

# The Connection

## The Bi-Annual Newsletter Yolo Ag & Food Alliance

### WHAT IS THE YOLO AG & FOOD ALLIANCE?

Officially launched in 2013 is committed to building a healthy food system- from farm to fork- for Yolo County. Its membership is comprised of a balanced representation of interests focused on agriculture, food access, food security and food policy. This breadth of membership is the result of the successful merger of two existing organizations, the Yolo Ag Futures Alliance and Yolo Food Connect.

The Yolo Ag Futures Alliance was founded in 2004 to bring together key Yolo County agricultural stakeholders to improve the viability and sustainability of Yolo County agriculture through collaborative problem solving and innovation.

Yolo Food Connect was formed in early 2012 to develop coordinated strategic actions to address gaps in the farm to fork food system of Yolo County.

Independently from each other around the time of the Yolo Food Connect Food Summit, convened at UC Davis in October 2012, the Yolo Ag Futures Alliance and Yolo Food Connect were each engaged in a process of organizational self-assessment. Each group had come to the realization that gaps in the representation of their membership were hindering their ability to move forward with their goals. The cross-pollination that occurred among members of both organizations at the Summit inspired collaboration between the two organizations that ultimately resulted in a number of Yolo Food Connect members merging into the Yolo Ag Futures Alliance.

That organizational development, aligned with the creation of a Food Policy Council emerging as one of the highest priorities identified by Food Summit participants, afforded an ideal opportunity for a formal reorganization of the newly merged group in 2013. Now dubbed the Yolo Ag & Food Alliance, the partnership has resulted in a more powerful and focused organization, able to accomplish broader and deeper goals around regional food policy from farm to fork. Clearly, Yolo Ag & Food Alliance has both the composition and the heart of the Food Policy Council called for at the Food Summit 2012.

#### Yolo AFA Vision:

Economic viability for farmers. Food accessibility for everyone- feed all community members. Honor all voices. Honor diversity. Build on successes. Sustain the environment. Create Equity.

#### Yolo AFA - What We Do:

As a multi-stakeholder collaborative of food system leaders, organizations, and community members, the Yolo AFA believes it can be most impactful working in the following ways:

- Bring people/resources/efforts together
- Improve communication with and engagement of public on food system issues
- Identify food system gaps/needs
- Encourage connections between uncommon groups
- Serve as sounding board for food system related efforts, ideas, and more
- Generate & share new ideas
- Put those ideas into Action

### IN THIS ISSUE

#### Winter 2014

- 1) What is the Yolo AFA?
- 2) Yolo AFA Committees
  - a. Policy
  - b. UCD Connection
  - c. Food Hub
  - d. Farm to School
  - e. Food Access & Urban Ag
  - f. Community Engagement
- 3) Who is Yolo AFA?
- 4) 2014 Supervisor's Ag Tour
- 5) UCD Survey Results
- 6) Committee Round-Up
- 7) CAFPC Regional Meeting
- 8) Feeding America Survey

# Yolo AFA Committees

The Yolo AFA is organized into 'Issue Specific Committees' focused on engaging in a selection of work related to a topic. Relevant issues and committees are selected at the beginning of each year by the whole group. Each committee chooses a leader, a scope of work for the year, and concrete deliverable dates by which they will accomplish something.

Committees change every year sensitive to the needs of the community. The 2014 Committees & Committee Leadership are:

- 1) **Policy Action Committee** - Michelle Stephens
- 2) **Stronger UCD Connection Committee** - Morgan Doran & Kristy Lyn Levings
- 3) **Food Hub Committee** - Kevin Sanchez
- 4) **Farm to School Committee** - John Young & Randii MacNear
- 5) **Food Access & Urban Agriculture** - Nancy O'Hara
- 6) **Community Engagement News & Outreach** - Kristy Lyn Levings



