

CHAPTER

3

AGRICULTURE

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture has historically been both an important industry in Solano County and a central part of the county's identity. Agricultural lands account for more land than any other land use. Agriculture contributes to regional economic health and prosperity, defines much of the County's visual character, supports wildlife habitats and migration corridors, provides open space and recreational amenities for residents and visitors, and acts as community separators defining the county's cities. The combined benefits of agriculture help make Solano County a great place to live, work, and visit.

This chapter provides a single location for the County's agricultural goals and policies, which are closely related to goals and policies in the Land Use, Conservation, and other chapters of the General Plan.

The General Plan vision statement expresses a desire to ensure the long-term protection of agricultural opportunities in the county through recognition of these economic, environmental, and social equity benefits. It states:

We will use our natural and agricultural resources as economic opportunities while also recognizing their environmental value. We will strive to enhance the quality of our natural and agricultural resources as visitor attractions and contributors to our economy while giving equal weight to their environmental value. We will support small family farms and large agricultural businesses alike in a committed effort to enhance the viability of agriculture for future generations in this county. We will encourage Solano County residents to visit and learn about our local farms and encourage them to buy from local farmers. By doing so, we may also encourage farmers to provide sustainable goods and services for our community.

...We can sustain the unique character and identity of our communities while simultaneously valuing our agricultural identity in rural areas. We will use our natural habitat, farmlands, and water resources to maintain separation among our cities and unincorporated communities.

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Because we value the quality of our air, soil, water, and other finite natural resources, we will continue to enhance agricultural business and preserve agricultural lands and resources...

In addition to the general vision statement, the Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) Agricultural Subcommittee conducted numerous workshops within the farming community and drafted a vision statement to specifically address the agricultural industry's importance to the county and to pledge support for its protection and preservation. This vision states:

Agriculturists (Farmers & Ranchers) in Solano County are wise stewards of our natural resources. They support the concept that the land on which they produce food and fiber is valuable and worth economic preservation for the future. Solano County residents support the concept of enhancing the rural environment while assisting the urban environment with their internal development. The rural identity and unique character of agricultural areas is valued by the County.

Because the agricultural industry is a major contributor to the overall economic health of Solano County, it is our desire to contribute to its prosperity. The agricultural economy is diverse and the support of individual business rights is recognized. The County will support farm operations both large and small and support the development of agricultural related industries that will make the economy stronger.

The greatest assets to the industry are the individuals who toil in the fields to achieve their individual goals. The County will support farmers in their efforts and will strive to support programs and activities that will enhance their efforts.

The major strategies in this chapter as well as the goals and policies derive from these elements of the vision statement:

- ensuring that agriculture endures as an essential part of Solano County's identity and lifestyle;
- maintaining and promoting agriculture as an important business and major contributor to Solano County's economy;
- preserving additional values of agricultural land, including important scenic value within the rural environment, providing habitat, providing options for recreation, and serving as a community separator defining the county's distinct cities; and
- providing opportunities for agriculture to serve as an educational tool and tourist draw.

This chapter identifies goals, policies, and implementing programs that serve as an outline to guide the County toward fulfilling this vision.

Scope and Content

This chapter is organized into the following sections. The first section provides introductory information and regulatory context. Next, current (2007) agricultural conditions are briefly described. These conditions provide context for a plan narrative, followed by the County's goals, policies, and implementation programs.

Purpose and Relationship to Other General Plan Chapters

The purpose of this chapter is to recognize the value of agriculture and present goals, policies, and programs that support the growth and health of agriculture in Solano County.

State general plan guidelines do not require an agriculture element as part of a general plan. However, the agricultural community, the public and the CAC all supported grouping agriculture goals, policies, and programs as an optional element or subject category, rather than addressing agriculture issues as part of one or more mandated elements.

Section 55303 of the California Government Code allows counties and cities to adopt "any other elements or address any other subjects, which, in the judgment of the legislative body, relate to the physical development of the county or city." This provision is made so that counties and cities can address important issues of local concern. Once adopted, optional general plan elements are legally equivalent to, and must be internally consistent with, the seven mandatory subject categories.

This chapter addresses several issues that are required parts of mandatory general plan elements. For example, a land use element must include the distribution of agricultural land and the locations of lands subject to Williamson Act contracts or in other land conservation programs. The conservation element must address the conservation of agricultural soils as a resource. Open space elements must address issues related to open space for the managed production of resources, including agricultural lands.

In addition to addressing topics that are included in state general plan guidelines for mandatory elements of the general plan, this chapter covers issues related to Solano County's agricultural economy, which are closely related to those described in the Economic Development chapter.

Related Plans, Programs, and Agencies

Support for agricultural production and preservation can be found in numerous plans and programs established by multiple agencies and organizations. Those that most affect Solano County agriculture are described below.

Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection, administers the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) to analyze impacts on the state's agricultural resources. Land is rated based on its soil characteristics and irrigation status. These ratings are then used to help prioritize conservation efforts. The FMMP uses the term **Important Farmland** to describe parcels that meet certain criteria.

In Solano County, three Important Farmland types have been identified: Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland. According to the FMMP:

Prime Farmland is "farmland with the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long term agricultural production. This land has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date."

Farmland of Statewide Importance is "farmland similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to store soil moisture. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date."

Unique Farmland is "farmland of lesser quality soils used for the production of the state's leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated, but may include nonirrigated orchards or vineyards as found in some climatic zones in California. Land must have been cropped at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date."

Based on 2006 mapping data, approximately 139,459 acres in Solano County are identified by the FMMP as Important Farmland (Figure AG-1). These lands are concentrated in the northeastern portion of the county because of the prevalence of grazing activity in southern areas.

Williamson Act

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (referred to as the Williamson Act) is the most effective agricultural conservation tool currently available. Under the Williamson Act, local governments can enter contracts with private property owners to protect land for agricultural and open space purposes. This voluntary program offers tax breaks by assessing lands based on actual use (agricultural or open space) as opposed to their potential full market value, creating a financial incentive to maintain farmland and open space, as opposed to allowing conversion to other uses.

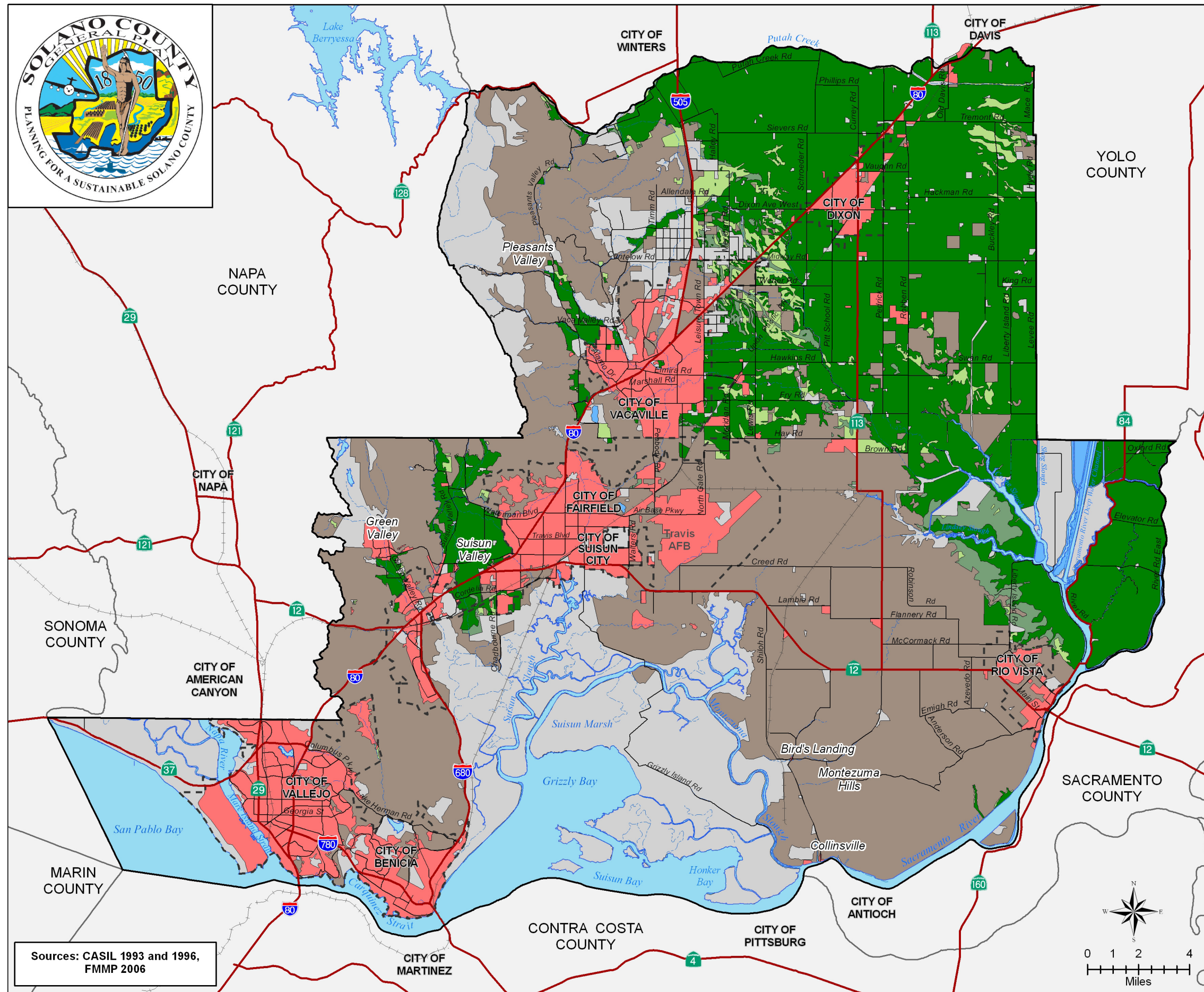
The Williamson Act program uses rolling 10-year contracts that renew annually until either party files a "notice of non-renewal." If an owner decides to opt out, the land is still protected for 10 years while the tax liability increases in annual increments up to its full market value.



