

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

September 20, 2018



**CENTER for  
LAND-BASED  
LEARNING**

**Contact:** (Information omitted)

**California Farm Academy to honor 21 graduates at State Capitol**

*Seven months of intensive training proves tomorrow's farmers ready for new challenges*

**Winters, CA** — The seventh graduating class of the California Farm Academy, a program of the Center for Land-Based Learning, will walk the West steps of the State Capitol in Sacramento at 3:30 p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 23, where they'll begin their journey as the farmers of tomorrow.

This year, 21 students will join the 111 previous graduates of the program, which began in 2012 and teaches participants about agricultural production, business planning, and marketing of a wide range of specialty crops, poultry and livestock.

"Graduation is a celebration of seven months and hundreds of hours of hard work for these students," the farmer training program manager Maureen Thompson said. "They have been in the classroom, in the field and have toured dozens of local farms. All of this prepares them to enter into a career in farming."

The ceremony will feature keynote speaker Judith Redmond, one of six owners of Full Belly Farm ([fullbellyfarm.com](http://fullbellyfarm.com)), a multigenerational certified organic farm in Northern California growing fruits, nuts, vegetables, and flowers. Full Belly Farm includes pastured sheep and chickens and prides itself on making every effort to foster sustainability with everything from soil fertility to crafting a stable, respected workplace for its employees.

Redmond also serves as an advisor to the California Climate and Agriculture Network, the Community Alliance with Family Farmers, and as a Commissioner of the Capay Valley Volunteer Fire Department. Additionally, she is on the Governing Council of the Organic Farmers Association, a group providing a strong national voice for organic farmers.

"This eclectic group of aspiring farmers have come a long way since taking their tentative first steps in February 2018," Sri Sethuratnam, director of the California Farm Academy said. "CFA's Beginning Farmer Training program has provided them with the knowledge and skills that will help them chart their next course of action, whether it be starting their own production farm, school garden or farm centered non-profit. The foundational

knowledge imparted by this program will stand them in good stead in the journey that lays ahead of them and for many years to come.”

Upon completing the program, graduates who have a solid business and marketing plan in place can lease small plots of low-cost land from the Center for Land-Based Learning, which continues to provide ongoing training and peer-to-peer support. More than 70 percent of California Farm Academy graduates are either farming or working in agriculture-related businesses.

California agriculture, a \$54 billion industry, leads the nation in agricultural production, but the average farmer’s age ranges in the 60s. The USDA estimates that the U.S. will need 700,000 new farmers over the next two decades to replace those who age out. Fortunately, this new crop of Farm Academy graduates, which mostly hails from the greater Sacramento region to the outer reaches of Northern California, ranges in age from 20 to mid-50s.

###

***The Center for Land-Based Learning*** was founded in 2001. The mission is to inspire, educate, and cultivate future generations of farmers, agricultural leaders, and natural resource stewards. Combining innovative hands-on experience with classroom learning, participants in Land-Based Learning’s programs develop leadership skills, learn how sustainable agriculture practices contribute to a healthy ecosystem, and create connections to agricultural, environmental, and food system careers.