



SPRING 2021

LEGACY

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PROTECTING THE FARMS THAT FEED YOUR FAMILY

2021 ASPIRATIONS

By Development and Operations Director, Katie Otto

While things are not necessarily normal, we are all excited to turn the page on the calendar, have 2020 behind us, and be well on our way towards our 2021 aspirations. CFT ended the year with three exciting grant awards that all translate to furthering our mission, impact, and reach in 2021. We have five easement projects set to close this year, new educational tools to share, and are in the process of reevaluating operations, strategies, and marketing efforts to ensure efficiency and effectiveness – that includes our office move! There is a lot rolling out for CFT in 2021, and we look forward to continuing to collaborate and partner with you, in our collective efforts to protect farmland.

One of the new paths we are forging this year, is a fundraising campaign to place an agriculture conservation easement on Fiorini Ranch. The Fiorini name is well-known and respected in the agriculture industry and we are excited to be working with them to protect what is hopefully the first of many properties. The Fiorini's took the first step by voluntarily coming forward to express their interest in permanently protecting their land, and following our review of their application, we are now pursuing funding to place an easement on the 60-acre almond orchard.

To access certain easement grants, CFT needs to provide a 25% match. We are fortunate that one of the grants received at the end of 2020 was from the Henry Mayo Newhall Foundation (Foundation). For every \$1 we receive to Protect Fiorini Ranch, the Foundation will match

it, up to \$80,000. Staff is working with the Fiorini family and our partners to actively secure the remaining funds.

Donating to Protect Fiorini Ranch is an opportunity to be a part of history and protect a sustainable working landscape. Not only are you helping the Fiorini's ensure their land remains in agriculture, but you are sending a message to developers, and others in the area regarding strategic development, urban sprawl, and the importance of the farmland that feeds and employs many in their community and throughout the region.

Undoubtedly, you will be hearing a lot about this campaign in the coming weeks and months. We're hoping to achieve our fundraising goal by the end of 2021, and look forward to celebrating with you when the easement officially closes. If you are interested in donating or learning more about the Fiorini Ranch, visit www.cafarmtrust.org/protect-fiorini-ranch.



Again, this is just one of the many projects CFT is working on in 2021. We look forward to continuing to share our work with you and appreciate your involvement, engagement, and feedback. Our donors, sponsors, board members, volunteers, easement holders, and friends make a difference, and provide CFT the opportunity to embark on new and challenging endeavors as we collectively try to protect farmland, preserve family farms and promote agriculture.



OUR MISSION

Help Farmers Protect the Best Farmland in the World

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Sacramento, San Joaquin, Contra Costa, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, and Fresno counties



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TAKING A STAND — HELP CFT PROTECT THE FIORINI RANCH



Since 1909

FIORINI RANCH

When asked if there was any doubt if he would follow in his father's and grandfather's farming footsteps, Randy Fiorini, the managing partner of Fiorini Ranch answered with a resounding, "No. I loved being outdoors. I loved the farming life."

For many, farming is a tradition, a legacy, that is passed on from one generation to the next. The crops may change, operations evolve, and techniques may advance, but one thing always remains – the love of the land, and the responsibility of being a steward for natural resources and the food the land provides.

That statement holds true for Fiorini and it is his hope it will hold true for generations to come. His dedication to the land, farming and his family are strong. Fiorini is currently working with California Farmland Trust to pursue an agriculture conservation easement that will ensure the land remains in agriculture and is not paved over or developed.

By Vicky Boyd

Randy Fiorini fondly remembers almond harvest on the family farm south of Turlock when he and his sister used rubber mallets to knock tree branches to remove nuts, catching them in canvas sheets spread under the trees. During a recent tour of the farm, he also pointed out three rusty Model A trucks the family used to haul peaches to the cannery. He recalled how his grandfather, Francis, moved in 1909 from Los Angeles to northern Merced County, where he farmed dryland and had a dairy operation for at least 20 years.

