



2023 CALIFORNIA FARM TO SCHOOL CONFERENCE

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 24 -
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 25



THE PACKHOUSE AT AZIZ FARMS
PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA



2023 CALIFORNIA FARM TO SCHOOL CONFERENCE

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 24

10:00 AM GUEST ARRIVAL

11:00 AM BRUNCH

- *First Partner of CA Jennifer Siebel Newsom in conversation with CA Department of Food and Agriculture Secretary Karen Ross*
- *Center for Ecoliteracy - California Food for California Kids Awards Ceremony*

12:30 PM NETWORKING, FARM
TOURS, AND RESOURCE
FAIR

2:30 PM CONCLUSION OF DAY 1



In Conversation



JENNIFER SIEBEL NEWSOM ***First Partner of California***

Jennifer Siebel Newsom is an award-winning documentary filmmaker, thought leader on gender equity, and influential advocate for women and children. As First Partner, Siebel Newsom is a voice and partner to working moms and families through her California For All Kids and California For All Women initiatives. First Partner Siebel Newsom has made Farm to School a priority facet of her California For All Kids initiative—championing efforts to establish first-in-the-nation state funding for universal school meals for all public school children in California and leading the work to develop the innovative California Farm to School grant program.



KAREN ROSS ***Secretary, California Department of Food and Agriculture***

Karen Ross was appointed Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture on January 9, 2019 by Governor Gavin Newsom. In re-appointing Secretary Ross, Governor Newsom cited her unmatched leadership experience in agricultural issues nationally, internationally, and here in California, in areas including environmental stewardship, climate change adaptation, and trade. Secretary Ross was initially appointed by Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. in 2011.

Secretary Ross grew up as a 4-H kid on a farm in western Nebraska. She owns 800 acres of the family farm where her recently retired younger brother, a fourth-generation farmer, is mentoring a new, beginning farmer in growing no-till wheat and feed grains, incorporating cover crops and rotational grazing for beef production. The Secretary has a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and is a graduate of the Nebraska Ag Leadership Program. She has served on numerous boards and committees in California agriculture and with various academic institutions.



Presented by Center for Ecoliteracy

CALIFORNIA FOOD FOR CALIFORNIA KIDS® 2023 LEADERSHIP AND INNOVATION AWARDS

The Center for Ecoliteracy's California Food for California Kids® Network fosters leadership in over 100 public school districts working to transform school food systems and how students learn about food.

These eight leaders are being awarded for their creativity and initiative in school nutrition and farm to school programs. Learn more and see photos on Instagram @center_for_ecoliteracy or californiafoodforcaliforniakids.org.



SWEETWATER UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

**CALIFORNIA FOOD FOR CALIFORNIA KIDS® 2023
LEADERSHIP AWARD**

**ERIC SPAN,
DIRECTOR OF NUTRITION SERVICES**

Farm to School Region: Southern

Eric Span is a leading visionary in school nutrition policy and farm to school programs. He is the Director of Nutrition Services for Sweetwater Union High School District, the Public Policy and Legislative Committee Chair for the California School Nutrition Association, and a Board Member of the Chef Ann Foundation. Under his leadership, Sweetwater has created an urban farm that grows produce (and will soon produce fresh eggs!) for its school meal program. Eric has also helped to foster an innovative student-led food rescue and composting program for the district. He is a trained chef and has worked in school nutrition for 18 years. Eric's passion and love for food power his belief that all students have the right to high-quality and nutritious foods. His goals include on-campus beekeeping, honey harvesting, and developing career training programs for students focused on farming and gardening.



