

Western Washington County Community Food Assessment: Bridging the Gap Between Rural and Urban



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Cover photo: Farm next to a development in
North Plains; Back cover photo: high wind
tunnel at New Earth Farm

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Thank you to all of Washington County, with an extra thanks to the communities in Western Washington County for welcoming me in and taking the time to share your knowledge and experiences. This document would not have been possible without the willingness of the community to be actively engaged and interested in continuing to improve the local food system.

When the first settlers came to Oregon they were amazed by the rich soil, abundant water supply and even the islands of productivity in Oregon's deserts. They were thrilled with the crops, fruits and berries they were able to raise, the rich pastureland as well as the streams teeming with fish and the bounty of wild game available to feed a growing population. It would have been impossible for them to believe that anyone could be hungry or food insecure in this land of plenty. It is incredible that hunger and food insecurity abound in Oregon nearly two centuries later. In fact, many of the areas that seemed so bountiful to those early settlers have the least access to food today.

Six years ago the Oregon Food Bank in partnership with University of Oregon RARE program began to conduct community food assessments in some of Oregon's rural counties. Very few community food assessment efforts have been undertaken in rural America with a county by county approach. The report you are about to read is a result of conversations with the people who make Oregon's rural communities and their food systems so very unique. These reports are also a gift from a small group of very dedicated young people who have spent the last year listening, learning and organizing. It is our sincere hope that these reports and organizing efforts will help Oregonians renew their vision and promise of the bountiful food system that amazed those early settlers.

Sharon Thornberry
Community Food Systems Manager Oregon
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Timbuktu might not be a name that comes to mind in relation to Washington County, one of the five counties making up the Portland Metropolitan area, but it was once the name of one of the more isolated timber camps in the 1940s because it was "way off in the back of the beyond." The notion of a place named after the difficult to reach African city may seem farfetched in today's Washington County, but for some parts of the area, it's not as far off as one might think. The 724.23 square miles of forest, farmland and urban centers now make up the second most populous, and the fastest growing, county with a current population of 547,672 people. The county is "58 percent in a city, 36 percent outside a city but are urban areas inside the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), and 6 percent in the rural area. Approximately 94 percent of the population lives inside the UGB on 17 percent of the county's land mass." The high density population in the UGB is also due to the fact that much of the area surrounding the incorporated cities is forestland and over 130,000 acres of high- value rural farmland.

For purposes of this assessment, the focus looked away from the city centers of Beaverton, Hillsboro, and the southeastern side of the county and instead examined how the people outside the major cities, in the rural Western portion of the county, are living and if their food needs are being met. The 2014 grassroots Washington County Community Food Assessment is a first step in compiling information on the rural parts of the county, and highlights the needs and visions of those inhabiting this underserved area. With the over 30% of the population concentrated in Hillsboro and in

Beaverton, much of the county's focus goes to aiding the needs of those people, leaving out the residents of the western part of the county. This report goes beyond the statistics to ask the community members why a county with one of the lowest unemployment rates, 5.8%, can also be a place going through a statistically significant jump in poverty, from 9.7 to 12.4 percent between 20102013, even with the fastest growing wages in the country. And why is this seemingly prosperous county with a significant growth rate has experienced a 100% increase in food boxes distributed from 2007-2013?

Through the process of gathering information for this assessment, it became apparent that Washington County has an opportunity to harvest the liveliness and interest in our local food system and transform it into a powerful community strengthening tool. Everybody knows food is a basic need, but our efforts to make sure that is met for all are not always in sync with reality. Unlike many of the rural areas in of the rest of Oregon, Washington County is much more centered on urban or commuter lifestyles, which has created less of a sense of community and more disconnect between people and their communities. There are many great people and organizations working hard to help strengthen Washington County and the local food system can play a part in the improvement process. A strong local food system is not just about making sure food is provided to all citizens, it also helps to support local agriculture and farms, improve citizens' health, and promote economic growth and local job creation. Although not an exhaustive study of the area, this assessment is designed to be used as a

working document to facilitate ongoing conversation and help to better interconnect people to strengthen Washington County and its food system.