## Who is Yolo AFA?

### Member Leaders:

**Chair: Marcia Gibbs** - Executive Director, Sustainable Cotton Project

**Vice Chair:**

**Secretary: Michelle Stephens** - Yolo & Solano Farmbudsman

**Past Chair: Kristy Lyn Levings** - Farmer, Chowdown Farm & Farm to School Yolo Proj. Director

### General Members:

**Jacqueline Clemens** - Retired Educator and Food Access Advocate

**Morgan Doran** - Director, UC Cooperative Extension Sacramento

**Laurie Somerhausen** - Director, WIC Yolo County Health & Human Services

**Mary Kimball** - Executive Director, Center for Land Based Learning

**Randii MacNear** - Executive Director, Davis Farmers Market

**Alysa Meier** - Director, Legal Services of Northern California

**Nancy O'Hara** - Director, Yolo County Health & Human Services

**Eric Paulsen** - Farmer, Rice

**Kevin Sanchez** - Executive Director, Yolo County Food Bank

**Don Saylor** - Chairman, Board of Supervisors representing District 2

**Chris Simas** - Farmer, Simas Swine & Wine & Agriform/Tremont Ag

**Chris Turkovich** - Farmer, Turkovich Wines

**John Young** - Commissioner, Yolo County Department of Agriculture

# Yolo County Supervisor's Ag Tour is a Success!

On August 5<sup>th</sup>, Yolo County Supervisors, Department heads, and staff loaded on a Yolo Bus to tour the area and learn about the agricultural businesses that we see on a daily basis in Yolo County but may not fully understand.

Planned in conjunction with the County Administrator's office and Yolo Farm Bureau, the Yolo AFA designed an educational day for participants that included stops at Joe Muller & Sons Farms, Chowdown Farms, and Turkovich Winery.

Yolo Farm Bureau President, Jeff Merwin started the day with a message from the Farm Bureau. Then the group loaded onto the bus where they were treated to engaging discussions on the bus from Center for Land-Based Learning Director, Mary Kimball, Farmbudsman Michelle Stephens, and Ag Commissioner John Young.

Topics were varied during the day ranging from basic overviews of agricultural production and concerns about permanent crop transitions happening within the county to Agritourism and the implications of the continuing drought.

Once the group arrived at Turkovich Winery, Dr. Helene Dillard, the Dean of the College of Agriculture & Environmental Sciences addressed attendees while they ate lunch. Dr. Dillard discussed the history of UC Davis and potential ways the university could work with the local agricultural community.

The day ended with a panel of speakers discussing their perspectives on Ag in Yolo County. Tim O'Halloran from Yolo Flood Control gave the



group background on the groundwater status and potential solutions moving forward. Chris Turkovich discussed his trials with the permitting process when building his winery and seed cleaning facility. Jim Eppers of Yocha DeHe Wintun Nation talked about the Tribe's agricultural activities.

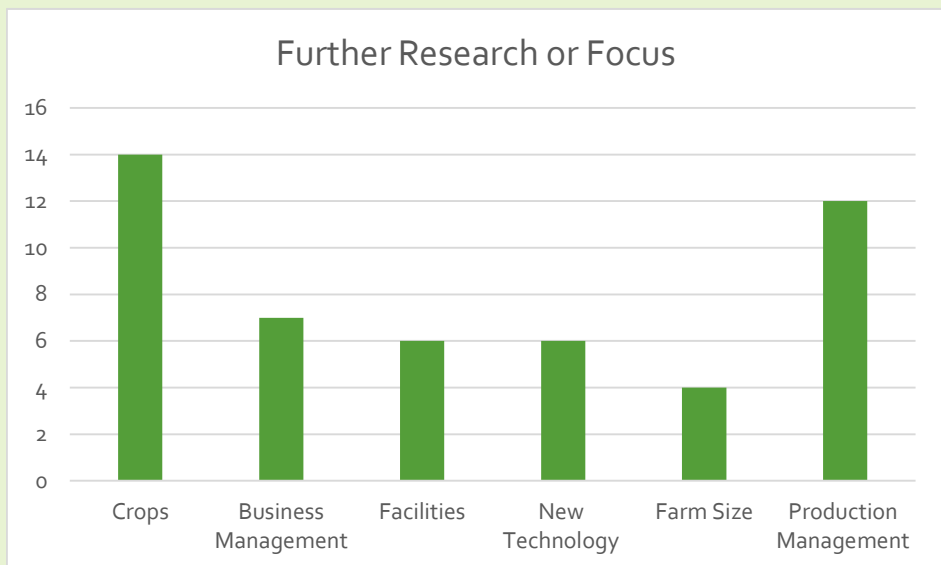
Overall, the day was a success with positive feedback from all attendees on the importance of the information shared. Yolo AFA is planning to spearhead another tour in 2015 so stay tuned.

