



SLOW FOOD
SONOMA
COUNTY
:: NORTH ::

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Who Is Working for Sustainability and Regeneration?

The Language

The words “sustainable” and, more recently, “regenerative,” are showing up with increasing frequency in the media. Sustainable farming goes back many years—meaning that the farmer or rancher does nothing to harm the environment. The next and current iteration is regenerative agriculture, where growers improve the health of the environment with their practices.

One aspect of regenerative agriculture includes practices that mitigate and adapt to climate change, called **climate-resilient** or **climate-smart farming**. For example, “increasing soil organic matter can result in more productive fields that are more resilient to pest and disease pressure, conserve water through improved water holding capacity and infiltration, address climate change through soil carbon sequestration and can make farms more resilient to drought and flooding.” (CAFF)

Slow Food has long supported and promoted farms and ranches that are sustainable and regenerative. And there are other organizations whose mission is devoted to helping growers learn and apply regenerative practices.

CAFF (Community Alliance with Family Farmers)

Since 1978, CAFF has worked statewide to foster partnerships between farmers and their communities as a way to build sustainable food and farming systems. CAFF focuses on both policy advocacy and on-the-ground programs.

For example, their Ecological Farming component brings together farmers, policy makers, researchers, and local technical assistance providers to conduct on-farm trials. These trials link the science behind climate smart farming with farmer experience to learn, innovate and optimize climate smart farming practices and systems across the state.

The Sonoma Ecology Center

This Sonoma County nonprofit does not specifically focus on farming, but works more broadly to address challenges related to water supply and quality, open space, rural character, biodiversity, energy, climate change, and a better quality of life for all residents.

Sonoma County Farm Trails

Farm Trails connects the public to Sonoma County farmers, ranchers, producers, and purveyors to ensure the economic viability of local agriculture and instill an appreciation of agriculture as a vital part of our community. Their website and publication lists and maps products and experiences at local farms, ranches, farmers' markets, producers, and restaurants.

One section of Farm Trails lists [14 farms that practice regenerative farming](#).

Roots of Change

ROC (Roots of Change) is a food-system policy and advocacy project of the Public Health Institute. The project works together with organizations, universities, governments and businesses to ensure that every aspect of our food supply chain—from when it's grown to when it's eaten—will be healthy and accessible for all eaters, safe and fair to workers, and profitable for companies.

The most recent of ROC's [Flipping the Table podcasts](#) is on regenerative agriculture. ROC Director Michael Dimock interviews regenerative ag consultant Spencer Smith on the links between soil biology, plant, livestock and human health.

Michelin Green Star Award

A recent (2020) example of the notion of sustainability reaching the mainstream is Michelin's annual designation of starred restaurants as "sustainable." The Green Star highlights restaurants that hold themselves accountable for both their ethical and environmental standards, and work with sustainable producers and suppliers to avoid waste and reduce or even remove plastic and other non-recyclable materials from their supply chain. They consider things such as: the provenance of the ingredients; the use of seasonal produce; the restaurant's environmental footprint; food waste systems; general waste disposal and recycling; resource management; and the communication between the team and the guests about the restaurant's sustainable approach.

If that sounds familiar, Michelin has finally caught up with Slow Food's [Snail of Approval program](#)! And this summer, they awarded Healdsburg's SingleThread Farm a Green Star. SingleThread is also a Slow Food Snail of Approval farm, restaurant, and producer.

Slow Food Events

Look for an invitation with details about a month before each event.

August

11 Farm Tour: Green Star Farm, 10:30 am, Sebastopol

September

TBD Farm to Pantry Volunteer Gleaning Day, Healdsburg **23SAVE THE DATE** for Slow Food Presents a Sunset Supper at Foss Vineyard, 6 pm, Windsor!