Cleaned lettuce for a CSA pickup
at La Finquita del Buho

AGRICULTURE IN WASHINGTON COUNTY

From the Past to Present

The year 1834 marked the arrival of the first permanent settlers in what we today call Washington County, Oregon, but they were predated by the Atfalati tribe. The Atfalati were hunter gathers who roamed from the Columbia River to the Pacific Ocean in search of food throughout the year, before being decimated by disease brought over by the European settlers. As people slowly trickled out West, they realized that the land was prime for agriculture. First settlers were encouraged to venture west with descriptions of a healthful climate, ample rainfall, fertile soil, and great beauty as well as rumor the government might give 320 acres of prime land awaiting the arrival for every man and married woman.

The land spoke for itself once settlers made it to Washington County, and word spread fast about the high value farmland available. As society developed in the early 1900s, farming remained the dominant occupation and agricultural products drove the economy as the fertile lands continued bringing in new European settlers. At that time the agricultural industry consisted of the start of the Oregon Nursery Company (Orenco), fields growing hops, Ferdinand Groner declaring the land and climate ideal for growing a grafted variety of walnuts, and many berry fields. While the nursery business has grown through the years, hops were mostly gone with prohibition, walnuts have taken a back seat to filberts (hazelnuts) and berry (mostly strawberries) plantations have slowly declined ever since Japanese Americans were taken to internment camps during WWII and lost their farms. Now a shortage of able farmworkers is limiting production even more.

As WWII ended people returned to the county once again to tend to the fields and develop a community. The creation of the Sunset highway began, spurring more available real estate and a desirable location

for industries to relocate. Tektronix took advantage of the cheap land, ample space, and close connection to the Portland market in 1951 after outgrowing its' Portland location, spurring other companies to follow suit. As the high tech industry expanded, so did industrial parks and shopping centers. The expansion increased the need for more housing. In *This Far-Off Sunset Land* Carolyn Baun wrote, "development has continued to be so rapid that city, county, and regional governments must struggle to keep up with it. No sooner are highways and roads widened and improved than they are choked with cars, inching their way to destinations. No sooner are land-use planning regulations set than they must be reevaluated.

No sooner are large, state-of-the-art schools built than they are over-crowded."

"The county was constantly challenged by its success, for in presenting itself as an appealing place to locate—a place of physical beauty with good schools, reasonable land prices, low construction costs, proximity to Portland, and (more recently) special tax breaks—it grew at breathtaking speeds"

-This Far-Off Sunset Land by Carolyn M. Baun

As a place that had a booming agricultural industry in the 19th century, high land values and urban development have contributed to a changing agricultural industry today. In the last 25 years in Washington County, 14,000 acres of farmland have been lost to urbanization and only about half of the available farmland is currently being harvested (2012 Census of

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Agriculture states 74,707 acres harvested). Of the harvested land, a large portion of the agricultural production is exported. Only a small percentage of the land is used for the production of food for local communities. For the state of Oregon, about 80% of all agricultural products leave Oregon, with 40% leaving the country. Some of the exported non-food agricultural products from Washington County are nursery and greenhouse stock, grass seed, Christmas trees and a large amount of raw logs and lumber. There are also fields of edible foods such as hazelnuts, cane berries, grapes (wine) and other agricultural products that are exported out of the county as well. In western Washington County, 25% of the land is farmed, making agriculture a leading industry, but companies such as Intel, Tektonics and IBM as well as the world headquarters of NIKE and Columbia Sportswear are huge employers leading to the county being the top county for manufacturing in the state.

Washington County has seen many changes to

the agricultural industry over the years. There has been a clear transformation to more specialized agriculture alongside modern manufacturing, but the soils, water and climate combine to make excellent agricultural capability. Farmers and rural communities are continuing to fight for more land to stay in agricultural production and not be transformed into more urban uses such as housing and industrial work sites.

Urban Growth Boundary

The use of the land in Washington County is a much discussed topic in the evolution of the county. In 1950 there were about 50,000 residents in the county and now there are 550,000 residents with about 40,000 people living in the rural areas of the county. With such a growing population and increasingly limited housing options, the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) brings into sharp focus the challenges faced in creating a livable urban environment.

