

California AgVentures



Hitting the Farm Trail to Adventure

Farm trails are an increasingly popular way to bring American consumers directly to agricultural producers.

Farm Trails have emerged as a key to increasing direct marketing and incomes on California's small farms. The primary goal of the trails is to increase revenue by bringing consumers to the farm to purchase fruits, vegetables, and value-added products from farm stores and stands and participate in agritourism and other activities such as festivals. In building sustainable local and alternative food systems, farm trails can be an important link between agricultural producers and consumers of their goods.

Usually created through joint efforts by farmers, local businesses, county chambers of commerce and tourism boards, regional farming associations, and the University of California's *Small Farm Program*, farm trails can also serve to increase county tourism revenue and income for local small businesses that advertise on a map.

For Farmers

Farmers benefit from farm trails through increased direct marketing of agricultural and value-added products. Additionally, having visitors to the



farm increases opportunities for farmers to diversify their revenue-generating activities away from simple production into agritourism (e.g., you-pick, farm stands, pony rides, etc.). Finally, farm trails provide a way for farmers to collaborate in marketing their shared agricultural region, products, and history.

For Consumers

Farm trails assist consumers in obtaining locally grown food, supporting local food systems, and finding healthy outdoor entertainment through agritourism. Maps spell out which farmers are offering which products and often include helpful tools such as harvest calendars, enabling consumers to plan their farm visits. Farm trails encourage consumers to visit farms by making it easier for them to locate two or three farms with different products in

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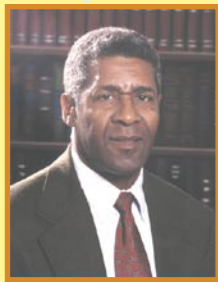
California's Farm Trail Adventures

Manas Ranch Produce and Beef

Central Coast Agritourism Guide

Napa Yolo Harvest Trails Website

Calaveras Grown Products



Editor's Note

This issue focuses on the growing Farm Trail network in California.

Farm trails are a user-friendly and effective way of organizing farms and ranches that allow consumers to match their needs and interests with businesses that can meet those needs. The fact that new regional groupings are being developed is a hopeful sign. Agriculture's historical independence has been admirable and useful in some respects. But the reality of the modern economy is that cooperation in marketing is more cost effective and has greater potential impact in the long run, particularly for those without deep pockets.

We hope this issue helps spread awareness about the various farm trails throughout California with positive results for consumers and farmers alike. ■

Desmond Jolly
Director, UC Small Farm Center

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a single area, making them more likely to actually make the trip.

For Local Small Business Owners

Small local businesses also benefit from farm trails. Businesses that produce goods such as wine, bakery items, and artisan cheeses find that farm trail maps are a good place to advertise. Businesses that carry locally produced goods, such as vegetable stands, also find farm trails can be a good marketing venue.

Additionally, even local businesses that are not involved in agriculture but that still have an interest in the economic viability of the region find benefits from advertising on a farm trail map.

For Tourism Bureaus and Government Offices

County and regional tourism bureaus and industry promotion associations may find that a regional farm trail map boosts tourism revenue.

Farm Trail Maps

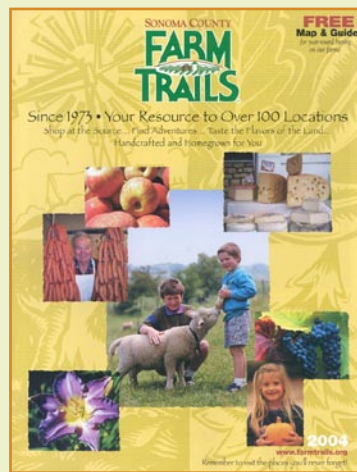
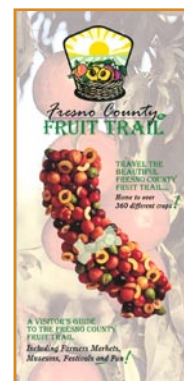
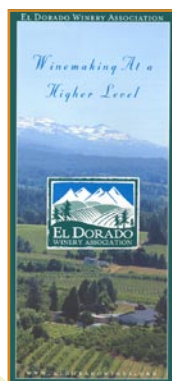
Farm trail maps vary in creative design, in features, and with the local agricultural communities' needs. Generally speaking, they are regional (by county, growing area, etc.) and identify local farms and the products sold there. Thus, only farms that are equipped to receive visitors and market goods directly are listed on a map. In addition, local food artisans

