



PACIFIC COAST
FARMERS' MARKET
ASSOCIATION

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SOLSTICE GREETINGS

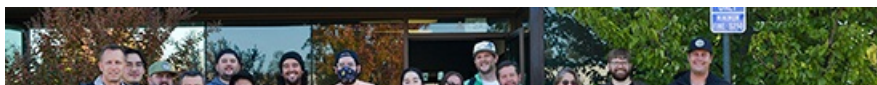


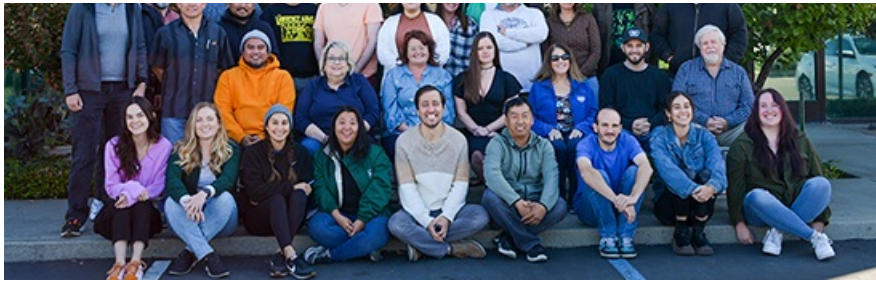
This message was written on December 21, 2022 – the date of the winter solstice. That means today is the shortest day of the year for those of us in the Northern Hemisphere, with the fewest hours of daylight; 9 hours, 31 minutes, and 43 seconds at PCFMA's Concord office according to a quick online search.

Throughout history, the winter solstice was often marked with celebrations that looked back upon the successful harvests that would carry communities through the winter and that looked forward to the return of spring when planting could begin again.

Our modern conveniences and hard-working farmers allow our modern society to have much easier access to food throughout the winter, so the winter solstice no longer carries the same significance. However, it remains an important celestial turning point.

As we get ready to wrap up 2022 and prepare for 2023, I have been reflecting on the challenges of the past several years and hoping that we have finally reached a turning point that will propel our farmers, farmers markets, and farmers market communities forward.





Years of pandemic restrictions have made all of us in the farmers market world highly sensitive to health news. But while flu, COVID and other infection rates are rising rapidly again, death rates from those infections are not increasing at the same pace and we have not seen a return to masking and social distancing requirements. This return to “normal” when at farmers markets – as either a seller or a shopper – is a very welcome change.

For over a year, inflation has driven up prices worldwide and here at home. Food costs have been among the fastest to rise with prices for food at home (like fresh fruits and vegetables) increasing faster than prices for food away from home. This has raised concerns in the farmers market community that some shoppers may choose lower cost restaurant or take out options, skipping their weekly trip to the farmers market. Recent national figures suggest that while food prices have not yet leveled off, they are increasing more slowly than in past months. This gives us hope that we may reach the turning point for food cost inflation next year.

The one turning point that still seems too far off is an end to California's three-year drought. Early December storms and the prediction of rain and snow in the coming weeks gives us hope that this winter will be wetter than the last, but currently no one is predicting an end to California's drought this winter. The lack of water is increasing costs for PCFMA's farmers who are digging deeper wells or paying more for water purchases to keep their crops irrigated. Multiple farms are seeing their production drop or are choosing to fallow some of their fields to keep other fields irrigated. With fewer crops to harvest, that may mean that some farms will be forced to sell in fewer farmers markets next year. All that we can do as fans of farmers markets is to try to conserve as much water as possible while showing our support for local farms by shopping local farmers markets and farm stands and watching for the weather forecast to change.

While challenges remain to be overcome, I remain optimistic about the future. I am made hopeful by the good spirits, generosity, and acts of kindness that I see; the farmer who slipped a grapefruit into my bag of oranges as a holiday treat, the customer who shared that her young children love Brussels sprouts when she buys them fresh from the farmers markets, and the donations of clothes and toys from PCFMA staff members and farmers market customers that will brighten the holidays of some local families. And I am made hopeful by the knowledge that tomorrow we will have 1 second more of daylight than we did today.

From all of us at PCFMA, we wish you a very happy holiday season and wish you the best for a bright and prosperous new year!

Allen Moy
Executive Director

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