The UGB defines the balance between land committed



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for urban development and land to

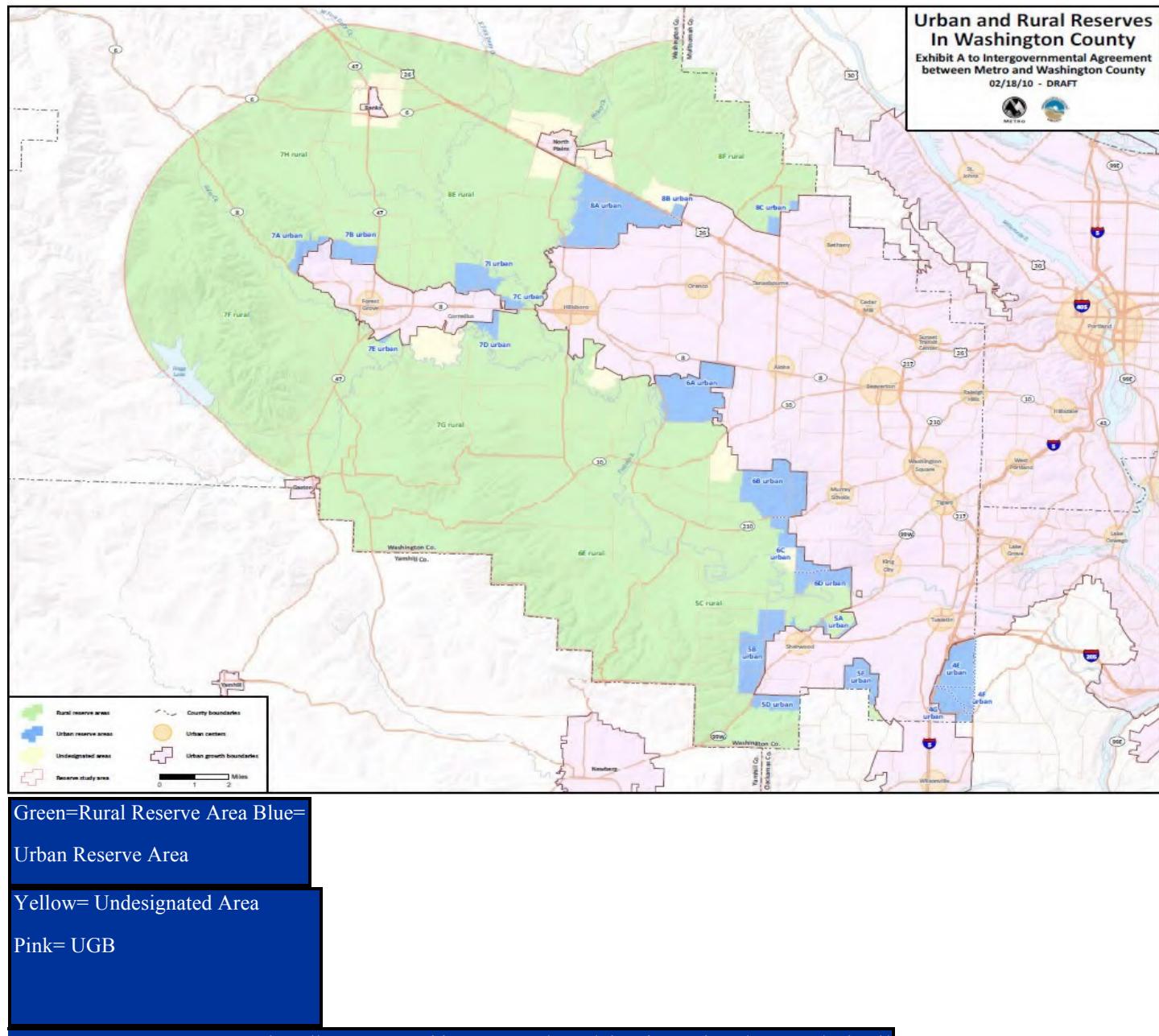
A field just outside North Plains

remain in rural agricultural use. Land use is often debated, as every five years more rural and less productive agricultural lands are brought into the UGB for urbanization. Many people are drawn to the county for the beauty of the land so the preservation of the nature of that land is important to the residents, and there is always a potential conflict as the incorporated cities nearby grow and expand. Whether rural land is purchased by people with agricultural dreams, or for the pure beauty or for living a “rural lifestyle”, it is important to preserve that use of the land because once it is urbanized and more intensely used it never reverts back to its rural use.

