COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL, CONSUMER AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

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Nation's Largest Aquaponics Conference Will Be in New Mexico This Fall

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For the first time ever, the Annual Aquaponics Association Conference will be held here in New Mexico https://aquaponicsassociation.org/conference. The conference will be hosted at the Sheraton Uptown Hotel in Albuquerque on September 15-17. This is an excellent opportunity for producers of all levels, researchers, educators, or anyone interested in learning about aquaponics to meet and interact with producers and experts from across the country and beyond.

Aquaponics is a rapidly growing industry and one of the fastest growing segments of aquaculture. For those unfamiliar with this industry, aquaponics is an intensive food production system that combines hydroponics, the growing of plants in a soilless medium, with aquaculture, the growing of fish, crustaceans, and shellfish, together in a recirculating system. The waste produced by the fish is converted by nitrogen-fixing bacteria into plant nutrients which are taken up by the plants grown in the hydroponic component of the system. By combining an aquaculture component with a hydroponic one in a recirculating system, there is no need to discard any water or filtrate or add any chemical fertilizers for the plants. Compared to traditional agriculture, aquaponics uses up to 97 percent less water than plants grown in soil. Produce is grown free of pesticides because these would be harmful to the fish. Aquaponics systems produce multiple cash crops year-round allowing growers access to fresh produce throughout the year.

From a water consumption perspective, aquaponics systems are more efficient than either traditional recirculating aquaculture systems, which must discharge and replace 10 to 20% of the total volume of water daily to prevent the build- up over time of animal waste products, or hydroponics systems that also require frequent full water changes to replace nutrient medium. This makes aquaponics particularly suited to harsh, arid environments such as New Mexico, where arable land and water are scarce. Aquaponics is well suited to small farm producers that target local markets and agrotourism opportunities. It is increasingly viewed as an avenue

to help diversify industries here in NM, increase food security, and provide a means for year-round locally grown pesticide-free produce and fish/seafood using a fraction of the water and chemical inputs of traditionally grown produce.

The Aquaponics Association Conference is an engaging and interactive event, with ample occasions for aquaponics aficionados of all levels to interact, discuss, and network. Over 50 presentations under different topic areas will provide learning opportunities for the entire aquaponics community, regardless of expertise level. The topic areas include Community aquaponics, Commercial aquaponics, Current Research, and STEM educators. Special discounts are available for students, educators, and small community growers. More information about these discounts is available at the following link: https://aquaponicsconference.org/stem-communitytickets.

The conference will also include breakout discussions, ask-the expert sessions, panel discussions and keynote presentations. There will also be the opportunity to check out the latest technology and equipment on display at the aquaponics vendor showroom. Additionally, there will be tours of local aquaponics operations with bus transportation provided.

In addition to the conference, there will be a 1-day Pre-conference Workshop for beginners at the Santa Fe Community College in collaboration with the Aquaponics Association. The state-of-the-art facilities of the Controlled Environment Agriculture program at Santa Fe Community College provide an excellent venue to obtain an overview of aquaponics for anyone interested in learning the basics. More information about the workshop and topics that will be covered can be found at the following link: https://aquaponicsconference.org/preconference-workshop.

To learn more about aquaponics, consider joining the Aquaponics Association https://aquaponicsassociation.org/membership. With a general membership fee of $60.00 you can interact with an engaging community of growers, industry's leading experts, educators, and hobbyists. There are also opportunities to upgrade your skills and increase your knowledge through weekly online presentations.

Fall 2023 classes begin Wednesday, August 16, 2023

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