

# ORGANIC FARM & GARDEN

## California Farmer Creating Identity For His Rice

AP Wire Service  
By Juliana Barbassa,  
Associated Press Writer

OLIVEHURST, CA (AP) – Great sushi depends on rice that is just right – grains that are glossy and yielding after cooking, sticky with a touch of sweetness, but able to retain their color, aroma and shape.

Nearly all sushi rice used in the United States is grown in the Sacramento River valley, where the snowmelt and the region's warm days and cool nights create ideal conditions for the medium- and short-grain varieties preferred by sushi chefs.

But even in California, where many chefs have developed relationships with farmers and put their names on the menus, rice is an anonymous, bulk product – a faceless commodity.

Fifth-generation farmer Michael Bosworth, 28, wants to change that. He's selling his family's organic rice directly to restaurants and retailers, skipping the middle man, preserving the identity and quality of his grain, and helping consumers connect to the source of their food.

He's among the first in the nation to try such an approach.

"We're trying to make a traceable product, to preserve the identity from this farm," he said. For Bosworth, doing business directly with buyers allows him to escape the volatility of prices set in an international marketplace. That, in turn, gives him the security he needs to invest more in rice he grows, and deliver a better product.

He has won some supporters, such as chef Billy Ngo, of Kru in Sacramento.

It wasn't until Ngo visited Bosworth's farm and tried the rice that he bought into the idea of paying a little more for rice he could track from the farm to his restaurant near the state Capitol.

Now Bosworth's name is on the menu. He still delivers Ngo his rice, and often stays for sushi.

"It's great to have a face with the product," Ngo said.

Part of the appeal of Bosworth's approach is the essential role rice plays in sushi.

As the delicacy transitioned from Japan, where it had been a part of the culture for hundreds of years, to California, where Japanese restaurants first started serving it in the 1960s, cooks struggled to find the right rice.

The quality wasn't there, said chef Andy Matsuda, owner and chief instructor at the Sushi Chef Institute in Los Angeles. The taste was off, and it just didn't feel right, Matsuda said.

"The rice was too big, not so comfortable in the mouth. It was a very bulky feeling," he said. Over the decades, California rice has improved considerably, he said. "It's more like the fresh vegetable that it is," he said.

In spite of the demand for higher-quality rice, and buy-in from chefs such as Ngo, who takes 150 pounds of rice a week, the transition to direct marketing hasn't been easy, Bosworth said.

Rice growers usually sell directly to mar-



AP Photo - In this photo taken Wednesday, June 2, 2010, rice farmer Michael Bosworth and his nine-week old puppy, Drake, walk along berm surrounding one of the organic rice fields on his farm near Olivehurst, CA. Bosworth, a fifth generation farmer, is selling his family's organic rice directly to restaurants and retailers, skipping the middle man and preserving the identity and quality of his grain.

keters, and along the way, the grain can be mixed with that grown by other farms. Carving alternative paths to the consumer has taken time and persistence.

"I had no idea how hard it would be," Bosworth said. First, there is the additional expense of tracking the grain as it's dried, hulled and polished, then kept in cold storage for preservation. Storing the rice is expensive, but selling too quickly and running out is not an option when you're trying to earn the trust of a buyer, Bosworth said.

Also, for farmers and chefs who work together, one of the treats is being able to try different varieties, and together find one that suits the climate and the soil, and brings something different to the dinner plate. A vegetable farmer can grow two rows of, say, cardoons, for a chef willing to brave the thistles.

When Ngo approached him to grow Koshihikari short-grain – a high-end rice traditionally grown in Japan, with a natural sweetness and creamy but firm consistency that makes it ideal for sushi – Bosworth couldn't do it. At least not right away.

A rice farmer needs at least 100,000 pounds

of a variety to make milling feasible, said Bosworth. Selling to a large buyer such as the University of California, Davis, which takes 1,500 pounds of his grain a week, has its own hurdles – think liability insurance and third-party auditors.

"Their protocol just didn't have a way to work with some guy driving rice down in his pickup truck," said Bosworth.

