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Jo Ann Baumgartner and Sam Earnshaw: Organizers and Farmers

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Jo Ann Baumgartner & Sam Earnshaw



Organizers & Farmers

Jo Ann Baumgartner directs the Wild Farm Alliance, based in Watsonville, California. WFA's mission, as described on the organization's website, is "to promote agriculture that helps to protect and restore wild Nature." Through research, publications, presentations, events, policy work, and consulting, the organization works to "connect food systems with ecosystems."

Sam Earnshaw is Central Coast regional coordinator of the Community Alliance with Family Farmers. Working with CAFF's farmscaping program, he helps farmers plant hedgerows and create grass waterways, improving production while increasing biodiversity and wildlife habitat on their lands. In 2009 Earnshaw was awarded the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign's Pollinator Advocate Award as part of an international effort to promote public awareness of bees, bats, butterflies, beetles, and other animals that enable the reproduction of over seventy-five percent of flowering plants. In

2008 Earnshaw and Baumgartner received the Stewards of Sustainable Agriculture (Sustie) award from the Ecological Farming Association.

Baumgartner and Earnshaw met in the early 1980s while working on a five-year research project using reclaimed wastewater for crop irrigation in the Salinas Valley. Alarmed by the toxicity of the conventional agricultural environment, the couple became interested in organic production; when they left the research project in the mid-1980s, they started their own organic Neptune Farms, in Santa Cruz County. During this period they were involved with the development of California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF) and with the early days of the Ecological Farming Association (EFA). In the early 1990s, Earnshaw began working for CAFF's predecessor, California Action Network, with its newly founded Lighthouse Farm Network, organizing breakfasts for farmers to share ideas and strategies for sustainable production. In the mid-to-late 1990s, Earnshaw and Baumgartner both worked with the Campaign to Save Pajaro Valley Farmlands and Wetlands, ultimately creating a 25-year urban growth boundary in the area.

Sarah Rabkin conducted this interview with Baumgartner and Earnshaw at the WFA offices on Monday, May 18, 2009. At the time, both were giving considerable attention to issues related to food safety—a pressing concern in the wake of recent events. In the fall of 2006, an outbreak of food-borne illness caused by the pathogen *E. coli* O157:H7 had sickened about 200 people and killed three; the outbreak was traced to bagged fresh spinach grown in San Benito County. Industry and government leaders were calling for the elimination of farm hedgerows and other non-crop vegetation in order to create “clean” or “sterile” growing environments, despite compelling evidence that the pathogen originated elsewhere. Baumgartner and Earnshaw were working hard to educate farmers, industry and government representatives, and the general public—explaining the benefits of farm biodiversity for soil and water conservation and ecological health, and promoting best practices for keeping the food supply safe.

Additional Resources

Wild Farm Alliance: <http://www.wildfarmalliance.org/>

Community Alliance with Family Farmers (Program on Farmscaping and Hedgerows) <http://www.caff.org/programs/farmscaping/hedgerowin.shtml>

Daniel Imhoff, *Farming with the Wild* (Sierra Club Books, 2003).

Daniel Imhoff, Jo Ann Baumgartner, eds., *Farming and the Fate of Wild Nature: Essays on Conservation-based Agriculture* (University of California Press, 2006).

Daniel Imhoff, *Food Fight: The Citizen's Guide to a Food and Farm Bill* (Watershed Media, 2007; distributed by University of California Press.)

Diana Stuart, Carol Shennan, and Martha Brown, "Food Safety versus Environmental Protection on the Central California Coast: Exploring the Science Behind an Apparent Conflict," Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems Research Brief #10, Fall 2006.

Matthew Wheeland, "Wilding the Farm," *California Magazine*, Volume 118, No. 3, May/June 2007.

Beginnings

Rabkin: Today is Monday, May 18, 2009. This is Sarah Rabkin, and I am talking with Jo Ann Baumgartner and Sam Earnshaw at the Wild Farm Alliance office in Watsonville. I'd like to start with a bit of basic biographical background about each of you. Sam, let's start with you. Tell me where and when you were born.

Earnshaw: I was born in New York City in 1943.

Rabkin: Where did you grow up?

Earnshaw: In Washington, D.C.

Rabkin: And where did you go to school?

Earnshaw: I went to several schools. I went to high school in Washington; I went to Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut; to the University of Essex in Colchester, England, and then to UC Berkeley studying forestry.

Rabkin: And how did you get interested in sustainable agriculture?

Earnshaw: Actually when I went to school in forestry, it was because I really wanted to spend my life outdoors, and I worked on doing environmental impact reports. I ended up working for an engineering company, and that was at the time when the Clean Water Act had just come through, and so there were lots of EIRs [environmental impact reports]. That's when EIRs were just starting. This one engineering company I worked for got a five-year research project in Castroville in the Salinas Valley on using reclaimed water with crops. I just started working on the project, and then I ended up being the field manager of the project and learned about agriculture. That's when I learned about how many extremely toxic materials were used in agriculture and that the stuff that goes inside the lettuce leaves that people eat was very poisonous. I became very interested in organic farming.

And then Jo Ann started working on the project, as you'll hear. Towards the end of it, we just started farming. We had a half-acre, and we just started growing stuff. We decided we wanted to change agriculture, and the way to do it was to become farmers. So instead of just talking about it, we became organic farmers. That's how I got into it.

Rabkin: Great. Thanks. Let's back up and start with you, Jo Ann. When and where were *you* born?

Baumgartner: I was born in Bakersfield, California. I went to high school in Taft.

Rabkin: And what year were you born?

Baumgartner: In '56, and moved out when I was seventeen, just to get out of that hot, arid place. I went to school at UC Davis and studied soils, and then got a job on this project growing crops with reclaimed wastewater, because we were doing lots of soil sampling. Well, all kinds of sampling, water and plant tissue sampling. It was five years of sampling and learning how to grow the crops from the farmers, who were excellent at what they were doing although they were growing crops with pesticides, which we didn't like. It didn't really come home until we would be out in the fields and getting sprayed by them.

Rabkin: You were literally being sprayed with pesticides.

Baumgartner: Yes. The crop-duster people didn't think it was a big deal. At that time, they had women out on the edges of the crops with flags moving down the field, showing them where to spray. These beautiful young Hispanic women were getting sprayed all day long with pesticides. Remember that?

Earnshaw: Yes.

Rabkin: So this was the project where you met each other. Is that right?

Baumgartner: Yes.

Earnshaw: Now you'll see a field that has a spray sign with a skull and crossbones, [but] I don't think that was even implemented until the middle of our project. The farmers made a big deal out of it. It was going to cost them all of this money and put them out of business. But there used to be no notices when they were spraying pesticides, no reentry [policy] or anything like that.

Things have changed. There weren't toilets in the field when we were working then. So things have really considerably changed. That was 1980 to '85 that we were down there. Things were changing in the mid-eighties. There was a lot of stuff going on with the United Farm Workers. I remember one morning we came to work and a bunch of buses had burned up and tractors and stuff, because there was some violence going on there.

Starting an Organic Farm

Rabkin: Okay. So you met on this project, and eventually the two of you started a farm together. Can you tell me about that? How did that project come into being?

Earnshaw: Well, like Jo Ann said, we learned how to farm from these Salinas Valley farmers. I lived in a house that had an acre and a half in the back—

Rabkin: Where was that?

Earnshaw: In Live Oak [near] Santa Cruz. We decided we wanted to farm together. We answered an ad in the paper for an additional half-acre. This was Claude, who had a spot at the Cabrillo Farmers' Market. He wanted somebody to just help him farm. We started growing garlic at our acre and a half in Live Oak and working with Claude on his half-acre, and that's how we got into it. Then over the years, he just kind of backed out of it. We took over his spot at the Cabrillo [farmers' market]. It was very difficult to get into Cabrillo.

