

## Organic Fertilizer Seminar a Success

Steven R. Beckley, S. Beckley and Associates

CAPCA and the Organic Fertilizer Association of California (OFAC) joined together to sponsor a successful organic fertilizer seminar in Salinas on December 10th. Over 90 attendees, including PCAs and other individuals involved in organic agriculture, were at the conference. The seminar featured speakers on soil management and the role of fertilizer products in certified organic production. Due to the success of the initial seminar, additional seminars are planned in other California locations in 2009.

The morning session covered the agronomic and plant health aspects of the use of organic fertilizer. Terry Stark, CAPCA CEO, addressed the group with a PCA regulatory update and was followed by Dr. Tom Quick, Grow More, giving an overview of Certified Organic farming and fertilizers. Soil fertility management for organic farming systems and disease control benefits was discussed by Dr. Sajeemas Pasakdee, California State University, Fresno and the attendees were given a review of the use of compost in organic systems by Doug Graham, New Era Farm Service. The role of humic acid in plant health and organic production was covered by Peter Aleman.

Policy, organic integrity and food safety was the topic of discussion in the afternoon. Consultants heard from Claudia Reid, Policy Director of California Certified Organic Growers (CCOF) on organic regulations and issues and Jessica Morrison of Organic Certifiers spoke on accredited certifiers and materials used in organic farming for fertility and pest control.

Organic fertilizer integrity and



John Usher (Kleen Globe) and Dale Rush (Rush, Marcorft and Associates)

food safety was the subject of a panel discussion that featured Will Daniels, Earthbound Farm, Tim Stemwedel, California Organic Fertilizers, Inc. and Dr. Hadi Tabbara, Western Growers Association. The panel stressed that good management practices must be used in applying organic fertilizers to ensure food safety, leafy green marketing order and steps that can be taken to ensure fertilizers used are acceptable for certified organic production. Steve Beckley, OFAC Executive Director, wrapped up the day with a quick overview of OFAC and its goals for educational outreach.

Participants also had the opportunity to view the table top exhibits from Becker Underwood, Bio Scientific, California Organic Fertilizers, Certis USA, Grow More, Monterey

AgResources, Sustane Natural Fertilizers, Tiger-Sul Products, and Westbridge Agricultural Products.

Seminar sponsors included: New Era Farm Service (program printing and lunch); California Organic Fertilizers (lunch); Western Farm Service (lunch); Wilbur Ellis Company (lunch); Westbridge Agricultural Products (registration, refreshments) and Monterey AgResources (morning break). Additional support for the event came from: Certis USA, Grow More, Port Organic Products and Sustane Natural Fertilizer. A very special thanks to the exhibitors and sponsors for their support of this initial conference.

Copies of most of the presentations made at the seminar are available at [www.organicfertilizerassociation.org](http://www.organicfertilizerassociation.org).