October

5 Showa Olive Farm Tour, Cloverdale

15 Annual Meeting, Farm to Fight Hunger, Healdsburg

Spotlight on Heidi Herrmann, Strong Arm Farm

Heidi Herrmann, owner of [Strong Arm Farm](#) in Santa Rosa, spends her winter, fall, and spring seasons growing and selling her beautiful [perennial cut flowers](#) and teaching sustainable agriculture courses at Sonoma State University and Santa Rosa Junior College (SRJC). However, when summer rolls around, Heidi turns her attention to the flow of the ocean tides. The tide chart dictates her work schedule because the negative low tide is the optimum time to forage. She packs her collection materials, dons her rubber boots, and heads to the ocean to forage seaweed that grows in abundance along the Sonoma Coast.



Heidi Herrmann, photo by Mateo Hinojosa

Biodiversity Hotspot

Strong Arm began as a produce farm, yet due to the high demand and interest, Heidi began selling her seaweeds to customers and chefs. Currently, working as a seaweed harvester is Heidi's main business, and Strong Arm sells 2500 pounds of [sustainably harvested Sonoma seaweed](#) each year.

Heidi says, "We live in a biodiversity hotspot. There are 640 varieties of seaweed along the California Coast. The skill is to know which ones to harvest, specifically the five most frequently used in the culinary trade."

All of the favored edible species grow here: Kombu, Nori, Wakame (use in seaweed salads, high in calcium), Bladderwrack (aka fucus, rich in iodine and iron), and finally, Sea Palm (ribbed ribbons that are great raw). Some varieties can be eaten right out of the ocean and are perfect in a seaweed salad. However, most get dried, which is the primary global way of preserving seaweeds for use in cooking. Once harvested and dried-- it is crisp and dry within 12 hours--seaweed is shelf stable for 10 years.

During the summer season, Heidi offers [3-hour Seaweed Harvest and Educational Tours](#). Foraging season ends in early August because the days get short and seaweed is dormant in winter. Seaweeds are annuals and perennials, so many come back each year.

Health Properties of Seaweeds

Seaweeds are considered superfoods. Heidi says, "They grow in nutrient rich ocean water; most of the Periodic Table is present in seawater so seaweed is full of vitamins, minerals, and salts. Also, seaweed goes through photosynthesis, so it is infused with many sun-derived nutrients. Nothing else has those two sources of nutrient making."

Educator for Sustainable Agriculture

Heidi teaches Native Plant Restoration courses at Sonoma State University, where her students gain an understanding of the different functions of local plants for erosion control, food, and habitat. Additionally, she guides her students to jobs in the realm of

environmental science. She also teaches crop planning and production, and direct marketing at SRJC's [Shone Farm](#).

Field trips and hands-on experiences are at the core of Heidi's curriculum. When they are not working in the labs, students visit farmers markets, put on farm events, pack CSA boxes, and practice ways to market and sell vegetables. They get real-life, eye-opening experiences to see the fast pace and heavy lifting involved in working a small farm. For example, Heidi asks her students to ponder, "What does a no-till farm, a cannabis farm, or a cut flower farm look like and how does each function?"

In addition, Heidi's students visit female-run farms and have access to a variety of demographic backgrounds within the field. Heidi says, "This is a dire plea to come join a small farm, get the skill to lead your own farm, or take your skills elsewhere where there aren't so many small farms."

To round out her curriculum, Heidi invites a wide range of guest speakers. Slow Food leaders Brad Whitworth from the Russian River chapter and Kathy Matonak from Sonoma County North have spoken to students about our [Snail of Approval](#) program.

Heidi loves the variety of her work and it feels valuable to her. "I get a special joy when students reach out to me five years later and say they work for a great company. It's very rewarding."

