

Little-known wineries to make presence felt

By Ben Antonius | Daily Republic | June 26, 2009 14:26



Julie Larson, owner of Julie LePla Winery, stands in her vineyard north of Vacaville Friday morning. Photo by Brad Zweerink

FAIRFIELD - Some of Solano County's less-prominent wineries are considering joining forces to market themselves and hold events that would bring people to vineyards in overlooked areas.

Owners of several wineries in non-traditional locations such as English Hills, Green Valley and Dixon met recently with county agriculture leaders to discuss topics of mutual concern, such as tax issues for small wineries, state wine regulations and the marketing of Solano County wines.

'If you look at Napa (or) Sonoma, they have so many different events that bring the public to their wineries,' said Carolyn West of Green Valley-based Rock Creek Winery.

'It's very hard to get any kind of substantial participation if you only have two wineries like we do in Green Valley.'

The gathering was orchestrated by the Solano County Agriculture Department's Farm Assistance Revitalization and Marketing program.

'This was the first time these growers came together, and I think they walked away with the feeling that they share common experiences, even though they are making wine in distinctly different regions in the county,' said program coordinator Adam Cline.

The majority of the county's wineries are in Suisun Valley, which has its own organization for marketing the appellation. There are 11 wineries in the Suisun Valley, two in Dixon, two in Green Valley and three in Vacaville.

It can be difficult for small wineries to establish their presence, said Julie Larson, owner of Julie LePla Winery in English Hills on the outskirts of Vacaville. She said she was looking forward to getting the group going.

'I have gone to events and literally every person would say to me 'A winery in Vacaville?' with that type of incredulous tone of voice,' she said. 'There is just that lack of recognition.'