*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

**GROWING RESILIENT FARMS
8th Annual North Coast Farmers’ Convergence comes to Mendocino County**

*February 11, 2019 (Ukiah, CA)* North Coast Opportunities is excited to bring the 8th Annual North Coast Farmers’ Convergence to Ridgewood Ranch on February 16th & 17th. The MendoLake Food Hub and the School of Adaptive Agriculture are once again leading the charge with organizing this annual event. This conference brings together farmers and food producers from Lake and Mendocino Counties along with local retailers, chefs and activists who are at the forefront of promoting local farming.

The North Coast Farmers’ Convergence is a celebration of growing, local-food system. Since the inception of this event, the Farmers’ Convergence has brought together local farmers, ranchers, retailers, and advocates for a day of networking, education, and inspiration. According to participants, successful outcomes of the day include, forging connections that enhance our local economy, linking farmers with needed resources, and sparking new or renewed buyer contracts for food producers. The 8th 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 at Convergence, and those little nuggets help launch me into new ideas for the next season,” says Laytonville farmer, Irene Enberg of Irene’s Garden.

Sunday morning kicks off with an inspiring welcome from Rachel Britten, guest instructor at the School of Adaptive Agriculture and new owner of the Mendocino Grain Project. Disaster Preparation is the timely topic addressed in Sunday morning’s keynote panel discussion. Farmers across the state increasingly find themselves staring down unprecedented challenges, including: drought, wildfires, floods, erratic weather and long-term power outages. This year’s keynote panel will highlight the personal stories from local food producers about how they are growing resilient farms in the face of adversity. Luke Frey (Frey Vineyards), Brian Bartholomew (Ridgewood Ranch), Kyle Farmer (Magruder Ranch), and Colleen Rentsch (Seely Farm) will share their personal stories on the road to creating their own resilient farms.

Alan Haight will deliver the keynote on Sunday morning. He’ll share his story of farming at Riverhill Farm and the pitfalls on the path to profitability for the small farm. According to Alan,

 *"When I started my farm, I had no business skills and not much common sense. My expectation was that I would grow beautiful organic produce, customers would embrace my farm*

*enthusiastically, and it would all work out. I wasn’t wrong about any of those things, but there were pitfalls along the way to eventual profitability that delayed profitability and could have*

*caused me to abandon what I considered to be my life’s work... Yet, all was not lost. Within a relatively short time ...we were netting a good income from our small acreage, we paid off all our farm and personal debt, and we had confidence that we were on the right track and could successfully adapt to changing markets. And, we did this with no increase in acreage."*

In his workshop, participants will learn how to construct an annual budget before the season begins, create a cash flow plan, keep track of income and expenses during the season, and how to use an end-of-year budget to celebrate successes and improve business performance.

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

* Tools & Equipment for the Small Farmer
* Leadership Skills: Creating a Culture of Goodwill
* Farm to School: Purchasing Roundtable
* The History and Basics of Seed Saving
* Tax Preparation
* The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) & Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)
* Vermiculture 101
* Finance and the Small Farm
* Holistic Approaches to Mental Health and Depression for Farmers
* Healthy Soils & Climate Smart Farming
* Growing Great Fruit

## Farmer's Convergence Schedule: Sunday, February 16th, 2019 | 8:00am-5:00pm

* 7:45am - Check in opens
* 8:15am - Welcome & Kick Off
* 8:30am Morning Roundtable – Growing Resilient Farms
* 10:45am – Morning Workshops
* 12:00pm – Lunch
* 1:30pm - Session I Workshops
* 3:00pm - Session II Workshops

Other highlights of the day include:

* **All Day Seed Swap**. Sponsored by the Yokayo Seed & Mendocino County Libraries. Bring seeds to share and pick some to grown out this year. Bring back more seeds next year to share.
* **Informational & Vendor Hall**. Some of this year’s participants include: Mendocino Renegade, Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF), Good Farm Fund, School of Adaptive Agriculture (SAA), Anderson Valley Food Guide, Mendocino County Certified Farmers’ Markets (MCFARM), Mendocino Herb Guild, Mendocino County Resource Conservation District (MCRCD), West Business Development Center (WBDC), Economic Development & Financing Corporation (EDFC), and Cold Creek Compost.

Farmer's Convergence Schedule: Monday, February 17th, 2019  | 8:00am-5:00pm

*Theme for the day - farming for the wholesale market - sponsored by the MendoLake Food Hub*

* 8:00am - Welcome & Kick Off
* 8:30am - Morning Workshops
* 12:45pm – Lunch
* 1:30pm - Afternoon Workshops

Tickets are $20/person, but to encourage attendees to bring a co-worker, this year there is a special ticket price, $30 for 2 people. Organizers hope this will encourage additional attendees from the larger farming community and North Coast foodshed to come together for this important day of networking and sharing ideas. Scholarships are available thanks to the generous event sponsors and attendees who purchase a “pay it forward” ticket. Tickets are available via Brown Paper Tickets ([convergence2020.brownpapertickets.com/](https://convergence2020.brownpapertickets.com/)) or at the door (cash or check only). For more information about the event please visit [www.ncoinc.org/convergence/](http://www.ncoinc.org/convergence/).

The 8th Annual North Coast Farmers’ Convergence is made possible by the generous support of its sponsors:

* Anderson Valley Foodshed
* Black Oak Coffee Roasters
* Christ’s Church of the Golden Rule
* Cold Creek Compost
* Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF)
* DripWorks
* Economic Development & Financing Corporation (EDFC)
* Emergency Preparedness in Communities (EPIC)
* Good Farm Fund
* Lake County Farmers’ Finest
* Mendocino County Certified Farmers’ Markets (MCFARM)
* Mendocino County Herb Guild
* Mendocino County Local Food Guide
* MendoLake Food Hub
* North Coast Opportunities (NCO)
* School of Adaptive Agriculture
* Sonoma Clean Power
* Ukiah Natural Foods Co-op
* Yokayo Seed Project/Mendocino County Library

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**About NCO** *NCO is the Community Action Agency that serves Lake and Mendocino Counties, as well as parts of Humboldt, Sonoma, Del Norte, and Solano Counties. NCO reacts and adjusts to community needs, including disaster response and recovery.*

*For more information visit*[*www.ncoinc.org*](http://www.ncoinc.org/)*or call (707) 467-3200.*

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