FORT BRAGG UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

CREATIVE FOOD EDUCATION AWARD

**PILAR GRAY,
DIRECTOR OF NUTRITION SERVICES**

Farm to School Region: North Coast

Pilar Gray is an energizing force in food education programs throughout Fort Bragg Unified School District, where she has been the nutrition services director for nearly 20 years. Pilar supports the district's garden-enhanced nutrition education programs and serves on the wellness policy committee for the district. In partnership with North Coast Opportunities, Pilar led the creation of 27 Harvest of the Month videos. Featuring fruits and vegetables from farms and farmers in the region, the videos are screened in classrooms for students and are paired with a taste test of the featured items. She has guided the successful expansion of Fort Bragg's school gardens to get a garden into every school, including two that produce vegetables for their farm-to-cafeteria program with crops such as snap peas, tomatoes, radishes, and fresh herbs. She and her nutrition services team, a close-knit community of dedicated professionals, envision programs that creatively guide students in growing food on campus for delicious, freshly-prepared, scratch-cooked school meals.



FRESNO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

MODELING SCHOOL FOOD SYSTEMS CHANGE AWARD

**AMANDA HARVEY, SNS,
DIRECTOR OF NUTRITION SERVICES**

Farm to School Region: San Joaquin

Amanda Harvey is a solutions-oriented leader, improving school meals and modeling systems change at Fresno Unified School District, California's third-largest school district. Inspired by student and family feedback, Amanda stepped into the role as Director of Nutrition Services in 2020 to increase the focus on locally-sourced ingredients and freshly-prepared meals. She has adapted menus to provide more choices for students and to serve more of the food that students love. Working with Amanda and her team, the district developed a new position for a farm to school coordinator and is bringing on nine executive chefs to increase the quality of school meals, support nutrition education, and expand farm to school offerings. Amanda has worked in school nutrition since 2015 and envisions Fresno Unified's program as a future model for nutrition, quality, and variety in school meals.



NATOMAS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
VISIONARY FOOD HUB PARTNERSHIP AWARD

VINCE CAGUIN, MBA,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF NUTRITION SERVICES
AND WAREHOUSING

Farm to School Region: Central

Vince Caguin is revolutionizing school food procurement. When he read that lettuce from neighboring Fiery Ginger Farm had gone to waste during the pandemic, he started thinking creatively about how to support local Sacramento-area farmers. As Executive Director of Nutrition Services and Warehousing at Natomas Unified School District, he formed a visionary partnership with Fiery Ginger Farm's new Spork Food Hub, becoming the first school district in the state of California to name a local food hub as its primary produce provider. This unique model provides students with fresh produce like butternut squash, salanova lettuce, cucumber, and tomatoes sourced from nearby farms. Vince's partnership has supported Spork Food Hub to grow its operations to source from over 30 local farmers and provide food to over 20 school districts. Vince has over 11 years of experience in school nutrition, is the former Academic Department Chair at Le Cordon Bleu Los Angeles, and currently works with the National Restaurant Association Education Foundation and the Institute of Child Nutrition. He envisions a future where students are well-nourished, staff have opportunities for professional growth, and local farmers are honored and supported.



SAN MIGUEL JOINT UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
OUTSTANDING NEW FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAM
AWARD

LAUREN THOMAS, RDN, SNS,
FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES DIRECTOR

Farm to School Region: South Coast

Lauren Thomas is successfully leading an outstanding new farm to school program at San Miguel Joint Union School District. A newcomer who started her school nutrition career in 2020, Lauren has already helped the district forge partnerships with 12 local farms and businesses and leads a Wheat2School grant program. Lauren discovered her passion for school nutrition during her Registered Dietitian Nutritionist internship with Erin Primer at San Luis Coastal Unified School District and credits Erin as her mentor. Now, as Food and Nutrition Services Director, Lauren has strengthened regional partnerships and shares ideas and best practices with neighboring school districts. She believes that all children deserve delicious, nutritious food at school, and envisions a school environment where fresh, locally-sourced, scratch-cooked meals and nutrition education are deeply rooted in the climate and culture of the school district.