producing cheese, wine, beer, honey, etc., can be listed, along with museums and cultural sites, hunting and fishing venues, bed and breakfast facilities, and restaurants and markets that use local agricultural goods. Farm trail maps often offer harvest calendars showing when individual crops are available. Some also feature product indexes so consumers

can find specific goods. Listings for local farmers markets and fairs, as well as interesting historical information on the region's agricultural industry, also contribute to making a great farm trail map.

The maps can be made as traditional folding maps or produced as booklets, and many maps and supportive information are now available on websites where they can be conveniently downloaded as needed.

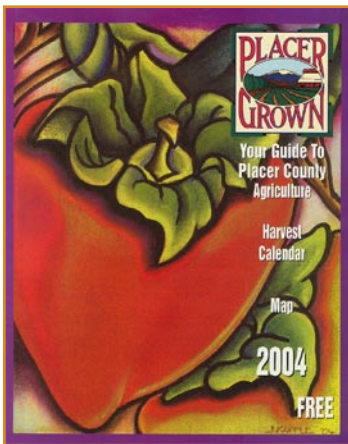
The *Sonoma County Farm Trails Map & Guide*, for example, is produced by Sonoma County Farm Trails, an organization specifically working on the annual production of its map and guide. Presented in booklet form, the guide's index features



California offers a multitude of farm trail adventures throughout the state.

a harvest calendar, maps by county region, an index of members according to product, and listings of individual members and associate members. In an effort to lure urbanites to the county, the guide has a mileage chart specifying how far the county is from nearby cities and a detailed road map of the county. In addition to listing farmers and other businesses that sell locally produced goods, the guide is funded by other local businesses who are associate members. They include providers of financial services, arts and antiques, etc.

As tools designed to enhance direct marketing and consumption of agritourism activities, farm trails have emerged at a time when Americans are growing more conscientious about food and more informed about the effects of their food-buying dollars on local farmers and businesses. Additionally, recent trends in health and exercise encourage people to seek more wholesome tourism activities such as farm stays and other agritourism venues. Thus, farm trails are well-positioned for success as Americans are more receptive than ever to using these maps to obtain food and outdoor entertainment. ■



Manas Ranch

Even before Manas Ranch was founded, Fred Manas was no stranger to the challenges of fruit farming. Growing



Fred Manas of Manas Farms shows off some of his produce.

Photo: Isabella Kenfield

up on a one-hundred-acre apricot ranch outside of Winters, Manas watched his father deal with fruit brokers and recalls, “It about broke him.” So when he and his wife Alice were starting Manas Ranch in Esparto, Manas was adamant that he would not deal with brokers or middlemen. “I told my wife that we’ll plant peaches, and

if I can’t sell them all, we’ll let them fall on the ground,” he recalls. “I’m not going to see brokers make money while I don’t.”

Everything produced on Manas Ranch is sold directly from the farm. “This way you’ve got control,” says Fred, who admits to being “somewhat of a control freak.” He believes farmers are better at selling their own products because they put their “blood, sweat, and tears into them. Brokers do not know your commodity and are not going to sell it as passionately as you can. To a broker you’re just a number.” By assuming responsibility for marketing and selling his products and disregarding traditional marketing channels, Manas is both agricultural producer and marketer.

