**7TH ANNUAL NORTH COAST FARMERS’ CONVERGENCE COMES TO THE HEART OF MENDOCINO COUNTY***Farming community comes together to share stories, successes and skills*

North Coast Opportunities is excited to once again bring the North Coast Farmers’ Convergence to Ridgewood Ranch this February 17th. The MendoLake Food Hub and the School of Adaptive Agriculture are leading the charge on this annual event, which brings together food producers from Lake, Mendocino, Sonoma and Humboldt counties, along with local food retailers, chefs and food activists.

The North Coast Farmers’ Convergence is a celebration of our region’s growing, local food system and the vital profession of farming in Northern California. Since the inception of this event, the Farmers’ Convergence has brought together over 150 local farmers, ranchers, retailers and advocates for a day of networking, education and inspiration. According to participants, successful outcomes of the day include: forging successful connections that enhance our local economy; linking farmers with needed resources; and sparking new or renewed buyer contracts for food producers. The 7th Annual Farmers’ Convergence promises to build on the successes of previous years with new workshops, speakers and additional, intensive-educational sessions.

 “I love getting all the ideas, and those little nuggets help launch me into new ideas for the next season,” says Laytonville farmer, Irene Engber of Irene’s Garden, who participated in last year’s event.

Ruthie King, a member of the New Agrarian Collective and the School of Adaptive Agriculture, will kick off Sunday morning with an inspiring welcome. This year’s keynote speaker will be Donna D’Terra, the founder and director of Motherland Botanical Sanctuary and Herb School, where she has taught classes for the past 35 years. Donna will share her passion for local, sustainable and regenerative herbalism. A local panel of innovative farmers-activists will round out the morning, sharing their work in the community to revolutionize the local food system. This panel will include: Isabel Quiroz of Tequio Community Farm; Daniel Ryberg of Mendocino County Jail Gardens’ Project; Caroline Radice of the MendoLake Food Hub and Joshua Sternberg of New Agrarian Collective. Later in the morning,Michael Foley, a member of Green Uprising will lead a workshop on taxes, bookkeeping and record keeping for very small farms to introduce farmers to free and low-cost, farm-management resources.

This year’s Farmers’ Convergence includes an impressive lineup of experts and innovators in the agricultural community who will lead breakout discussions and workshops on a wide range of topics.

**Sunday 2/17 – Program**

* 8:00am – Check in
* 8:30am – Welcome & Kick Off
* 9:00am – Keynote
* 12:00pm – Lunch
* 1:30pm – Session I Workshops
* 3:00pm – Session II Workshops
* 5:00pm – Mixer

 *Workshops at this year’s event include:*

**Seed Saving & Varietal Trials
Soren & Gina, Strong Roots Farm**
This discussion group will do a deep dive into unique and specialty varietals. Do you have a variety of winter squash that you absolutely adore? Have you spent the last ten years perfecting a variety of sweet summer cantaloupe? We want to hear all about it!

**The Art of Whole Animal Butchery
Ruthie King & Eliot Hartley, New Agrarian Collective**
Learn the theory and practice behind humane slaughter and butcher techniques for sheep, including their anatomy and physiology and the science behind different kill methods and low stress handling of meat for improved quality.

**Herbal First Aid For Farmers: Bug Bites, Burns, Backaches, Blisters & More
Sara Grusky, Prana, Anna & April**
This workshop will offer simple and accessible herbal remedies for common ailments. Discussion and hands-on demonstrations will follow the process from plant identification and spit poultices to making simple salves and tinctures.

**Learn to Build a Johnson-Su Bioreactor
Jes Pearce & Keith Michalak, Buttercup Compost Lab**
Using bioreactors is a simple and accessible method of building compost with high biological diversity. This compost is so potent it is better considered a biological inoculate to your soil, rather than serving the same purpose as regular compost.

**Climate Smart Farming
Britta Baskerville, Community Education Specialist for Mendocino County's UC Cooperative Extension**
Explore the upcoming funding opportunities provided by the CA Dept. of Food and Ag. (CDFA) for farmers and ranchers interested in implementing new climate-smart technology and practices.

**Hands-on With Soil Health
Rachel Britten, Instructor at the School of Adaptive Agriculture**
Ever wonder what’s going on with your soil? Rachel Britten will help you understand where to start with this hand-on workshop all about the science of soil. She will share practical steps you can take to improve your soil’s health. Rachel is known for her ability to make complex topics fun and accessible - this workshop is not to be missed!

**Food Safety On The Farm
Luis Sierra, Assistant Director of CA Center for Cooperative Development**
This training will be a great overview of food-safety best practices. Luis Sierra will present the basics of Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs), as well as best practices for retaining high quality produce through effective and safe post-harvest practices. This training will discuss how to integrate practical, useful, and effective “right-sized” food safety on the farm.

**Land Access
Mike Parker, National Young Farmers’ Coalition**
Mike will help you create a strategy for securing affordable farmland tenure in CA and present various financing options. This workshop is intended for people who have some farming & ranching experience and are looking to secure land tenure.

Other highlights of the day include:

* **All Day Seed Swap**. Bring some seeds to share if you have them; pick up some other seeds to grow out this year, and then bring back more seeds next year to share.
* **Informational & Vendor Hall**. Megan (Johnny’s Seeds sales rep) will be on hand with the newest tools, seeds and info to share. The Herbal Guild, Sundial Seeds, Mendocino County Food Policy Council, Victory Gardens for Peace, MendoLake Food Hub and many more will also be on hand to answer questions and share information.
* **Closing Reception**. Sunday will close with a mixer (5-6pm) where food producers and buyers can make connections and establish sales relationships over locally sourced beer, wine, and other beverages.

More information on these and other workshops can be found on the event’s Facebook page - www.facebook.com/events/2373253476294278

The National Young Farmers’ Coalition will be leading a pre-conference workshop on Saturday, February 16th from 1-5pm at Ridgewood Ranch*.* All local farmers are invited to come and share their stories. The NYFC is gathering input to incorporate into a California policy platform.

The National Young Farmers Coalition (NYFC) is a national advocacy network of young farmers fighting for the future of agriculture. They are farmer-led and want to hear from North Coast agriculturalists about their experiences. This listening session will be the foundation for a solution-oriented session at Convergence the following day (mini-session/workshop 2/17), wherein NYFC will identify regional, state, and national strategies for helping farmers and North Coast agriculture thrive. NYFC would like all those interested in attending this workshop to rsvp via Eventbrite (www.eventbrite.com/e/california-farmer-listening-sessions-north-coast-tickets-56038687222).

Attendees are encouraged to register in advance via Brown Paper Tickets ([www.brownpapertickets.com/event/4057244](https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/4057244?fbclid=IwAR0-f843b0NgtyiNYUbx9ObE38gig-F42s5NMkpX3v-qgVEKGXU6k_ncWdE)). Tickets are $20 per person or $30 for two people. No one will be turned away due to lack of funds and scholarships are available thanks to the generous event sponsors and attendees who purchase a “pay it forward” ticket to help sponsor a farmer to attend this year’s event.

The 7th Annual North Coast Farmers’ Convergence was made possible by the generous support of the event’s sponsors, including
North Coast Opportunities,
MendoLake Food Hub,
the School of Adaptive Agriculture,
the Mendocino County Food Policy Council,
the National Young Farmers Coalition,
Ukiah Natural Foods Co-op,
McFARM,
Sonoma Clean Power,
Savings Bank of Mendocino County,
The Gardens Project,
Yokayo Seed Project, and
Christ's Church of the Golden Rule.

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