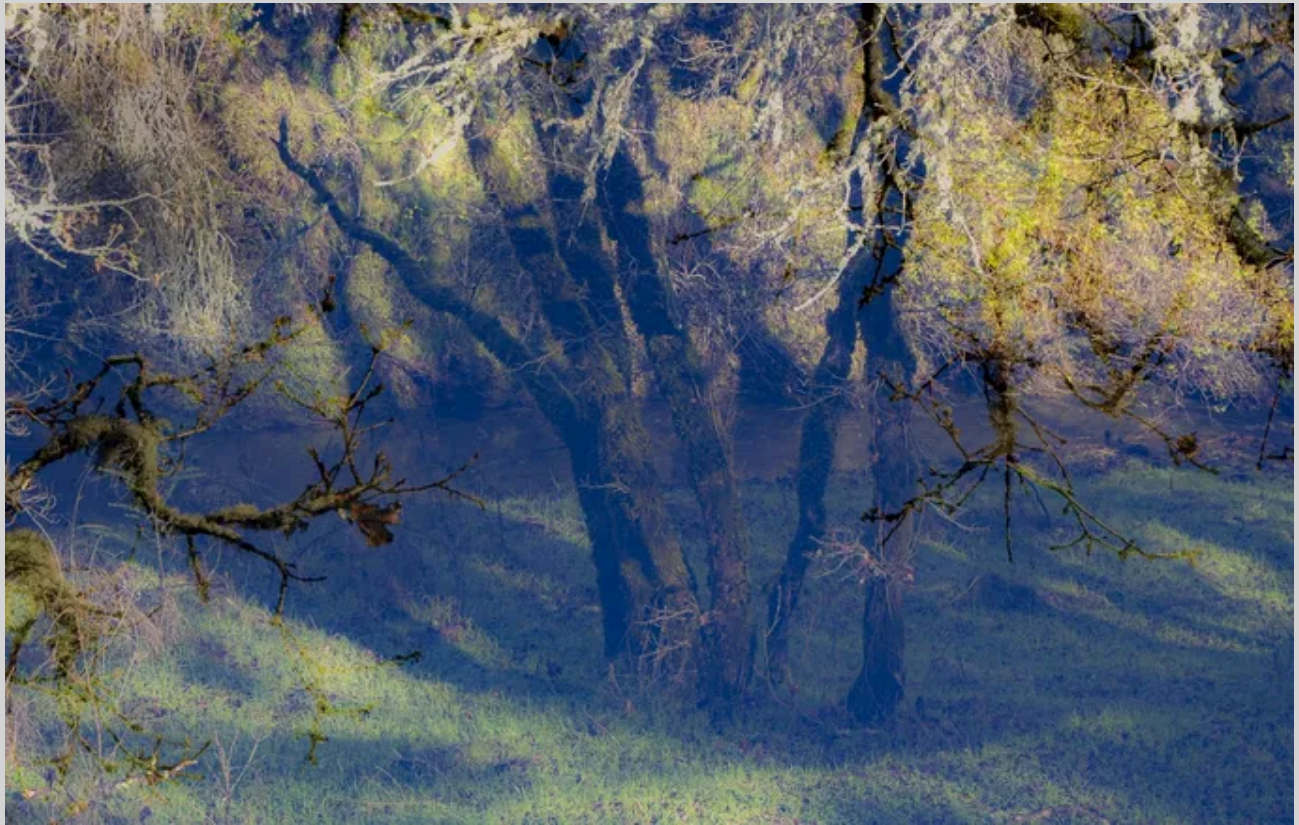




**SLOW FOOD  
SONOMA  
COUNTY  
:: NORTH ::**

## **FEBRUARY 2023 NEWSLETTER**



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## Embrace the Farm Bill!

### Averse to Policy Work?

Some of us who are involved with Slow Food and other organizations dedicated to a healthy food system shy away from topics like legislation, policy, and advocacy. But without local, state, and federal policies to ensure that local small farms and ranches are protected, supported and assisted, we would be spinning our wheels in all the other work we do.



Slow Food USA, "Flustered by the Farm Bill?"

### What Is The Farm Bill?

The largest piece of national legislation that governs our food system is [the Farm Bill](#). Formally known as the Agricultural Improvement Act, it is modified and reauthorized every 5 years. Last signed in 2018, the Farm Bill is up for reauthorization in 2023.