Baumgartner: As it still is.

Earnshaw: So we just kind of went in through him. But they were happy to have us, because we brought a lot of stuff that helped the market—

Baumgartner: We got media for them.

Earnshaw: Yes, I was on the board. We were very active in trying to promote the farmers' market at the time.

Rabkin: What was Claude's last name?

Earnshaw: Bourne, Claude Bourne. He wasn't organic. He liked going out there and eating doughnuts and hanging around with people. It was just a total side hobby for him. He was fun. We learned some stuff from him.

Rabkin: You were growing on your own acre and a half in Live Oak, and then were you also growing on his half-acre as well?

Earnshaw: Yes.

Rabkin: And where was his place?

Earnshaw: At Happy Valley.

Rabkin: So what all were you growing?

Baumgartner: Oh, we really liked growing different kinds of lettuces, but any kind of cool-season vegetable you can grow here. So cilantro and arugula and broccoli and cabbage.

Earnshaw: Forty different crops we were growing. Forty different crops. We started off with just one or two, and Jo Ann kept going, "We've got to have more at the farmers' market." So we kept expanding. We had everything at the stand—beets and basil and parsley and chard and kale and—

Baumgartner: It evolved over time. We wanted to have as many different products on our stand, so that when somebody came up to us they wouldn't just spend fifty cents on a head of lettuce, which is how much it was initially. [laughs] They'd spend five dollars at your stand. So then we added flowers to it. That made it fun.

Earnshaw: Garlic braids. We did garlic braids.

Baumgartner: Yes, that was beautiful.

Earnshaw: Every year, we'd make these garlic braids and weave flowers into them.

Rabkin: Were you guys making a living?

Earnshaw: Yes, we supported ourselves a hundred percent off of this farm into the nineties.

Baumgartner: Yes. Then we dropped Claude's piece, added another acre and a half.

Earnshaw: We got the piece right next to Barney Bricmont.¹ He told us his neighbor had an acre and a half. We had an acre and a half on Ivy Lane and an acre and a half on Maciel. So we had three acres.

Baumgartner: And that was great. We were grossing a hundred thousand dollars on three acres. So we said, "Oh, well, we're going to move up to ten acres." There was this hundred-acre valley. It was very beautiful, and we farmed the bottom. By that time, we were growing—still a big diversity, but lots of lettuce. It was hard to grow lettuce in that valley, because the deer liked the lettuce. So we just gave up growing lettuce.

Rabkin: Your place wasn't fenced for deer.

Baumgartner: No. We were just renting it from this couple who lived there and enjoyed our farming efforts.

Earnshaw: And by having it in agriculture they got tax breaks, because we were there.

Rabkin: This was in Aptos?

Baumgartner: Yes. So we at some point realized that it was consuming us.

Earnshaw: We made less money on more acreage, and had a lot more headaches and work and more employees and traveling back and forth. We had to drive our tractor down 41st Avenue in Soquel and back. That took a lot of time out of the day to get the tractor from one place to the other.

Baumgartner: But we were still in love with farming and agriculture, and so decided that we were going to cut back, and tried to figure out how we could do that and other things. So one of the crops we focused on was garlic. The thing that's great about garlic is you can dry it and sell it over a period of time, as opposed to lettuce, you've got to sell the day that it's harvested. So we grew garlic on a larger scale. We came back to garlic and winter squash, because they keep.

Earnshaw: Cabbage was another one.

Baumgartner: We went from forty crops to fifteen to five. It took us several years to back down.

Farmers' Markets in the 1980s

Rabkin: I'm curious about the selling part of the farming. You said that you were at the Cabrillo Farmers' Market, which was pretty young in the early days of your farm. Tell me a little what the Cabrillo Farmers' Market looked like back in the early eighties.

Earnshaw: It was just one line. It was the parking lot across from the big complex now. That used to be a big parking lot. I think they built something on that, and it was just one line.

Baumgartner: And a couple of organic farmers.

Earnshaw: Russel Wolter², Dennis Tamura³ and Lori Perry were there, and then that guy, Dean.

Baumgartner: No, he wasn't organic.

Earnshaw: And Rodney Stackhouse [of Stackhouse Brothers Orchards] wasn't organic, but then us and Mrs. Webb and then Jerry and Jean Thomas.⁴

Baumgartner: They're organic.

Earnshaw: Ken Kimes and Sandra Ward were just across from us, and "Steiney" [Jonathan Steinberg] and Larkey of Route 1 Farms, and then Molino Creek was there.⁵ That was about it on the organic.

Baumgartner: Yes.

Earnshaw: Then there were the strawberry people.

Baumgartner: It seems like maybe there were thirty farmers there, and a quarter of them were organic?

Earnshaw: Yes.

Baumgartner: And we didn't garner that much respect from the whole market board. They kind of felt like, "Well, this—"

Earnshaw: Yes, organic was really—

Baumgartner: New and—

Earnshaw: —peripheral at that time. They had this quota system, and they only let so many people in. We used to argue that organic crops were different. But they wouldn't let— I remember there was a big thing about pears or something,

something with organic pears. We were saying, “They’re different. People come there and want to buy organic pears.”

So it was just one line of people and it was pretty cool. We ended up doing four farmers’ markets a week—Cabrillo and then Monterey. The same farmers’ market association had one in Monterey on Thursdays. Friday, a market started in San Jose, and we got in big discussions over whether we should go—I didn’t want to go. Jo Ann wanted us to go. I just didn’t want to drive over the hill. I just didn’t want to go there. But then it was fine, and we did. They started a new market. So we bought a bigger truck and started going over there.

Then Saturday was Cabrillo, and Wednesday was the Downtown [Santa Cruz] Farmer’s Market. And the first time that opened was after the earthquake, and it was in the old Ford’s department store building site. It was a big empty lot on the corner. They’ve built a building there now, a brand-new building, but there was linoleum in the parking lot where it used to be the inside of Ford’s department store. That was a good market. So we did four farmers’ markets a week.

Other Marketing Outlets

We [also] had five stores twice a week. That was actually a huge part of our income, was the stores. There was Community Foods, Staff of Life, Stapleton’s was a big store downtown [Santa Cruz], Aptos Natural Foods, and then New

Leaf, which originally was just this little store on the far end of town called Westside Community Market, and then they opened the one out on 41st, I think.⁶

We'd load our truck up. I'd get up on Tuesday mornings and Friday mornings at five in the morning and call in and take the orders from all the stores. We had an order form. Then we'd call up our workers and tell them what we needed to harvest, and then we'd load up. At the same time, we were getting another batch of produce and flowers ready for the farmers' markets.

Packing Lettuce for Wholesale

And we did wholesale, too, because we were really good at growing lettuce. We'd learned how to grow lettuce from the Salinas Valley guys. In the eighties, people didn't really know how to pack, and yet we knew how to pack. They required these very stringent packs. So that's one reason that we were sought after by all these stores. We sent these beautiful packs of lettuce to them.

Rabkin: What were the keys to correct lettuce packing?

Earnshaw: Well, first of all, you have twenty-four good heads in a box, not like ten good ones and fourteen small ones and misshapen ones. Then the way you pack them, there's a way of packing them so they're nice. You put the butts down. I notice people still don't do this, but you put the butts down and then on the top layer, you put the butts up, because lettuce, when you cut it, has a milky juice. If you put the butts on top of the leaves, then it discolors that whole bottom

row. You'd open the box, and it would be beautiful. We knew quality. We wouldn't send stuff out that wasn't quality.

