

# SUISUN VALLEY GRAPE GROWERS ASSOCIATION.



As Seen in The Vacaville Reporter



## Suisun: The new Napa?

DANNY BERNARDINI

April 21, 2009

No matter what the future of Suisun Valley eventually looks like, it's going to take visitors to complete the mission of creating an agri-tourism area. That's why a marketing plan is one of several elements that was discussed Monday night in the fourth of a series of meetings to craft a vision for the area near Fairfield.

The meetings are leading up to a community forum on June 22 where all the information gathered will be put on display and finalized before being forwarded to the Board of Supervisors.

While many have compared Suisun Valley's wine producing and opportunities to cash in on the product with that of Napa Valley, the area must stand on its own, said Adam Cline, coordinator of Solano County's Farm Assistance Revitalization and Marketing (FARM).

"It's more about creating their own ID," Cline said. "Really, what they are trying to do is different."

When voters approved the general plan update in November, a number of special study areas were created. Suisun Valley is the first to be considered.

In the past, supervisors and those who live and work in the area have agreed that outdated zoning and permitting rules have hampered agriculture production and agri-tourism. Along with easing the rules for processing and selling goods, the general plan calls for creating as many as eight agricultural tourism areas in the Suisun Valley

that would allow mixed uses, including commercial areas.

Suisun Valley hopes to include the sale of the local fruits, vegetables and wine with a host of new opportunities, such as restaurants, shops and bed and breakfasts.

"It can be what Napa was 30 years ago," Cline said. "It can be more balanced. Hopefully through this process, we'll have more opportunities and destinations. We can get back to the way California was."

Some ideas talked about were linking the Suisun Valley Web sites to the county's, creating a brand name for vegetable growers in the area and having the county talk with surrounding counties in the Bay Area to promote Suisun Valley agriculture.

Ron Lanza, grower at Wooden Valley Winery, said the county should follow the lead of what the Suisun Valley Fund has done in helping raise funds and tout the merits of the area.

Lanza said the county would be able to help secure funding, but the marketing and promoting of the area should be left to those in the trenches.

"It's critical that it's done by people in the valley and no one else," Lanza told the group. "We can't rely on others. They can assist us, but we have to be behind ourselves."