

Farmers making a difference

May 17, 2011 by Pesticide Action Network



Organic farmers Larry Jacobs and Sandra Belin have made a life-long commitment to sustainability and social justice. And as reported in [PAN's spring newsletter](#), they recently won confirmation of their right to farm free of pesticides in a \$1 million court case.

Larry and Sandra started [farming](#) in San Mateo County, California, in 1980, producing fresh organic culinary herbs. Then in 1985 they began working with the Del Cabo community in Baja California, Mexico, to develop a source of organic fruit and vegetables during the off-season. Today, [Del Cabo Cooperative](#) is a thriving community of 400 farmers that sells organic produce across the U.S. Larry and Sandra are more than successful farmers. They're actively involved in influencing policy to protect people's health and livelihoods from pesticide corporations. One example: Larry traveled with PAN scientist Susan Kegley to Washington, D.C., to testify at EPA on the economic hazards caused by pesticide drift.

"PAN saved our farm"

In October 2006, their California business was threatened when trace levels of pesticides were detected on plants at their farm after several [organophosphates](#) (chemicals that pose serious human health risks) were applied nearby. Coastal fogs carried the chemicals over neighboring property, wiping out a year's worth of sage, rosemary and dill at Jacobs Farm Del Cabo.

[A Drift Catcher](#), the air monitoring device developed by PAN, was used to collect samples of the chemicals, providing evidence that the pesticides had traveled substantial distance from the application site, exposing a recreational area, west Santa Cruz neighborhoods — and Jacobs farm.

Western Farm Service, the pesticide applicator, was found liable and in 2010 a \$1 million fine was upheld. "The message from the jury is pretty clear, both to industry and to regulators," says Jacobs Farm attorney Nathan Benjamin. "It's not acceptable to apply these poisonous chemicals and turn your back on the consequences after the point of application."

Larry's conclusion? "PAN saved our farm — your scientists helped us explain how pesticides

Farmers making a difference

Published on Pesticide Action Network (<http://www.panna.org>)

evaporate and drift after application and can contaminate nearby crops.”

The story of Jacobs Farm/Del Cabo appears in the Spring issue of PAN’s newsletter: [View or download here >>](#)

Source URL: <http://www.panna.org/blog/farmers-making-difference>