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California Dairy Farmer to receive Leopold Conservation Award

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The [California Farm Bureau Federation](#), [Sustainable Conservation](#) and [Sand County Foundation](#) are pleased to announce [Dino Giacomazzi](#) as the recipient of the 2012 [Leopold Conservation Award](#) in [California](#).

Sacramento, Calif. (PRWEB) November 15, 2012

The California Farm Bureau Federation, Sustainable Conservation and Sand County Foundation are pleased to name dairy farmer Dino Giacomazzi as the 2012 recipient of the [Leopold Conservation Award](#) in California.

The seventh annual Leopold Conservation Award for California will be presented December 3 at the [California Farm Bureau Federation's](#) Annual Meeting in Pasadena.

The \$10,000 Leopold Conservation Award is named in honor of world-renowned conservationist Aldo Leopold. The award is presented annually in eight states to private landowners who practice exemplary land stewardship and management.

“Dino Giacomazzi has committed himself to the production of not only quality dairy products but also quality soil, water and air,” said Dr. Brent Haglund, Sand County Foundation President. “He is also representative of a new breed of producers who believe strongly in the power of the story of farming, choosing to promote agriculture and conservation through traditional and modern communications methods.”

Dino Giacomazzi is a fourth-generation dairy farmer whose farm is comprised of 900 dairy cows on 900 acres. Mr. Giacomazzi represents what it means to farm responsibly and sustainably, enhancing natural resources as part of his work. He participated in one of the first conservation tillage projects in California, which has proven to enhance soil, water and, especially, air quality in an area that typically experiences high air pollution levels. Not content to confine these successes to his own farm, Mr. Giacomazzi is a leader in communicating the benefits of conservation tillage to other dairy farmers. His communication methods are both new and traditional, utilizing social media channels and hosting demonstrations and field days at his farm to connect with those inside and outside of the agricultural community.

“Ever since I started thinking about conservation as a practice, I have been seeking a reward,” Mr. Giacomazzi said. “The reward of leaving this farm for my son in better condition than my father left it for me. It isn’t as much of a desire as an obligation since my father, grandfather and great-grandfather had done that for me. Conservation farming is really the only way I know how to do it ... adapt to change, preserve the land, try to make money and move the family farm forward.”

Mr. Giacomazzi was joined by two other outstanding finalists for the 2012 Leopold Conservation Award:

- Burroughs family – Stanislaus County
- High Ground Organics, Stephen Pedersen and Jeanne Byrne – Santa Cruz County

Burroughs family

For third-generation farmers Ward and Rosie Burroughs, who farm 4,400 acres just outside of Modesto, the fate of sustainable farming lies in the present and the future. That's why they've involved their three children and their grandchildren in a farming operation that's anything but conventional. Following the lead of their son, Zeb, and daughter-in-law, Meridith, the family established California Cloverleaf Farms, a certified organic dairy that raises nearly 500 cows. The Burroughs' livestock graze in lush pastures of native grasses, enhancing the health of the cows and quality of the milk, while reducing dependence on costly commercial feed and shrinking their carbon footprint. To cut greenhouse gases even more, Ward and Rosie's middle child, Benina, installed five high-tech solar arrays that provide 80% of the power needed to irrigate the organic almond orchards she farms.

"Ward and I believe that it takes the creative thinking of the younger generations to run a viable farming business in an ever-changing world," Rosie Burroughs said. "That includes changes to our environment, things like less water to go around and a climate that's not as predictable."

High Ground Organics, Stephen Pedersen and Jeanne Byrne

High Ground Organics produces fruits, vegetables and flowers on 50 acres in Santa Cruz County and 23 acres in north Monterey County. Given the fact that a portion of High Ground Organics is adjacent to one of the largest remaining freshwater wetlands in coastal California, Stephen and Jeanne have made water quality enhancement a primary focus on their farm. They utilize water quality enhancement techniques such as cover crops, conservation tillage and a vegetative filter strip along a highly erodible hill to reduce the amount of sediment reaching the slough system.

Stephen and Jeanne have also taken steps to benefit vegetation and wildlife. They planted native hedgerows along a highway perimeter to encourage beneficial insects, and provide habitat for vulnerable species of bee and butterfly. In addition, they converted 11 acres into native grassland to benefit several local migrating land and water birds, as well as other species of special concern. To share what they've learned, Stephen and Jeanne often open their farm to public tours and school field trips, educating visitors about farm values and natural resource conservation.

"For more than a decade, we've reconfigured nearly every square inch of our property – and way of doing business – to bring the land, water and wildlife of this sacred place back to life," Byrne said. "It's working, and we prove each day that, added together, little actions add up to big changes."

The Leopold Conservation Award in California is supported in part with generous contributions from the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation; the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation; The Nature Conservancy and Farm Credit.

In 2012, Sand County Foundation is presenting Leopold Conservation Awards in California, Colorado, Nebraska, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Wisconsin and Wyoming. The awards are presented to recognize extraordinary achievement in voluntary conservation on the land of exemplary private landowners; inspire other landowners in their own communities through these examples; showcase conservation leaders in the agricultural community to people outside of agriculture and build bridges among several private and public sectors in support of private land conservation.

For more information, please visit <http://www.leopoldconservationaward.org>

Photos of Dino Giacomazzi and the other finalists are available upon request.

ABOUT SAND COUNTY FOUNDATION

Sand County Foundation is a private, non-profit conservation group dedicated to working with private landowners to improve habitat on their land. The Foundation's mission is to advance the use of ethical and scientifically sound land management practices and partnerships for the benefit of people and the ecological landscape. Sand County Foundation works with private landowners because the majority of the nation's fish, wildlife and natural resources are found on private lands. The organization backs local champions, invests in civil society and places incentives before regulation to create

solutions that endure and grow. The organization encourages the exercise of private responsibility in the pursuit of improved land health as an essential alternative to many of the commonly used strategies in modern conservation.

<http://www.sandcounty.net>

ABOUT SUSTAINABLE CONSERVATION

Sustainable Conservation believes protecting the environment can also be good for business. The organization's climate, air, water and wildlife initiatives promote practical solutions that produce tangible, lasting benefits for California. Founded in 1993, Sustainable Conservation's effectiveness lies in building strong partnerships with business, agriculture and government – and establishing models for environmental and economic sustainability that can be replicated across California and beyond. <http://www.suscon.org>

ABOUT CALIFORNIA FARM BUREAU

The California Farm Bureau Federation is California's largest farm organization. It works to protect family farms and ranches on behalf of 53 county Farm Bureaus throughout California, whose members include farm families and those who support the farming way of life.

<http://www.cfbf.com>

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