Linda Adams, director of sustainability and nutrition for the campus, said she'd been working on sourcing the food served to students. It was hard with rice, but Bosworth made it happen. "We really want the students to understand what they eat," she said. Bosworth has still not met his goal of marketing all of his organic rice directly to consumers, but he's adding clients.

Judging from the reception his rice had when it was served at a recent University of California Davis event, mixed with halibut and scooped into endive leaves, he's earning the loyalty of new customers. Students lining up for the appetizer read an explanation about its origins – and liked what they saw.

"You don't know where anything comes from anymore," said Roger Moy, 20. "Everything is mass produced." ☞

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# Going Green For The Health Of It



Participating in a program that contributes to the expansion of wind energy production is one small way you can help reduce pollution.

(NAPS) – As more people seek a greener way of life, they are learning that small changes can make a significant difference in the health of the environment and their personal health.

Terra Wellington, author of “The Mom’s Guide to Growing Your Family Green,” suggests a few changes that families can make in honor of World Environment Day, celebrated every June:

- Fish are healthy and rich in omega-3 fatty acids, but you should choose only sustainable fish because overfishing threatens the ocean’s ecosystems. Check Seafood Watch to see which kinds are sustainable.

- Going to bed just a half hour earlier each night will save 182.5 hours of energy use annually and improve the way you feel.

- Choose cleaning products with materials and ingredients that are nontoxic. Buy brands that are committed to protecting the environment and will not contribute to indoor pollution. Less indoor pollution can improve health, resulting in easier breathing and fewer headaches.

- Take advantage of natural light. Turn off some artificial lighting in your home and open your shades to let the sun in. Relying on more natural light reduces global warming, pollution and environmental degradation. Plus, it’s free.

- Eating more plant-based protein can have a significant impact on the environment.

“You can include more plant-based proteins in your family’s diet, like smoothies made with soymilk,” said Wellington. “With no cholesterol and packed with nutrients, fiber and antioxidants, soymilk can be a tasty and nutritious way to go greener.”

Buying soymilk can also provide another way to make a difference. For the third year, Silk Soymilk’s Green Caps for a Greener World program at [www.SilkSoymilk.com](http://www.SilkSoymilk.com) provides an opportunity to support clean renewable energy or American family farmers. After buying a 32-oz. or 64-oz. carton of the soymilk, just enter the UPC bar code at the website. For each UPC number entered, the company will donate 33 cents to the organization of your choice – either Farm Aid, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to keep family farmers on their land, or the Bonneville Environmental Foundation, a nonprofit partner that funds the expansion of renewable energy.

Wind farms are one way to grow America’s green power grid with clean, renewable power created using wind turbines. Choosing Earth-friendly wind energy contributes to a greener world and supports an energy-independent America. Supporting family farms through Farm Aid helps create a future of good food and helps build strong local communities. ♻️

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## Why Foliars Feed?

# Growing Profits Beyond Conventional

by Mike Hilton

With the possible exception of soil microbes and its benefits for modern agriculture in crop production, feeding plants through leaves is the next best breakthrough for yield increases, protein enhancements, and soil reinvigoration.

Most universities and agri-businesses are just

waking up to the idea that foliar plant nutrition might be important. In the private sector the practice has been used for over 30 years.

Ideally, we must feed the biology in the soil, feed the plant at the root level, and feed the plant through the leaves. It has been known for too long that the method of feeding through this plant, nutrition, insect

suppressant, and disease prevention can be a winning combination. In pro-active agriculture depending on your budget, we use a combination program to get the desired results. Remember, understanding how leaves function and how to increase their efficiency through capturing solar energy is important. Timing of sprays is also an important factor to consider.

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<p><b>Optional:</b> TKO insecticide – 1 pint 5-8 oz. Green Growth Plus: Growth Stimulant 1 pint to 1 quart or 1 powder Calcium Liquid 1 quart Sulfate</p>	<p><b>Optional:</b> 1 quart sulfur 1 pint to 1 quart Humates 5-8 oz. Green Growth Plus 1 pint to 1 quart or 1 powder Calcium Liquid TKO insecticides</p>	<p><b>Optional:</b> 1 quart sulfur 1 pint to 1 quart Humates 5-8oz. Green Growth Plus TKO insecticides</p>
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