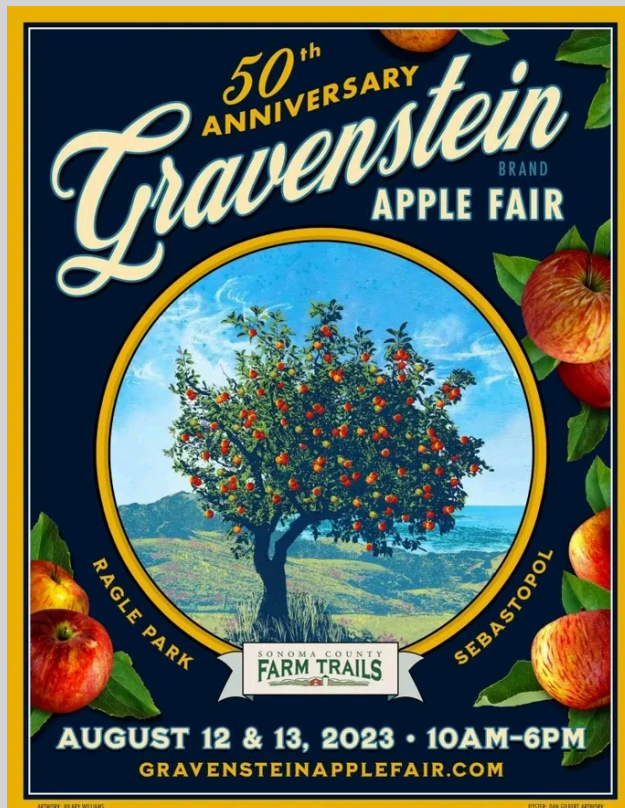
[Click here to read the full article.](#)

[Click here for detailed information about foraging and processing seaweed.](#)

Snail of Approval

Congratulations to [SingleThread Farm-Restaurant-Inn](#) for being our first Snail of Approval awardee to be honored in all three of our categories--first in the restaurant category in 2019 and now in the farm and artisan producer categories. SingleThread has a biodiverse farm that supplies much of the produce and other products used by their restaurant. They work the fields by hand to grow healthy soil and minimize their impact on the land. They source locally and are community-minded: they share time, talent, and knowledge with the community, as well as their produce and more with various local food organizations.

You can find their farm stand at 2836 Dry Creek Road, Healdsburg, open Thursday-Monday from 11am-5pm.



Snail Trail

We follow the Snail Trail this month to the [Gravenstein Apple Fair](#), which is celebrating its 50th year on August 12th and 13th. Our Snail of Approval awardees [Black Piglet](#), [Gold Ridge Organic Farms](#), [Handline](#), [Tilted Shed Ciderworks](#) and [Tucker Taylor](#) of [Jackson Family Gardens](#) will all be joining in the fun.

[Slow Food Russian River](#), our partner chapter in Sonoma County, will also be participating in the Apple Fair and will have their working apple press on site.

The Apple Core is looking for volunteers to work a four-hour shift on either day (or both days!). [Sign up here](#).



Recipe of the Month: Seaweed Salad with Wakame

Seaweed Salad with Wakame



Adapted from *Serious Eats*

Ingredients

2 cups rehydrated Wakame seaweed

1 tablespoon rice vinegar

2 teaspoons sesame oil

½ small garlic clove, minced

1/4 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon sugar

2 teaspoons toasted sesame seeds

2 scallions, chopped into rounds

Procedure

To rehydrate seaweed, place it in a bowl filled with water. Soak for 10-15 minutes until seaweed is soft and pliable. Drain off excess water and squeeze out any remaining water with your hands.

On a cutting board, roughly chop the Wakame and add to a mixing bowl. Add rice vinegar, sesame oil, garlic, salt, and sugar. Taste and adjust seasonings and ingredients as needed. Garnish with toasted sesame seeds and scallions.

Can be served cold or at room temperature. Refrigerate for up to one week.

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

Bodega Red Potato Presidium

Our Slow Food representative in Napa County reports that Bodega Red seed potatoes were distributed to Long Meadow Ranch/Farmstead Restaurant, the French Laundry Restaurant, Clif Family Winery (for their Clif Family Bruschetteria Food Truck), and Hudson Ranch.

Go to our website for information about the [Bodega Red Potato Presidium](#).

Membership

Welcome New Chapter Member!

Jefferson Finney

[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.

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