On stuff that was seconds, we would sell it to the restaurants, because we had so much—we were growing eight kinds of lettuce—green leafs and red leafs and butters and romaines and trying new varieties—and we had a lot that wasn't perfect. So we sold to several restaurants.

Baumgartner: It was still good, but maybe it wasn't as big or—

Earnshaw: Beautiful.

Baumgartner: Yes.

Rabkin: What restaurants?

Earnshaw: McDharma's was one of the ones. That was the main one. We sold them a lot of beets and cabbage.

Rabkin: Back when it was still McDharma's?

Earnshaw: Yes, McDharma's up there on the corner of 17th and Portola. I had this route. I wouldn't get home until ten thirty at night. I would just go around and do all of the delivering. So that was our marketing strategy.

Marketing was a big deal. We heard this guy a long time ago when we first got started. We'd go to conferences, Eco-Farm and these others. We learned a lot from the conferences. But one guy one time said, "Anybody can grow it. The trick is being able to sell it." That was just absolutely true.

Baumgartner: I remember when the Cal Organic was selling—they had a forty-acre field of broccoli, and it came in and flooded all the stores here, and we were growing broccoli. It was kind of a drag, but it was more exciting to know that somebody could grow that much broccoli organically, because for so long people were saying, especially the people we knew in Salinas Valley from working on the research project, "Oh, sure, you can do it in your garden, but that's it." That was the accepted norm. Most people felt that way, but that large broccoli planting was part of the beginning of big ag going into organic.

Who Worked on the Farm?

Rabkin: Thinking about what you're telling me about your farm, I'm curious about how many people you had working for you in the big days of the farm, and what kind of jobs they did, and who they were.

Earnshaw: Well, I remember that at our height, we had fifteen people working for us. A lot of them worked all year long. Originally, when we started farming, we only farmed during the warm season, and the farmers' market didn't used to go twelve months a year either. It would close down right after Thanksgiving. We used to look forward to that. Then it would open up again in May or June.

And then they decided to go twelve months a year, and we decided to farm twelve months a year.

I've got this list of all of these people that worked for us, but a majority of them were Cabrillo and UCSC students, and then kind of that clique of people that lived in Santa Cruz at that time. They all knew each other, and their friends would come over: "Oh, can we work on your farm?"

Rabkin: Had some of these folks been apprentices at the UCSC Farm and Garden?

Earnshaw: I'm not sure they were apprentices. I don't remember having any apprentices. It was more just people who were, like I said, in this Santa Cruz network. We had people who would come from other farms. We had people that worked in both our farm and other farms. You know, they were just basically young white kids who didn't know anything about farming. We had come from this farm in Salinas where we were around a lot of Mexican workers who really knew how to work fast, and we'd try to teach these kids to work fast. It never really panned out. [laughs]

Baumgartner: Some of them did. Some of them worked really hard.

Earnshaw: Some of them were really good. One girl though, I remember her coming and saying years later, "You used to tell us to work fast and we'd get mad, and now I realize you were right. We weren't working that fast." [laughs]

Steiney used to have this expression, “hands a blur.” You’d think completely differently. But it was cool. There were some really good people there.

Rabkin: Did any of the folks who worked for you end up starting their own farms?

Earnshaw: One guy who worked for us is still farming, Ronald who has the Windmill Farms downtown now. He worked for Francis Corr at Santa Cruz Farms, and then he came to work for us. When we got rid of one of our farms, he took that piece of ground over. Then when we got rid of the other one, he took that one over too. Ronald Donkervoort is the one person I think who is still farming.

Some of these people were from Vermont, too. We had a bunch of people from Vermont. I think some of them went back to Vermont and were farming there. There was this flux of people would come from Vermont every winter.

Baumgartner: A couple of people that worked for us ended up working for CAFF [Community Alliance with Family Farmers] later.

Earnshaw: One guy, Brad, is working for Jacobs Farm now, and he’s a manager.⁸ He was one of our best workers ever. He grew up in a farming family in the Central Valley, and he was fantastic.

Baumgartner: Eagle and her husband Kevin have their own farm.

Earnshaw: In Nebraska.

Baumgartner: Some people went on to do environmental work.

The Joys of Farming

Rabkin: What were the main pleasures and satisfactions of that farming time for you?

Earnshaw: The people. And we loved working with plants. The joy of producing really good food and beautiful fields—all of that. It was great. It's unique. Agriculture and farming is just a completely different world from the other world. Until you've done it, you don't really know that. Everybody else, their money is a number on a piece of paper, but your money comes out of the ground and out of hard work and good weather, and you just are in a completely different world. It's a great world. The people part of it is the part that I really loved the most. And the plants, the beauty of all of these beautiful plants. We'd start all our own seeds and grow our own transplants. We'd take these seeds and know that all of this beautiful food was going to come out of it. The whole process was really fun.

Rabkin: How about you, Jo Ann?

Baumgartner: I liked being so caught up in the seasons. I knew exactly where the moon was and if it was going to rain. All the farmers knew. They know when it's going to be hot, when there's going to be heat spells, when it's going to rain, or at

least more than most people, just tracking the weather. I guess that whole feeling of being part of, and connected to, so much more of the world.

Backbreaking Work

Rabkin: What was hardest about farming?

Baumgartner: It was backbreaking. It was physically demanding. And not making a lot of money, because of our scale, I think. So that meant you could either work eight hours and make some money, or you could work ten or eleven hours a day seven days a week and make a living. We were fine making a living, but it wasn't comfortable.

Earnshaw: Yes, I remember the physical part was really—I mean, it was hard work, lifting boxes. We did everything. Jo Ann and I did everything. We did all the planting, the transplanting, the tractor work. Just staying on top of all of the scheduling [was] physically exhausting.

Baumgartner: Sunday was the day to plan.

Earnshaw: Sunday, we tried not to work. Anyhow, that was one thing. I'm sure it's not like that for everybody.

Baumgartner: Right, but most small farmers work six days a week, and they're working long hours. It's just the life. But there're these other benefits, like by selling at all the farmers' markets we really got to know the community. That

was such a good feeling. Even though you can't value it monetarily, people loved the food we were growing for them. So that was a really nice part of selling direct.

Early History of California Certified Organic Farmers

Rabkin: Your comment about community is maybe a good opportunity for a segue into talking about the organizations having to do with organic and sustainable farming that were springing up in the days when you guys were farming. What can you tell me about what you witnessed of the beginnings of those organizations?

Baumgartner: I remember we went to a CCOF meeting that Janet Brians chaired and Dale Coke was there, and maybe Ken Kimes.⁹ They were some of the core people. CCOF [California Certified Organic Farmers] had hardly begun. The paperwork was just in Barney Bricmont's office at that time.

Rabkin: When would this have been?

Earnshaw: It would have been around '84.

Baumgartner: '83.

Earnshaw: We went to our first Eco-Farm [conference] in January of '83, and that's when we were just starting to figure out we wanted to grow crops for a living. It had to have been after that. So it was either late '83 or '84.

Baumgartner: Yes, and that was very exciting—to meet other people at Eco-Farm.

Rabkin: Where was that first Eco-Farm conference that you attended?

Earnshaw: It was at La Honda.

Baumgartner: Yes, so let's see. Who else was around?

Earnshaw: Russel Wolter was a part of the early CCOF days. Janet Brians. And Steiney and Larkey and Frances were a part of it. And Molino Creek: Mark Lipson.

Baumgartner: When we first got certified, Ken Kimes was inspecting our farm—

Earnshaw: We used to inspect each other's farms. That's how they did it.

