

People & Places

Distributor is an organic pioneer

David Lively of the Organically Grown Co. helped shape industry's rise

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press



David Lively, vice president of sales and marketing for the Organically Grown Co., helped launch the produce distribution company to better coordinate sales among organic farmers. The company now has \$150 million in annual revenues.

EUGENE, Ore. — As organic entrepreneur David Lively has discovered, there's occasionally an upside to being widely mocked.

In the fledgling years of the Organically Grown Co., which Lively helped launch in the late 1970s, the idea of a food wholesaler devoted to organic produce was derided as a "hippie idealistic trip."

"Nobody was interested in what we were doing," he said. "I was literally laughed at."

While it's not pleasant to have one's dreams subjected to ridicule, Lively learned that the seemingly ludicrous concept gave the Organically Grown Co. an open field in which to operate.

"The commercial distributors considered organic a complete joke," he said. "We had a pretty good run at it without any competition."

In all fairness, the 1970s organic food scene as described by Lively was fairly laughable: There was "almost no market" for organic produce while growers fiercely competed for existing sales channels, he said.

Farmers were overproducing some vegetables while grocers were facing shortages of others, so a handful of growers decided to push for a "coordinated marketing effort," Lively said. "There was too much chaos in the market."

Organically Grown Co. originated as a farmers' cooperative in Eugene, Ore., aimed at improving agricultural practices but then shifted to preventing "gluts and holes in production," he said.

John Eveland, co-owner of Gathering Together Farm in Corvallis, Ore., remembers that the firm initially consisted of little more than a small warehouse and a truck.

Even so, it offered growers improved efficiency over their previous approach to marketing produce, he said. "Everybody was selling \$100 worth out of the back of their truck."

Such cooperation was key to the success of small organic farms, which could not economically deliver fruits and vegetables to grocery stores on an individual basis, said Larry Lev, an Oregon State University agricultural economist who studies local food systems.

By pooling their resources, the growers could consolidate shipments and deliver them more effectively, Lev said.

"Collectively, they can get more done," he said. "They can fill the gaps in the food system."

Even so, the cooperative's early years were "definitely rough," even as it converted into a for-profit company and opened its first facility in the early 1980s, Lively said.

When the cooperative converted to a marketing venture, Organically Grown Co. was intended to free up time for growers such as Lively and his brother, Tom, so they could spend more time farming and less on making deliveries and collecting payments.

However, Lively eventually became more involved in the cooperative's operations in various capacities.

He helped other farmers with problems they were ex-

periencing in the field but later moved into managing supplies and shipping. Lively now serves as vice president of sales and marketing.

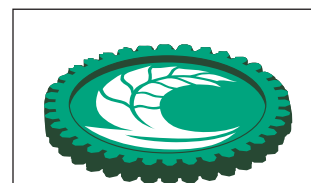
"We were pretty fluid with what we were doing," Lively said. "We have people who just want to get it done."

The company's role also changed over time as it began distributing produce from growers who weren't founding members of the cooperative, sourcing organic fruits and vegetables from California and elsewhere to supply customers year-round.

Organically Grown Co. lost money for several years but became profitable as the baby boomer generation began earning middle-class incomes and wanted to support an alternative food system.

Lively describes the phenomenon as "hippies who cut their hair and got jobs."

"That's when the market



Western Innovator

David Lively

Occupation: Vice president of sales and marketing at Organically Grown Co.

Age: 62

Family: Two grown children

Hometown: Eugene, Ore.

Education: After graduating from Cortez High School in Phoenix, Ariz., he studied writing, social work, business and marketing at several colleges and universities

really took hold," he said.

Organically Grown Co.'s clientele, which originally consisted of small food-buying clubs and grocery cooperatives, now includes major national grocery chains. Its revenues have grown from \$100,000 a year to \$150 million.

"The company is a force," said Eveland, the organic farmer, noting that it has nonetheless stayed true to its original values. "It isn't just about making money, it's about doing it with a conscience."

Lively was pivotal in enabling the distribution company's growth and prominence while retaining strong ties with the agricultural community, Eveland said. "He's been a formidable force in that company and the whole organic industry."

Nevada students see, touch agriculture

By SARAH HAUCK
The Record-Courier

GARDNERVILLE, Nev. (AP) — Two chickens ran away from their pens, and a young dairy cow pulled from her owner's grasp during a break at Ag in the Classroom at Scarselli Elementary School.

The Douglas County Farm Bureau-hosted traveling program brought feathers, hooves, tractors and stingers to show students how agriculture influences their lives every day.

"A lot of the younger children don't realize what's in their own backyards," District English as a Second Language teacher Anissa Rose said. "It is

great to see what goes on behind the scenes. This program brings the sights, the smells, the sounds of everything that's out there, right here to these kids."

Students from DHS's FFA brought their projects of chickens, sheep and goats to share their purpose within Carson Valley agriculture with the elementary students.

Being part of the district for a decade, Rose enjoyed seeing several familiar faces Friday on the field of Scarselli Elementary School.

"I love seeing the older kids running the programs," she said. "I see three kids here today that I've known since they were in elementary school. See-

ing them as representatives of this program is heartwarming to me. This and FFA are just another example of the opportunity for success the district is able to provide for our students."

For a 4-H member, Ag in the Classroom is a time to share with his peers how products from cows help fill grocery store shelves.

Lander Smith, 12, shared with students his Belted Galloway calf, Theo.

