

AGRICULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY

Agriculture has long prospered in Yolo County, but faces new challenges because of increasing competition from farmers in other countries who have much lower labor, energy, water, regulatory and other input costs. To remain competitive, Yolo County's farmers are using new technologies, diversifying crops, embracing agri-tourism opportunities, growing organic produce, investing in sustainable agricultural practices, improving marketing programs, and producing more value-added products. Yolo County vigorously supports these efforts and is actively working to further them through our General Plan, the Yolo County Food and Agricultural Marketing Initiative, and our economic development initiative to improve the long-term viability of the agricultural industry.

ISSUE #1: Yolo County needs designated farm-to-market routes to ensure the efficient transport of goods to market locations, as well as funding to maintain and improve such routes. Existing roads used to truck produce are not designed to allow for efficient transport.

ISSUE #2: Yolo County needs new land use policies and streamlined permitting processes to match the needs of the rapidly evolving industry.

ISSUE #3: Yolo County and its neighboring counties have lost several processing facilities in the past decade, so farmers truck their crops farther away than in the past. The additional transport costs more, as well as contributes to increased greenhouse gas emissions. Yolo County produces a significant enough volume of some crops to justify new processing facilities of various sizes in the area. Some direct market-oriented farmers are interested in a facility that would allow them to produce value-added products (jam, candied nuts, etc.) and commercial kitchens to allow for small-scale production of local products.

YOLO COUNTY GENERAL PLAN

The Yolo County General Plan has always focused on preserving agricultural land and limiting urban development. The current General Plan update will expand on these historic themes by promoting agritourism, applying new marketing techniques, designating areas suitable for new processing facilities, and improving rural infrastructure to ensure a healthy agricultural economy. The General Plan also proposes an agricultural district in the Clarksburg area to promote the local wine industry. Yolo County released a draft General Plan on September 10, 2008 for public review and comment. Yolo County plans to complete the General Plan update by September 2009.