"If it hadn't been for his wife, Mabel, Francis wouldn't have known how to hook up the horses to the plow," Fiorini said jokingly about his grandfather.

Given the family's history, it was evident farming was in the younger Fiorini's blood. Fiorini attended Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, receiving a bachelor's degree in fruit science. Before he graduated, he bought his first 60-acre farm next door to the family's original homestead ranch. At the time, some friends and family questioned his judgment because the ground had been stripped of topsoil.

"Most people around here didn't think it was farmable," Fiorini said. "The price was so cheap. I went to the Farmers Home Administration and they gave me a start-up loan. That's really the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



piece of property I got started on in 1973. Needless to say, we're almost 48 years into it and it's become very productive farmland." The transformation didn't happen overnight and reiterated Fiorini's long term commitment to the land. Healthy soil-building practices, such as compost and manure applications, as well as water-use efficiency technologies like microsprinklers were all utilized. The land is now in its third planting of almonds. Fiorini said this 60-acre property is near to his heart because it is adjacent to the ground where his grandparents started their farming journey and is the first ground he ever owned.

NEARBY DEVELOPMENT THREATS

Protecting the 60-acre property with an agriculture conservation easement (ACE), will not only ensure the farm remains in agriculture, but Fiorini said he hoped to send a message to area developers and encourage other nearby landowners to follow suit. "The threat is from Delhi," he said. "In most valley communities, they grow up around (Highway) 99. Delhi has been growing to the west, and land development opportunities that exist now to the east, I think, are more attractive to land developers. So 160 acres adjacent to Delhi that we're located next to are likely to be the first to go. And the landowner is eager to sell."

"We're right on the edge of the Delhi sphere of influence. I think we want to signal to Merced County planning department that they should not think about residential housing development beyond this line that we're trying to form."

Charlotte Mitchell, CFT Executive Director agreed, adding the Fiorini project complements the more than 11,000 acres that the Trust has already permanently protected in Merced County.

"Some of the most productive farmland located in Merced County is also under threat for urban development," she said. "It's important we strategically invest in protecting sustainable farmland that provides food and benefits the environment."

"With urbanization creeping closer, land prices have skyrocketed to the point that purchasing a piece to farm doesn't pencil out," Fiorini said. Potential buyers are either willing to shell out for 3- to 4-acre ranchettes or are developers who plan to split the property for housing. The high prices also prove enticing to farmers looking to retire.

SUSTAINING THE FAMILY'S LEGACY

Seeking a conservation easement is just part of Fiorini's overall sustainability plan to preserve his family's legacy. Over the years, the Fiorinis have expanded their farm to currently comprise about two-thirds almonds, a quarter walnuts and the remainder cling peaches.

"We have the next generation coming along, so I want to prepare



"WE HAVE THE NEXT GENERATION COMING ALONG, SO I WANT TO PREPARE THEM TO FARM."

them to farm," he said. "It's hard to do what we do. In the time I've been in business, everyone around us has gone out of business largely because of commodity prices. This land is productive, but it doesn't produce enough to overcome some of the pricing challenges."

Like many in the agriculture industry, they have learned diversification is key to survival. Fiorini's also have a farm management company to offer services, such as custom harvesting which complements farming revenue.

Fiorini has tried to maximize inputs through sustainable practices. He's converted his orchards to either drip or microsprinkler irrigation. These types of irrigation systems can help growers increase irrigation efficiency to produce more crop per drop. Low-volume irrigation also lends itself to fertigation, where nutrients are delivered to the plants through the irrigation.

Not only does this allow growers to spoon feed their crop, but it also helps them steward nutrients by following the 4 R's: applying the right product, at the right rate, at the right time and the at the right location.

In addition, owl boxes, which were removed when older orchards were ripped out and replanted, are being installed again to provide environmentally friendly rodent control.

A BIG PICTURE APPROACH

Fiorini and his family have also taken a bigger-picture approach beyond just the boundaries of his farm. Since his early days serving on the board of the Merced County Farm Bureau, he

has advocated for agriculture and been active in farming issues, particularly those related to water.