Background

Manas’ maternal grandparents emigrated from Spain in the early 1900s, first to Hawaii, where they worked as what Manas calls “indentured servants” on a sugar plantation. Their hard work paid off—they bought three farms in California,

Central Coast Agritourism Council Launches Regional Agritourism Guide

The Central Coast Agritourism Council (CCAC) is a grower-driven, grassroots marketing association for a small group of farmers and ranchers. CCAC collaborates with local tourism professionals to promote the region’s agricultural way of life. The council has chosen agritourism as a mechanism by which to educate the public about the rural way of life and help diversify income sources for local farmers and ranchers. Its goal is to help identify additional revenue sources, thereby promoting and fostering viable agriculturally based businesses throughout Central Coast communities.

In 2002, with the support of several key individuals and organizations, CCAC developed a destination guide to attract visitors to the diverse agricultural operations found within the state’s Central Coast region. CCAC developed and promoted a map identifying regional producers entitled *Ag Adventures of the Central Coast*, which has been distributed widely both regionally and nationally. To date, more than 35,000 maps have been

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CCAC Ag Adventures (cont.)

distributed to targeted organizations and destinations.

In addition to the guide, CCAC has developed a website, www.agadventures.org (technical expertise was provided by Janice Meyers at eVisions Designs), to showcase the area's farms and ranches. They also designed an attractive logo that retailers can display to help the public identify local products and producers.

Key contributors in this effort were Maryann Vasconcellos (Community Alliance with Family Farmers), Jeff Rodriguez (Central Coast Resource Conservation and Development Council), Desmond Jolly and Gillian Brady (UC Small Farm Center), the San Luis Obispo (SLO) County Small Business Development Center, the SLO Convention and Visitors Bureau, and many of the chambers of commerce in the region. The initiative also was strongly supported by Congresswoman Lois Capps (representing California's 23rd congressional district) and the California Farm Bureau.

CCAC recently received a U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Business Enterprise grant and is planning a reprint of the agritourism destination map. This second edition is scheduled to be released this year. If you would like to receive a copy of the currently available map, please take a moment to visit www.agadventures.org and, if you have any questions or would like additional information, contact Jeff Rodriguez at the Central Coast Resource Conservation and Development Council at 805.772.5623 or by email to jeff.rodriquez@ca.usda.gov. ■

Isabella Kenfield, SFP
Desmond Jolly, Director, SFC

eventually establishing their dairy and fruit farm near Winters, where Manas grew up. "Farming has always been in our blood one way or the other," he says.

Ranch Products

When Fred and Alice bought their ranch in 1980, Fred's grandfather told him to plant whatever everyone else was removing, so he planted peaches. That wisdom paid off—today the ranch is a thriving commercial enterprise supplying fresh peaches locally and nationally. A recent *Sunset* magazine article cited the ranch as a place in the West to find the perfect peach.

Manas Ranch produces about 130 tons of peaches a year, including Angelus, Fay Albert, Cassie, and O'Henry varieties. While not certified organic, Manas' peaches are insecticide-free. He uses integrated pest management. "If I can get good bugs to eat the bad bugs," he asks, "why use insecticides?" The ranch also annually produces about ten tons of apricots plus vegetables, including cucumbers, peppers, tomatoes, tomatillos, and squash.

Manas also owns and operates Double Bar O Angus Ranch where he raises natural grain-fed beef for direct market. In the 1940s, his family brought the first Angus cattle to Yolo County by train, and Fred and Alice took over the herd of about a hundred cattle around 1980. They initially sold calves and breeding stock to other ranchers. Recently, they began marketing beef directly to consumers. Manas figured, "The peach business works, so why wouldn't the beef business work? Why don't I take the middle man out?"

Manas keeps a closed herd with virgin bulls for breeding, which keeps the herd free of disease. For Manas, cattle breeding is a science tied always to the bottom line. He breeds calves with low birth weights

that are heavy at weaning and as yearlings. He says, "You want them to come out little but to hit the ground running!"