Solano County General Plan

Figure AG-1

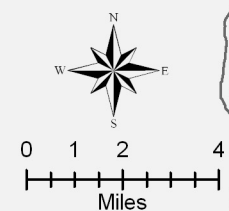
Important Farmland



Legend

- Prime Farmland
 - Farmland of Statewide Importance
 - Unique Farmland
 - Grazing Land
 - Urban and Built-Up Land
 - Other Land
 - Water
- Basemap Layers
- Roadways
 - Highways
 - Railroads
 - Streams and Creeks
 - Major Water Features
 - Municipal Service Areas
 - Adjacent Counties

Sources: CASIL 1993 and 1996, FMMP 2006



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Figure AG-1 Important Farmland

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Additionally, existing Williamson Act contracts on lands classified by the California Department of Conservation as Important Farmland can be extended to 20-year Farmland Security Zone contracts (called super Williamson Act contracts), which offer landowners greater property tax savings.

Statewide, more than 16.5 million acres have been protected under Williamson Act contracts, representing more than half of the State's agricultural and open space lands. In Solano County, roughly 215,000 acres are held in Williamson Act contracts, representing 62 percent of the county's agricultural lands (Figure AG-2).

Right-to-Farm Ordinance

Chapter 2.2 of the Solano County Code protects farm operations from nuisance complaints associated with residential uses located next to active agricultural operations. These complaints often cause farm operators to cease or curtail operations. They may also deter others from investing in farm-related improvements that would support the county's agriculture economy. This "right-to-farm ordinance", as it is commonly known, guarantees the right to continue agricultural operations, including, but not limited to, cultivating and tilling the soil, burning agricultural byproducts, irrigating, raising crops and/or livestock, and applying approved chemicals in a proper manner to fields and farmland. This ordinance limits the circumstances under which agriculture may be considered a nuisance. To prevent future conflicts, notice of this ordinance will be given to purchasers of real property in the county.

Solano Land Trust

The Solano Land Trust is a nonprofit organization whose goal is to permanently protect and preserve farmland, ranch land, and open space in the county. As of 2007, the Solano Land Trust has permanently protected 19,403 acres through acquisition, conservation easements, education, and land management.

CURRENT SOLANO COUNTY AGRICULTURE

Grapes ripening on the vine in Suisun Valley



Several agricultural studies and reports have been prepared to determine the current (2006) condition of agriculture. Among these studies was the Solano Agricultural Futures Project, prepared by the University of California Agricultural Issues Center. This project identified nine distinct agricultural regions, each characterized as a separate farming system according to commodities grown, soil conditions, cultivation practices

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and water conditions. These regions were Winters; Dixon Ridge; Elmira and Maine Prairie; Montezuma Hills; Ryer Island; Suisun and Green Valleys; Pleasants, Vaca, and Lagoon Valleys; Jepson Prairie; and Western Hills.

In addition to these nine regions, the County has identified Green Valley as a separate region because of the agricultural characteristics of the Valley and General Plan policies requiring a specific plan for Middle Green Valley. Figure AG-4 shows the location of these 10 regions. The details of these regions follow under the "Agricultural Regions" section.

Agricultural Economy

As an industry, agriculture generated approximately \$233 million in commodity sales in 2006. Further, every dollar generated by agriculture sales is estimated to generate \$0.58 elsewhere in Solano County's economy, bringing agriculture's total economic contribution to an estimated \$360 million. For every job created in agriculture, 0.7 job is created in supporting and related industries, further increasing the overall benefit that the industry provides to the county.

Cropping patterns have been evolving in Solano County over the past 25 years. Since 1981, only four commodities have remained in the top 10 of gross market sales: nursery products, cattle, hay, and tomato processing. Commodities new to the top 10 list in 2006 were bell peppers, walnuts, milk, wine grapes, dried plums, and almonds. Nursery products are an important commodity in the county and have been number one in terms of gross sales since 2000. Commodities that have fallen out of the top 10 since 1981 include sugar beets (attributable to processing plant closure), wheat, corn, beans, sheep, and pears.

As agricultural markets shift, increasing the value added to agricultural produce locally can help Solano County's farmers maintain viable businesses. Local processing and sales operations for the county's farm produce can keep more money from the distribution of agricultural products in the county.

Agricultural Land Use

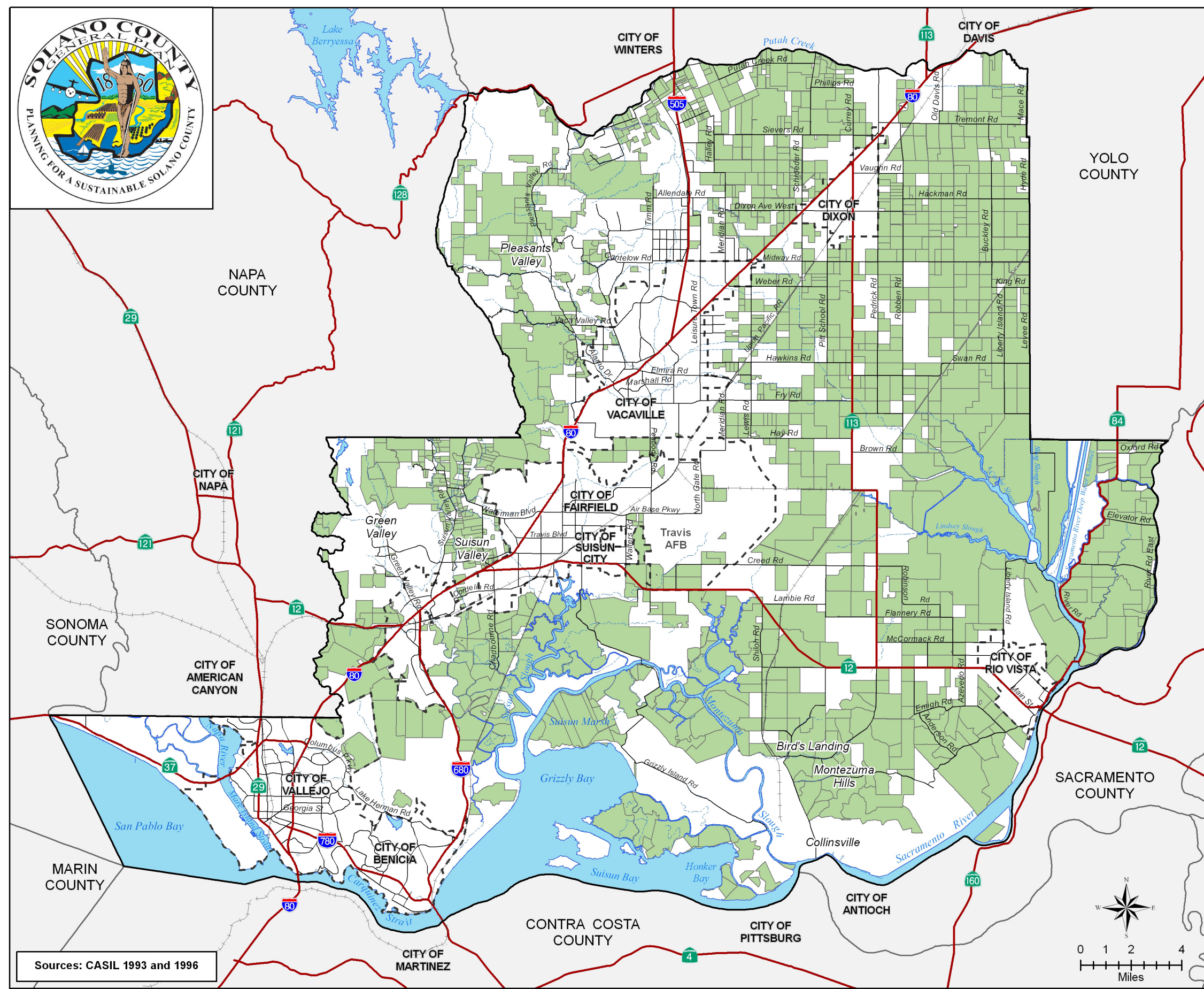
In 2006, Solano County had 373,500 acres of land in agriculture. Of these acres, 360,562 were under agricultural production, according to the Solano County Agricultural Commissioner's annual report. The acreage dedicated to the various crops and other agricultural activities is shown in Table AG-1.



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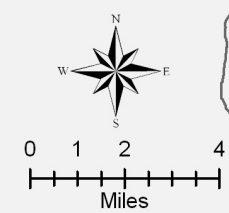
Figure AG-2

Williamson Act Contracts (2006)



- Legend**
- Williamson Act Contracts
 - Basemap Layers
 - Roadways
 - Highways
 - Railroads
 - Streams and Creeks
 - Major Water Features
 - Municipal Service Areas
 - Adjacent Counties

Sources: CASIL 1993 and 1996



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Figure AG-2 Williamson Act Contracts

**Table AG-1
Areas in Agricultural Production (2006)**

Use Classification	Acres (2006)	Percent of Total
Field Crops	92,155	26%
Fruit and Nut Crops	19,072	5%
Pasture and Rangeland	202,826	56%
Seed Crops	13,283	4%
Vegetable Crops	12,236	3%
Nursery Stock	1,827	0.5%
Other	19,163	5.5%
TOTAL	360,562	100%

Grazing land is the largest single use of farmland in the County.



According to the 2002 U.S. Department of Agriculture Census of Agriculture, there has been a trend involving an increase in farm size and a decrease in the number of farms in the county. The average farm size was 384 acres, up from 378 acres in 1997. This pattern mirrors the national trend as smaller farms are combined into larger assemblages that can support industrial farming operations.

Of the county's 915 farms in 2002, more than 60 percent were small farms ranging from 1 to 49 acres. Those ranging from 50 to 500 acres accounted for another 27 percent. The remaining 12 percent was composed of farms of more than 500 acres. The high number of small farms is due in part to the large number of rural homesites within the County and in part to the census definition of "farm," which includes a property that produces only \$1,000 in gross revenue.

Despite their increase in total numbers, the small farms represent less than 2.5 percent of the county's farmland, compared to 91 percent for the large farms. Because an overwhelming majority of farmland is held by large farm operations, the General Plan seeks to protect the viability of these operations from parcelization and encroaching land use changes.