This massive bill addresses 14 topics from conservation and forestry to farm credit, crop insurance, livestock, and nutrition assistance.

According to [Slow Food USA](#), "We need to

**understand the Farm Bill and its impacts in order to connect with our legislators to make sure this year's plan leads us toward better, cleaner and fairer food for all."**

## **What Will Change In the New Bill?**

This year's modification of the Farm Bill is especially crucial. "Policymaking does not happen in a vacuum, and the years since the 2018 Farm Bill was signed into law have been among the most tumultuous in our nation's history. An increasingly disruptive and changing climate, the COVID-19 pandemic and societal impacts, and a long-overdue racial justice reckoning have conspired to thoroughly unveil the fragility of our current food system." (National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition)

Slow Food and other California organizations that advocate for farmers are members of the [National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition \(NSAC\)](#), "an alliance of grassroots organizations that advocates for federal policy reform to advance the sustainability of agriculture, food systems, natural resources, and rural communities."

NSAC has published [The 2023 Farm Bill Platform](#), whose recommendations we support. The platform spans key issue areas including

- natural resource conservation,
- local and regional food systems,
- sustainable agriculture research,
- structural reform to farm programs,
- advancing racial equity across farm bill programs,
- supporting beginning farmers,
- addressing the climate crisis and its impacts on our food and farms.

## Why Should We Get Involved?

We must get involved because we benefit from the bounty of our local farmers and ranchers and we want to support them in any way we can. It's time to suspend any fear of or aversion to legislation and policy and dip into learning about the issues that impact us. The Executive Summary of NSAC's *2023 Farm Bill Platform* is an excellent overview of the bill and the aspects that speak especially to small growers. From there it is just a small step to contact our legislators to support our favorite programs.

[Take action!](#)

## Slow Food Events

**Look for an invitation with details about a month before each event. For events in February, click on the event below to register.**

### February

[12 Meet the Author: Craig McNamara, \*Because Our Fathers Lied\*, Healdsburg](#) [28 Slow Cookbooks: Lidia Bastianich, Healdsburg](#)

## March

14 Snail of Approval Awards, Sebastopol Grange

26 Meet the Author: Jim DiMartini, *The Cloverdale Forager*, Cloverdale

## April

15 Tastes & Tales of Terra Madre Dinner, Windsor

# Spotlight on Michael Dimock, *Roots of Change*



Michael Dimock brings a vast array of experiences to his role as director of [Roots of Change](#) (ROC). In his youth, he worked the cattle drive on his uncle's ranch and worked alongside Himalayan subsistence farmers in Nepal. In college he learned to speak Russian while studying political negotiations, then worked in Europe in the commodity industry. This circuitous route brought Michael right back to the ranch, and gave him a close up view of just about every aspect of the agriculture business and an ability to build and sustain real change in the food system.

## Roots of Change

Roots of Change is a project of the Public Health Institute. ROC, "Develops and campaigns for smart, incentive-based food and farm policies that position agriculture and food enterprises as solutions to critical challenges of the 21st century." In Michael's words, "ROC is a nonprofit whose job is to grow the good food movement, to scale

change, and to transform the food system from farm to table.”

## Slow Food

Michael's long involvement with Slow Food has played a vital role in his accomplishments at ROC. Michael says, “Slow Food was fundamental to my understanding of how to motivate people - to give them something to think about.” In 1996, he founded the Slow Food Russian River chapter, and from 2002 to 2007, he filled the role of Chairman of Slow Food USA. Later, as a member of Slow Food International's board of directors, Michael worked alongside the founder, Carlo Petrini. Michael received a real-life training course on how to build a movement. This knowledge nourished his leadership in ROC.

## ROC Projects

### Healthy Agriculture

ROC's reach extends to policy from California to Washington, D.C. In its role in building healthy agricultural practices, ROC supported the [California's Healthy Soils Program](#), which provides grants to farmers to improve soil health, sequester carbon, and reduce greenhouse gases. ROC bolsters other California grant programs such as [State Water Efficiency Program](#) (SWEEP), [The Alternative Manure Management Program](#) (AMP), and [ALBA](#) which assists former farmworkers to become farmers. These programs have consultants to help farmers apply for these grants; in addition, many nonprofits reach out to farmers to inform them of these opportunities.