"I am a talker, so I love this," Lander said. "I like seeing kids learn, and look at the animal up close. I also like seeing them get their questions answered."

Lander's mom, Julene Smith, thinks programs like

4-H and Ag in the Classroom are a way for kids that don't live on a ranch like her son Lander, to get hands-on experience.

"Watching them cringe when they find out Jell-O comes from cows is my favorite part of this," the Carson City resident said. "Plus, this shows kids that the food in the grocery store has to come from somewhere before it ends up on the shelves. We help teach them that there has to be ranchers and farmers to get that food to them."

Ag in the Classroom takes over an elementary school in the district bringing exhibitors from bee keepers, to noxious weed experts to cowboys to

share with students the importance and presence of agriculture in their area.

Farm Bureau President Woody Worthington said the program works directly with curriculum requirements, so students aren't just playing with farm animals for the day.

"We are working with Teri White (Douglas County School District Superintendent) directly to ensure what we bring to the kids is beneficial," he said. "We want to be able to get ag into classrooms, just like the name says. We are a future for these kids. That's why it is so important to introduce kids to agriculture and ranching and farming."

Oregon residents worried about 'gold rush' for pot land

By VICKIE ALDOUS
Mail Tribune

MEDFORD, Ore. (AP) — Many residents in rural Jackson County say their peaceful way of life is being threatened by people grabbing up land for marijuana grows.

"We've got a little gold rush going on. People have their minds set on profit and getting fabulously rich," said Rich Fairbanks, who lives in the Applegate Valley near a marijuana grow with plants as tall as small trees.

He said marijuana growers are buying up rural residential sites with water and power, displacing homebuyers and using up scarce well water.

"It's a perfect storm that has created a lot of tension and potential for violence in what used to be nice neighborhoods," Fairbanks said.

Jim Reiland, who also lives in the Applegate Valley, said he and his neighbors are not personally opposed to the legalization of marijuana in Oregon. But the marijuana grows seem to be going in with little regulation or concern over impacts to the surrounding community.

"A lot of us have pretty significant plantations right next door," he said.

During all of September and October, neighbors are putting up with skunk-like odors as the marijuana plants

mature and become ready for harvest, Reiland said.

But worse than that, Reiland said marijuana growers have little regard for the community and long-time residents.

"Growers are not bad people, but they don't have the same commitment to the area," he said. "They're just looking at it as an opportunity to make a boatload of money in a hurry. Their issue is getting it grown and getting it out."

With Southern Oregon in a drought, many rural residents don't believe wells on rural residential and woodland resource lands should be tapped for high-intensity marijuana grows. They think marijuana

growers should instead obtain legal water rights and use water from irrigation districts.

The residents are also worried about woodlands being cleared for marijuana plants, and they say grow lights and industrial fans are disturbing.

They have called on Jackson County officials to develop more regulations governing marijuana grows.

Rural resident Cathie Sabinos said she lives within 100 yards of a medical marijuana grow. Cars come up and down the driveway at all hours of the day and night, flashing their lights and honking to be let into the grow site, which is guarded by eight to 10 dogs that bark constantly.



Calendar

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Saturday, Oct. 31

National FFA Convention & Expo, Kentucky Exposition Center, Louisville, Ky.

Tuesday-Thursday Nov. 3-5

Practical Food Safety & HACCP Workshop, Idaho Water Center, Boise, 208-364-6188. HACCP or Hazard Analysis Critical Control

Points, is a preventive system for the control of health-threatening biological, chemical and physical food hazards during food processing. This is a comprehensive workshop designed for those individuals responsible for implementing and managing a HACCP system in a food manufacturing facility.

Tuesday-Thursday Nov. 3-5

UC-Davis Produce Safety Workshop, University of California-Davis campus. This 2½-day workshop is an integrated approach to building a foundation of awareness and improved understanding of the current scientific basis for produce microbial safety systems and preventive controls.

Wednesday-Friday Nov. 4-6

2015 Weed Conference, Wenatchee Convention Center, Wenatchee, Wash.

Saturday, Nov. 7

Worm Bin Composting Workshop, 10 a.m.-noon, OSU Extension office, Eugene. Pre-registration by Nov. 3 is requested. Cost is \$40, which includes a worm bin and worms.

Tuesday, Nov. 10

Nevada Governor's Conference on Agriculture, Culinary Academy of Las Vegas, North Las Vegas, Nev. Conference highlights include local food successes in

southern Nevada, breaking down barriers within the local food movement and making important connections in the local food chain.

Wednesday-Saturday Nov. 11-14

Tri-State Grain Growers Convention, Davenport Grand Hotel, Spokane, Wash.

Thursday-Friday Nov. 12-13

Oregon Water Law Conference, Hilton Executive Tower, Portland.

Friday-Sunday Nov. 13-15

Tiith Producers of Washington 2015 Annual Conference, Spokane

Convention Center, Spokane, Wash. 206-632-7506.

Monday-Thursday Nov. 16-19

Washington Farm Bureau 2015 Annual Meeting & Trade Show, Yakima Convention Center, Yakima.

Friday, Nov. 20

Agri-Business Council of Oregon Denim & Diamonds Auction, Dinner & Awards, 5 p.m. Oregon Convention Center, Portland, 503-595-9121.

Friday-Saturday Nov. 27-28

Open Alpaca Barn, Alpacas of Oregon, Sherwood, 503-628-2023.

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