Water availability is extremely important to agriculture. For example, the presence of irrigation is required for land to be classified by the FMMP as Prime agricultural land. In Solano County, water for irrigation is provided by three sources: irrigation districts (Solano Irrigation District, Maine Prairie and Reclamation District No. 2068); sloughs from the Sacramento River and Putah Creek; and groundwater wells. The Solano Irrigation District, located in the Dixon Ridge region, Pleasants/Vaca/Lagoon Valleys, Suisun Valley, and Green Valley regions provide water to approximately 57,550 acres of agricultural-zoned land. As the county and its neighbors continue to urbanize, competition for water resources will continue to increase. The General Plan supports agricultural activities that reduce the industry's

dependence on water, promotes farming practices that maximize use of this valuable resource.

Conservation and Farmland Conversion

The county's location between two growing metropolitan regions has resulted in rapid increases in land value. Between 2001 and 2006, prices nearly doubled, resulting in larger tax bills for everyone, including agricultural land owners. Low interest rates and low land values (compared to the Bay Area) fueled land speculation and rural homesite purchases. The county's natural beauty and access to Interstate 80 (I-80) prompted investors to purchase land in the Dixon Ridge and Suisun Valley areas, providing access to employment opportunities in the San Francisco and Sacramento areas.



The County can work with groups like the Solano Land Trust to protect farmland permanently.

Solano Land Trust ©

Changes in Solano County land use from 1984 through 2006, calculated using the 2006 FMMP data, are presented in Table AG-2. Negative change indicates loss of area, and positive change indicates gain in area. Although some of the changes in mapped land uses are artifacts reflecting changes in survey methodology over this 22-year period, a large part of the reported loss of Important Farmlands (classifications of Prime, Statewide Importance, and Unique) is attributable to their conversion to urban land or low-density development included in the category of other land. Area mapped as Important Farmland in 1984 that had become urban and built-up land or other land in the 2006 FMMP survey amounted to 18,672 acres.

**Table AG-2
Farmland Conversion (1984–2006)**

FMMP Land Use	Acres		Change 1984-2006	
	1984	2006	Acres	Percent
Prime Farmland	152,140	139,459	-12,681	-8.3%
Statewide Importance	12,613	7,159	-5,454	-43.2%
Unique Farmland	16,102	11,031	-5,072	-31.5%
Grazing Land	220,008	202,702	-17,306	-7.9%
Urban and Built-up Land	40,145	58,590	+18,445	+45.9%
Water (over 40 acres)	50,579	49,717	-863	-1.7%
Other land	90,430	113,360	+22,930	+25.4%

Agricultural Identity and Tourism

Agricultural tourism centers like Mankas Corner can contribute to the continuing viability of agriculture.



During the preparation of the General Plan, the community overwhelmingly identified the importance of agriculture and farming to Solano County's identity and culture. This importance is reflected in the vision statement. This chapter of the General Plan outlines several objectives related to economic development and increasing tourism, especially agri-tourism, to Solano County. Policies permitting increased agricultural service and local sales uses, as well as programs to encourage increased agri-tourism and branding of local Solano County produce, are expected to help maintain the locally prominent position of agriculture.

AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION TOOLS

This chapter provides a basis for the future agriculture policy direction in Solano County by describing strategies and implementation tools for protecting the viability of agriculture in the county. Potential strategies are explained as they relate to the 10 agricultural regions. The section concludes with a brief introduction to the activities that the County may engage in to aid in the economic development of agricultural uses, many with a region-specific focus.

Conservation Techniques

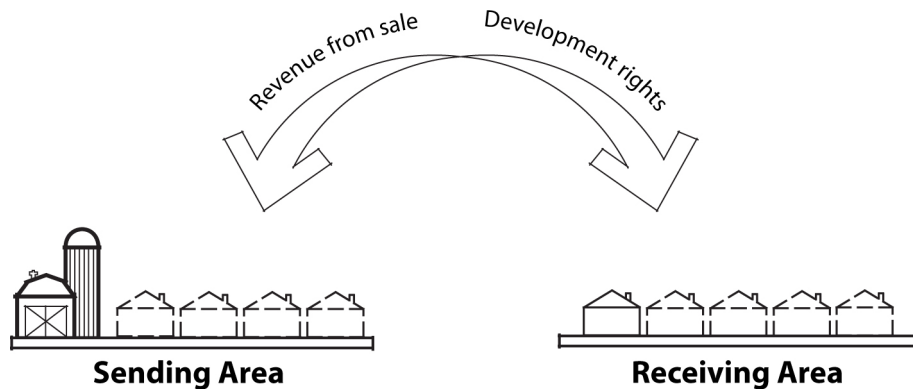
In addition to tools administered by other agencies, as described in the "Related Plans, Programs, and Agencies" section, the County could independently use a number of incentives and other tools. These planning tools protect and maintain agricultural lands, promote investment in agriculture-related improvements, and increase the marketability of Solano County-grown products.

Transfer of Development Rights

In response to strong development pressures, the County intends to establish a **Transfer of Development Rights** (TDR) program to protect agricultural lands. This tool can be used in areas where agricultural lands are threatened by development pressure. TDR programs enable property owners to protect a resource, such as agricultural land, while still benefiting financially from the land's development potential. Property owners of land with resources targeted for conservation are allowed to sell their development rights in exchange for permanent resource protection. The purchased development rights can be used in areas that have been identified as appropriate for future growth. To define areas targeted for conservation and development, TDR programs require the

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creation of sending and receiving zones. Figure AG-3 below shows a hypothetical transaction under a TDR program.



TDR programs enable landowners to sell their right to develop to owners in other areas.

Figure AG-3
Transfer of Development Rights

In Solano County, prime agricultural lands, habitat areas, and the sensitive delta area could be protected by diverting development toward appropriate municipal areas. The use of TDRs is especially relevant in the Green Valley region as it is included within the Middle Green Valley special study area policies, found in the Land Use chapter.

Urban-Agricultural Buffers

This chapter also includes policies to reduce conflicts between residential and agricultural uses. Urban-agricultural buffers are strips of vegetated land (typically ranging from 300 to 500 feet) located within city municipal service areas that are used to help reduce complaints due to normal agricultural operations near residential areas. With appropriate vegetation management, the buffer can also prevent pesticide drift resulting from agricultural spraying. The cost to maintain these buffers is typically born by the proposed development project rather than the agricultural landowner/farmer, and managed or maintained by the adjacent city, a homeowners association, or special district. The cost to create and maintain these buffers would be paid by the new development through development impact fees or ongoing maintenance fees.



Buffers between residential and agricultural areas may reduce potential conflicts between residents and farmers.

Farmland Mitigation

Conversion of agricultural land to other uses removes that land from agricultural production and may place increased pressure on adjacent land to also convert. This chapter includes policies that establish a

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farmland mitigation program for agricultural land converted as a result of nonagricultural development. Mitigation may be in the form of conservation easements, outright purchase of other agricultural properties for protection, or in-lieu fees paid to the County. A County ordinance is required for this program. The ordinance will determine the extent of mitigation necessary, although many jurisdictions use a ratio of 1:1. Farmland that is used to support agri-tourism and agricultural processing would be exempted from this ordinance because the intent is to prevent agricultural land conversion, not to present barriers to development of agriculture-supporting industries. Agricultural landowners may choose to participate in the mitigation program but are not required to make their land available for mitigation. The County will make a special effort to encourage landowners within the Agricultural Reserve Overlay to voluntarily participate.

Right to Farm Ordinance

The County's right-to-farm ordinance, described in more detail on page AG-7, reduces further loss of agricultural land to encroaching nonagricultural uses by limiting the circumstances under which agricultural activities may be considered a nuisance. This tool is directed at the conflicts that arise when residential uses locate next to active agricultural areas. Types of activities protected under this ordinance include, but are not limited to, tilling soil, spraying approved pesticides, burning agricultural byproducts, cultivating crops, and grazing livestock. Notice of this ordinance would be given to purchasers of property in the county.

Agricultural Reserve Overlay

Agricultural land between the cities of Vacaville and Dixon and Dixon and Davis experiences high development pressure. In order to maintain the physical separation between these cities, to acknowledge the development pressure in this area, and to promote the viability of agricultural operations, the County has proposed an Agricultural Reserve Overlay as part of the Land Use Diagram, as described within the Land Use chapter. The Agricultural Reserve Overlay indicates that area in which the County will encourage private landowners to voluntarily participate in agricultural conservation easements. This overlay will incorporate existing agricultural conservation easements and establish new land easement acquisition methods (such as TDRs) that encourage landowner cooperation.

The overlay district will be established as an agricultural mitigation bank for development projects subject to County and city agricultural mitigation programs. Projects having a significant impact on valued agricultural resources in other areas of the county or participating cities would be able to mitigate this impact by paying in-lieu fees used to purchase agricultural easements from landowners in the overlay area. Easements would be held by the County or relevant land trusts, and the landowner would maintain ownership and management control.

Community Separators

The Agricultural Reserve Overlay and other agricultural land conservation practices support the establishment and maintenance of community separators. These areas between the cities are meant to help each city maintain its distinct identity and to remain physically separated from other cities. This is described in further detail in Chapter 4.

It is the desire of the County that these areas remain in agricultural use. For this reason, the County's policy is to support cities in their efforts to preserve and maintain land within agreed-upon separator areas and to continue to maintain the agricultural designation on the large contiguous areas within the Agricultural Reserve Overlay.

Agricultural Planner and Ombudsman

The creation of agricultural planner and agricultural ombudsman positions in the county can address some of the issues facing agriculture. The planner would possess knowledge of the special needs of agriculture in the county and experience navigating the planning, conservation and development processes. The ombudsman would create strategic marketing plans and serve as an intermediary between county officials and local agricultural businesses. Marketing efforts could include plans to promote agri-tourism in Solano County and to remove barriers to its success. Agri-tourism capitalizes on the unique experiences associated with agriculture by allowing visitors to interact with the production process and surrounding rural environment. Examples include bed-and-breakfast opportunities at local vineyards, organic farm tours, and ranching home stays.

