

Mapping Organic Monterey

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Abstract

“Mapping Organic Monterey” is an ongoing research project that examines the scale, scope and possibilities of organic agriculture in Monterey County. Contributing about \$8.1 billion—around twenty percent of the economic output—and employing one out of every four workers, agriculture in Monterey County is overwhelmingly conventional. The 2014 Crop Report for the county mentions organic agriculture only once in its conclusion referring to diversity in production types. The objective of “Mapping Organic Monterey” research project and paper proposed, is to examine whether national trends of increases in organic consumption, growth in organic acreage, changing attitudes towards climate change and related issues are mirrored in Monterey County. The project seeks to track and document organic agriculture in Monterey County. In doing so, it also explores opportunities and challenges for an organic Monterey.

This project has evolved from a course on Global Ecology with a focus on Agriculture and Climate Change. Taught every fall semester over the past decade, it has involved fieldwork with conventional growers such as Tanimura & Antle, organic sites such as Earthbound Farms, Agricultural Land-Based Training Association (ALBA), and organizations such as the Center for Health of Mothers and Children (CHAMACOS). It also includes in-depth interviews with over 20 farm workers and organic agriculture professionals who have transitioned from conventional agriculture to organic. “Mapping Organic Monterey” builds on this knowledge base.

The project uses data in the public domain, particularly from the Monterey County Agricultural Commissioner’s Office, University of California Cooperative Extension, California Department of Food and Agriculture, California Certified Organic Farmers, and the National Organic Program. This data is used to locate and document certified organic acreage, as well as tracing markets and services connected with organic production. The research project also examines changing attitudes and related issues of concern in everyday life. The social dimension supplements ‘official’ data through participatory observation and in-depth interviews of service providers, farmworkers, educators and agricultural professionals. The project intends to produce an analytical report on the current state of organic Monterey, one examining future possibilities and challenges for an Organic Monterey.

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