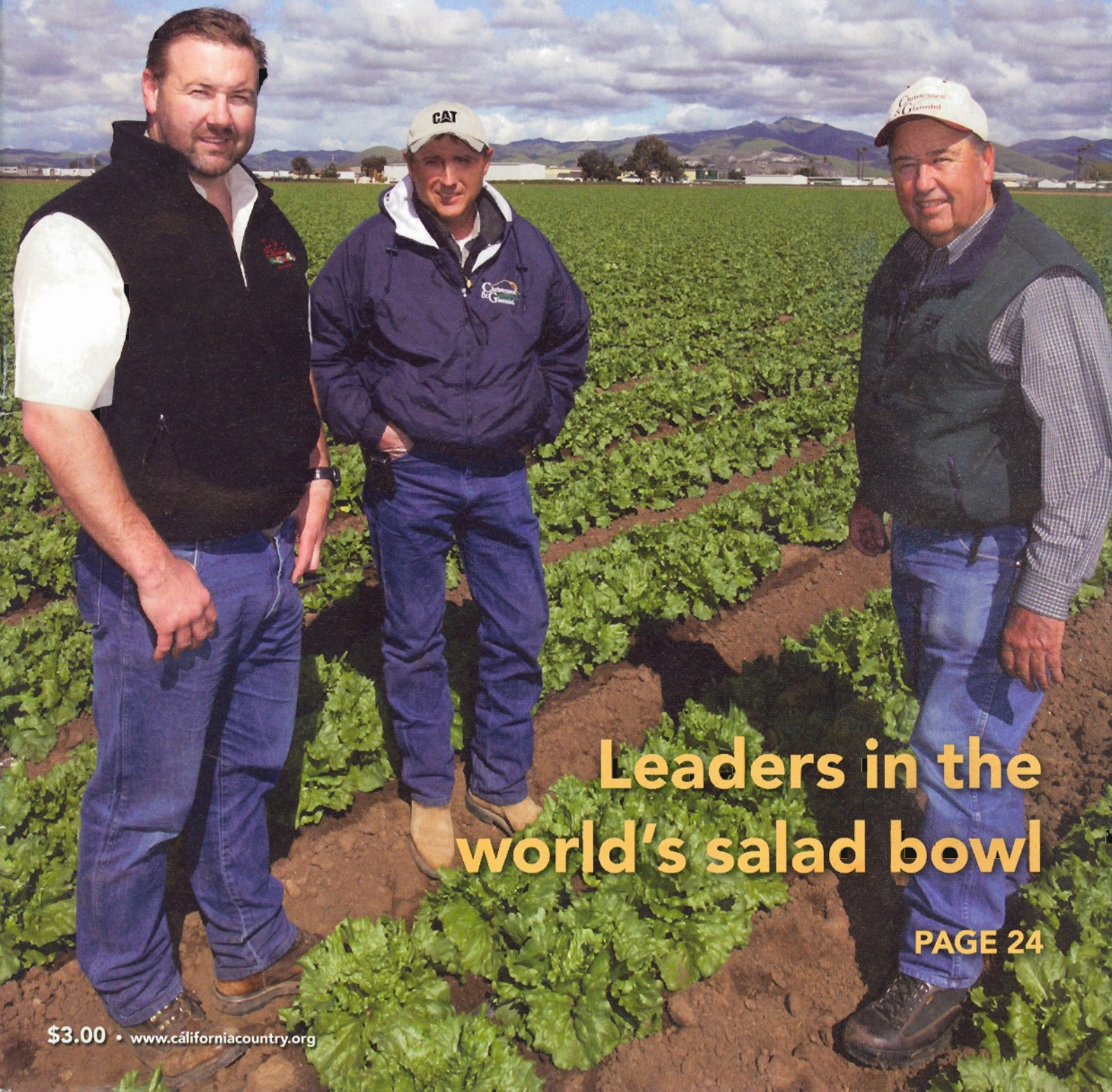


california COUNTRY[®]

Love what you eat. Know what you love.[®]

July/August 2009



Leaders in the
world's salad bowl

PAGE 24



Rancher George Work says that understanding how all the parts of the landscape work together results in a healthier environment. Like all California ranchers, he worries about the threat from non-native, invasive plants, above.

ungrazed strips of grasses that can filter material running off the fields," he added. "That technique protects the stream banks from erosion and improves water quality.

"But doing these kinds things is quite a bit of work," Giacomini said. "We're at it every day, moving cattle and portable fences, monitoring and modifying plans. That's the intensity of management that we think is beneficial."

Noting that grazing animals, including great herds of elk and deer, have been a vital part of the state's grassland ecology for thousands of years, Giacomini said Farm Bureau policy recognizes that grazing is the most practical and environmentally acceptable way to prevent the buildup of ex-

cessive, dry vegetation that can lead to catastrophic wildfires.

Rangeland, both public and private, is essential to maintaining viable ranching businesses, but equally important, Giacomini said, is the growing understanding of the benefits California ranchers bring to the environment.

George Work agrees, saying, "The

overriding thing for us is the vision we have for a healthy landscape and a productive future. My whole family is involved in operating the ranch to achieve the vision."

Kate Campbell is a reporter for California Country. She can be reached at 800-698-FARM or kcampbell@californiacountry.org.

How you can help keep invasive plants in check

California's native landscape is being overrun with invasive plants and pests. Experts say it costs the state upwards of \$85 million a year to control and eradicate plant invaders, but they stress there are ways to reduce the onslaught and protect the environment.

PlantRight is a new program designed specifically to help home gardeners do their part to keep invasive plants in check.

"Most of the plants used in gardens and landscaping do not invade wildlands and harm wildlife," said Andrea Fox, California Farm Bureau Federation legislative coordinator and a leader in the PlantRight coalition. "But a few species can—and do—escape from cultivated areas into open landscapes and cause serious ecological problems."

Invasive species crowd out native plants, insects and animals, and can lead to flooding, fire and crop losses.

The PlantRight Web site (www.plantright.org) provides information on smart, region-specific gardening choices.

"You are one click away from viewing plants that have proven to be invasive in your area, along with the many non-invasive alternative plants that provide the color, coverage, beauty and functionality you are looking for," Fox said.

For more information...

California Rangeland Conservation Coalition: www.carangeland.org

California Cattlemen's Association: www.calcattlemen.org

University of California: <http://californiarangeland.ucdavis.edu>

The Work Family Guest Ranch: www.workranch.com