Baumgartner: So you didn't even have to be there. He just came over and left a note pinned on the barn door saying, "It looks good."

Rabkin: [laughs]

Earnshaw: That was our CCOF inspection.

Baumgartner: Yes, times have completely changed.

Earnshaw: We segued forward, but to segue back for a minute, when you talked about some of the difficulties of it—farming is like—there are so many things. The paperwork and regulations are some of them, also plumbing and city codes and all of that stuff. But the inspections and all of the paperwork involved, plus all the paperwork dealing with employees for years—Jo Ann would spend hours, hours, hours filling out these—we had to pay workman’s comp. There were all these forms for that.

Baumgartner: And register for farmers’ market.

Earnshaw: Get the ag commissioner to come out.

Baumgartner: Because we wanted to use Bt [*Bacillus thuringiensis*] and the Ag Commissioner had to know about that.

Earnshaw: And then what’s happened since with all of this food safety requirements—I mean, the stuff farmers have to go through now is just unbelievable. But that’s an element of farming—besides just going out there and growing crops—it’s just all this other stuff on top of it.

Rabkin: Since you mentioned worker’s comp and that you guys didn’t have it, I just wanted to interject a question about health insurance. Did you have health insurance?

Earnshaw: No. Absolutely not, no health insurance.

Rabkin: Okay. So let's come back now to CCOF in its early days.

Earnshaw: So they started having meetings up at the UCSC Farm and Garden where Jim Leap¹⁰ worked. For one year, we agreed to be co-presidents.

Rabkin: Of CCOF?

Earnshaw: Yes, of our chapter. There'd be an annual event up at UCSC. I'm trying to remember other stuff. I remember one time there was a real controversial meeting of CCOF out at Corralitos. That's the time Russel Wolter was really upset because he thought they were going way beyond the assessment. It was only supposed to be to help pay for minimal paperwork. Now it was broadening out and they were hiring people. A lot of farmers showed up and were very upset. Do you remember that meeting?

Baumgartner: No. Maybe I didn't go.

Earnshaw: No, you did. I remember it was weird. We were kind of still green to all of this. We sat in there. There were some real upset people at that meeting.

Baumgartner: Was it when CCOF got an actual office?

Earnshaw: It might have been around then. But it was more like some of the farmers were trying to question how the assessment was being done, and they were saying it should only be for keeping records. It was a big issue.

Thoughts on Large-Scale Organic Farms

Baumgartner: So we joined the Eco-Farm early on, maybe '84 or '85. We joined a committee first and then we joined the board, and so started to get to know people, not just here in our area but across the state, that were interested in sustainable agriculture, and how to bring more sustainably produced foods to everyone's shelves. Our goal was to get it in the big stores and have these huge corporations growing organic. [We] hadn't thought of the downside of that at the time. It was more about using less toxic pesticides and trying to farm more closely with nature.

Earnshaw: What's the downside?

Baumgartner: The downside is that some large organic farms dominate the markets, and took over a lot of the smaller markets that the smaller or medium-sized farmers developed. They just came in and took them. So those smaller farmers had to re-create themselves and develop more [markets] by marketing more locally, and many have.

Rabkin: So the advent of big organic has created competitive pressures for small organic farmers that have forced them to invent new niches and do things differently. Do you think there is another downside in terms of practices? Do you think anything's lost in terms of cultivation of ecological integrity when organic farming goes industrial scale, large scale?

Baumgartner: Well, there're definitely large organic farms that are just doing input substitutions, not really addressing the philosophy or the rule now. But it's hard to make the case that all small farmers are doing it right and all large farmers are doing it wrong, because there are some large farmers that are doing a really good job and small farmers that aren't.

Earnshaw: Yes, that's what I would say. It's very hard to generalize. Right now I work a lot with habitat on farms, planting hedgerows and grass waterways. We're working with some very large farms. These farmers are really into it. They believe in it. We've helped them create biodiversity farm plans, initially developed by Wild Farm Alliance. So you can't really generalize. Some big farms have been told by their shippers, "We're only going to buy your conventional produce if you give us x number of boxes of organic." So that's why they do organic. Like Jo Ann said, the substitution of materials is one thing. But others really do get it, that beneficial insects and crop rotations and cover crops and all that makes their crops grow better to the point where they've incorporated a lot of those practices into their conventional side.

It's difficult, the whole food system thing. Growing all the food here in this climate which is so valuable and sending it all over the country is a part of it, and that's what we've got. So I still think that having the big farms in organic is really good, like Jo Ann said, to get all of these toxic materials off the ground, away from the farm workers, and growing food that doesn't have poisons in it.

Baumgartner: Well, I don't still feel that way as much as I did back then.

Rabkin: Why?

Baumgartner: Because we need to rethink the scale of how we do business with agriculture. We really saw that a couple of years ago when oil prices went high. I doubt they're going to stay low like they are now. At some point, it's going to be too expensive to ship product all around the world like we do. When that happens, it's going to be hard for a grower in the Salinas Valley to produce ten thousand acres of lettuce. They're going to have to diversify, and get smaller.

Plus, the scale inherently brings problems with it, like we've seen with the food safety issue, because when you centralize and process huge amounts of product, if it's a risky product like with leafy greens, then it just amplifies the problem much more than if you are a small farmer with a small amount to process and sell.

There was a study done where people that live on their own farm actually have a higher interest in maintaining wildlife habitat than those that don't.¹¹ They value the natural resources around them, whereas when farmers rent land, it tends to be more of an extraction process going on than stewardship. I'm generalizing, but it seems that the more farmers living on the land—like Wendell Berry said years ago, “the more eyes to the acre,”—the better wild nature will co-exist with farms.

Food Safety and Handlers' Leafy Green Marketing Agreement

Earnshaw: Another thing, too, is food safety—I don't know how familiar you are with that issue, but there's been the question of habitat along the Salinas River and elsewhere being destroyed in order to create big, wide buffer zones.¹² Some organic farmers have been guilty of doing that. They're supposed to be embracing biodiversity in nature, and instead they're destroying wildlife habitat so they can sell their product. They're kind of caught in the middle, with the buyers requiring sterile farm situations without habitat, but that is an element to your question about the bigger farms because they are the ones that are taking out habitat—even though this has the potential to trickle down to smaller farms, too, if the worst case scenario of the food safety laws go through. Jo Ann's been very active fighting this, but if these big overriding laws go through, even small farmers are going to be required to be destroying habitat.

Baumgartner: Well, actually we don't know for sure. A lot of the requirements out there are not transparent. We just hear from farmers that they're supposed to comply with certain metrics. And what happens is the buyer comes out and says, "Oh, there's a hedgerow right there? Well, we'll just take the field that's not next to the hedgerow." So that makes a farmer not want to keep the hedgerow in or other native plants in riparian habitat, or on nearby steep slopes.

But one good thing that happened a couple of weeks ago was that the National Organics Standards board approved a comprehensive package for organic farmers, organic certifiers, inspectors, and the USDA program to address

biodiversity conservation.¹³ It's part of the federal rule, which came out in 2002. And it's been ignored, pretty much. We've been working on it almost since then. Some certifiers have been starting to address biodiversity, but this decision will now make it much more apparent to organic farmers that they need to consider how to conserve biodiversity. There's so many different ways that they can and are doing that, so the new NOSB decision will help further that intention.

Rabkin: Does that rule then trump something like the Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement?