“Water supply reliability is a concern for everyone related to farming,” he said. “California water policy is something that every region in the State is concerned about and watches closely. Some regions in the State already suffer from an unreliable supply of surface water and with recent groundwater regulations that will be phased in over the next fifteen years those areas may be forced to fallow productive farmland. We must find better ways to insure a more reliable and sustainable water supply for agriculture. Our family is fortunate to be located in this region. Because of the foresight of forefathers who developed a reliable and sustainable supply of water more than a century ago, we are blessed with a reliable supply of water for irrigation which is a compelling reason to insure this ranch can continue to produce food for generations to come.”

Fiorini served on the Turlock Irrigation Board for 17 years, which provided a steppingstone to eventually chair the Association of California Water Agencies and appointment by then-Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to the Delta Stewardship Council.

During his 10-plus years on the seven-member council, he also served five years as full-time chairman. The group is charged with advancing the state's co-equal goals for the Delta – a more reliable statewide water supply and a healthy and protected ecosystem in the Delta.

Joining him in the family partnership are two of Fiorini's kids, Jay and Stacy. The fourth-generation Fiorini's along with their older sister, Cari, all attended Cal Poly and now hold leadership roles within the community and other industry groups.

A potential fifth generation of farming Fiorini's, ages 3 ½ to 17, spends time with grandpa learning skills around the farm and in the shop such as welding, metal cutting and wood finishing.

A CALL FOR SUPPORT

To help fulfill Fiorini's dream to keep the ground permanently in agriculture, CFT plans to apply for agricultural conservation easement grant funding, which carries matching fund requirements. CFT needs to raise \$165,000 to meet the matching fund requirement. Thanks to the Henry Mayo Newhall Foundation (Foundation), the project is almost halfway there. In late 2020, the Foundation provided CFT with \$80,000 to be used as matching support for donations.

“The support from the Henry Mayo Newhall Foundation will really make this project achievable,” Mitchell said. “It's difficult to obtain the match requirement needed for agriculture conservation easement grants. With the Foundation providing some of the match funding, this will double every other donation we receive for the project, helping us achieve our ability to protect this land for agriculture, forever.”

“CFT, along with many other land trusts, have been fortunate to receive grant funding for easements,” Mitchell said. “But as that funding decreases, we really need communities to take a stand, invest in protecting the working landscapes that surround them and sustain them. Donating

toward the protection of Fiorini Ranch is investing in farmland, family farms, the environment, local jobs and our food supply. It also sends a message to local leaders that the community values agriculture and strategic development.”

The primary purpose of these funds will be dedicated to Protect Fiorini Ranch. Should

the Protect Fiorini Ranch project not be completed, the donated funds will be redirected for a similar purpose. If you are interested in supporting Protect Fiorini Ranch, please visit www.cafarmtrust.org/protect-fiorini-ranch or contact Katie Otto at kotto@cafarmtrust.org

**“THE CALL FOR DONATIONS FOR
A SPECIFIC PROJECT ALSO IS A
DEVIATION FROM THE PAST AND IS
DUE TO A CHANGING LANDSCAPE.”**

**DONATE
NOW**



www.cafarmtrust.org/protect-fiorini-ranch

THE HENRY MAYO NEWHALL FOUNDATION

Following a competitive grant process, in early December the Henry Mayo Newhall Foundation (Foundation) awarded CFT matching grant funding that will be leveraged to meet the 25% funding requirement for an agricultural conservation easement grant for the Fiorini Ranch, located in Merced County.

The Henry Mayo Newhall Foundation is a private family foundation whose mission focuses on improving the

quality of life within the geographical areas associated with the career and legacy of California pioneer, Henry Mayo Newhall. The Foundation has a long history of supporting communities and agriculture throughout California.

The logo for the Henry Mayo Newhall Foundation is a red square with a thin gold border. Inside the square, the text "Henry Mayo Newhall" is written in a white serif font, and "FOUNDATION" is written below it in a larger, bold, white sans-serif font.