## UC Davis Connections Committee Surveys Farmers on Potential Ways to Work with the University

Being neighbors with a world-renowned agricultural university can be a boon to local farmers and ranchers. Through the years, UC Davis and the UC Cooperative Extension have benefitted the ag community. Over the years though, many of the farmers and ranchers in UC Davis's backyard have felt that there is more focus on the world's farms than the Yolo County ones.

As a result of these concerns, the UC Davis Connections Committee surveyed farmers in Yolo County to gauge interest around working with UC Davis and to also identify specific items on which to collaborate. The group asked farmers questions to gain information about their needs in relationship to Cooperative Extension and UC Davis with regards to topics of *Research, Facilities, and Continuing Education*.

The group received 38 responses from a diverse group of farmers, some farming less than 50 acres, others more than 1,000. These farmers overwhelmingly expressed interest in becoming more engaged with the University and saw many paths that connections could take. The graph to the right shows areas of further research that were identified through the survey.



Yolo AFA intends to use this information as a springboard for further outreach and activity with UC Davis. By pooling UC Davis's research capacity with our farmers' know-how, this connection can benefit the larger agricultural region.



# Committee Round-Up:

*What are the committees working on?*

## POLICY COMMITTEE

**Committee Leadership:** Michelle Stephens

**Committee membership:**

Marcia Gibbs  
Mary Kimball  
Diane Parro  
Eric Paulsen  
Don Saylor  
Chris Simas  
Chris Turkovich

**This committee is focused on:**

The Policy Committee follows key issues pertaining to agriculture and food access within Yolo County and California. The topics and groups that we track include:

Ag Conservation  
Cap-to-Cap  
Ecosystem Services  
Farm Unions & Labor  
Immigration  
Land Use  
NorCal Water Alliance  
Pollination  
Renewable Energy (solar, wind, gas)  
Sacramento Food System  
Collaborative  
Water

**Our current projects are:**

Water  
Land Use

**We have already accomplished:**

Worked with the Yolo Farm Bureau & County Administrator's Office to plan the Board of Supervisors Ag Tour  
Invited speakers to attend the regular Yolo AFA meetings. These include Chief Building Official-Ed Short and Tim O'Halloran, General Manager of the Yolo County Flood Control & Water Conservation District

**Our next steps are:**

Continue following the above topics and begin the planning process for the 2015 Ag Tour

## STRONGER UCD CONNECTION COMMITTEE

**Committee Leadership:** Morgan Doran & Kristy Lyn Levings

**Committee Membership:**

Chris Simas  
Chris Turkovich

**This Committee is focused on:**

Cultivating a stronger relationship between the concrete needs of the farming region and the body of research and development being done at UC Davis.