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As the second most populous county in Oregon with the fastest growing population in the state, the UGB plays a significant role in determining how the county will function in the future. Under Oregon law, each city or metropolitan area in the state must have an urban growth boundary that defines the land to be urbanized and protects the rural land from sprawling unplanned development. Oregon's state-wide

land use program started under then governor Tom McCall in the early 1970s. McCall, with the help of a unique coalition of farmers and environmentalists, persuaded the Legislature that the state's natural beauty and easy access to nature would be lost in a rising tide of urban sprawl. The new system has 14 goals and associated guidelines which require every city and county in Oregon to develop a long-range plan addressing how future urban growth will occur. In short,



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state land-use goals require: setting urban growth boundaries, using urban land wisely, and protecting natural resources.

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Land uses inside the UGB rely on urban infrastructure services such as roads, water and sewer systems, parks, schools, fire & rescue and police protection to create thriving places to live, work and play. The UGB constrains development to occur within the designated urban areas which allows the creation and maintenance of urban infrastructure to be vastly more efficient than sprawling development would allow. Rural lands outside the UGB are typically high-value working farms and/or forests, or have important natural qualities like rivers, wetlands and floodplains. Washington County is part of Metro (originally the Metropolitan Service District) a metropolitan region also including Washington, Multnomah and Clackamas counties with a total of 25 cities which is unique being the only directly elected metropolitan planning organization in America. City, county and Metro officials are required by state law to work together, reconvening every 5 years to designate a rolling 20-year supply of land for future urban development inside the UGB.

Once it's paved over, once its houses we can't go back and make that land fertile. We need to think about our kids, our future generations. What are we going to leave for them?

-Helvetia CSA farmers on the UGB

This is a basic description of Oregon's land use goals and laws. For further information on UGB, Oregon's land use laws and Washington County's activities, refer to any of the groups involved in getting citizens voices heard and

look at their history and information. (See appendix III for reference to groups throughout the county).

A Changing Agricultural Industry

Since 1840 Washington County has transformed many times, from the beginning years as a forest, to a logging economy supplying lumber to Portland, to an agricultural community, and today as an electronics manufacturing center. The changes have had great influence on the people, environment, and the economy, and changes are continuing to happen. The agricultural industry is continuing to adapt to the market and the changing rural lands of the county. While most of the agricultural lands do not supply food to the local economy, agricultural land avoids further development while supporting the local economy. While food for the local economy is not a top agricultural product of Washington County there has been a resurgence of local food production in recent years. There is also a resurgence of people living in the urbanized areas within the UGB planting more food for both personal consumption and their communities.

Although there are 135,733 acres of farm land in Washington County, only a little more than half consists of harvested cropland, the rest lies in woodland, permanent pasture or rangeland, and infrastructure (such as farmsteads, homes, buildings, livestock facilities, ponds, roads, wasteland, etc.). When it comes to the harvested cropland there are not only edible foods being produced, but much of the land is dedicated to field seeds, grass seeds, hay, forage, and silage (~56%). Berries, vegetables, and orchards are some of the cropland, along with intensive vegetable farms, supplying the food to the local economy and much of that food stays in the regional economy after being harvested or processed.