SANTA ANA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

SUSTAINABLE STUDENT-CENTERED MEALS AWARD

**JOSH GODDARD,
DIRECTOR OF NUTRITION SERVICES**

Farm to School Region: Greater Los Angeles

Josh Goddard believes school communities are enriched when school meals reflect students' cultures and home lives. As the Director of Nutrition Services for Santa Ana Unified School District, Josh and his team listen to students to learn about the foods they eat at home and how their families prepare them. They use this research to develop student-centered meals such as lentil picadillo, chicken tinga, horchata overnight oats, and scratch-made vegan empanadas. Students' preferences for plant-forward options are supported by Santa Ana farm to school program. Farm to School Coordinator Moises Plascencia has built relationships with local farms to grow produce for students to enjoy. Josh started his food service career at age 15. He envisions a world where school cafeterias set a new standard for high-quality, sustainably-grown food, and where school kitchens attract chefs from local culinary schools.



TAHOE TRUCKEE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

CLIMATE-SMART SCHOOL MEALS AWARD

**KAT SOLTANMORAD, RDN,
DIRECTOR OF FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES**

Farm to School Region: Superior

Kat Soltanmorad is committed to climate-smart school meals that support the health of students and the planet. When she joined Tahoe Truckee Unified School District as Director of Food and Nutrition Services, her mission was to transform the meal program, moving from pre-packaged heat-and-serve meals to fresh, delicious, scratch-cooking. Kat's menus reflect the knowledge and commitment she earned from over 20 years of experience in school nutrition. The district's freshly-prepared meals use produce and bulk milk sourced primarily from local distributors, Tahoe Food Hub and Produce Plus, allowing cafeterias to feature salad bars with reusable silverware, plates, and milk dispensers. These innovations and the district's support for student-led teams who monitor and compost food waste were recognized with a US Department of Education Green Ribbon Award in 2018. Kat, along with her nutrition services team, hopes to empower students to make choices that positively influence their health, community, and the environment.



SANTA CLARA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

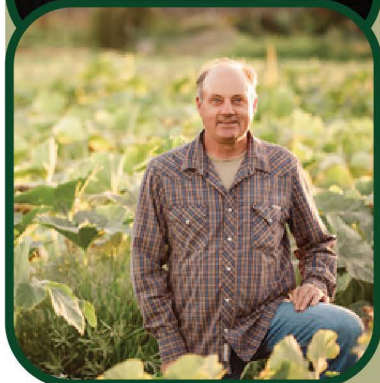
INTEGRATED DISTRICT FARM PARTNERSHIP AWARD

**KAREN LUNA,
DIRECTOR OF NUTRITION SERVICES**

AND

**DAVID TUTTLE,
FARM CONSULTANT**

Farm to School Region: Bay Area



In the heart of Silicon Valley, Karen Luna and David Tuttle share a sustainable food systems success story with their integrated district and farm partnership, serving fresh produce from the Santa Clara Unified School District Organic Farm in school meals since 2017.

With over 16 years of experience in school food, Karen has guided her team to use this hyper-local produce to prepare fresh, healthy meals for students' lunch trays and salad bars. This commitment to sustainability has fostered a transformed community within the district, helping students understand how food grows and what it needs to thrive and ensuring that students receive the freshest, healthiest meals possible.

Under David's farm leadership, 6,000 pounds of produce are harvested each month, offering seasonal fruits and vegetables to K–12 students year-round. The organic farm, adjacent to one of the district's middle school campuses, boasts 11 acres that consist of row crops, orchards, herbs, native plants, and free-range chickens. The farm also serves as an outdoor classroom and space for community events. David has over 20 years of experience in farming and hopes that the Santa Clara Unified School District Farm can serve as a model for other school districts in California and across the nation.

Congratulations award recipients!