Baumgartner: Yes it does, if you are an organic farmer. The Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement is voluntary, first of all, for handlers. But if you're a farmer and you're selling to that handler, you have to comply with it. So many organic farmers choose not to sell to them. But the marketing agreement itself doesn't tell farmers to take out habitat. It focuses on animals as a significant risk, and we feel like deer is one of those animals that shouldn't be on their list, which then has implications towards removing all habitat because deer are attracted to habitat. But farmers can conserve biodiversity, like having hedgerows, and still have safe produce. Habitat actually filters *E. coli*, researchers have found. It's just a matter of farmers starting to understand that.

Earnshaw: And buyers starting to understand.

Baumgartner: Well, I don't know that this decision at the NOSB [National Organic Standards Board] is going to make much difference at the buyer's level,

but farmers are going to have to care, if they want to stay certified. And ultimately it's good for food safety to have vegetation filtering water, for all sorts of other food-safety reasons, like a reduction of other pollutants in water and good pest control with native habitat that supports beneficial insects.

We began our foray into the sustainable agricultural world through being organic farmers, and this decision really feels good, because those large farms that we talked about, that maybe aren't doing all that they should, will start to think about how they're going to address it. It's not like the transformation is going to happen right away, but over time, it will. I think we'll see some changes in a good way.

Rabkin: So I just want to ground this discussion about food safety by acknowledging that a big catalyst for what's going on now was the September 2006 outbreak of *E. coli* 0157:H7. That was in spinach from near the Salinas Valley.¹⁴ And it's in the wake of that, which was one of several instances over time of food safety events, that there's been this renewed concern about food safety and growing and processing of leafy greens, among other things. I know that both of you are engaged deeply in efforts to increase biodiversity on farms, particularly organic farms. We've begun this discussion, but I'd like to hear more from both of you about what you've seen as the downside or the detriment in the wake of the '06 event, in terms of: has that caused some backsliding for increased biodiversity on farms, and what you see as hopeful developments in the wake of that event? Jo Ann, you've touched on one, but maybe there are others as well.

Baumgartner: Well, we documented a mile of mature riparian trees a hundred feet wide cut down along the Salinas River, because of this food safety pressure.

Rabkin: A farmer cut those trees down in order not to scare buyers away?

Baumgartner: Yes.

Earnshaw: You should go to the Wild Farm Alliance website, and then the CAFF website has some materials on food safety too. The Wild Farm Alliance website has a lot of pictures and articles and briefing papers on it.¹⁵

Rabkin: And you made presentations about this at the last Eco-Farm conference as well.

Baumgartner: Yes, and we had a teach-in last fall in San Francisco on food safety. The video clips are up on our website.

We knew things were getting a little dicey, but it wasn't until the Monterey Resource Conservation District did a growers' survey, probably six months after that spinach contamination, where they found that of the farmers managing 140,000 acres, eighty-nine percent were taking out habitat, putting in sterile ground buffers, putting up fences, killing wildlife. That's when we realized that it was a huge problem.¹⁶

Right now what's happening is the Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement, which has improved over time but still has some problems, is being proposed to be a national agreement. Even if they did take deer off the list and fix some of the really vague areas, there's this other problem—what we're calling super metrics, that have arisen at the same time as the LGMA. Super metrics are private company food safety requirements that market their programs as the safest, with the most sterile farms that you could imagine. Buyers like that. Buyers want zero risk. But Nature never provides zero risk. So what we are most concerned about with the proposed national LGMA is that it's going to bring with it a new set of super metrics nationwide, and we could be seeing the same habitat destruction there that we are seeing in the Salinas Valley.

Rabkin: Can you give an example of what you mean by super metrics?

Baumgartner: Well, the problem with super metrics is that they're not transparent. You can't go to somebody's website. There's a couple, maybe, that I know of, two or three out of probably a hundred that are publicly available. Fresh Express, which sells a lot of bagged salad mix, was interviewed soon after the spinach contamination, and they told *USA Today* what their metrics were, including a four-hundred-and-fifty-foot sterile ground buffer between crops and habitats.¹⁷ The problem is, if you call Fresh Express, they're going to say, "We don't have to share the complete set of requirements with you." And then I hear from some farmers that Fresh Express is requiring less, but just the other day, I heard that they were back to the same old thing.

[These] metrics encourage farmers to take out habitat and to not protect water quality, while the California State Water Board and our regional boards are requiring farmers who use irrigation to protect water quality. Plus, there are farmers saying that they are poisoning frogs because they can't sell salad mix with frogs nearby. There's endangered frogs in our area. So how do they know if they're going against the Endangered Species Act? I doubt they're surveying and saying, "Oh, I won't poison these." So all kinds of laws and regulations are being ignored—from organic to Endangered Species Act to water quality protections—and it's all because these super metrics are marketing a product. It's not that it's safer, because habitat can help to reduce food safety pathogens.

So right now, besides the LGMA, there are congressional bills proposed that could potentially require metrics on the farm like the LGMA, only they would be for all crops. It's all getting worked out in subcommittees. What we feel like is the risky crops should have some food safety requirements associated with them, like leafy greens that are going to processing, but they should also consider how you can farm with non-crop vegetation that helps achieve food safety.

Earnshaw: One of the things being that a lot of the outbreaks are associated with bagged, processed leafy greens—the one-size-fits-all is what's really difficult about this—large farmers sending huge amounts to the processors should be treated differently than small farmers.

You asked the question about how it's affected our work. Right before the spinach outbreak, two, three years before, there'd been a whole movement in the

ag community that we noticed around here. Farmers were becoming more proactive about conserving and installing habitat and grassed waterways. The Water Board was behind this. There was this whole TMDL issue.

Rabkin: TMDL?

Earnshaw: Total Maximum Daily Load that an irrigated farm could discharge into the waterways.

Rabkin: Load of?

Earnshaw: Like sediments and pollutants.

Baumgartner: Including pesticides.

Earnshaw: Pollutants. At first, they resisted it, and then a six-county Farm Bureau coalition got together and decided, "We're not going to fight this. We'll work with them." So they worked with the Water Board. Water quality short courses were offered, and lots of farmers took them. I took it. Jo Ann took the course. When I was there at one of them, one of the NRCS [Natural Resources Conservation Service] guys I know came up to me and said, "Let me introduce you to this farmer. He's a big farmer in Salinas Valley. Let's try putting a grass waterway on this ditch that he's got." The guy said, "Yes, this is great." So we went out and worked with him on putting perennial grasses in one of his ditches. We also put a hedgerow in. Then we came back when the RCD [Resource

Conservation District] got some money, and we did six more plantings on this guy's farm. He showed me at one point his food safety audit from this Primus Labs (this was before the spinach disaster), where they were docking him points for having weeds in the ditches—that's what the auditor was calling our grass waterways—weeds. Even though this farmer's father had a total clean-farm philosophy, he said, "I like this, and I'm going to just stick with it."

We did little trials; we did two- or three-hundred-foot trials. We didn't do his miles and miles of ditches. And then the spinach crisis hit, and after that, this guy was not interested in installing any more plantings on these ditches. So where we had these farmers who were really positively responding to water quality protections, all of a sudden, they don't want to do it.

Now, in a way, they're starting to come back a little bit. I did a grassed roadway with one of these huge farms in Salinas. It's about the only grass roadway you can find in the whole Salinas Valley. And it's still there, and he's growing leafy greens next to it. That's interesting for me. I thought he would have ripped it out or not grown these crops next to it, or maybe he's not allowed to harvest next to it. I don't know. But yes, there have definitely been effects on what we're doing, because of food safety.

Rabkin: Both of you are doing work that demonstrates the ways in which buffers and these other farmscaping techniques can actually help clean the water, prevent the transmission of pathogens to harvested crops. It seems that if that information were more widely understood, there might be less pressure on the

farmers to rip out their hedgerows and so forth. Do you see that information getting spread to growers?

