

## SUSTAIN VC's "Measure F" Keeps Farmers Farming



The SUSTAIN VC initiative "Measure F for Farmers" will be on the November 8<sup>th</sup> ballot this year as an alternative to the countywide SOAR initiative. It was written by farmers and ranchers starting from a simple idea: if you want to stop sprawl and protect open space and agricultural land in Ventura County, then agriculture must be economically viable.

The families of the farmers who filed the ballot measure have been farming in Ventura County for a combined 400 years. With over 400,000 acres of farm and ranch land in the County, including 100,000 acres of irrigated farmland, keeping this land in farming and ranching increases the livability of our communities and is essential to our local quality of life.

Preventing housing tracts and shopping malls from sprawling into farmland is one of many unprecedented challenges that farmers face in 2016. Measure F maintains the public vote for urban development outside of each city's CURB lines, just like SOAR, protecting both open space and farmland. But unlike SOAR, Measure F goes further to help "Keep Farmers Farming" in Ventura County.

**Why did farmers write Measure F?** In contrast to SOAR, Measure F changes the **INTENT** of the Ventura County General Plan to support farmers farming the land rather than just preserving the land.

Ventura County farmers are facing unprecedented challenges including drought, international competition and invasive pests. Major local berry farms have closed recently laying off over 1,000 employees. Without Measure F, our precious local farmland is in jeopardy of being fallowed, turning vast landscapes from green to brown.



**Why is the County General Plan Important?** General plans contain goals and policies that guide how local decision makers and agencies view the agricultural industry and their projects. Agricultural goals and policies in our County General Plan were written in 1988. Focused on preservation, they are 28 years old now and would be 62 years old in 2050 when SOAR is set to expire.



**How does SOAR hurt farmers?** SOAR 2050 would re-adopt antiquated agricultural goals and policies from the 1988 General Plan that prevent technological advances. It would require a countywide vote of the people to change a single goal or policy likely costing over \$1 million for the referendum process.

**Why is Measure F a Better Solution?** Water is key to the future of Ventura County agriculture. While farmers are furiously investing in water saving technology, conservation alone will not sustain local agriculture. Measure F contains a goal to promote water infrastructure and a policy to maintain water resources for production

agriculture. If SOAR 2050 passes there will be no direction to decision makers on water to keep farmland from being fallowed.

Adding to the livability of Ventura County, Measure F has a small allowance for expanded food processing in Ventura County. Allowing 225 acres of processing countywide would generate opportunities for locally made products, create better paying jobs, and lessen truck traffic from the transport of our produce out of the County for processing.

The acreage was based on results of a study by the Ventura County Economic Development Cooperative (EDC-VC). SOAR's unrealistic gesture to processing would limit parcel sizes to 3 acres which would not even accommodate the parking required for a processing facility.



**SOAR Says Measure F has loopholes. Why do we need options for farmland adjacent to schools?** It is important for both schools and farmland to avoid conflicts that naturally arise from noise, dust and pest control. Constantly changing regulations around schools are causing adjacent farms to become "unfarmable." Measure F improves the safety of several urban public schools by allowing compatible county uses, giving relief to adjacent farms. Urban development including housing tracts and

shopping malls would not be allowed on these parcels per existing state and local law governing unincorporated lands. This is not a loophole, just common sense.

**Why is Measure F up for renewal in 2036?** The countywide SOAR measure was passed in 1998 incorporating agricultural goals and policies from 1988. The extension to 2050 would keep these policies static for 62 years. Our cars and phones are not the same as in the 80's, nor is farming or our economy. It is reasonable for policies that impact both the agricultural industry and the economy to be up for renewal every 20 years by the next generation of voters. 2050 is simply too long.

Measure F has a unique feature that requires an economic study by the County of Ventura on impacts to middle class housing and rent affordability, job growth and traffic by 2026. This provides accountability so voters can make an informed decision when the measure is up for renewal in 2036. SOAR has refused to take any responsibility for impacts of their measures to the Ventura County economy. Economic prosperity is a key factor in a livable community.

**How can you enhance Ventura County's Livability?** Local, strong, economically viable family farms are one of the most important factors making Ventura County a great place to live. When they are successful, local family farms provide the greatest protection against overdevelopment, and provide beautiful open and green space that can't be targeted for urban sprawl. This will enhance the livability of our whole Ventura County community.

Please vote YES on MEASURE F and NO on MEASURE C to "Keep Farmers Farming" in Ventura County. For more information visit our website at [www.sustainvc.org](http://www.sustainvc.org).