Agricultural Economic Incentives and Development

The importance of agriculture as a business and contributor to Solano County's economy is an important theme of this chapter. To maintain a healthy agricultural economy in the county, the General Plan outlines a number of programs.

Increasing the value-added component to Solano's agricultural produce is the goal of the agricultural economic development program. An increase in the value-added component might be derived from an increase of on-site or local processing, allowing a finished product (rather than raw produce) to be sold either locally or to a distributor.

Marketing or branding of Solano County's produce and producing regions is another way to add value to agricultural products. As the market for local produce grows, Solano County is in a position to provide locally grown produce to nearby markets in the Bay Area and Sacramento.

The County will also support the development of limited agricultural service uses in rural areas. These agricultural services will be located in Limited Industrial- and Agriculture-designated areas and will be targeted

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to serve local farmers. In addition to agricultural service uses, the General Plan provides a framework for developing services that support agri-tourism, including restaurants, bed-and-breakfasts, and similar tourist-oriented services.

To progress toward these broad agricultural economic development objectives, General Plan implementation programs lay out an agricultural economic development strategy. Agricultural economic development activities will be guided by producers and landowners in the individual agricultural regions. Each of the regions has unique economic conditions and goals, and economic development activities will be tailored to the different regions.

Agricultural Regions

The Land Use chapter of the General Plan includes description of the General Plan land use designation for agriculture. This designation is intended to support agricultural use, with minimum lot sizes defined for individual agricultural regions of the county.

Sheep grazing in the Montezuma Hills.



Several agricultural studies have identified broad geographic areas in the county that have similar agricultural characteristics. The University of California Agricultural Issues Center study identified nine regions. The county has identified a tenth region not identified separately in the Agricultural Issues Center study. The regions are:

- Dixon Ridge;
- Elmira and Maine Prairie;
- Montezuma Hills;
- Ryer Island;
- Suisun Valley;
- Winters;
- Jepson Prairie;
- Western Hills;
- Pleasants, Vaca, and Lagoon Valleys; and
- Green Valley (the tenth region not identified separately in the study).

Researchers involved in the Agricultural Issues Center study defined each agricultural region by combining satellite images, soil survey information,

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county infrastructure, topography, and producer interview information. Studies have identified unique characteristics in the agricultural practices and marketing needs for each region. These characteristics make the regions valuable planning units for creating targeted agricultural policies, programs, and requirements and are recommended as the basis for region-based agricultural policies.

Both the University of California Agricultural Issues Center and the CAC Agricultural Subcommittee gathered input from local farmers and landowners. Several strategies were repeatedly discussed and addressed in community meetings, letters, and interviews. These included:

- marketing, including region-specific marketing of agricultural products;
- streamlining of existing agricultural regulations;
- infrastructure and transportation, including the need for improved road safety and maintenance, the need for maintaining water flows for irrigation, and the role of I-80 as a barrier between nearby farm fields;
- taxes and fees, including assessment values for agricultural lands;
- economics, including the need to increase the local value-added component to agriculture through tools such as local processing and sales; and
- compatibility conflicts between the county's agricultural and urbanized areas.

Many landowners and producers want the County to aid them in addressing these issues.

Agriculture is a highly dynamic and rapidly changing industry. The 10 agricultural regions represent a snapshot in time and reflect agricultural conditions present in the county at the time of the General Plan update. The agricultural characteristics that make these areas distinct regions also affect marketing and economic characteristics. For these reasons, the County believes that regions should be treated as units and specific policies should be used to address issues where they are unique to a region.

Marketing efforts should be targeted for each region. This could be accomplished through strategic action plans. County planning and ombudsman positions could assist regions in creating strategic plans or helping with other economic or marketing needs. These plans may differ in complexity depending on the regional needs, ranging from a few additional policies and action programs to a special study area process. Many of the policies developed within the Suisun Valley Special Study Area process are included in this section, although some have been adapted to apply to multiple regions.



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Figure AG-4

Agricultural Regions

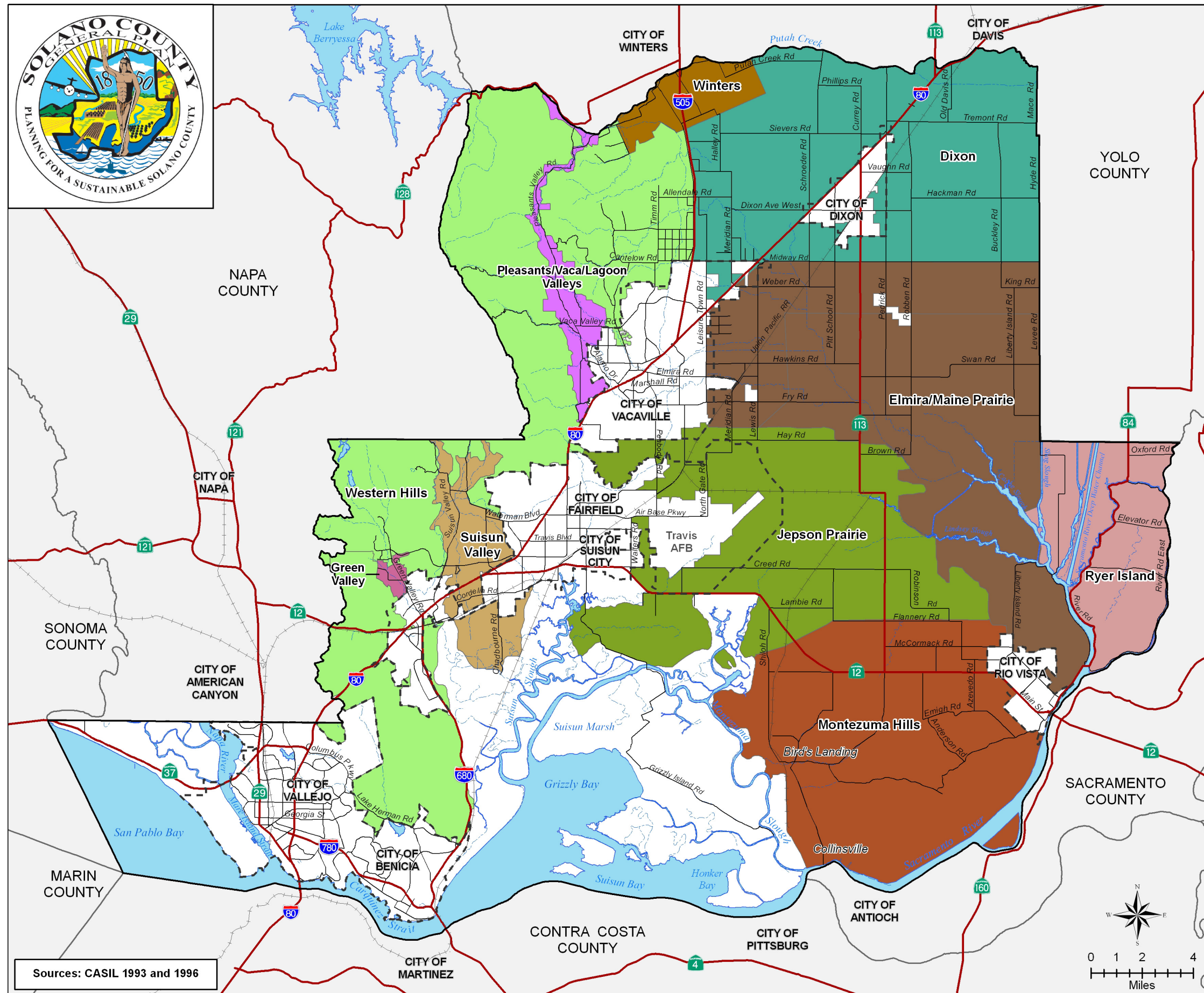
Legend

Agricultural Region

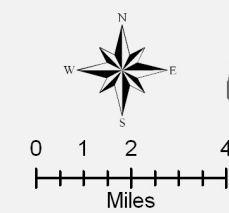
- Dixon Ridge
- Elmira/Maine Prairie
- Green Valley
- Jepson Prairie
- Montezuma Hills
- Pleasants/Vaca/Lagoon Valleys
- Ryer Island
- Suisun Valley
- Western Hills
- Winters

Basemap Layers

- Roadways
- Highways
- Railroads
- Streams and Creeks
- Major Water Features
- Municipal Service Areas
- Adjacent Counties



Sources: CASIL 1993 and 1996



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Figure AG-4 Agricultural Regions

The following section contains descriptions of 10 proposed agricultural regions and policies that are unique to an individual region or group of regions. The minimum lot sizes and general uses presented in Table AG-3 should be used in conjunction with the agriculture land use description from the Land Use chapter to define the General Plan land use description for agricultural lands in the county's 10 agricultural regions.

**Table AG-3
Agricultural Regions**

Agricultural Region	Minimum Lot Size	General Uses
Winters	40 acres	Provides for agricultural production, agricultural processing facilities, facilities to support the sale of produce, and tourist services that are ancillary to agricultural production.
Dixon Ridge	40 acres	Provides for agricultural production, agricultural processing facilities, and agricultural services.
Elmira and Maine Prairie	40 acres – northwest portion (Elmira) 80 acres – southeast portion (Maine Prairie) See Figure AG-5	Provides for agricultural production, agricultural processing facilities, and agricultural services.
Montezuma Hills	160 acres	Provides for agricultural and energy production.
Ryer Island	80 acres	Provides for agricultural production.
Suisun Valley	20 acres	Provides for agricultural production, agricultural processing facilities, facilities to support the sale of produce, and tourist services that are ancillary to agricultural production.
Green Valley	20 acres	Provides for agricultural production. The Middle Green Valley Specific Plan provides further details regarding desired agricultural uses and lot sizes.
Pleasants, Vaca, and Lagoon Valleys	40 acres – Parcels with current A-40 zoning 20 acres – Parcels with current A-20 zoning See Figure AG-6	Provides for agricultural production and facilities to support the sale of produce and tourist services that are ancillary to agricultural production.
Jepson Prairie	160 acres	Provides for agricultural production.
Western Hills	160 acres – West of Pleasants Valley Road 20 acres – East of Pleasants Valley Road and in the Tri-City and County area See Figures AG-7 and AG-8	Provides for agricultural production.