Baumgartner: I don't think it's a grower issue so much as helping buyers understand that they need to be part of the solution. Because right now they say, "It's not our problem. Just give us clean food we can market, and we don't care what the risk is."

Earnshaw: Zero risk is what they want.

Baumgartner: Yes. Well, they want zero risk, but: "We don't care what the impact is on the environment. That's not our business." So until they understand that some of the practices that they are marketing are really counterproductive for food safety, I don't know that things are going to change too easily. But they don't really want to talk to us either, which is the problem. They hold a lot of the cards and know that.

Rabkin: How do you see that impasse getting resolved?

Baumgartner: Well, one of the strategies we are developing is working with the media. We got a lot of media articles as a result of our food safety teach-in that we did last fall. We felt like it would be really good for the public to start to understand this issue, which is beginning to occur. And then more recently, in the last month, there was a whole suite of e-mails going out saying food safety is

the end of organic farming. These e-mails went across the country to all kinds of blogs.¹⁸

Rabkin: Who originated them?

Baumgartner: I don't know. It was a couple of people, I think. But they ended up getting sustainable-ag groups across the country concerned, and congressional people listening to these sustainable-ag people about that fear. Now all of these groups are paying attention to food safety, and some of Congress anyway is open to hearing from their constituents about sustainable agriculture, or at least organic agriculture, whereas before they didn't even consider the fact that there could be a problem. One size does not fit all.

I think that as more people understand food-safety conflicts, it will help things change. It would be good for more farmers to be able to stand up for their habitat and understand how to be able to educate their auditors, because often the auditors are not trained to be out on farms. They're coming from industrial processing-plant inspections where everything is sterile and should be sterile. Farmers have told us that they'll look at native habitat and say, "That's harboring rodents. It's harborage. Get rid of that harborage." Field rodents aren't a food safety problem, according to all of the literature.

Earnshaw: They're a food quality problem, but not a food safety.

Rabkin: You mean, because they nibble on the crops.

Baumgartner: They might get mowed and have mouse parts in there, but it's not an *E. coli* O157 issue.

Earnshaw: And that's how the processors have confused this issue to their benefit.

Rabkin: How so?

Earnshaw: They've said, "Oh, this is a food safety issue," getting a mouse part in the bag, then the farmers and the buyers and auditors started putting pressure on the habitat. Whereas if it had simply been an issue about getting mouse parts or something else in the bag, then they've got to figure out ways to keep them out, but it's not food safety. Wild Farm Alliance has been really good at making the distinction between food safety and food quality.

Lighthouse Farm Program through Community Alliance with Family Farmers

Baumgartner: I wanted to go back to a couple of things that Sam's been involved with. He put on about five hundred farmer breakfasts, workshops, and field tours in this region.

Rabkin: Wow. Five hundred?

Baumgartner: Through CAFF.

Earnshaw: CAFF has an office upstairs [in the same building as the Wild Farm Alliance office in Watsonville]. When Jo Ann and I were selling at the farmers' market at Cabrillo, this guy came up to us one day saying that CAFF had gotten some money from the Foundation for Deep Ecology to help change agriculture in California.

Rabkin: When was this?

Earnshaw: This was probably '91 or '92. It was right when we were starting to think about backing off of farming. It took us five years to get out of it, but we had kind of made the decision that that was not where we wanted to go. "Get big or get out" was kind of where we were at, and we did not want to get big.

So I started working ten hours a week for CAFF. They had a big meeting in the [UC] Kearney Agricultural Center and invited farmers from all over California. CAFF had a different constituency then. It wasn't even called CAFF. It was called CAN, California Action Network, and then they merged with CAFF, which was California Alliance with Family Farmers to become 'Community' Alliance with Family Farmers. That happened later on.

I started working ten hours a week, and what came out of that meeting was input from farmers: What can be done to get some new ideas into agriculture? It was Phil Foster actually who came up with the idea. He said, "Farmers have breakfasts all over the world. Why don't you tie into this?"

A model for that was this organization in the Central Valley called California Clean Growers Association, which was a bunch of peach other fruit growers. Paul Buxman and Fred Smeds and others used to get together, and they were members of CAFF. CAFF always looked at that as a really neat thing. So we took that as a model, and they hired me to start having breakfasts.

Since I knew all these farmers from farmers' markets and farming, I'd call them and say, "Hey, let's start this program. Let's do this." It started off really slow. One of our first ones, I think, was at a restaurant (it's not even there anymore), Amanda's, up at Freedom Boulevard. Richard Smith from UC and Brad Bennett, an organic farmer, came. I think Jim Leap from UCSC might have come to that one, as well.

Baumgartner: But after a while, you started developing other programs.

Earnshaw: So what happened was we started that and—

Rabkin: And the purpose of the breakfasts was?

Earnshaw: Was to share information. That's all it was, sharing information. That's what the California Clean guys did. They brought a leaf to the meeting. "What's eating this leaf? What's the disease on this leaf?"

So we built it up to having four breakfasts a month. I did it for a year or two, and then Reggie Knox¹⁹ started working for us with me—we got so busy, and the

money kept coming in on this program. We actually tied in to NRCS EQIP [Environmental Quality Incentives Program] money. At that time, it was funding outreach. It no longer does that, but that funded a lot of our work.

So we were putting four breakfasts on. We were meeting at the [Ristorante] Avanti in Santa Cruz. We had different places here in Watsonville. It was always difficult finding a place in Watsonville. We had various ones in Salinas, various meeting locations, and then in Hollister, we met at Jerry's Restaurant. It was cool. We had this network of people who would meet monthly. We sent out postcards. We had a newsletter called *The Foghorn*, because it was called the Lighthouse Farm Program. And then we'd have field days. At the time compost was becoming a really big issue—I mean, really big. The state was involved. So we put on some big field days over at Pat Herbert's. So over the course of the years, we figured out we put on about four or five hundred meetings on.

Baumgartner: They gave you a plaque for "Most Breakfasts Eaten."

Earnshaw: What Jo Ann was kind of alluding to earlier when you were talking about this, it did help really build up the sustainable-ag movement. It was a great program. Then other organizations started doing the same thing. It was like the bell curve. It went up, and I thought it was just going to zoom up, but it never really did. It kind of flattened out, and then it started dropping off, and fewer and fewer people came, but a lot of them stayed in the CAFF and Eco-Farm networks. We tied in with Eco-Farms somewhat. So it was a really exciting thing, and a lot of the work I'm doing now and all of us are doing now is from these

networks that developed out of that program. It was a really exciting, good program.

Rabkin: Can you think of some examples of current relationships or projects that have in fact blossomed out of that networking?

Baumgartner: Well, it seems like a lot of the hedgerows that have been put in over the years are with farms that have either farmers that were attending some of those meetings and/or that had made those earlier connections. That was a really big network.

Preserving Agricultural Land in Watsonville

Another thing that you didn't talk about was Watsonville has an urban growth boundary. It's because Sam and others, Ken Kimes and a group of people, got together and preserved farmland that was going to be developed.

Earnshaw: That was starting in '96. You were part of it.

Baumgartner: I was part of the last year.

Earnshaw: We formed the Campaign to Save Pajaro Valley Farmlands and Wetlands.²⁰ We got a coalition of different groups together. They were trying to annex 1,000 acres here, 212 acres right outside as you go out Riverside [Drive] on the north side. They were trying to get that, and 646 acres with the Tai property on the west side of Highway 1, which the Land Trust has just recently acquired.