In interviewing and talking to farmers, an overwhelming number commented on "knowing your market" as the most important part of farming and an important piece

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of advice for new farmers. No matter what your agricultural dream is, it is important to have a plan and a market to make the work worthwhile. This has been true in Washington County for many years, and farmers here are a very savvy group of hardworking people with a love for the land. Where is the market changing? Some of the largest changes seen in the last 25 years of agricultural production have been:

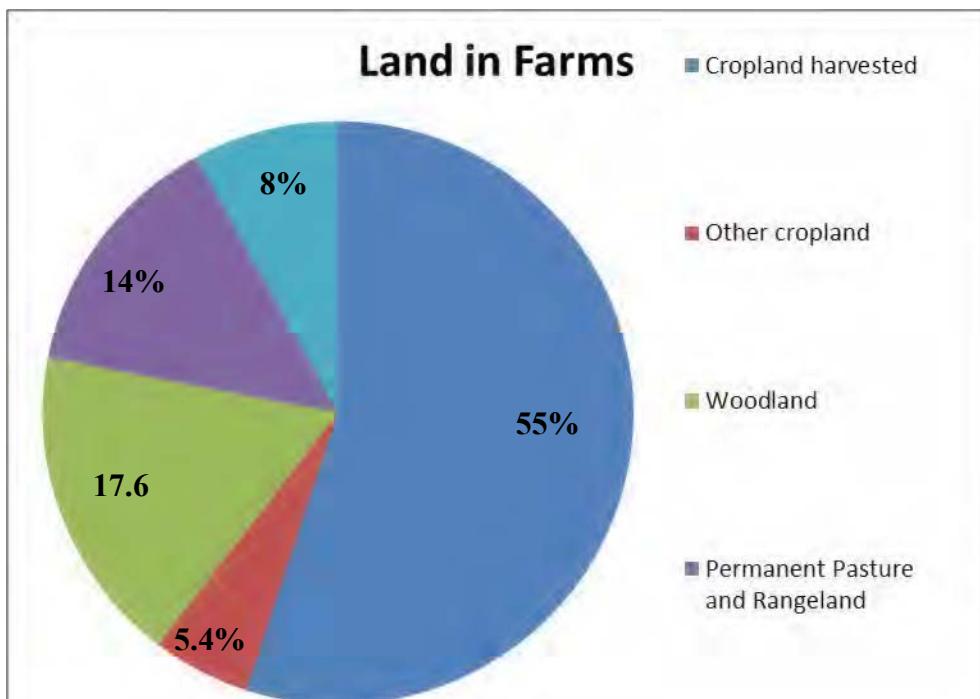
- Decreased number of dairies
- Increased grape production
- Decreased English Walnut Production
- Strawberries fields transitioning to blueberry fields
- Decreased dry onion, sweet corn, cucumber/pickle, broccoli, and snap pea production
- Increase in the number of small direct farm sales and larger variety of vegetables grown

to a major metropolitan area, urban growth is a huge player.

Increase in the cost of land and the closure of local processing facilities are some issues that have changed the market. Large operations are less prevalent because of their closeness to urban centers. People, although in favor of farms and local produce, are not always aware of the smells and noise that a farm can produce. As the UGB slowly reaches outward neighboring farms encounter new issues in running their farms. A Hillsboro farmer expressed concern with new neighbors unaware of farmer noises and smells complaining and stated that, “what worries [him] are the people moving...why is it always the farmer that has to change?” The close proximity to urban centers is not all bad though, it offers a close local market to sell products produced, not only Washington County, but also in the region. In fact, most farmers selling food directly to customers in Washington County have a much larger population of people they sell to in Portland, which offers a huge market of people interested in local food who are more conscious of their ecological footprint.

Why is the Market Changing?

The changes in the market have been for a variety of reasons. As an area closely connected



Baggenstos

Arriving from Europe in the early 1900s, the Baggenstos family purchased land in the Willamette Valley southwest of Portland and started a dairy farm. With little-to-no profit from the dairy farm, they transitioned over to producing mostly potatoes for a large potato chip manufacturer and some russet potatoes. Now in its third generation in the Baggenstos family, the potato farm is still going strong, but has transitioned yet again. The large manufacturer they were selling their potatoes to dropped the contract suddenly and the Baggenstos had to switch gears.

