

## **Agricultural Economic Priorities for Solano and Yolo Counties**

The counties of Solano and Yolo are engaged in a concerted effort to increase the economic viability of agriculture within their borders and as a region. Both counties commissioned the University of California Agricultural Issues Center to examine their agriculture industries and incorporated many of the lessons learned from those studies into the updates of their respective general plans. The counties held a Joint Economic Summit in November 2011 to explore ways the public and private sector could collaborate to add more value to agriculture. The summit resulted in eight action areas, which affirmed many of the concepts that emerged independently in the two counties. The following examines priorities identified in various studies conducted by the respective counties over the last decade and merges them into a synopsis of common priorities for both counties.

Key areas of improvement identified by both counties:

- Creation of an Agricultural Ombudsman or “Farmbudsman”
- Land-Use decisions that support agriculture and the business people working the land, while mitigating impacts and acting as responsible stewards
- Market and promote local agriculture and products

<b>Creation of an Agricultural Ombudsman or “Farmbudsmen”</b>		
<b>Solano County</b>		
<b>Identified Priority</b>	<b>Actions Taken To Date</b>	<b>Future Efforts in the Works</b>
Adopt throughout County government a more informed and proactive approach to agricultural issues in the work of the Board of Supervisors and County staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Held two-county Food Chain Summit</li> <li>• Bi-county session on Ag Tourism and conflicts with Williamson Act and agricultural easements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploring the Agriculture Ombudsperson as a tangible result of the summit findings</li> <li>• Board members are better informed of consequences of easement language on future Ag related uses</li> </ul>
<b>Yolo County</b>		
<b>Identified Priority</b>	<b>Actions Taken To Date</b>	<b>Future Efforts in the Works</b>
Create Farmbudsmen Position to aid farmers and ranchers with permitting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop position description with Solano County</li> <li>• Develop shared services agreement with Solano County</li> <li>• Explore alternative funding models</li> <li>• Seek and secure funding for the position</li> <li>• Implement</li> </ul>	Evaluate Measure Success of this position: Economic benefit of the position outweighs the cost of the position <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project approvals increased by 20%</li> <li>• 500 new jobs added</li> <li>• 5 new processors added</li> </ul>

<b>Land-Use decisions that support agriculture and the business people working the land, while mitigating impacts and acting as responsible stewards</b>		
<b>Solano County</b>		
<b>Identified Priority</b>	<b>Actions Taken To Date</b>	<b>Future Efforts in the Works</b>
Establish, in the general plan, a regional basis for policies, land use designations and zoning standards that accommodates important geographical differences in local agricultural conditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ten agricultural regions have been identified in the General Plan and a strategic plan has been adopted by the Board for Suisun Valley</li> <li>• A strategic plan is being developed for the Dixon Agricultural Industrial area and the agriculture zoning regulations have been updated several times over the last several years to support agricultural businesses</li> </ul>	Pleasants Valley will be the next area of the County where emphasis will be directed to support the existing and future agricultural endeavors.
Give priority zoning and other farmland protection policies to the Dixon Ridge and Winters agricultural regions in Solano County.	Background materials are being collected to research a farmland conversion mitigation program identified in the General Plan.	
Consider policies to support small scale and value-added agricultural operations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The agriculture zoning regulations have been updated several times over the last several years to support small-scale agricultural businesses</li> <li>• Transferred intellectual properties for Solano Grown to a 501(c)6 grower member organization</li> </ul>	The agriculture zoning regulations will continue to be updated to support small scale and value-added agricultural operations.
Minimize the negative impact of rural residential development in agriculturally zoned areas.	Maintain the minimum acreage for each agriculture zone district identified in the General Plan to reduce the impacts of rural residential development.	
Commission a detailed study of County regulations and their implementation with the intent of minimizing the regulatory obstacles to value-added opportunities for local agriculture.	The agriculture zoning regulations have been updated several times over the last several years to support agricultural businesses with the intent of reducing regulatory obstacles.	The agriculture zoning regulations will continue to be updated to support agricultural businesses with the intent of reducing regulatory obstacles.

Protect and encourage agricultural processors through local and regional actions.	Resource Mgmt. staff have met and offered assistance with Superior and Campbells’s representatives on future expansion plans.	A strategic plan is being developed for the Dixon Agricultural Industrial area with the intent of providing an area for future agriculture processors.
Improve the information and expertise used by County government to evaluate and decide land use issues affecting local agriculture through better information and expertise.	Resource management brings both conceptual issues as well as specific projects that impact prime Ag land to the Agricultural Advisory committee for consultation.	Development of proposed language for a Solar Ordinance is being vetted with a grower working group of the AAC.
<b>Yolo County</b>		
<b>Identified Priority</b>	<b>Actions Taken To Date</b>	<b>Future Efforts in the Works</b>
Legislative priorities to mitigate FEMA flood and Bay Delta Conservation Plan impacts to Yolo County.	Secure changes to the Bay Delta Conservation Plan Yolo Bypass Conservation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measure to avoid/minimize impacts on agriculture, flood protection and terrestrial species habitat, including migrating waterfowl, as well as secure full mitigation for any unavoidable impacts (At time BDCP is permitted)</li> <li>• Seek modifications to the National Flood Insurance Program reauthorization bill to protect both rural areas and incorporated cities (2017)</li> <li>• Seek modifications to Federal Emergency Management Agency standards for non-residential structures (2017)</li> <li>• Oppose widening the Fremont Weir and Yolo Bypass (2017)</li> <li>• Research creation of an Ag and economic development fund (2014)</li> </ul> <p>Measure Success of this effort by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yolo County maintains control over local land use decisions</li> <li>• Economic Development opportunities increase in rural areas</li> <li>• Fremont Weir and the Yolo Bypass are not widened and farming operations are not impacted</li> </ul>
Study conducted to determine whether a higher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund study</li> </ul>	Evaluate and Implement findings (2013)

