

Dry farming turning out sweet produce

By Alastair Bland, NPR

A week without water can easily kill the average person.

But a garden that goes unwatered for months may produce sweeter, more flavorful fruits than anything available in most mainstream supermarkets – even in the scorching heat of a California summer. Commercial growers call it “dry farming,” and throughout the state, this unconventional technique seems to be catching on among small producers of tomatoes, apples, grapes, melons and potatoes.

At Happy Boys Farms, near Santa Cruz, sales director Jen Lynne believes dry farming could be an important agricultural practice in the future, when water will likely be a less abundant resource.

But the taste of her dry-farmed Early Girl tomatoes is the main reason chefs, wholesalers and individuals around the country are increasingly calling to place orders. She notes that many calls come from places where rain falls through the summer, making dry farming impossible.

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