological developments continue to drive their operations, and we look forward to hearing more about their solutions to provide fresh produce in the future.



Chalone Estate Vineyard red wines take around 2 1/2 years to go from grape to bottle, while their white wines take closer to a year and a half.

Class 5 will graduate at FFVA 2016 in Naples. Look for a special edition recapping their year in September.

Chalone Estate Vineyard



by Marshal Sewell
Seminis Vegetable Seeds

Established in the early 1960s, Chalone Estate Vineyard is considered the oldest producing vineyard in Monterey County. Though it is typically closed to the public, our ELDP group had the good fortune of being able to tour this impressive facility under the guidance of Gianni Abate, the resident winemaker.

On site, we observed nearly 240 acres of wine grapes in production and were given a brief lesson on the local growing conditions and their effect on the quality of the grapes and wine being produced. From there we made our way into the actual winery, where Gianni explained the process of squeezing grapes and storing juice for fermentation and the start of the wine-making process. Gianni helped us understand the impact of methods of storage and length of storage on the development of tannin structures in the wine and how these differing tannins affected the flavors and qualities of wine. By Gianni's methods, a red wine typically takes around 2½ years from grape to bottle, while a white wine takes closer to a year and a half. Although Chalone has the capacity to produce about 50,000 cases of wine, Gianni said that only 20,000 of the highest-quality cases will actually make it to market to ensure the integrity of their brand.

In addition to a walking tour of the entire facility, Gianni also provided us a wine tasting experience to better understand the different types and varieties of wines. Gianni demonstrated pouring and visual evaluation of the wine before tasting and invited us to sample some of his white and red wine offerings.

ELDP NEWS



1: Derek Orsenigo (Class 2) and his wife, Lauren, welcomed Lanie Mills Orsenigo on May 4.

2: Leigh Ann Wynn (Class 5) and her husband, JB, welcomed Jacob on June 25.

3: Jordan Theis (Class 3) and his wife, B, welcomed Hendrix Cash Theis on May 1.

4: Congratulations to Clayton Norman (Class 3) who married Candice Earl on April 23.

5: Congratulations to Jennifer Lytch (Class 1) and her husband, Adam, who are expecting a baby girl in November.