



VERMIVISION TO LAUNCH VERMICOMPOSTING PROJECT

Cal Poly State University's College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences (CAFES) will install a complete, state-of-the-art vermicomposting system at its San Luis Obispo campus thanks to a recent agreement with VermiVision, Inc. The project will enable students, faculty, and staff to conduct research, crop trials, training, and education in the process of worm composting and will support vermicompost research and development. The initiative will be coordinated by the Center for Sustainability, which promotes sustainability practices in the College of Agriculture, Food & Environmental Sciences.

Research topics will focus on vermicompost's impact on agricultural water dynamics and quality, turf management, early plant development, and disease suppression. Center for Sustainability Director Hunter Francis is excited about the opportunities the new system brings to Cal Poly. "Composting is receiving increasing attention as a cost effective way to meet numerous challenges in agriculture including soil fertility, disease suppression and recycling of agricultural wastes. The vermicomposting process produces a superior compost product, and its many benefits are now being validated scientifically. We are grateful our students will be able to be a part of this process with the commercial-scale infrastructure VermiVision is providing," Francis said.

The new system will include a three-vessel, aerated composting array, where manure-based feedstock from Cal Poly's dairy will be pre-processed before use in the worm beds. After processing via a thermophilic composting method, the feedstock will be transferred to a continuous-flow bed where the earthworms reside and transform the compost to vermicompost. The units, to be installed this summer, are designed and produced by Jack Chambers of Sonoma Valley Worm Farm.

This past spring, VermiVision installed a 100-gallon vermicompost tea brewer on campus, supplied by Growing Solutions Incorporated (GSI). Michael Alms, GSI's president, trained Cal Poly students, staff, faculty, and local growers in the process and benefits of "brewing" vermicompost tea. Compost tea is a microbially-rich liquid extract that can be used in a wide range of agricultural and horticultural settings to enhance fertility and pest management.

Vermivision was founded in 2011 to bring high-quality, commercial grade vermicompost to mainstream agriculture and landscape horticulture.