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For Earth Day, Innovative Farming Group Announces Series of Free “Sustainable Farming” Classes

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New Orleans, LA: What better way to celebrate Earth Day than offering free training in sustainable growing techniques? That’s what Recirculating Farms Coalition thinks could put the “green” back in greens – and fruits, vegetables, herbs and other foods.

Marianne Cufone, Recirculating Farms Coalition Founder and Executive Director said, “It’s important to be eco-friendly in farming. Food production uses a tremendous amount of water, space and fossil fuels; it’s a major contributor to climate change.”

Recirculating Farms Coalition blends traditional soil-based agriculture with innovative water-based growing methods like hydroponics, aquaculture and a combination of both – aquaponics. The unique approach allows people to raise more food using less water, space, and energy than many other forms of farming.

Urban farmer, and Louisiana Master Gardener Ica Crawford who now runs the Coalition’s farm center in New Orleans, Growing Local NOLA, says, “I participated in the first training classes that the Coalition held in 2012. It was very eye-opening to see how much food could grow in a recirculating system running mainly on solar power and rain water.”

Those interested in becoming “market growers”, a term that means commercial farmers - people who want to grow food to sell at market - can sign up for one or the whole series of classes. Training sessions will progress from beginner to intermediate to advanced, and offer internships on real working farms and connections to local experienced growers through a mentorship program. Classes include topics like: natural disease and pest prevention and management, composting, hydroponics, aquaponics and more.

“We are so excited to be offering these training classes for market growers,” Cufone said. “Our mission is to provide accessible, healthy, fresh food and create stable jobs in green business right in the communities where these are most needed, and this program can help achieve both goals.”

The classes are being sponsored by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture’s New and Beginning Farmers and Ranchers development grant program.

Cufone concluded “If we want more good food, we need more good farmers and our trainings focus on making that happen.”

The Recirculating Farms Coalition is a collaborative group of farmers, educators, non-profit organizations and others committed to creating local sources of healthy, accessible food and green jobs through promoting and supporting eco-efficient farms. RFC is headquartered in New Orleans, Louisiana.

<http://www.recirculatingfarms.org>