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The plan seeks to ensure that uses which occur in agricultural areas are compatible with the continued agricultural operation of the area. Agricultural service uses should be limited to those uses where a rural location to service agriculture is necessary. In regions that do not allow for agricultural service uses, only those uses compatible with continued agricultural operations should be allowed. Such uses include limited recreational opportunities in designated areas and limited industrial development in the central County area. Rural residential uses should be confined to areas designated for such uses to minimize potential conflicts.

Winters

Winters is a 6,474-acre area in the northwest portion of the county, where it borders Yolo County. The area produces primarily orchard crops, including walnuts, almonds, and plums. Local agricultural processing is important in this region, which experiences strong pressure toward urbanization because of its location on I-505, and interest from Bay Area commuters to purchase orchard land for rural residences.

The Winters region is a vital area for both Solano and Yolo Counties. The tree-based economy in this area spans the border between the two counties. Winters contains some of the most valuable agricultural land in the county and is second only to Suisun Valley in market value of land.

Dixon Ridge

The 63,436-acre Dixon Ridge region, located in the northeastern corner of the county, contains some of the best farmland in the region. Most of the Dixon Ridge region is in production for field crops, such as tomatoes, alfalfa, and safflower. This area is also home to two of the few agricultural processing facilities in the county: the Campbell Soup plant and Superior Meat. This area is relatively flat and divided by I-80, which runs southwest to northeast.

Elmira and Maine Prairie

The Elmira and Maine Prairie region, which borders the city of Vacaville to the west and Jepson Prairie and Dixon to the south and north, is primarily planted with field crops. Some grazing is present and is more prominent toward the south. It occupies 75,358 acres. Crops grown in this area include alfalfa, corn, and wheat and are mainly sold to dairies throughout the region.

Although this region is a single unit for purposes of marketing and economic development, it is split into two portions to maintain the existing minimum agricultural parcel sizes. The split between Maine Prairie and Elmira is shown in Figure AG-5.

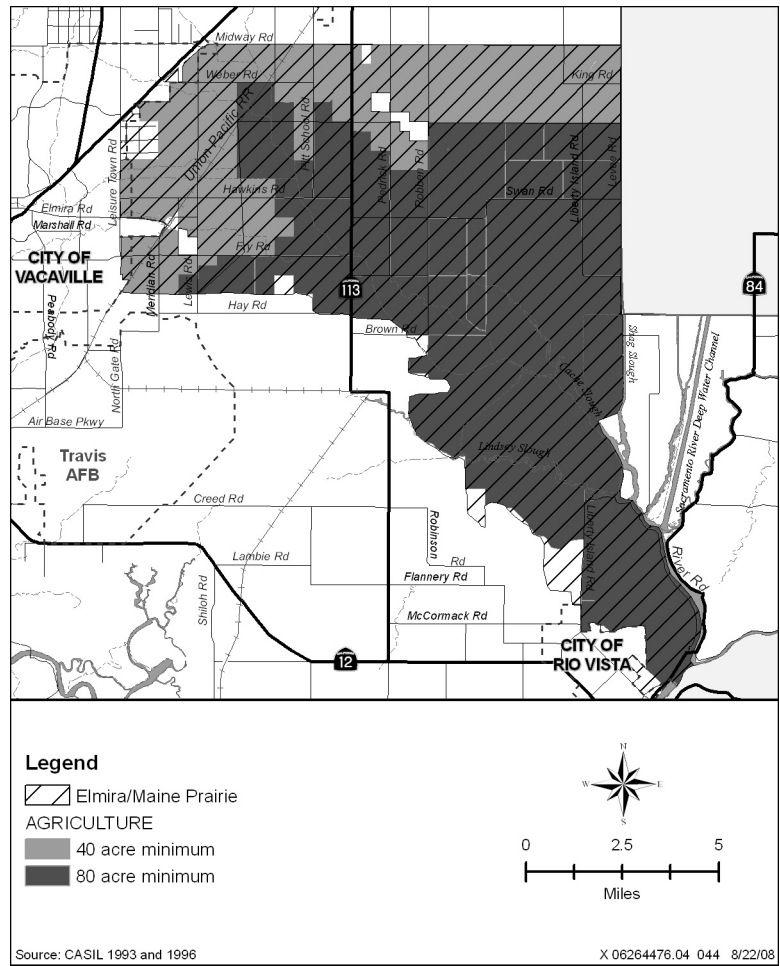


Figure AG-5
Elmira and Maine Prairie Minimum Lot Sizes

Montezuma Hills

The Montezuma Hills region is a mix of grazing land and cropland. Sheep are grazed on the hillsides in a crop rotation system which includes the growing of small grains such as oats and barley and a fallow period. This area is approximately 58,035 acres and is also used for energy production. With high wind speeds and natural gas deposits, landowners are able to supplement their incomes through productive gas wells and wind turbines. Other energy producing options may also be considered. This area is experiencing some urbanization pressure around Rio Vista as the city begins to expand. Increasing the agricultural value-added component through processing and sales is particularly important in this area.

Ryer Island

Ryer Island is located in the southeastern most corner of the county and is characterized by fertile soils and little development. Farmers in the area produce primarily field crops that are tolerant of spring flooding. Some producers have planted wine grapes and orchards as well.

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The island is isolated from major transportation corridors and access to the island is provided only by a narrow bridge or by ferry. Most of the crops grown on the island are transported to and processed in San Joaquin, Sacramento, and Yolo Counties.

Suisun Valley

Suisun Valley is located between Fairfield and Cordelia, east of the Napa Hills, and south of the Napa County border. Most land in this area is in agricultural use, producing grapes for wine, small grains, or other fruit crops. Three intersections in this area contain commercial establishments: Mankas Corners, Rockville Corners, and Rockville Road/I-80. Suisun Valley could provide a unique opportunity for the County to promote agri-tourism, specifically as a destination for visitors interested in local wine production, farm stands, and rural atmosphere while avoiding the traffic of the nearby Napa and Sonoma areas. The area was part of a special study area and was the focus of a community workshop planning process. Goals and policies specific to the Suisun Valley are found in the Land Use chapter.

Green Valley

Agricultural land in Green Valley is somewhat limited. This area was historically home to small orchards but many producers are beginning to grow wine grapes. The area was part of a special study area. Middle Green Valley was the focus of a community workshop planning process. Goals and policies specific to Middle Green Valley are found in the Land Use chapter. The County will prepare a specific plan for the Green Valley region in cooperation with local residents and landowners.

Jepson Prairie

The Jepson Prairie region occupies 52,943 acres and is used primarily for grazing cattle and sheep. It contains low hills and vernal pool habitat. Increasing the agricultural value-added component through processing and sales is particularly important in this area.

Pleasants, Vaca, and Lagoon Valleys

The 4,341-acre Pleasants, Vaca, and Lagoon Valleys region is the most diverse agricultural region in the county. The University of California Agricultural Issues Center study describes the produce of this area as "Small-Scale Commodity and Niche Agriculture." The high-quality soils found in this area support everything from horse and livestock operations to wine grapes and organic produce. The parcels are smaller than those in other regions, and they do not support large-scale operations. The area experiences urbanization pressures as the city of Vacaville continues to grow. An increased use of conservation easements and increased marketing of local produce are important to this region. Minimum lot sizes are shown in Figure AG-6.

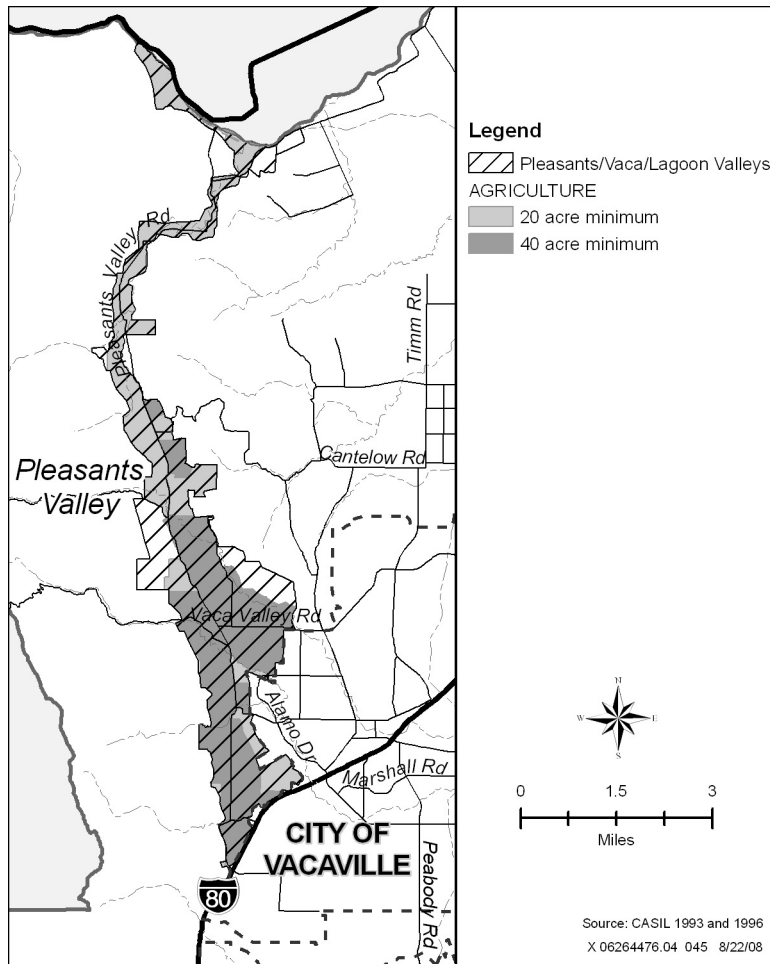


Figure AG-6
Pleasants, Vaca, Lagoon Valleys Minimum Lot Sizes

Western Hills

The Western Hills region is characterized by grasslands, oak woodlands, and mountain plateaus. The steep slopes and soil types currently limit the productive use of this land primarily to grazing. Most of the Western Hills region is in the Watershed land use designation. Minimum lot sizes are shown in Figures AG-7 and AG-8.