**Our Current Projects are:**

- 1) Creating & Publishing a Survey for farmers to give their feedback
- 2) Making one-on-one relationship building efforts to staff & faculty at UCD
- 3) Hosting a Farmer/UCD forum in early December for cross-pollination

**We have already accomplished:**

Our survey is complete and survey results are being compiled. The Forum is scheduled for December 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**We could use some help with:**

If you're a farmer or agriculturalist, please visit and fill out our UCD Farmer Feedback Survey-

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/S3JXKSK>

## LAST QUARTER HIGHLIGHTS



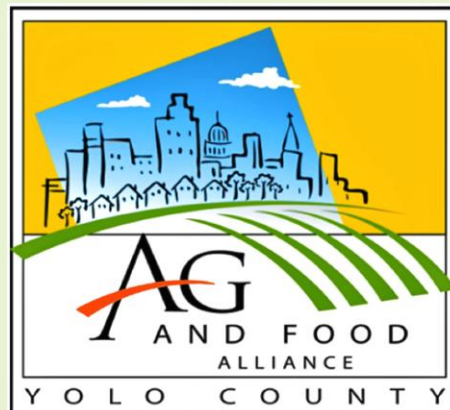
### YOLO COUNTY BOUNTY- GALA

August 13<sup>th</sup> was once again the opening night for the County Fair. Over 20 farms, restaurants, & wineries participated with samples of beautiful produce, wine, meats, olive oils, nuts and more.



### FARM TO FORK FESTIVAL

Yolo County is once again featured at the 2014 Farm to Fork Festival in Sacramento. Showcasing the large 20x40 foot banner displaying the bounty that is Yolo County.



## **FOOD HUB COMMITTEE**

**Committee Leadership:** Kevin Sanchez

**Committee Membership:**

Michelle Stephens  
Kristy Lyn Levings  
Marcia Gibbs  
Randii MacNear  
Eric Paulsen  
John Young

**This committee is focused on:**  
Researching Funding Opportunities,  
Developing a Business Plan

**We have already accomplished:**  
Identified a large grant to fund the project and piecing together information for the grant.

## **FARM TO SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**Committee Leadership:** John Young & Randii MacNear

**Committee Membership:**

Kristy Lyn Levings  
Laurie Somerhausen

**This committee is focused on:**  
Building connections between countywide & regional Farm to School groups helping to coordinate efforts, cultivate new ideas, and identify any gaps or needs.

**We have already accomplished:**  
Hosted the first Yolo-wide Farm to School Coalition Gathering May 8<sup>th</sup>.  
Soon to host the 4 county regional (Yolo, Solano, Sacramento, Placer) Peer Exchange September 30<sup>th</sup>.  
Committee is also the CAFF Regional Lead.

## **FOOD ACCESS & URBAN AG COMMITTEE**

**Committee Leadership:** Nancy O'Hara

**Committee Membership:**

Mary Kimball  
Jake Clemens  
Alysa Meyer  
Laurie Somerhausen

**This committee is focused on:**  
Furthering the work of the Yolo Food Connect by investigating current Food Security efforts and surveying for gaps or unmet needs.

**We have already accomplished:**  
Reading through the previous Food Access documents detailed at the first Yolo Food Connect Summit in 2012. Applying for a USDA FINI grant.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT NEWS & OUTREACH**

**Committee Leadership:** Kristy Lyn Levings

**Committee Membership:**  
Michelle Stephens

**This committee is focused on:**  
Making the connection between the larger community and the work of Yolo AFA.

**We have already accomplished:**  
Construction of the Yolo AFA website- [www.YoloAFA.org](http://www.YoloAFA.org).  
Publishing the first newsletter 'Yolo Ag & Food Alliance—The Connection'

**We could use some help with:**  
Calendar items to share in our Community Events section. Please contact us at [info@yoloafa.org](mailto:info@yoloafa.org) if you'd like to add a Calendar Item



## **COMMUNITY EVENTS:**

- January 8, 2015—Yolo AFA New Member Training
- January 15, 2015—Yolo County Farm Bureau Annual Meeting
- January 26, 2015—Yolo AFA January Meeting
- January 29, 2015—Don Saylor's Soup's On
- February 9 & 10, 2015—CA Food Policy Council Statewide Meeting
- February 22, 2015—Capay Valley Almond Festival

# CA Food Policy Council Regional Meeting brings together Central Valley and Mountain Communities

On December 15, 2014, the Central Valley and Mountain Region of the California Food Policy Council (CAFFPC) gathered together at the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) building in Sacramento.