Resource Fair

PARTICIPATING VENDORS

CALIFORNIA
FOUNDATION
FOR AG IN THE
CLASSROOM

CALIFORNIA
STATE LIBRARY

CALIFORNIA
VOLUNTEERS

CALIFORNIA
NATURAL
RESOURCES
AGENCY

CALIFORNIA
SCHOOL
NUTRITION
ASSOCIATION

CALIFORNIA
WHEAT
COMMISSION

CENTER FOR
ECOLITERACY

CHEF ANN
FOUNDATION

COMMUNITY
ALLIANCE WITH
FAMILY FARMERS

DAIRY COUNCIL
OF CALIFORNIA

EAT REAL

THE ALICE
WATERS
INSTITUTE &
SHARED PLATE

LIFE LAB

NO KID HUNGRY

TEN STRANDS



2023 CALIFORNIA FARM TO SCHOOL CONFERENCE

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 25

9:00 AM	GUEST ARRIVAL
9:30 AM	OPENING REMARKS
9:40 AM	EDUCATION PANEL #1 (35 MIN): FARMER LED FARM TO SCHOOL
10:30 AM	EDUCATION PANEL #2 (45 MIN): SUSTAINING CAFETERIA AND CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS
11:30 AM	EDUCATION PANEL #3 (45 MIN): CREATIVE FARM TO SCHOOL FUNDING
12:15 PM	FARMERS MARKET LUNCH BUFFET LUNCH AND FARMERS MARKET
1:45 PM	CLOSING SESSION: REFLECTION + ACTION
2:00 PM	CONCLUSION OF DAY 2

Education Panel #1

FARMER LED FARM TO SCHOOL

Facilitator: **TRACEY KIMURA**
California Department of Food & Agriculture (CDFA)



Tracey Kimura is the Farm to School Regional Producer Engagement Specialist for the Greater LA Region at the CA Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), where she supports local farmers with opportunities to sell to school districts. Tracey was born and raised in the Inland Valley of Southern California and has worked in the region for almost a decade with experience in a range of urban agriculture settings including school gardens, small farms, and community gardens, where she gained experience in all aspects of urban farming including production, sales, marketing, grant writing, administration, and event planning. Before joining CDFA, Tracey worked at UC Riverside

R'garden, Cal Poly Pomona Lyle Center for Regenerative Studies, Pomona Unified School District, and Huerta del Valle.

Panelist: **BOB KNIGHT**
Old Grove Orange



With his wife, Aki, and daughter, Anna, Bob stewards Old Grove Orange, a farm focusing exclusively on Farm2School. Old Grove Orange grows 81 acres of citrus, vegetables, blackberries, and flowers, all nestled around a namesake block of 109-year-old grandmother orange trees in southern California. Old Grove has been an engine of small farm innovation over the years: kicking off with farmers markets from the mid-70's, starting one of SoCal's earliest CSA's, pioneering farmer-active farm-to-school, and creating one of California's first local food hubs. Each year Farmer Bob meets with

thousands of his school-kid customers, 35 at a time, to talk about farming and how eating lots of fruits and vegetables can give you superpowers.



Education Panel #2

SUSTAINING CAFETERIA AND CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Facilitator:

NICHOLAS ANICICH

California Department of Food & Agriculture (CDFA)



Nick Anicich is the Farm to School Program Manager at the CDFA where he leads the CA Farm to School Network, the CA Farm to School Working Group, and CDFA's Urban Agriculture Grant Program. Before joining CDFA, Nick worked as Community Programs Coordinator at Soil Born Farms in Rancho Cordova, CA, and as School Garden and Nutrition Coordinator at Sacramento Charter High School in Sacramento, CA. Nick is excited to share his experience building networks, supporting changemakers, and expanding farm to school programs across California. He lives in Sacramento, CA with his family.

Panelists:

JUANITA CHAN-RODEN

Rialto Unified School District



Juanita Chan-Roden, MAEd, is the STEM and college and careers pathway coordinator for Rialto Unified School District. Her main focus is to develop active community-based environmental stewards in NGSS science instruction, career technical education, and environmental stewardship. She has a background in entomology and plant vector pathogen epidemiology, among other disciplines, and has taught both elementary and secondary grade levels. She nurtures wonder and curiosity about the natural world by developing cross-disciplinary curriculum, organizing STEM student learning events, and leading various school professional learning opportunities.