Direct Marketing

Manas uses multiple direct marketing channels, including a farm store, brochures, and a website, www.manasranch.com, with online ordering. The store evolved from the ranch's original fruit stand, and Manas credits Alice with its inviting layout and design. "She's into aesthetics," he says. "She says I'd sell out of a shoebox if I could." Tiffany Kay, who helps run the store, estimates that about 200 people visit on weekdays and about 300 on weekends, thanks mostly to word-of-mouth advertising and good press coverage. In addition to the *Sunset* article, several complimentary articles have appeared in the local newspaper, *The Daily Democrat*, and the ranch is part of the *Napa Yolo Harvest Trails* map and accompanying website, www.napayolanoharvesttrails.com, both products of a recent farm trails map initiative produced by the UC Small Farm Program in conjunction with U.S. Department of Agriculture's Federal-State Marketing

Improvement Program. Manas says customers like the map because "it gives them a view of what is available and when. It gives them versatility."

The farm store's huge window lets customers watch peaches being graded into first and second quality

and "soft." First quality peaches are cosmetically perfect and are the most expensive, while soft peaches, usually overripe and bruised, are the cheapest and are sold to customers for canning and cooking.

Direct marketing gives Manas complete



The Manas Ranch website at www.manasranch.com.

control over what he sells and how he sells it. Instead of meeting grocery store standards, Manas grades his peaches according to his own standards, allowing him to sell more fruit through the store and avoid waste. Peaches that are not sold are donated to Yolo County Food Bank and Monroe Detention Center in Woodland.

In addition to fresh produce, the store sells value-added goods like Alice's home-made jams and toppings. According to Kay, the jams and toppings sell well. "Especially the triple berry; we can't keep it on the shelf."

To provide variety, the store carries locally produced honey plus melons sold at cost for Future Farmers of America. The store also offers cookbooks devoted entirely to peach recipes—great for encouraging peach purchases—plus t-shirts, tote bags, and hats featuring the "Capay Valley Grown" logo, a regional branding effort they support.

Manas makes sure visitors to the store know about his other direct marketing efforts. A box of peaches displays a sign inviting visitors to "Ship peaches to a friend!" Manas Ranch ships boxes of peaches anywhere in the country, including Hawaii. Customers Frank and Sherran Lane have been coming to Manas Ranch for peaches and apricots for more than ten years. Recently, after a box of peaches they sent as a gift to friends in Montana arrived smashed due to rough handling in transit, Fred Manas sent a new box of peaches to their friends. "They arrived fine and they were thrilled to get them," says Sherran, who cannot say enough good things about the Manas-



A display of Alice Manas' home-made jams at the ranch store.

Photo: Isabella Kenfield

es and their products. Sherran adds that "they have a wonderful product and really care about their customers."

A sign encourages customers to join the ranch's mailing list (currently about 5,000 names). Ideally, every customer who enters the store signs up for mailings, which are Manas'

principal means of communicating information on available products and other ranch news to customers.

Manas' beef is also sold direct via word of mouth, the website, and descriptive flyers he inserts into shipped boxes of peaches. The flyers describe his production methods, the health benefits of his beef, and the story of the ranch and his cattle-raising philosophy. "I've been getting calls from people saying they've never had such good meat," Manas reports. "They will never go back

to a store." Generally, Manas sells cattle based on live weight to between one and four

Brokers do not know your commodity and are not going to sell it as passionately as you can. To a broker you're just a number.

—Fred Manas

families. He has the beef processed and then aged for ten to fourteen days. This aging process, he says, is a primary difference between his product and beef sold in stores, which is typically aged only one day.

