

Sustaining an Agricultural Region: Capay Valley Grown

Judith Redmond (Farmer/Rancher Grant Program)

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Title: Sustaining an Agricultural Region: Capay Valley Grown

Principal Investigator:

Judith Redmond
Partner Full Belly Farm
P.O. Box 11
Guinda, CA 95637
530.796.2214
Judith@fullbellyfarm.com
www.fullbellyfarm.com

Technical Advisor

Mario Moratorio, Farm Advisor
UC Cooperative Extension
501 Texas Street
Fairfield, CA 94533
707.421.6793
msmoratorio@ucdavis.edu



Farm signs are part of the farmer and rancher partner package.

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Situation

The Capay Valley northwest of Davis is distinguished by abundant biological diversity, rich soils, and the flow of Cache Creek, contributing to a viable agricultural economy. More than 200 farms and ranches in western Yolo County harvest products consumed by tens of thousands of Californians. Yet most of those products, once they enter the food distribution chains, lose their identity, leaving them to compete in an unstable global marketplace.

At the same time, a casino in the Capay Valley draws visitors from the San Francisco Bay Area, adding pressure for land development. The attendant rising land prices and shifting land uses, along with depressed commodity prices, constrain opportunities for new and current farmers and threaten to destabilize agriculture.

Capay Valley agriculture could benefit from a local agriculture products branding program that includes sustainability goals.



Capay Valley Grown bumper sticker.

Objectives

- Establish standards for the “Capay Valley Grown” label, including sustainability goals that balance the values and expectations of producers and consumers
- Implement the “Capay Valley Grown” marketing plan

Actions

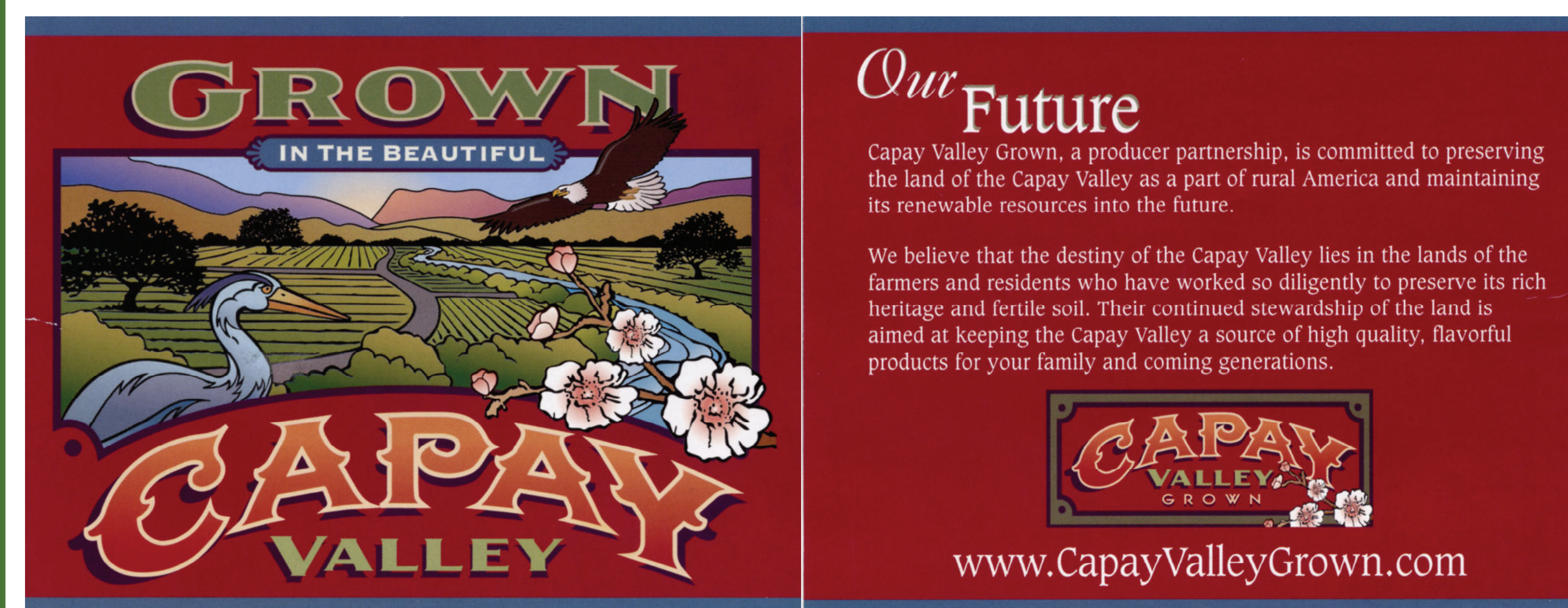
Producers were invited to become a Capay Valley Grown Partner to strengthen the Capay Valley Vision Agriculture Task Force and its efforts to maintain and strengthen farming and ranching opportunities in the region. For a \$100 annual fee, partners could market their products under the Capay Valley Grown program and receive various marketing materials.

Local business were engaged with invitations to become business partners with the Capay Valley Grown brand. Membership was offered at \$200 a year. Among benefits, members were linked to the Capay Valley Grown website, received the newsletter, and were given a color sign for displaying on the premises.

The Agricultural and Environment Task Force scheduled regular meetings that included discussions on a variety of marketing opportunities, events, and venues in the Capay Valley.

A field day was planned for April 2, 2006, with an agenda that included farm visits and discussions on direct marketing.

Marketing materials featuring the Capay Valley Grown branding logo were developed and printed, including a brochure, farm signs, newsletter, grower card, and point-of-purchase material.



A project brochure.



Sheep graze in pastures of the Capay Valley.



Results

Over the course of the project, participation in the Capay Valley Grown partnership grew to 31 farmer and rancher partners and 11 business partners. The Agricultural Task force continues to be the forum for growers, individuals, and organizations to discuss agricultural issues in the Capay Valley.

The project:

- Created and published five issues of *Capay Valley Harvest*, a quarterly insert in local newspapers featuring local farmers’ contact information and products. Between 2,000 and 4,000 copies of each issue were distributed.
- Conducted the Capay Valley Grown Field Day in April 2007 attended by more than 60 people. The field day featured tours of two diverse farm businesses and presentations on topics like value-added products, Ventura County Growers’ Collaborative model for distribution to institutions, county ordinances that support agriculture, and marketing of local agricultural products.
- Enhanced the Capay Valley Grown website: www.CapayValleyGrown.com which provides farm biographies (with include contact information, crop lists, and where to get farm products) and a calendar of agriculture-related events in the region.
- Supported Agriculture Task Force meetings (“the place to get the ear of busy farmers and ranchers”), which have featured such topics as opening a Capay Valley Grown store, the Yolo Valley Olive Oil Competition, agricultural easement programs, the Capay Valley Regional Farmers Market, and planning for a local meat cut and wrap facility.

Potential Benefits/Impacts

The project team convened dialogue with partner producers that resulted in the development of agreed-upon standards for addressing product quality, committing to stewardship and health, and sustaining the economic viability of local farms and ranches.

The campaign has helped to reinforce the established identity that captures the region’s unique products, environments, and rural communities.