Although at the time the lost contract was devastating, it turned out to be good for the future of the farm. Since Baggenstos is just over 100 acres, it is considered a small farm and the lost contract allowed them to switch to specialty potatoes. With specialty potatoes now becoming a commodity amongst the large potatoes growers the farm is once again adapting to the market.

Baggenstos still plants and sell potatoes to 14 wholesalers, but they are also now doing a seasonal pumpkin patch and corn maze. The success of their pumpkin patch has since led to the building of a farm store, which is probably what they are most known for today. The store sells a wide variety of fresh vegetables and depending on the season has u-pick/cut berries and Christmas trees available to purchase.

Although adapting to the changing market, the farm still struggles. The biggest issue is finding reliable labor. With only a few full time employees, the farm contracts out for seasonal workers, but struggle with inconsistency from the demand for farm workers required by the local grape harvest.

It's not surprising that Jim Baggenstos' advice to future farmers is to have patience, know your market, and to learn to roll with the punches. Baggenstos Farm has definitely dealt with its share of problems, but their strong work ethic and adaptability have led to the success they have made today and will continue making into the future!



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2014 Potato Harvest at the farm; photo courtesy of Jim Baggenstos

Non-Food Crops: Field and Grass Seed, Nursery and Greenhouse Stock

Field and grass seed, nursery and greenhouse stock might not be contributing directly to feeding people, but they are huge contributors to the local economy. In a county that has seen the urban centers slowing encroaching more and more on the rural farmland, farms without food are important in preserving the land and are a boost to the economy too. Washington County has always been dependent on agriculture for jobs and nonfood crops are integral part of why this is true.

Oregon has consistently been one of the world's major producers of cool-season grass seed, with most of the acreage located in the Willamette Valley, which produces twothirds of the U.S. cool-season grasses. Although Washington County is a minor contributor to the grass seed production, it leads the states in clover fields. More than 95 percent of the crimson clover seed in the United States is produced in western



Oregon, mostly in Washington and Yamhill counties. In fact, Washington County is the top producer of crimson clover and just behind Yamhill County is a close second in the production of red clover for the entire state of Oregon. The market is continuing to grow for Crimson clover as it is a great nitrogen fixer for

cropland and becoming more well-known and desired by Midwestern farmers as a cheaper alternative to purchasing nitrogen. Other benefits of crimson clover as a cover crop include erosion control, improved moisture-holding capacity and increased soil organic matter, as well as a benefit to organic farms, which usually use alternative nutrient sources such as composts, meals or manures for fertilizer.

While the field and grass seed farms account for a third of the harvested cropland and are useful to other parts of food production in the United States, nursery and greenhouse stock, even while continuing to decline, are still the leading agricultural commodity

in the county with over \$100 million in sales every year.

A crimson clover field on Mountaintale Road, Washington County, OR. Gary Halvorson, Oregon State Archives

Although the recession took a toll on the nursery business and only about 7,000 acres are in nursery and greenhouse stock production, many are still hanging on and adapting to the market by shifting to other crops. Many are turning away from ornamentals and instead focusing on more food producing bushes and trees at their customers' request. The main challenges the industry has faced are in the availability of skilled labor (agriculture being a labor intensive industry that depends on reliable and skilled workforce), the nation's transportation system (logistical challenge with long hauls on crowded roads, where delays can be hard on the plants and require maintenance while in route), and preserving agricultural land (with most nurseries near urban areas, some land may be converted to urban uses). While the industry struggles at times to overcome the challenges its shift to appease the market has been useful to stay a strong income generator for the county.

One farmer in Verboort has even expressed a desire to have more acres of his land in vegetables sold directly to the local community, but acknowledged that as he is getting older it is too hard to convert to direct market sales when all his income is generated through exporting product throughout the US and China. He is supporting new young farmers in starting and recommends to any new farmer to get involved in direct market sales. While the seed, nursery stock, and greenhouse stock markets are not directly feeding people, they are still important to the agricultural industry in the US and Washington County.

Dairies

Few families remain as dairy farmers in Washington County, but many remember the days when dairy farms were more prevalent. Just 25 years ago there were about 70 dairy farms within the county and today only 11 remain. Although Washington County is not a huge contributor, milk remains one of the top 5 agricultural products in the state of Oregon. So what has happened to all the dairies?