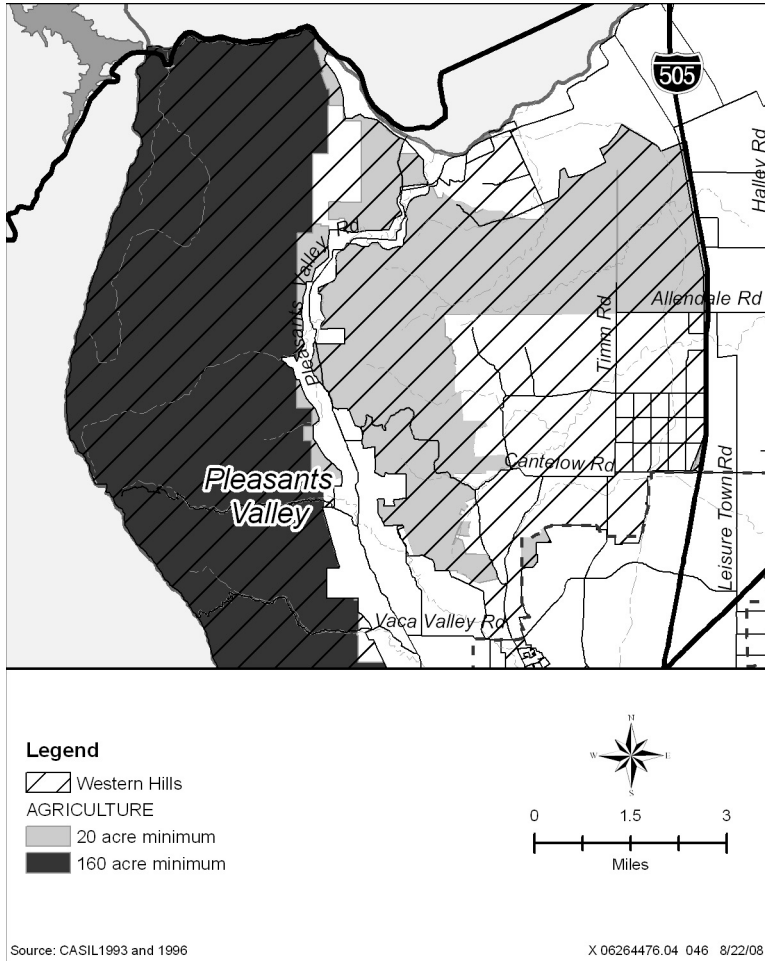


Figure AG-7
Western Hills Minimum Lot Sizes

"Planning for a Sustainable Solano County"

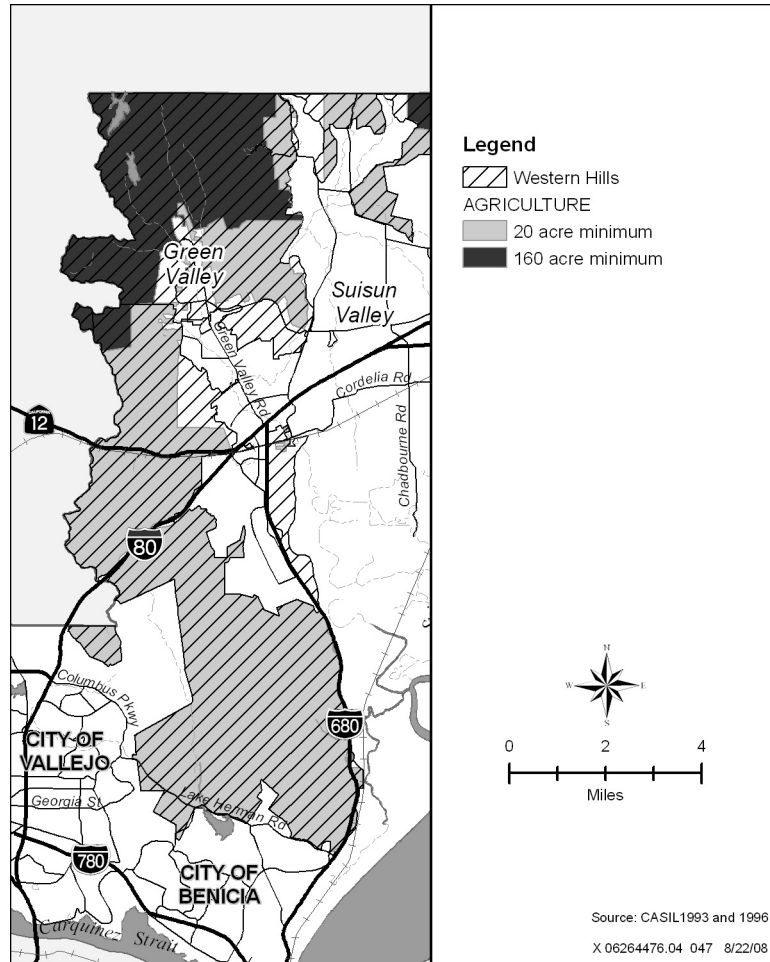


Figure AG-8
Western Hills – Tri-City & County Area Minimum Lot Sizes

GOALS

Four strategies for agriculture are articulated through the General Plan.

- Ensuring that agriculture endures as an essential part of Solano County's identity and lifestyle;
- Maintaining and promoting agriculture as an important business and major contributor to Solano County's economy;
- Preserving additional values of agricultural land, including important scenic value within the rural environment, providing habitat, providing options for recreation, and serving as community separators defining the county's distinct cities; and
- Providing opportunities for agriculture to serve as an educational tool and tourist draw.

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The goals and policies of this chapter are intended to provide a framework for achieving the agricultural vision.

-
- AR.G-1: Recognize, value, and support the critical roles of all agricultural lands in the stability and economic well-being of the county.**
 - AR.G-2: Preserve and protect the county's agricultural lands as irreplaceable resources for present and future generations.**
 - AR.G-3: Support the ability of farmers to earn sufficient income and expand the county's agricultural base by allowing for a wide range of economic activities that support local agriculture.**
 - AR.G-4: Enable the development of housing opportunities for farm families and farmworkers to ensure the continued competitiveness of Solano County agriculture.**
 - AR.G-5: Reduce conflict between agricultural and nonagricultural uses in Agriculture-designated areas.**
 - AR.G-6: Recognize, support, and sustain agricultural water resources for farmlands.**
 - AR.G-7: Preserve and enhance the landscape and economy of the Vaca, Pleasants, Lagoon, and Suisun Valleys as rural agricultural communities.**
 - AR.G-8: Seek to increase the value-added component of the county's agricultural economy to a level that meets or exceeds the state average.**

POLICIES

The following policies apply to all lands designated Agriculture on the Land Use Diagram.

-
- AG.P-1: Ensure that agricultural parcels are maintained at a sufficient minimum parcel size so as to remain a farmable unit. Farmable units are defined as the size of parcels a farmer would consider viable for leasing or purchasing for different agricultural purposes. A farmable unit is not considered the sole economic function that will internally support a farm household.**
 - AG.P-2: Ensure that residential development is compatible with surrounding agricultural activities.**
 - AG.P-3: Encourage consolidation of the fragmented pattern of agricultural preserves and contracts established under the Land Conservation Act (Williamson Act) and the retention**

of agricultural preserves and contracts in agricultural, watershed, and marshland areas.

- AG.P-4: Require farmland conversion mitigation for either of the following actions:
 - a. a General Plan amendment that changes the designation of any land from an agricultural to a nonagricultural use or
 - b. an application for a development permit that changes the use of land from production agriculture to a nonagricultural use, regardless of the General Plan designation.

- AG.P-5: Create an Agricultural Reserve Overlay designation on the Land Use Diagram that identifies an agricultural mitigation bank area in which the County will encourage private landowners to voluntarily participate in agricultural conservation easements.

- AG.P-6: Encourage eligible property owners to participate in a County-led agricultural preserve program.

- AG.P-7: Explore and if feasible implement a voluntary transfer of development rights program to help protect agricultural resources by guiding development to more suitable areas.

- AG.P-8: Maintain water resource quality and quantity for the irrigation of productive farmland so as to prevent the loss of agriculture related to competition from urban water consumption internal or external to the county.

- AG.P-9: Promote efficient management and use of agricultural water resources.

- AG.P-10: Support efforts by irrigation districts and others to expand the county's irrigated agricultural areas where appropriate.

- AG.P-11: Support agricultural production by enabling the development of adequate amounts of farmworker and farm family housing in agricultural areas that meet state housing quality standards.

- AG.P-12: Promote agriculture as a major county industry and support marketing efforts for Solano County-grown and value-added products and agricultural services and compatible activities.

- AG.P-13: Support changes in local, state and federal taxing structures that promote the retention of production agriculture and the beneficial use of agricultural byproducts.

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- AG.P-14: Support and promote streamlined permit processing procedures for agriculture-related buildings on Agriculture designated parcels (including barns, farm stands, and agricultural processing plants).
- AG.P-15: Permit limited agricultural service uses that support local agricultural activities and are not harmful to the long-term agricultural use in the surrounding area. These support services should be located in areas designated Limited Industrial and Agriculture as depicted on the Land Use Diagram.
- AG.P-16: Minimize potential conflicts between agricultural and residential uses by encouraging the use of urban-agricultural buffers within Municipal Service Areas between residential uses and agricultural lands.
- AG.P-17: Minimize potential conflicts between automobile and bicycle traffic and agricultural operations through transportation planning and capital improvement efforts.
- AG.P-18: Support long-term viability of commercial agriculture and discourage inappropriate development of agricultural lands within the Delta.
- AG.P-19: Require agricultural practices to be conducted in a manner that minimizes harmful effects on soils, air and water quality, and marsh and wildlife habitat.
- AG.P-20: Protect, encourage, and provide incentives to agricultural processors that serve local/regional markets.
- AG.P-21: Promote natural carbon sequestration to offset carbon emissions by supporting sustainable farming methods (such as no-till farming, crop rotation, cover cropping, and residue farming), encouraging the use of appropriate vegetation within urban-agricultural buffer areas, and protecting grasslands from conversion to non-agricultural uses.
- AG.P-22: Work with property owners and law enforcement to address illegal dumping.
- AG.P-23: Support recreation and open space activities that are complementary and secondary to the primary agricultural activities on the land.
- AG.P-24: Continue to support nursery crop industries at locations with favorable growing conditions and transportation access.
- AG.P-25: Facilitate partnerships between agricultural operations and habitat conservation efforts to create mutually beneficial outcomes. Although such partnerships are to be

encouraged throughout the county, additional emphasis should be focused in locations where the Resource Conservation Overlay and Agricultural Reserve Overlay coincide.