Henry Mayo Newhall
FOUNDATION

To read more about this project be sure to check out the featured article in this issue of Legacy on page four or visit <https://www.cafarmtrust.org/protect-fiorini-ranch>.

SAVE THE DATE - BIG DAY OF GIVING



Save the date, the Big Day of Giving (BDOG) 2021 is right around the corner! A program of the Sacramento Region Community Foundation, BDOG is an initiative to grow local philanthropy. The annual 24-hour community-wide movement unites the nonprofit sector to help raise unrestricted funds for nonprofits. For California Farmland Trust, BDOG is used to raise vital funds to better position us to protect valuable farmland throughout California. Look for more information on the BDOG coming soon to our website and social media.

WE ARE MOVING!

2020 allowed CFT the opportunity to evaluate our efficiencies and operations. One notable lesson learned, was that our staff was just as efficient at home, as we are in the office. Staff's passion for our mission, coupled with our infrastructure and technology, ensured that our work continued and thrived. As a result, we have made the decision to downsize our office. In April, we will be moving into a building owned by the Sacramento County Farm Bureau. This move will allow staff to work remotely as needed, and ensure CFT is fiscally responsible as it pertains to our overhead and operational costs. We have also established a permanent post office box that will serve as our new mailing address. Please be sure to note our address change below.

Mailing Address:
California Farmland Trust
P.O. Box 1960
Elk Grove, CA 95759

Physical Address:
California Farmland Trust
8970 Elk Grove Boulevard
Elk Grove, CA 95624

CFT ENDS YEAR ON HIGH NOTE

CFT closed out 2020 with grant awards to further our education and easements efforts in 2021.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL LANDS CONSERVATION PROGRAM (SALC)

CFT recently received notice that funding will be awarded for two agricultural conservation easement projects that were submitted through a competitive grant application process. These projects were selected based on their risk of being converted to other non-agricultural uses, their potential to promote infill development, as well as their agricultural, economic, and ecological values.

The two projects will protect over 777 acres in Merced and Fresno counties, leaving some of the state's most valuable farmland available for agricultural production, forever. Located on prime soils, these multigenerational farms also utilize practices that help build soil health for increased carbon sequestration.



These funds were made available through the sixth round of the California Strategic Growth Council's (SGC) Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALC) in collaboration with the Department of Conservation.

SALC is a part of California Climate Investments, a statewide initiative that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment — particularly in disadvantaged communities.

CALAGPLATE

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) awarded funds through a competitive grant process for organizations that enhance agricultural education and leadership opportunities under the 2020 California Special Interest License Plate (CalAgPlate) program.



"Over the last seven years the CalAgPlate program has supported more than \$1.4 million in funding for agricultural education," said CDFA Secretary Karen Ross. "It continues to be a great program that connects and educates school children through activities like ag-focused field trips and school gardens, while also supporting leadership training and career development opportunities."

Protecting 777 acres of farmland helps the environment avoid 150,259 metric tons of Carbon Dioxide Equivalent (MTCO₂EQ) which is similar to:



Preventing the CO₂ emissions from 25,440 homes' electricity use for one year.



Avoiding the greenhouse gas emissions from 32,462 passenger vehicles for one year.

Source: EPA Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator

The CalAgPlate program is funded with proceeds generated through the sale of special interest, agriculture-themed license plates through the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV).

For CFT, CalAgPlate grant funds will provide 40 elementary classrooms resources kits and training, related to the Orange You Glad We Have Farmland curriculum. Designed for third to fifth grade students, the curriculum and activities will teach students the importance of farmland and its use for our future. If you are an educator interested in receiving a kit for your classroom please email Katie Otto at kotto@cafarmtrust.org.



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We are excited to introduce and thank our 2021 sponsors. Many of our sponsors have provided CFT with ongoing support for years. We appreciate their support and investment in the mission of California Farmland Trust.

Legacy



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97% of every dollar donated goes directly to farmland conservation.

Make a gift today at cafarmtrust.org