Manas has created a thriving business in fruit and beef direct-marketed from his ranch. By assuming the role of marketer and salesman in addition to producer, he maintains control over his products from field to consumer and reaps rewards for his hard work. ■

Desmond Jolly, Director, SFC
Isabella Kenfield, SFP



Photographs by Isabella Kenfield

Manas Ranch and Store

Open seven days a week
July through September

Manas Ranch and Double Bar O Angus Ranch

25838 County Road 21A
Esparto, CA 95627
530.787.3228
www.manasranch.com

A Highlight from the Napa Yolo Harvest Trails Map Website

Cal Yee is a family-owned dried-fruit business located in the heart of the Suisun Valley in Solano County. For the past forty years the Yee family has provided top-notch dried fruits, nuts, and other delectable food items such as chocolate-covered pitted prunes, corn nuts, and sunflower seeds to customers all over the U.S. and abroad.



“Our pledge,” says the family’s website, “is to provide the best customer service and fulfill all of our customers’ needs.” Customers can purchase products from the family’s store (see additional information below) or from their website, www.calyee.com. The product list is astounding in scope: eighteen different varieties of dried fruit, including cantaloupe, apples, apricots, and bananas; baking items that include dried cherries, coconut, dates, fruit cake mix, and pecans; and a mouthwatering selection of nuts, candies, and gift packs. ■

Cal Yee Store

5158 Clayton Road
Suisun Valley, CA 94534
707.425.5327 / 800.225.9337
www.calyee.com

Napa Yolo Harvest Trails Website Launched

www.napayolanoharvesttrails.com

An enthusiastic crowd of forty people gathered to celebrate the launch of the Napa Yolo Harvest Trails map website developed by the University of California *Small Farm Center*. City and county officials, selected news media, representatives from the *Small Farm Center*, and owners of participating harvest trails operations met at Cody’s restaurant in Winters to eat lunch, view the website, share stories, and discuss ways to further promote Napa, Solano, and Yolo County agritourism. *Small Farm Center* Director Desmond Jolly discussed the reasons for developing the new site and highlighted the enthusiasm with which the printed harvest trails map has been embraced by consumers.

The new site is devoted to showcasing and celebrating “back road treasures”—the farms, ranches, parks, and nature preserves—of Northern California’s Napa, Yolo, and Solano Counties. The user-friendly site is colorful, information-packed, and easy to navigate. Users can search for agritourism operations appearing on the map by county and by type of operation—from arts and crafts and farm stands to bed and breakfasts, petting zoos, and nature tourism.

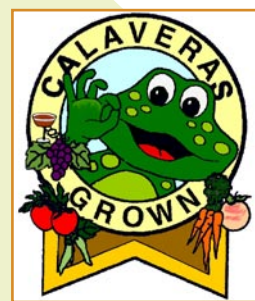
The Harvest Trails map is downloadable at the site, and a stunning feature visitors will enjoy is the travel itineraries that are available, including “Napa Yolo Driving Tours,” “Beautiful Capay,” and “The Delta and Suisun Valley Trails,” which make



The home page for the Napa Yolo Harvest Trails Map online, www.napayolanoharvesttrails.com.

planning travel to these areas delightfully easy and fun.

This vibrant site also provides farmers-market schedules for all three counties plus a listing of local fairs and festivals, like Napa County’s Festival of Lights, the Dixon May Fair in Solano County, and Yolo’s Capay Valley Almond Festival. ■



Calaveras Grown

Farming in California’s foothills is challenging. With a continuous mountain range on one side and the lush central valley on the other, the oak woodland foothills offer a unique landscape for farming. Moderately fertile to poor soils provide for a variety of commodities—livestock on dry rangeland, fruit and nut orchards and vineyards on deeper soils, and fruit and vegetable crops in between. Many consumers have recognized the benefits of

buying local products. Food that has not traveled hundreds of miles is fresher, better ripened, and tastier, resulting in a more nutritious and delicious product. *Calaveras Grown* producers raise, grow, and make handcrafted products with extraordinary dedication and care, producing a cornucopia of delectable items. Armed with these impeccably fresh, flavorful ingredients, local chefs prepare mouthwatering dishes for your pleasure. Look for the *Calaveras*

Grown logo wherever you go. It signifies locally grown products sold or served at that location. Working together, consumers and producers create a local food system that benefits the entire community. For more information about *Calaveras Grown*, contact:
Ken Churches
Phone 209.754.6477
Email kcchurches@co.calaveras.ca.us ■



Inside the retail shop at West Valley Alpacas.