DOUG HENDERSON

Val Verde Unified School District



Doug Henderson is the Director-STEAM for Val Verde Unified School District in Perris, CA. Doug spend the first 19 years of his career as a biology teacher before moving to the district office to coordinate STEAM opportunities for ALL students. The underlying core principle of STEAM education is problem solving and Doug has worked to give students opportunities to apply their 21st century skills toward a problem by creating a systemic infrastructure that enhances the iterative design principles on each campus using reimagined spaces, STEAM teachers and curricula. These conducive learning spaces

include STEAM labs that serve as the hub of engineering for all K-8 schools, outdoor classrooms, gardens and CTE classrooms that help prepare students with the skills needed in our local workforce.



Education Panel #3

CREATIVE SCHOOL FOOD FUNDING

Facilitator:



JACKIE RICHARDSON
California Department of Education

Jackie Richardson is a Registered Dietitian and the Associate Director of the Nutrition Services Division of the California Department of Education, where she works with a dedicated team of high performing colleagues who are passionate about child nutrition. Together, and in partnership with Local Educational Agencies statewide, they have supported the successful implementation of California Universal Meals Program, providing one free breakfast and one free lunch to all pupils every school day. Since 2021, this team has issued over \$1 billion dollars in state and federal funding for activities that support, and for components of, quality and delicious school meals, including: kitchen infrastructure, staff training, recipe development, plant-based meal components, and minimally processed and California Grown foods.

Panelists:



ERIC SPAN
Sweetwater Union High School District

Eric Span is the Director of Nutrition Services for Sweetwater Union High School District. Eric has served in this role for 11 years. Eric has 18 years in K-12 School Nutrition as well as being a trained chef. Having graduated culinary school 33 years ago, Eric has vast knowledge in recipe building, procurement, and leading large teams. His passion and love for serving great food guides him as he provides the highest quality and nutritious meals for Sweetwater students. Eric is a proponent of the Farm to School movement and is currently working to build a bridge between school food service and classroom education. Eric is currently serving his second year as the Public

Policy and Legislative Committee Chair for the California School Nutrition Association. Eric became a Board Member for the Chef Ann Foundation in 2023.



KAT SOLTANMORAD
Tahoe Truckee Unified School District

Kat Soltanmorad, RDN, is a dedicated professional with a remarkable 19-year career in the field of sustainable food systems, nutrition education, and scratch cook operations for school food programs. Throughout her journey, she has been an ardent advocate for healthier food options and environmental stewardship.

For the past eleven years, Kat has served as the Director of Food & Nutrition Services at Tahoe Truckee Unified School District (TTUSD), where she has spearheaded a transformative change in the school food landscape. Her primary focus has been to transition the district's operations from pre-packaged meals to predominantly scratch-made foods. Recognizing the importance of providing fresh, nutritious meals to students, she has worked tirelessly to increase labor hours and source organic and locally grown foods for the school meal program.





DICKINSON FAMILY
FARMS,
SAN DIEGO
COUNTY





Venue: The Packhouse at Aziz Farms



Aziz Farms is a model farm to school program in Southern California. Started in 1987 by Tadros A. Tadros, the farm originally grew and sold dates, but when Tadros' son Mark joined the farming business in 2007 Aziz Farms grew to include educational opportunities like field trips and educational events. Now the farm also includes a Packhouse aggregation center, where they support local farms entering the school food and wholesale marketplace.



Last year, with the help of Nicole Tadros (educator and wife of Mark Tadros) Aziz Farms hosted over 6,000 students from Palm Springs, Desert Sands and Coachella Valley unified school districts for field trips that connect to Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and Common Core Math and Language Arts Standards. The farm also partners with Future Farmers of America (FFA) and culinary students in Career Technical Education (CTE) programs.

Learn more at:



@cafarmtoschool



cafarmtofork.cdfa.ca.gov/CaFarmtoSchoolProgram.htm



cafarmtoschool@cdfa.ca.gov

Thank You!

We are so grateful you took the time to join us for the
2023 California Farm to School Conference!
We hope to see you in 2025!