## Produce Prescriptions

In 2021, ROC worked to pass a federal law within the Farm Bill called the [Gus Shumaker Nutrition Incentive program](#), aka GusNIP. Science shows a clear relationship between food insecurity and chronic disease. Michael explains, "We want to demonstrate that if you provide additional money to low income and food-insecure individuals to buy fruits and vegetables, it helps the farmers and the families." He says, "Through the produce prescription programs, we are trying to get Medicare and Medicaid to cover prescriptions from doctors for fruits and vegetables so patients can change their diet and live healthy lives."

## Farmworker Safety

Climate change is upon us. Heat will be the number one threat to public health in this century and farmworkers will be on the front line. ROC and other coalitions are working with science students at Cal Poly to develop solar powered systems to provide cold water in the fields and pay for weatherization and swamp coolers in farmer workers' homes. In addition, students are working on sustainable methods of cooling hoop houses which can get 50 degrees hotter than the ambient temperatures.

Michael is hopeful of the future. Climate change and COVID made it impossible to deny the need for massive changes in food and agriculture. He encourages us to see agriculture as a solution. He says, "Change is accelerating."

Visit [Roots of Change](#) for more information. Listen to Michael's podcast, "Flipping the

Table," where he and other movers and shakers discuss ways to build a sustainable and resilient food system.

## Snail of Approval

**Save the Date: Our Snail of Approval Awards are coming up on Tuesday, March 14th!**

Once again we will be gathering at the Sebastopol Grange to honor our 2022 Awardees and celebrating our 2022 Renewals.

We honor food-related businesses that are making a difference in Sonoma County, by supporting good, clean and fair food.

(more information coming soon, tickets will be available approximately one month prior to the event.)



## Recipe of the Month:

## Chicory, Bacon, and Poached Egg Salad

*Recipe courtesy of Bon Appétit*

[Open recipe](#)

Visit our [website](#) for a printable copy of this recipe.



## Bodega Red Potato Presidium

Our Bodega Red seed potatoes will be distributed in mid-March for 2023 planting. Details on pricing and the amount of seed available for sale will be released soon to participating farms and retail outlets.

This year, seed will be available from Baker Creek Heirloom Seed, Petaluma; Harmony Farm Supply, Sebastopol; Jon Wright Feed Store, Healdsburg; and Cloverdale Nursery. There may also be retailers in Sonoma Valley, Napa County, and Marin County.

We are allocating some of the Bodega Red seed for Slow Food members who have home gardens. Details will be sent out in February.

Here is more information about the [Bodega Red Potato Presidium](#).

## Grant Opportunity for Local Farmer or Rancher

# Slow Food Sonoma County North is offering a grant of \$1000 to a local farmer or rancher in Sonoma County who meets the eligibility criteria below.

To apply, complete the [application](#) and return it no later than February 25, 2023. Those who meet the requirements of the application will be invited to an interview in early March. The grant start date is March 15, 2023.

## Grant Eligibility

The applicant must:

- be actively farming/ranching in Sonoma County, or seeking to begin a career in Sonoma County farming/ranching with demonstrated history of preparing for such a career (e.g., internship, apprenticeship, farm labor);
- attend Slow Food Sonoma County North's annual chapter meeting as a featured presenter of what he/she accomplished with the grant;
- participate in appropriate chapter events whenever possible (perhaps hosting a visit to his/her ranch/farm);
- submit a brief final report describing how the Slow Food grant helped in meeting his/her goals.

[Complete the online application here.](#)

## Membership

## Welcome to Our Chapter!

John and Sara Esterkyn

## And Welcome Back

Sid and Eva Greer Kelly and Gary Osman, Oz Family Farm Marc Snyder

[Join or renew your membership online](#) and list Sonoma County North-CA as your chapter. If you prefer to renew locally by check, please download our [membership form](#) and follow the instructions. *Several times a year, Slow Food USA promotes **Pay What You Can Day** where you can join or renew for any amount on one day only. Watch your email for these promotions.*



P.O. Box 1494 | Healdsburg CA | 95448 [unsubscribe](#)