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Laguna Farms grow in harmony with wetlands

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TIMES by Dan Collins

As the name indicates, Scott and Jennifer Mathieson's Laguna Farms is nestled on a small parcel which abuts the Laguna de Santa Rosa.

The couple's 6.5-acre farming operation, which produces organically grown lettuces, greens, herbs, vegetables and fruits, is unique in that it incorporates a number of ecological techniques that minimize its impact on the sensitive Laguna environment.

The Mathiesons, along with a crew of four farm workers, have turned their Cooper Road property into a successful produce business as well as a model of environmentally harmonious agriculture.

Even on the fields furthest from the wetlands, where production continues year 'round with the help of clear plastic greenhouse enclosures, sensitivity to the environment is evident.

The entire operation is certified by California Certified Organic Farmers, a state-wide organiza-

tion of which Scott is regional director, meaning that no synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, preservatives, colorings or radiation contacts the produce. While certification allows the use of fertilizers and pesticides which are botanical, or derived from plants, Mathieson refuses to use even them. "Even botanicals are toxic," he

explained. "They just break down faster, and the residual impact isn't as great." On occasion, when an outbreak of insects threatens a significant part of his crop, he will resort to an approved soap which kills insects on contact, but is otherwise non-toxic.

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Scott Mathieson harvests basil, which he grows alongside his tomato crop.