The CAFFPC is a collaborative of local food policy groups working to ensure that California's food system reflects the needs of all of its communities. This group is managed by Roots of Change and the Yolo Agriculture and Food Alliance (Yolo AFA) is one of the ratified members of this group.



The regional meeting gave the group the opportunity to discuss what is happening within the Central Valley and Mountain region, as well as future activities that Food Policy Councils could engage in or support.

Food Policy Councils from as far north as Shasta and as far south as Kern were represented and Yolo AFA had six members in attendance, Jake Clemens, Josie Enriquez, Mary Kimball, Diane Parro, Laurie Somerhausen, and Michelle Stephens. This gave Yolo AFA the chance to both educate others on our successes and learn about potential new projects.

The meeting was hosted by the CDFA Farm to Fork Office and attendees learned about the newly formed office and their upcoming projects, including larger food access issues and an online statewide Farmer Marketplace, from Farm to fork Analyst Sarah Hanson.

In addition to learning about the Farm to Fork office and sharing best practices with the group, attendees heard from UC SAREP Deputy Director, Gail Feenstra on Food System Assessments and how these studies can advance the work of Food Policy Councils.

Ms. Feenstra's engaging presentation resulted in spirited conversation on how past assessments have benefitted communities and specifically how Yolo County could use one to further their agricultural and food access goals.

The final speaker of the day, Justin Rausa with Roots of Change, discussed potential legislation to support on 2015, focusing on the "Market Match" bill from 2014. This bill will probably be reintroduced in 2015 under the new title "California Nutrition Incentives Act" and the member Food Policy Councils will be asked in early-2015 to vote to support this bill.

The meeting provided a great kick-off to the 2015 schedule, which will begin with a two-day, statewide CA Food Policy Council Meeting. This meeting will be held in Sacramento, once again at the CDFA building, on February 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>.

# National Hunger Study provides a glimpse of what hunger looks like in Yolo County

In order to better understand the need in Yolo County, the Food Access/Urban Ag committee reviewed existing documentation and survey work that had been done in the area.

One particular study by Feeding America provided key information about the food access concerns in Yolo County. Feeding America is a nationwide network of 200 food banks that leads the fight against hunger in the United States. As a coalition, they provide food to more than 46 million people through food pantries and meal programs in communities throughout America.

Their study *Hunger in America 2014* showed that 1 in 5 residents of Yolo County receive assistance from the Yolo Food Bank and other emergency providers in the area.

One of the participating agencies in this study was Yolo Food Bank. "We are very grateful to our partners and the handful of loyal volunteers who, collectively, logged 195 hours interviewing the participants in this study. Without their dedication we would not have been able to participate in this vital analysis of hunger in Yolo County," said Kevin Sanchez, Executive Director, of Yolo Food Bank.

"As we look ahead to Hunger Action Month this September, it is important to remember the dynamic work Yolo Food Bank does every day and how much more we can do together, as a community, to alleviate hunger in our county."

Some key points from the study illustrate the need of the community:

- 91% of client households are food insecure in a given month

- 39% report participation in SNAP—(CalFresh in California)
- 85% of client households did not apply for SNAP benefits because they did not think they were eligible
- 56% of clients using the food bank are potentially eligible to SNAP (CalFresh) benefits

Nancy O'Hara, Chair of the Food Access/Urban Ag committee, noted that this told her more CalFresh outreach is needed. This committee has been tackling this issue head-on. Recent activities have involved a concerted effort to get more UC Davis students aware of and signed up for CalFresh.



While the study provided sobering facts about the scope of food insecurity in Yolo County, they Food Access/Urban Ag Committee is moving forward in 2015 to identify more ways to get food to those in need.