mitigation ratio for loss of agricultural land is warranted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop scope of work</li> <li>• Send out RFP</li> <li>• Award RFP</li> </ul>	Measures of Success: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More Ag land preserved through permanent easements</li> <li>• Agricultural production increased</li> </ul>
Alternative I-505 site recommended to be zoned Ag Commercial.		Work with the communities located along I-505 to identify appropriate site and concept (2014) Measures of success: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agricultural production has increased</li> <li>• Ag Commercial businesses are recruited and the projects are approved</li> </ul>
Zoning and incentives friendly to expanding the food value chain.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt agricultural zoning ordinance</li> <li>• Adopt Clarksburg Ag zone overlay</li> <li>• Assess feasibility of creating an agricultural benefit assessment district in Clarksburg or Esparto</li> <li>• Work with Tribe and growers to enhance sustainable development in the Capay Valley</li> </ul>	Measures of Success: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New flexible Ag zoning and other zoning ordinances Adopted</li> <li>• Clarksburg zoning overlay adopted</li> </ul>
Technology commercialization significantly smoother.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish One Window tech transfer conduit with UC Davis</li> <li>• Promote Seed Central</li> <li>• Complete planning for UC Ag/food research park at Nishi, West Village or S. Davis Road</li> <li>• Full County engagement and participation in Food U-Hub creation</li> </ul>	Measures of Success: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One window tech transfer conduit with UCD designated</li> <li>• One seed company expansion or recruitment per year, or company using UCD technology</li> </ul>

<b>Market and promote local agriculture and products</b>		
<b>Solano County</b>		
<b>Identified Priority</b>	<b>Actions Taken To Date</b>	<b>Future Efforts in the Works</b>
Consider County government funding and other support for promoting local agriculture.	Board authorized Ag Commissioner to accept USDA grant to start Solano Grown and a subsequent grant to promote local Ag through Solano Grown.	Continuing grant administration of promotional grant.
<b>Yolo County</b>		
<b>Identified Priority</b>	<b>Actions Taken To Date</b>	<b>Future Efforts in the Works</b>
Expanded tourism in unincorporated Yolo County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact and catalog all visitor attraction venues</li> <li>• Collaborate with YCVB to promote all venues</li> <li>• Work with new and existing venue owners to expand their capacity to serve visitors</li> </ul>	Measures of Success: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete catalog of attractions in unincorporated Yolo County</li> <li>• Increasing visitor counts</li> <li>• Help one visitor venue establish or expand per year</li> </ul>

The following priorities are unique to each county based on their specific goals and attributes. These items were identified with feedback from the community and the leadership within each county.

Solano County		
Identified Priority	Actions Taken To Date	Future Efforts in the Works
Bring more agriculture-related expertise into County government.	Contracted with Jim Louie and Adam Cline to develop Dixon Ridge plan.	

Yolo County		
Identified Priority	Actions Taken To Date	Future Efforts in the Works
Effective Farm-to-School program created to bring fresh, locally grown/produced food to school meals and provide farm education programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a strategic plan and budget</li> <li>• Host a stakeholders meeting</li> <li>• Develop a task force</li> <li>• Seek partnerships and align mission and values</li> <li>• Seek funding</li> <li>• Implement program</li> <li>• Evaluate effectiveness</li> </ul>	Measure Success of this program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program mission aligned with the goals of project partners</li> <li>• Program implemented in all 5 public school districts</li> <li>• Each school districts increased local procurement to greater than 25%</li> </ul>
Refrigeration and consolidation unit sited reducing truck trips to small farms with partial loads.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with UC Davis and the Yolo Ag and Food Systems Alliance to analyze project feasibility</li> <li>• Conduct feasibility study to determine if the Yolo County Food Bank can act as an aggregation facility</li> </ul>	Implement study results Measure Success of this action: Yolo County Aggregation Facility in operation

Source Documents:

- *The Future of Solano County Agriculture: What County Government Can Do*, December 2007.
- *The Food Chain Cluster: Integrating the Food Chain in Solano and Yolo Counties to Create Economic Opportunity and Jobs*, May 2011.
- *Yolo County, Three-Year Tactical Plan for Board of Supervisors-Identified Strategic Plan Goals*, May 2013.