
Corporate Award
Straus Family Creamery
Albert Straus



The Straus Family Creamery of California has been recognized with the 2006 **Corporate Award** in its sustainability and land stewardship categories. This long-standing family farm has sustained a commitment to both local and landscape-scale stewardship of resources within a region of rapid change and enormous social pressures. Bill Straus founded the dairy in 1941, sixty miles north of San Francisco. In the years after, Bill and Ellen Straus participated actively in the Marin Conservation League, the efforts to preserve the national seashore, and the creation of the Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT) in 1980. The latter organization has enabled the preservation of working agricultural landscapes in the face of intense pressures for development.

In the second generation, Albert Straus (son of Bill and Ellen) converted the farm to organic operation. Albert credits the conversion to organic with preserving the farm as an economic success, while neighboring conventional dairies have been fading away. Beyond typical organic practices, Albert has been applying innovative technology in every aspect of dairy and farm operations. The Straus Family Creamery now creates electricity from a methane Straus digester. The digester captures naturally occurring gas from manure and converts it into electricity. With this new system, Straus expects to generate up to 600,000 kWh per year, saving about \$6,000 in monthly energy costs. This process also eliminates methane, a natural by-product of manure. The Straus generation is connected to the local electrical grid, allowing them to run their meter “backwards” and contribute to the regional power supply. Finally, the farm has now converted a diesel back-up generator to run on straight vegetable oil, and is in the process of converting farm vehicles to vegetable oil as well. Finally, the creamery washes its glass milk bottles with a less toxic method than the typical one.

The Ecological Society of America is delighted to recognize this second-generation family farm for its sustained commitment to sound agricultural practice, technological innovation in reducing environmental impact, and contributions to regional-scale conservation of working landscapes.