



Vision for Yolo County Agriculture Yolo County Ag Futures Alliance MARCH 2007

Agriculture is a cornerstone of civilization because it provides a stable food supply, allowing the majority of people to engage in pursuits other than the production of food. Yolo County provides more than its share of this food supply as a result of ideal growing conditions and efforts by local decision makers over the past 150 years to support agriculture. The preservation of the county's agricultural heritage depends on a vision for the future of Yolo County agriculture that accommodates changing conditions, including development pressure, global competition, increasing production costs, and environmental concerns. The Yolo Ag Futures Alliance (AFA) offers a vision for Yolo County agriculture that includes three elements: agriculture, the environment, and community. This vision will guide the Ag Futures Alliance as it works to develop innovative solutions to environmental and agricultural challenges.

Agriculture

We envision a Yolo County in which farms and ranches are increasingly integrated into a landscape that supports a diversity of ecological processes and a vibrant agricultural economy. Toward this vision, we call for actions that support:

- Progressive and enforceable zoning ordinances and General Plan policies that protect farming and the environment, especially large, contiguous tracts of agricultural land removed from urban areas;
- Locally based farming operations committed to sustainable agricultural practices;
- A system that recruits and supports new farmers interested in farming in a sustainable, financially viable, community-supported and environmentally friendly manner;
- Mitigation and agricultural easement opportunities on land within agricultural preservation zones designated by the county through a public process;
- Affordable and realistic alternative energy sources;
- Exchange of information, technology, and funding between local government entities, Resource Conservation Districts, Cooperative Extension, research institutions and environmental organizations to promote agricultural and environmental innovation throughout the county, region and state;
- New markets or marketing strategies to support local agriculture; and
- Superior infrastructure to support local farms and markets.

Environment

We envision a Yolo County that continues to lead the state with progressive conservation activities that promote ecological recovery and preservation on agricultural land, a vibrant agricultural economy and collaboration between traditionally uncommon partners. Toward this vision, we call for actions that support:

- Conservation and restoration activities that integrate multiple benefits, such as beneficial pollinator insect conservation, water conservation, flood control, habitat connectivity, restoration of natural processes (e.g., wildfire, seasonal flooding) and weed management. This also includes conservation of unique local habitats such as oak woodlands, native perennial grasslands, wetlands and riparian habitat in a way that integrates wildlands and farmlands;
- Regional forums that address and resolve environmental and conservation issues that extend beyond Yolo County's borders, such as air quality, soil loss, watershed integrity and non-native and/or highly mobile or migratory species;
- A research network that continuously explores opportunities for habitat enhancement on agricultural land. This network will freely share ideas, findings, and other knowledge among farmers and other interested parties.;
- Efforts to find common ground between environmentalists and farmers; and
- Efforts to provide habitat for recovered or recovering endangered species on agricultural land, including options to pay farmers to enhance this habitat.

Community

We understand community as the people bound together through their shared interest in locally produced food, fiber, and other agricultural commodities, as well as through the connection of food systems to open space and environmental services. Toward this vision we call for actions that support:

- An urban/rural network that connects farmers and ranchers to the general public, including farmers' markets, community-supported agriculture, public outreach, and other activities that connect the general public to the source of their food;and
- Efforts to ensure the public understands the importance of rural county values and culture, a healthy, stable food supply, locally produced agricultural commodities, alternative energy sources, responsible land stewardship, and ecosystem services provided by agricultural land.

Yolo County Ag Futures Alliance

The Yolo Ag Futures Alliance (AFA) is an association of individuals from the agricultural, environmental and civic sectors working to maintain and enhance agriculture and the environment in Yolo County in perpetuity. The current priorities of the AFA are to ensure that preservation of agricultural land and the local agricultural economy is a significant part of the Yolo County General Plan Update and to ensure that Yolo County mitigation policies are as progressive as possible. For more information about the AFA, please visit our web site at <http://yolocoafa.org> or email us at info@agfuturesalliance.org.