Regional Policies

AG.P-26: Acknowledge the 10 agricultural regions and address them in unique ways that support the maintenance and expansion of profitable agricultural production.

AG.P-27: Use the regions to direct marketing or economic efforts. Encourage landowners, producers, and agencies in a region to work together to create strategic action plans.

AG.P-28: Recognize that agriculture is to be the predominant land use in the Dixon Ridge, Elmira and Maine Prairie, Montezuma Hills, Ryer Island, and Winters regions. These are agricultural areas where preservation efforts should be focused and conflicting land uses avoided.

AG.P-29: Support the unique agricultural uses found in the interior valleys (Suisun, Pleasants, Vaca, and Lagoon) and encourage the development of complementary agri-tourism, processing, and commercial uses in these regions.

AG.P-30: Recognize the diversity in individual regions, beyond the broad guidance provided for each region.

AG.P-31: Define parcel size of Agriculture designated lands based on the "Agricultural Regions" section as described in this chapter and presented in Table AG-3.

One residence and a permitted secondary unit may be built on a lot of record existing as of January 1, 1984, designated "Agriculture" provided however that (i) the owner demonstrates compliance with all other applicable County requirements, and (ii) before such exemption is granted, the lot has first been merged with contiguous parcels to the maximum extent possible consistent with state law.

AG.P-32: Lands within the "Agriculture" designation shown on the Land Use Diagram may be redesignated to a more intensive agricultural designation, or to a rural residential designation (with a maximum density of one unit per 2.5 to 10 acres) if the Board of Supervisors makes each of the following findings:

(a) That the approval will not constitute part of, or encourage, a piece-meal conversion of a larger agricultural area to residential or other non-agricultural

uses, and will not alter the stability of land use patterns in the area;

- (b) That no land proposed for redesignation is prime agricultural land as defined pursuant to California Government Code Section 51201 (the California Land Conservation Act of 1965, also known as the Williamson Act);
- (c) That the subject land is unsuitable for agriculture due to terrain, adverse soil conditions, drainage, flooding, parcel size, or other physical factors, such that it has no substantial market or rental value under the "Agriculture" designation;
- (d) That the use and density proposed are compatible with agricultural uses and will not interfere with accepted farming practices;
- (e) That the land is immediately adjacent to existing comparably developed areas and the applicant for the redesignation has provided substantial evidence that the Fire District, School District, County Sheriff, the area road system, and the proposed water supplier have adequate capacity to accommodate the development and provide it with adequate public services; and
- (f) That annexation to a city or incorporation is not appropriate or possible based on the following factors: nearby cities' designated sphere of influence boundaries, cities' general plan growth limits and projections, and comprehensive annexation plans.

All redesignations pursuant to this policy shall be limited to a maximum of 160 acres for any one landowner in any calendar year. Landowners with any unity of interest are considered one landowner for purposes of this limitation.

AG.P-33: To comply with state law regarding the provision of low- and very-low income housing as those terms are or may be defined by state law, lands within the "Agriculture" designation on the Land Use Diagram may be changed to a residential designation. No more than 50 acres of land may be redesignated for this purpose in any calendar year. Such redesignation may be made only upon each of the following findings:

- (a) The findings stated in subparagraphs (e) and (f) in AG.P-32 above are met;
- (b) Use of the land redesignated under this policy will be limited to a low- and very-low income housing

development, pursuant to a legally valid Housing Element of this General Plan;

- (c) There is no existing residential designated land available for the low- and very-low income housing; and
- (d) The redesignation of lands, and construction of low- and very-low income housing on those lands, is required to comply with state law requirements for provision of such housing.

AG.P-34: Lands within the Agriculture designations may be redesignated to Park & Recreation only for public recreation and public open space uses and only if the uses permitted by the new designation will not interfere with or be in conflict with agricultural operations.

AG.P-35: Lands within the Agriculture designations may be redesignated to Watershed or Marsh.

AG.P-36: Lands designated Watershed.

(a) Within the Watershed land use designation, the maximum permitted residential density is one dwelling unit per 160 acres.

(b) Notwithstanding the preceding paragraph, one residence may be built on a lot of record existing as of January 1, 1984, designated Watershed provided however that (i) the owner demonstrate compliance with all other applicable County requirements, and (ii) before such exemption is granted, the lot has first been merged with contiguous parcels to the maximum extent possible consistent with state law.

IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS

The 10 agricultural regions will emphasize different implementation programs, based on their distinct regional needs. The following list of programs is intended to serve as a toolbox for the regions' future strategic plans.

Regulations

AG.I-1: Create and adopt a farmland conversion mitigation program and ordinance. Require compensation for loss of agricultural land. Establish appropriate mitigation ratios for the program or utilize a graduated mitigation mechanism. The mitigation ratio shall be a minimum of 1.5:1 (1.5

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acres of farmland protected through mitigation for each acre of farmland converted). The program shall not present regulatory barriers to agritourism, agricultural services, and agricultural processing in regions and within land use designations where such uses are permitted and encouraged. The program shall also establish mitigation within the same agricultural region as the proposed development project, or within the Agricultural Reserve Overlay district, as a preferred strategy. The program shall incorporate a fee option, and shall provide an exemption for farmworker housing. Mitigation lands shall be of similar agricultural quality to the lands being converted.

Related Policies: AG.P-4, RS.P-62

Agency/Department: Department of Resource Management

Funding Source: General Fund

Time Frame: Ordinance adopted by 2010; Implementation ongoing

AG.I-2: Adopt ordinances and policies to support development of an Agricultural Reserve Overlay district. Include lands with highest agricultural value, based on soil classifications, irrigation, and surrounding uses. Work with local farmers and ranchers to generate support for using the overlay district as a receiving area for the farmland conversion mitigation program.

Related Policies: AG.P-5, RS.P-62

Agency/Department: Department of Resource Management

Funding Source: General Fund

Time Frame: Mitigation program and ordinance adopted by 2010; Zoning Ordinance updated by 2012; Implementation ongoing

AG.I-3: Study, and if feasible establish, a program to provide seasonal farmworkers with mobile housing that could be located on any specific parcel during the cultivation and harvest periods. Establish regulations and an inspection process (or coordinate inspections with the state Department of Housing and Community Development) that ensure the health, safety, and welfare of agricultural employees.

Additionally, support development of low- and very-low-income housing on agricultural lands, if criteria in policy AG.P-33 are met.

Related Policy: AG.P-11

Agency/Department: Department of Resource Management; UC Davis Cooperative Extension

Funding Source: General Fund

Time Frame: Ongoing

AG.I-4: Revise the agricultural zoning districts and other relevant sections of the County code to facilitate agricultural processing facilities and uses by region. Establish an incentive program to encourage development of local processing capacity to serve local and regional markets. The Zoning Ordinance and other relevant sections of the County code shall permit the establishment of limited agricultural support services in areas designated as Limited Industrial and Agriculture. Remove barriers to agricultural development by streamlining the permitting process for agriculture-supporting uses, including, but not limited to, barns, farm stands, and agricultural processing plants. Consider creating a separate permitting fee structure for these types of projects to promote investment in agricultural improvements.

The updated Zoning Ordinance shall include provisions for incidental recreational use of lands designated for agriculture.

Related Policies: LU.P-32, AG.P-5, AG.P-14, AG.P-15, AG.P-20, AG.P-24

Agency/Department: Department of Resource Management; Agricultural Commissioner

Funding Source: General Fund

Time Frame: Code updates completed by 2012; Implementation ongoing

AG.I-5: Work with cities to establish appropriate urban-agricultural buffers where new residential uses within municipal service areas may conflict with agricultural uses. Urban-agricultural buffers shall be an appropriate size to meet desired objectives, but in no case less than 300 feet in width. The buffer

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should occur on developing parcels located within municipal service areas to the extent feasible; be managed by the landowner, developer, homeowner's association, or a special purpose district; and favor protection of the maximum amount of farmable land.

Related Policies: AG.P-16, RS.P-70

Agency/Department: Department of Resource Management

Funding Source: Development fees

Time Frame: Ongoing

AG.I-6: Commission a study of County agricultural and land use regulations and their implementation with the intent of minimizing the regulatory obstacles to value-added opportunities for local agriculture. In addition to examining the substance of regulations and relevant county fees, the study should:

- examine their administration, seeking ways to make the application and review process more efficient, economical, and less time consuming;
- examine how the burdens of state- and federal-originated requirements can be modified in their local implementation; and
- examine ways the County can more proactively participate in the formulation and development of new state and federal regulations affecting agriculture, particularly Agricultural Enterprise Zones, water quality regulations, and water transfers from agricultural to urban use.

Related Policies: AG.P-13, AG.P-14

Agency/Department: Department of Resource Management; Agricultural Commissioner; UC Davis Cooperative Extension

Funding Source: Grant funds; General Fund

Time Frame: Study completed by 2015

Funding, Physical Improvements, and Capital Projects

AG.I-7: Provide incentives for landowners to participate in the Williamson Act and Farmland Security Zone

programs, including subsidy of application filling fees and assistance with the application process. Develop a conservation plan aimed at consolidating agricultural preserves and Williamson Act contracts to maintain large parcel sizes needed for productive agriculture. Ensure that agricultural parcels are maintained at a minimum parcel size sufficient to remain a farmable unit. Pursue grant funds under the provisions of the California Farmland Conservancy Program to assist with implementation of this and other measures contained in this chapter.