Photo: Timothy Plummer, f Stop Four. Productions, San Francisco, and courtesy of West Valley Alpacas.

Agritourism and Farm Trails in California

49er Fruit Trails and Christmas Tree Lane
10120 Ophir Road
Newcastle, CA 95658
530.885.3005
www.sacramentogardening.com/49erFruitTrails.html

Apple Hill Growers Association
PO Box 494
Camino, CA 95709
530.644.7692
www.applehill.com

Calaveras Grown
c/o Cooperative Extension
891 Mountain Ranch Road
San Andreas, CA 95249
209.754.6477
www.calaverasgrown.org

California Agritourism Database
UC Small Farm Center
Davis, CA 95616
530.752.8136
www.calagtour.org

Central Coast Agritourism Council
c/o Central Coast Resource Conservation & Development Council
545 Main Street, Suite B-1
Morro Bay, CA 93442
805.772.5623
www.agadventures.org

Central Valley Harvest Trails
1201 L Street
Modesto, CA 95354
209.522.7278
www.spendtheday.org

Coastside Harvest Trails
San Mateo County Farm Bureau
765 Main Street
Half Moon Bay, CA 94019
650.726.4485

Country Crossroads Map
141 Monte Vista Avenue
Watsonville, CA 95076
831.724.1356

El Dorado County Christmas Tree Growers
PO Box 423
Placerville, CA 95667
530.622.6766
www.edcochristmastrees.com

El Dorado County Farm Trails
PO Box 542
Camino, CA 95709
530.676.4263
www.edc-farmtrails.org

El Dorado Winery Association
PO Box 1614
Placerville, CA 95667
800.306.3956
www.eldoradowines.org

Harvest Time in Brentwood
PO Box 810
Brentwood, CA 94513
925.643.4913
www.harvest4u.com

Lake County Farmers' Finest
PO Box 1545
Kelseyville, CA 95451
707.279.8032
www.lakecountymfarmersfinest.org

Mendocino County Promotional Alliance
525 S. Main Street, Suite E
Ukiah, CA 95482
707.462.7417 / 866.466.3636
www.gomendo.com

Oak Glen Apple Growers Association
PO Box 1123
Yucaipa, CA 92399
909.790.0307
www.oakglen.net

Russian River Wine Road
139 Healdsburg Avenue
Healdsburg, CA 95448
707.433.4335 / 800.723.6336
www.wineroad.com

Silverado Trail Wineries Association
3212 Jefferson Street, Suite 143
Napa, CA 94558
707.253.2802
www.silveradotrail.com

Sonoma County Farm Trails
2971 Guerneville Road
Santa Rosa, CA 95401
707.571.8288 / 800.207.9464
www.farmtrails.org

Tehachapi Growers Association
1437 Casey Drive
Tehachapi, CA 93561
661.822.5969
www.tehachapiapples.com

A Highlight from the Napa Yolano Harvest Trails Map Website

West Valley Alpacas is a full-service, hands-on ranch in Esparto established in 1993 by Pat Meade and Jon Robbins. Pat and Jon breed and sell fine alpacas and alpaca fiber, yarn, and clothing plus knitting, weaving, and spinning tools and supplies in the ranch store. They also rent looms, wheels, and other weaving and spinning tools and offer fiber-arts classes. Visitors can learn about alpacas at the ranch's annual spring *Alpaca Open House* and fall *Fiber on the Farm* events at which visitors can learn more about alpacas while watching fiber artists demonstrate their skills and teach visitors some fundamentals. Pat Meade hosts and offers classes at West Valley Alpacas in spinning, weaving, felting, knitting, and crochet as well. ■

West Valley Alpacas

19190 Road 87B
Esparto, CA 95627
530.662.8630
www.westvalleyalpacas.com



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