

Dec. 2, 2021 Solano Local Food System Alliance Meeting

Link to full meeting presentation and discussion: [https://youtu.be/m\\_UU6zHiDBc](https://youtu.be/m_UU6zHiDBc)

Valley Vision: <https://www.valleyvision.org/>

Alliance members in attendance:

Elena Karoulina, Sustainable Solano

Stephanie Oelsigle Jordan, Sustainable Solano

Maggie Kolk, Sustainable Solano

Paula Schnese, Cultivate Community Food Co-op

Ed King, Solano County Agricultural Commissioner

Additional attendees:

Chris Husing, Solano County Public Health

Rema El-Mahmoud, Solano County Public Health

Blake Miller, CCFC

Christy Birkhead, CCFC

Denise Cullen, CCFC

Kyleigh Griffin, CCFC

### **Alliance discussion:**

Trish and Elena:

Valley Vision and Solano Local Food System Alliance should partner operationally where it makes sense

A need to add Solano County data to the data for the Sacramento region

Then identify areas of collaboration

Triple bottom line of equity, prosperity and environmental sustainability - have been told that you cannot do all three, but you try to do it every time

It's a screen and a filter with a goal to find a path to do all three together

Often fail the most on the equity side - need a more inclusive framework for overall economic strategy

### **Food Hubs**

Ed:

A broader ag region has so much potential

Is there an example of a food hub that's a successful operation? (in the state or elsewhere)

Trish:

USDA does an update of food hubs; over 300 in the country, different models

One reason there aren't more in the Sacramento region is that the region has really good food distribution companies that buy from local growers

Eg. Capay Farm Shop is a food shop (in Yolo County) that sources from about 30 growers  
Expansion to institutional partners is harder  
Yolo Food Hub project is working to address that

Valley Vision is the fiscal sponsor of the food hub project  
Food hubs help to consolidate smaller clients  
UCANR is designating a food system partner to help with the project who will be based out of UCANR's Solano County offices

Spork (a food distributor) wants to work with Solano County farmers and is working with the Yolo Food Hub project

Elena:

We have to be cautious about Solano County produce being taken out of the county by the hub

Trish:

It needs to go both ways, finding a market for farmers in the county in the bigger food system and finding institutional clients in Solano for regional farms

Alchemist CDC is working to help farmers markets take CalFresh: <https://alchemistcdc.org/>

An idea: collaborate to create the Yolo Food Hub first and then Solano second so they're partnered hubs

Elena:

After a bad experience with the Solano Grown hub, not sure a food hub is a top priority

Now looking at prepared food

There's a steady supply of raw food through food banks, but a need for medically tailored meals

Trish:

That could be a market differentiator

Haven't heard anybody else (in area) talking about responding to that as a market opportunity

In the food hub study, looked at doing packaged meals for seniors (what it would take to build capacity to do more prepared meals)

Other thing looked at was food banks as food hubs - wasn't going to work with ours, stretched already with capacity

### **Food waste/Food rescue**

Sustainable Solano and Food is Free Solano just got funding from EPA for doing pilot in Vallejo on food rescue; creating a model, includes software/platform working with UC Davis

Super-local - donors could post what have, recipients pick it up

Need to figure out a way to expand the approach to the county and to the region (with Valley Vision)

Trish: CropMonster

Started in Sonoma County - "Craigslist for food"

Became an exchange for a lot of different things

Had grant, curated exchange; did match-making

Then went and did pilot with UC Merced

Funding ran out, was really effective; but was a lot to manage when tried to scale

Tried again last year, but was going to cost too much money

Was partially the way that system was designed

Maybe some of this money from CalRecycle could be a resource to help with scaling

Grace:

Sort of related-Ample Harvest, used by some organizations in the region, helps reduce food waste by connecting community gardeners to food pantries / other organizations who distribute food: <https://ampleharvest.org/>

### **Regenerative Ag/ Ag Tech**

Elena:

Pleasants Valley Agriculture Association is going through strategic planning and zoning

One of the visions is to create it as a regenerative ag demonstration subregion

<https://pleasantsvalleyagricultureassociation.com/vacaville-farmers>

Trish:

Chico State has a Center for Regenerative Ag

<https://www.csuchico.edu/regenerativeagriculture/>

This could be a great project, could be really nice nexus

Elena:

might be possibility for SAREP planning grant to support

Ed:

Ag in the county has changed with almonds being the primary driver (no almonds 20 years ago to 25K acres of almonds and growing)

Pleasants Valley is going through this specific planning process for a designated ag region;

Suisun Valley underwent the process several years ago

A lot of tomato processing, walnuts, sunflower seeds

New movement in new ag tech / indoor aquaponic operations

Gotham Greens on the edge of Solano County

Trish:

Indoor, controlled environment ag -- in listening sessions, people felt like if you did that you were taking away from outdoor farmers, BIPOC

But it's all part of the food economy

For sustainability, can grow in winter and is additive, rather than taking away  
From a sustainability side, if you don't displace farming (put in urban/infill development), it's environmentally beneficial

### **Economics / Local Food Outlets**

Trish:

The other argument is to support food and ag as a viable economic cluster that contributes to a healthier environment and healthier community

Rural-Urban Connections Strategy did a lot of planning tools for the economic case to keep ag land

Raises other questions: When the land shifts to hard crops like walnuts and almonds, what does it do the local produce, because that's taking land that could be in production for local food markets (nuts usually exported, not into local markets)

Elena: from BOS perspective, totally fine

Ed: output \$350-\$375M (for county)

Trish:

The next question is what farmers need to help them expand from current market size into the regional market

Eg. Olive oil producers needed processing facilities

Are there things that farmers need that would help them scale/process product

Elena:

Another opportunity is truly local groceries, like the food co-op

Trish: chef community has been a big advocate for the farmer connection - grow local and buy local

Question is how to build a brand around food the way the city of Woodland did

### **Funding**

The next step is examining funding sources to support projects and coordinated pursuit of funding throughout the region

Working on funding for a feasibility study for a Food and Health Institute (EDA funding)

<https://www.eda.gov/funding-opportunities/>

Elena:

This conversation is the beginning of a long-term partnership

Trish:

Will send information on food hubs/models  
Co-op extension support from UCANR  
Feasibility study for institute  
Regenerative ag link  
Other resources/contacts