Related Policies: AG.P-1, AG.P-5
Agency/Department: Department of Resource Management; Agricultural Commissioner; UC Davis Cooperative Extension
Funding Source: Grant funds; General Fund
Time Frame: Williamson Act Conservation Plan completed by 2010; Implementation ongoing

AG.I-8: In coordination with programs in the Transportation and Circulation chapter, create a comprehensive plan for roadway improvements to support agricultural needs. The plan shall include increased connectivity across I-80 for farmers and their equipment, turnouts on agricultural roads, and grading/paving of unimproved roads. The plan shall also provide strategies to reduce automobile and bicycle conflicts with agricultural operations throughout the county. Recommendations shall be integrated into County transportation plans, recreation plans, and capital improvement programs. Partner with cities and the Solano Transportation Authority to address funding strategies for planned facilities.

Related Policies: AG.P-17, TC.P-26
Agency/Department: Department of Resource Management; Solano Transportation Authority
Funding Source: Grant funds; General Fund
Time Frame: Comprehensive Transportation Plan completed by 2015; Implementation ongoing

AG.I-9: Investigate funding sources to facilitate increased enforcement of dumping regulations, removal of illegally dumped materials, and public education on this topic.

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Related Policy: AG.P-22

Agency/Department: Department of Resource Management

Funding Source: General Fund

Time Frame: Ongoing

Development Review

AG.I-10: Focus preservation efforts, including use of Williamson Act contracts and conservation easements, in areas where agriculture is to be the predominant land use. Maintain large minimum parcel sizes in these regions, and discourage rezoning that would negatively affect farming operations. Recognize that agriculture is to be the predominant land use in the Dixon Ridge, Elmira and Maine Prairie, Montezuma Hills, Ryer Island, and Winters regions. Support long-term viability of commercial agriculture and discourage inappropriate development of agricultural lands within the Delta.

Related Policies: AG.P-3, AG.P-18, AG.P-28

Agency/Department: Department of Resource Management

Funding Source: Development fees; General Fund

Time Frame: Ongoing

AG.I-11: Do not require design review for barns and similar agricultural support structures unless design review is mandated by a local community plan, such as a specific plan, design guidelines, zoning, or a city's general plan.

Related Policy: AG.P-14

Agency/Department: Department of Resource Management

Funding Source: Development fees

Time Frame: Ongoing

AG.I-12: Update the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Ordinance to incorporate standards and guidelines for the placement of residential uses on agricultural land. These may include:

- limiting the size of the homesite portion of a parcel to maximize the land available for commercial agriculture,
- locating the homesite at the corner or other appropriate location on the parcel to support other agricultural operations, and
- requiring the purchaser to show how the property can still be used for agricultural production and supporting activities.

Related Policy: AG.P-11

Agency/Department: Department of Resource Management

Funding Source: General Fund

Time Frame: Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Ordinance updates completed by 2012; Implementation ongoing

AG.I-13: Support recreation and open space activities that are complementary and secondary to agricultural activities on the land. Encourage agriculturalists to incorporate compatible recreational and educational activities that provide visitor-oriented opportunities into agricultural land in appropriate areas, minimizing the adverse impact on agriculture.

Related Policies: AG.P-23, RS.P-46, RS.P-47

Agency/Department: Department of Resource Management

Funding Source: Development fees

Time Frame: Ongoing

AG.I-14: Implement the Orderly Growth Initiative by:

- defining the parcel size of Agriculture-designated lands as presented in Table AG-3,
- limiting redesignation of Agriculture-designated lands to a more intensive agricultural designation or residential designation as defined in policies AG.P-30 and AG.P-31,
- redesignating Agriculture-designated lands to Park and Recreation only for public uses and only if the uses permitted will not interfere with or be in conflict with agricultural operations,

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- redesignating Agriculture-designated lands to Watershed or Marsh if appropriate, and
- ensuring that lands designated Watershed will have maximum permitted residential densities as defined in policy AG.P-34.

Related Policies: AG.P-31, AG.P-32, AG.P-33, AG.P-34, AG.P-35, AG.P-36

Agency/Department: Department of Resource Management

Funding Source: General Fund

Time Frame: Ongoing

Ongoing Planning Efforts, Public Outreach, and Education

AG.I-15: Investigate methods to change state and federal tax and fee structures and to promote beneficial use of agricultural byproducts through changes to state legislation.

Related Policy: AG.P-13

Agency/Department: Agricultural Commissioner; Board of Supervisors; Department of Resource Management; UC Davis Cooperative Extension

Funding Source: General Fund; Grant funds

Time Frame: Ongoing

AG.I-16: Develop marketing/ombudsman and planning functions that facilitate and promote agriculture in the county.

Related Policies: AG.P-12, AG.P-26, AG.P-27

Agency/Department: Department of Resource Management; Agricultural Commissioner

Funding Source: General Fund

Time Frame: Complete by 2009

AG.I-17: Develop strategic marketing and economic plans for each of the 10 agricultural regions. These plans should address the regions' specific needs and potential opportunities for agricultural economic growth, the marketing efforts the region wants to

accomplish, and what help the County can provide. Specific growth areas include creation of a Solano County-grown identity and support for value-added production. This should be achieved through policies and action steps/programs.

Develop locally led and individual marketing strategies for the unique and distinct agricultural regions based on local crop production and agricultural assets that allow the regions to develop independently of one another.

Recognizing the diversity in individual regions, support agriculture-related uses, such as agri-tourism development, processing plants, and some commercial uses in regions with unique agriculture (e.g., Suisun, Pleasant, Vaca, and Lagoon). Allow value-added production facilities and agriculture-related niche activities, such as bed and breakfasts at local wineries.

Related Policies: AG.P-27, AG.P-29, AG.P-30, RS.P-39

Agency/Department: Department of Resource Management; Agricultural Commissioner; UC Davis Cooperative Extension

Funding Source: General Fund; Grant funds

Time Frame: All regional strategic plans completed by 2018; Implementation ongoing

-
- AG.I-18: Establish programs to preserve farmland, and encourage eligible property owners to participate in a County-led preserve program. Programs such as those listed below shall encourage maximum flexibility for agricultural operations:
- A farmland conservancy program. Protect agricultural lands by purchasing development rights and conservation easements from willing sellers, and offer conservation easements or other innovative programs. Coordinate efforts with conservation organizations and other municipalities and agencies. The program shall incorporate a mechanism or strategy to provide just compensation for participating landowners and to prevent degraded agricultural property values. Proposed agricultural preserves shall avoid current and future roadway and transportation corridor alignments.

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- A voluntary transfer of development rights program in combination with the Agricultural Reserve Overlay. This program shall establish requirements and procedures for transfer of development rights from areas in the Agricultural Reserve Overlay to specified receiving areas. Receiving areas may be identified within a city through a joint powers agreement.
- A Farmland Security Zone program (Super Williamson Act). This program, in tandem with others in this section, will encourage the consolidation of the fragmented pattern of agricultural preserves and Williamson Act contracts, and the retention of these contracts in agricultural, watershed, and marshland areas.
- Prepare a public information brochure for distribution to the agricultural community to increase awareness of the benefits of participating in these programs.

Related Policies: AG.P-3, AG.P-4, AG.P-6, AG.P-7

Agency/Department: Department of Resource Management; Agricultural Commissioner; UC Davis Cooperative Extension

Funding Source: General Fund; Grant funds; Development fees

Time Frame: Ongoing

AG.I-19: Educate real estate professionals, county staff who enforce the ordinance, and prospective homeowners of dwellings or property close to agricultural activities regarding the protection from a nuisance action provided by the right-to-farm ordinance. Ensure that residential development is compatible with surrounding agricultural activities, including with the use of urban-agricultural buffers.

Related Policies: AG.P-2, AG.P-16

Agency/Department: Department of Resource Management; Agricultural Commissioner; County Counsel

Funding Source: General Fund

Time Frame: Ongoing

AG.I-20: Create a small-scale, value-added agricultural committee, composed of successful small-scale producers, to advise county government on pertinent land use, permitting, and other issues.

Related Policy: AG.P-14

Agency/Department: Agricultural Commissioner; Board of Supervisors; Agricultural Advisory Committee; UC Davis Cooperative Extension

Funding Source: General Fund

Time Frame: Committee established by 2010

AG.I-21: Promote and assist farmer and rancher participation in federal and state voluntary incentive programs aimed at improving wildlife habitat, wetlands, and environmental quality (e.g., Natural Resources Conservation Service Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, Wetlands Reserve Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program) Concentrate efforts in areas where the Agricultural Reserve Overlay and Resource Conservation Overlay coincide.

Related Policies: AG.P-25, RS.P-62

Agency/Department: Agricultural Commissioner; Department of Resource Management

Funding Source: Grant funds

Time Frame: Ongoing

AG.I-22: Promote sustainable agricultural activities and practices that support and enhance the natural environment. These activities should minimize impacts on soil quality and erosion potential, water quantity and quality, energy use, air quality, and natural habitats. Sustainable agricultural practices should be addressed in the County's proposed Climate Action Plan to address climate change effects.

Related Policies: AG.P-19, AG.P-20

Agency/Department: Department of Resource Management; Agricultural Commissioner

Funding Source: General Fund

Time Frame: Climate Action Plan completed by 2010.

Coordination with Other Agencies and Organizations

AG.I-23: Work with the Solano County Water Agency, irrigation districts, reclamation districts, adjacent counties and the resource conservation districts to ensure adequate future water supply and delivery. Examine agricultural trends in surrounding communities and cooperate with adjacent counties in marketing and agricultural preservation practices. Review development proposals and require necessary studies, as appropriate, and water conservation and mitigation measures to ensure adequate water service. Examine the potential impact of water transfers from farmland to urban uses internal or external to the county and the implications for agriculture in the county. Create educational programs for farmers and ranchers that teach efficient water resource management. Explore options for expanding the county's irrigated areas. Working with the Solano County Water Agency, irrigation districts, reclamation districts, and the resource conservation districts, promote sustainable management and efficient use of agricultural water resources.

Related Policies: AG.P-8, AG.P-9, AG.P-10, PF.P-13, RS.P-76

Agency/Department: Department of Resource Management; Agricultural Commissioner

Funding Source: General Fund, Grant funds

Time Frame: Ongoing

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