A decision was being pushed through the city council and the county, and we put together this very effective campaign and fought them at hearings and in the papers and individual contacts and were successful at LAFCO [Local Agency Formation Commission] twice. They ended up with zero. That's when we came up with a growth boundary strategy, where we actually ended up conceding them ninety-five acres, while gaining a 25-year Urban Growth Boundary. If you drive north on Highway 1 between Riverside Dr. and Green Valley Rd. and you look to the right, that 95-acre piece is what we gave up.

Rabkin: The one that's full of houses now?

Earnshaw: It's next to the one full of houses.

Baumgartner: But we also got some wetlands. Actually Watsonville Slough historically flowed through there. That's getting converted back to wetlands.

Earnshaw: We gave up ninety-five acres, but only fifty-five of it can be developed. So the whole upper part is going to be in wetlands and ponds. One of the arguments all the way along is that this isn't a really great area for industry that creates jobs. That's the whole thing: jobs and housing, jobs and housing. But it wasn't a good area for it. So here it is, twelve years later, and it's still sitting there vacant, because there's no interest. There're only three roads into Watsonville here, [Highways] 129, 152, and 1, and they're not big roads. Industry doesn't want to locate here. Everything's high-priced. The county regulations are

really tough. So it was driven by development. The owners wanted to make money off of their land.

Baumgartner: I think what was exciting about that result was that so many people valued farmland for different reasons. A lot of the farming community wanted the land to stay in farming, although not everybody. A lot of the community valued the viewshed.

I came into it later, but Sam and others would get up every Monday morning for a couple of years. There was close to a dozen people coming over to Jerry and Jean Thomas's farm to brainstorm on: Who's going to write the next letter to the editor? What was it going to contain? What was the next strategy?

Earnshaw: What are we going to do this week?

Baumgartner: Yes, there was a whole list of who they had to educate next and still continue to get that voice out into the community. That was really important.

Wild Farm Alliance

Rabkin: Something else we haven't talked about really at all, Jo Ann, is Wild Farm Alliance: how it began, and how you got involved and what your mission is.

Baumgartner: Our mission is to promote a healthy, viable agriculture that protects and restores wild Nature. The Foundation for Deep Ecology had a

meeting in 2000 where they invited people from the conservation and sustainable-ag worlds. They had realized that there was a lot of commonality in both of those worlds, because they were funding both. So from that, our board emerged. Initially, the Foundation for Deep Ecology funded us, but now we have funding from lots of different foundations and some government agencies. Initially, we were focusing a lot on education, such as: What does it mean to accommodate wild Nature? So we helped our board president, Dan Imhoff, put out a book, *Farming with the Wild*.²¹ We've published a lot of briefing papers and made about 100 presentations.

More recently though, we're working on policy issues like the organic biodiversity issue and the food safety issue. And then we've started working regionally. Our focus is North America, which is big, but we started collaborating with CAFF, where we do different activities that support each other's work. So we do biodiversity farm plans and have expanded on the scope of conservation plantings that CAFF has done in the past, and working with farmers to put in wildlife corridors, doing riparian restoration, and hedgerows, which farmers love.

Hedgerows

Rabkin: Why do farmers love hedgerows?

Baumgartner: Well, because they support beneficial insects. Most farmers love pollinators and other kinds of insects like predators and parasitic insects that

attack pest insects. In this area, I think it's caught on. I would imagine that most farmers know what hedgerows are, wouldn't you think?

Earnshaw: I guess. Well, now it's so funny, because last week, we were working on a project with a big group of berry farmers, and I rode around with one of the biggest, most successful farmers because he wanted a hedgerow.

Baumgartner: He grows raspberries, and pollinators are really good for raspberries.

Earnshaw: He grows raspberries and strawberries and blackberries. So we went over and looked at where he talked about having this planting. Then I said, "Well, let me go show you some of these hedgerows." So we took two hours and drove all around the Pajaro Valley showing him. He didn't know they were hedgerows. In direct answer to what you were saying, he said, "I always thought those were just bushes." We were looking at the big hedgerows we've got across from the fairgrounds along [Highway] 152 there. That's the beauty of what we're doing in these farm plans, too, educating farmers about this component of agriculture. It's more than just a crop in the ground. It's the whole bigger-picture.

Baumgartner: And it is more than just supporting beneficial insects. Once they start putting habitat in, they start to see that there's all kinds of nature that comes in with it. Some nature is really beneficial. I did my master's [thesis on] looking at birds eating codling moth in apple orchards. I remember after making presentations about this to farmers, and they'd say, "Yes, we thought those birds

were doing something in there but we didn't know what," There are a lot of birds that eat insects. Many insectivorous birds don't eat fruit. So as a farmer develops the different kinds of plants on their farm, with varying structure, birds come in to help control pests, although often these insectivorous birds only work the edges of an orchard, but still they're important.

The farm is part of this larger landscape that is mostly supporting these native birds, and it really doesn't stop at its borders. There're things moving through. Hopefully there's clean water coming in and leaving and there're pollinators and ladybugs and lacewings and chickadees and all kinds of species that are a part of that farm.

Earnshaw: CAFF got a grant a few years ago to write a hedgerow guide—it's free on our website to download.²²

Rabkin: I've downloaded it, yes. Say the title for the transcript.

Earnshaw: It's called *Hedgerows for California Agriculture: A Resource Guide*. Jo Ann was talking of hedgerows, and you asked the question about what they do. Besides beneficial insects and pollinators, they offer erosion protection and runoff control, weed replacement, and serve as windbreaks. They can bring economic returns. They form barriers and help with air quality, wildlife habitat, aesthetics, dust control, and general increase in biodiversity. So it's not just insects. But that's what a lot of farmers come into it for. They want it for the insects or water quality, and then these other benefits are there.

Rabkin: And you also do other kinds of farmscaping besides hedgerows *per se*.

Earnshaw: Grass waterways and filter strips and windbreaks and riparian plantings. It's all kind of the same thing.

Rabkin: Jo Ann, Wild Farm Alliance published a book that you co-edited called *Farming and the Fate of Wild Nature*.²³ Tell me about the impact of that book. Have you seen it have an effect?

Baumgartner: At different times, people tell me that they've read it and it really resonated with different articles. It's all reprints from other people that were writing on this subject: the nexus between agriculture and Nature. One of the things we did was send copies out to most of the universities that cover sustainable agriculture or bigger conservation issues. And a lot of professors started using that in their classes. So that was exciting, because it covers a broad scope of different issues and gives a variety of examples of how farms are both supporting and coming in conflict with nature, and how people are trying to address that. So, yes, it's been good. We may do a reprint of it. We haven't decided.

Rabkin: Is it currently not in print?

Baumgartner: We don't have very many copies left.

Rabkin: So Sam, I realized that one thing that we haven't really covered in connection with your work is how you make the contact with farmers who might be interested in farmscaping, hedgerows, and so forth—how you work with them.

Earnshaw: A lot of it comes from just knowing people over the years. We see them at meetings. People call me. I get phone calls out of the blue that they've heard from somebody else. And I know farmers who've done it, and a lot of these farmers have a lot of land. So we go back to them and say, "Well, we got more funding. Have you got anywhere else on your farm to put a planting?" It's been in our newsletters that we do this. At a workshop we had out at Triple M Ranch that the Central Coast Ag Water Quality Coalition put on that we're part of their grant, I walked around and talked about grass waterways, and a farmer came up to me and said, "I want one of these on my farm."

On the one that I'm doing now on a big farm in Salinas, the farmer came to a workshop at Eco-Farm and saw a presentation on wasps being associated with the native shrub coyote brush. We have a list now of over forty, maybe even as many as sixty farmers on it, who have contacted us one way or another, who want projects. It's people who over the years see or hear about the projects. We run into them at meetings and conferences. It's a network within the ag community.

And then we have a project that if the state money gets reinstated, we would be doing seven plantings in the Watsonville Slough area. So we're thinking we're

going to have to outreach to a few new farmers, figure out a way. And the way you do it is you go to a farmer: “Who do you know who might be interested in this?” So you get a name of a farmer. It’s pretty much grassroots on the ground, just networking. Like I said, I get sometimes two or three calls a week from people I’ve never met or heard of who say, “I’m interested in having a hedgerow,” and we end up doing projects with a lot of them. But our funding is really limited right now by the state freeze, and the economy. Support has been good for these plantings for a lot of years, and now it’s getting kind of lean. We’re going to have to be real creative to keep this program going.

Transformations in the Organic Food System

Rabkin: Is there anything we haven’t addressed that either of you would like to touch on before we finish up?

Earnshaw: Organic agriculture has changed. Things *have* really changed in the Central Coast. When we started (as Jo Ann said), organic farming was just very minor and marginalized. We worked with these big Salinas Valley growers, and they would just laugh about farming without pesticides and chemical fertilizers. Then we’d go to Eco-Farm, and we heard about Steve Pavich who’s growing a thousand acres of grapes. We’d tell the farmers that, and they would say, “Oh, that’s just grapes. You can’t do it with vegetables. It can only be done in the backyard and it will never be done on a commercial scale.” And now these same farmers are growing some crops organically. That’s not a very long period of time for such a rapid change. When we started, you couldn’t go into a

supermarket and get organic food. And now you can almost go anywhere in the United States, and there is *something* at least organic, whether it's carrots or salad mix or some of the easier stuff that gets marketed. The whole industry's responded. And farmers' markets have proliferated. This farmers' market at Cabrillo was fighting for its life when we came into it. The state was trying to impose regulations where a farmer would have had to standardize boxes to even come to farmers' market. But that did not happen.

And now we have CSAs. We haven't talked about that. When we were farming, this guy showed up from Massachusetts at our farm one day. He tried to talk us into starting a CSA in the late eighties, and we just didn't want to have *anything* to do with it, because we were busy with what we had. We were comfortable with our marketing. It was working for us. But that was just as these big farms started coming in. CSAs have been a great boon for small farmers. Many farms around here have CSAs with hundreds, if not a thousand people in them. So that's a big change that we've seen.

I guess the other big change is just the tremendous amount of regulations that we didn't really have to deal with. We were very lucky. I remember I was asked to give a talk at one of these Farm Bureau meetings one time to compare organic and conventional, and I remember holding up this—I pulled this piece of paper up. It was a computer printout. As I held it up, it just kept flopping down and down and down. I said, "This is what we have to fill out to be an organic farmer." Everybody in the class was kind of shocked. That was a long time ago. Since then, it may have gotten more intense.

Baumgartner: The model organic system plan approved by the NOSB is twenty-something pages. Some certifiers use that and some certifiers shorten it. It's a few pages. But if you want to go for NRCS, Natural Resource Conservation Service, cost-share support, it's a lot more pages than that.

Earnshaw: That's right. But let's end this on a positive note. [laughs]

Baumgartner: If farmers don't want to market through organic, they don't have to.

Earnshaw: I remember feeling how people really didn't understand the economics of growing, the hard work it was to farm. We would go back year in and year out and not be able to raise our prices. That was something that we never really were aware of when we weren't farming. And you know, it's still the case. Every year, everything goes up—gas and drip tape and rents and everything, but the price of food stays the same. It forces farmers to do all kinds of things. The rents here for ground in Watsonville are over two thousand dollars an acre per year. So farmers are having to farm three crops a year when they only used to do two and then put in a cover crop. It's hurting the land. Water's a problem.

Our society needs to understand that the price of food in the store is not related to the cost of production, and that's wrong. It is related to supply and demand and other market influences. Everybody says this. We've been saying it ever since we learned about it, but it's something that's so true. Farmers are the most

creative, adaptable people, but they're not elevated in our society to a place that they ought to be.

Rabkin: Jo Ann, any last words?

Baumgartner: From my perspective, it seems like often farmers we've known a long time say that they really enjoy increasing the diversity on their farm because they're just tired of growing the same crops year after year after year. And now that they've incorporated this diversity, this whole new aspect of agriculture has come into their management and their daily lives and they love it. I think that's exciting, to help farmers get to that place and help them understand some of the benefits that they accrue and that the community as a whole does.

Rabkin: Great. Thank you both very much.

¹ See the oral history with Barney Bricmont in this series.

² See the oral history with Russel and Karen Wolter in this series.

³ See the oral history with Dennis Tamura in Maya Hegege and Randall Jarrell, *The Early History of the UCSC Farm and Garden* (Regional History Project, University Library, UCSC, 2003) <http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/farmgarden.html>

⁴ See the oral history with Jerry and Jean Thomas in this series.

⁵ See the oral histories with Jeff Larkey of Route One Farms, with Ken Kimes & Sandra Ward of New Natives, and with Mark Lipson of Molino Creek Farm, all in this series.

⁶ See the oral history with Scott Roseman in this series for more on the evolution of New Leaf Market from its origins as Our Neighborhood Co-op.

⁷ In 1988 McDharma's, a vegetarian restaurant in Santa Cruz, lost a trademark lawsuit brought by McDonald's fast food chain. McDharma's was re-named Dharma's and is still in business in Capitola, California. See <http://www.dharmaland.com/history/imageextra.html>

⁸ See the oral history with Larry Jacobs of Jacobs Farm in this series.

⁹ See the oral histories with Janet Brians, Dale Coke, Ken Kimes, and Barney Bricmont in this series for more on the early history of CCOF.

¹⁰ See the oral history with Jim Leap in this series.

¹¹ Paul Robins, "Private Land-Common Ground: A Case Study of Farmers, Landowners and Wildlife Habitat on Willow and Dry Sloughs in Yolo County, California." UC Davis Community Development Master's Thesis. 1995.

¹² See <http://www.caff.org/policy/leafygreen.shtml> for more on the leafy greens issue, and http://www.wildfarmalliance.org/Press%20Room/press_room_destruction.htm, including the

Wild Farm Alliance's paper, "Environmental Destruction in the Salinas Valley: 'Food Safety' Requirements to Remove Habitat Make Leafy Greens Less Safe."

¹³ See http://www.wildfarmalliance.org/Press%20Room/press_room_NOSB_letter4-09.htm

¹⁴ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2006_United_States_E._coli_outbreak

¹⁵ http://www.wildfarmalliance.org/Press%20Room/press_room_destruction.htm

¹⁶ See Melanie Beretti and Diana Stuart, "Food Safety and Environmental Quality Impose Conflicting Demands on Central Coast Growers," <http://www.rcdmonterey.org/>

¹⁷ See "'Fresh Express leads the pack' in Food Safety," *USA Today*, October 23, 2006.

¹⁸ See, for example: <http://www.grist.org/article/Food-scare>

¹⁹ See the oral history with Reggie Knox in this series.

²⁰ See Reggie Knox's oral history in this series for more on the Campaign to Save Pajaro Valley Farmlands and Wetlands.

²¹ Daniel Imhoff, *Farming with the Wild* (Sierra Club Books and Watershed Media, 2003).

²² See www.caff.org/programs/farmscaping/Hedgerow.pdf

²³ Daniel Imhoff and Jo Ann Baumgartner eds., *Farming and the Fate of Wild Nature: Essays on Conservation-based Nature*, (University of California Press, 2006).