The answer inevitability varies from farmer to farmer, but there is no question that dairy farming is very labor intensive. The necessity to milk and feed the cows a couple of times daily, all while maintaining the farm, managing animal waste, and planting feed crops is very time consuming work and makes for very few free days. Like most on most farms, the work that is needed to have a successful dairy farm is demanding, but those that have continued with it have a strong passion for the work.

One farmer in Banks whose family started as a dairy, but has since changed to grass seed and vegetable production explained that many dairy farmers from the past have chosen to quit or moved their operations to eastern Oregon. He believes the lure for dairy farmers to move east lies in the dryer climate, cheaper and closer hay, and cheaper and more plentiful land available. The lure of heading east and transitioning to less year round labor intensive farming ventures are not the only reasons for change. The land and population changes are definitely important factors in the consideration of owning a dairy in Washington County. 25 years ago the population of Washington County was half of the current population and land was much cheaper. The growing population and urban

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An old dairy barn west of Hillsboro with Mt. Hood in the background. Gary Halvorson, Oregon State Archives

boundary expansion have increasingly raised the cost of land and placed farm land in proximity to housing developments. The Banks farmer explained that development of rural lands into country estates (hobby farms) and urbanization brings new neighbors that complain about the dust, odors, noise and equipment on the road. Laws enforcing strict waste management practices and fluctuating expenses can also be a deterrent for some farmers.

While dairy farming is by no means an easy option for any farmer, and resurgence in Washington County is doubtful, those sticking it out may see great returns in the next few years. As the general population becomes more interested in locally produced foods, being a source for local milk could become a niche market. One farm, Schoch Dairy, is taking advantage of the local market and just completed a Kickstarter in April 2014 to get the additional funds they needed to finish the construction of an on-site creamery that they

have been working on the last two years. The additional funds will transform their family-owned dairy farm into an on-farm creamery producing glass-bottled, all natural whole milk and cheese, making them the only dairy to sell locally to the community in Washington County. Although not an easy place for new farmers to start a dairy farm, the future looks strong for those farmers already established in the Washington County market.

Fruits and Nuts

Fruit and nut orchards are an integral part of the agricultural industry in Washington County, accounting for about 10% of the harvested cropland. Grapes, hazelnuts (filberts), and walnuts are the main players, with apples, sweet cherries, and plums/prunes the second tier players, covering between 100-250 acres of production depending on the fruit.

The boost in grape production over the last 25 years is from the rapidly growing wine industry in Washington County. Before 1970, the wine industry was essentially nonexistent due to Prohibition, even in the late 1980's viticulture was still a very small industry in western Washington County. The Census of Agriculture shows that there were just 53 farms and 839 acres of land dedicated to wine production in the late 80s, but today there are 126 farms and 1,716 acres producing grapes. The demand for growth has come from the urbanization and the shift towards more intensive land use.

The winery industry in Western Washington County is small in comparison to many other areas, but as the agritourism industry grows, the winery business is continuing to boom. Wineries tend to have a high start-up capital, consisting of buying and planting a property, waiting four years for vines to

yield grapes and then another year to produce the first wine. The large initial investment that needs to be made can be intimidating, but Oregon and more specifically Washington County has a lot of room for growth in the wine market. The fertile land and close proximity to Portland make Washington County a perfect venue for new wine entrepreneurs.

Current grape production pales in comparison to the nut production happening in Washington County. The majority of the orchard land lies in hazelnuts (filberts), but Washington County is also the leading producer of English Walnuts in the state of Oregon. The census of agriculture shows that Walnut production has decreased from over 1,000 acres in Washington County 25 years ago to only about 1,000 acres in the entire state, with half lying within the county. The decrease in production is mostly attributed to the lack of market, since California controls 99% of the domestic production, but the market is not completely dead in Oregon. Walnuts

from Oregon consistently get

Western Washington County Wineries, by Pat Snider;
http://www.oregon.com/yamhill_valley_attractions/washington_county_wineeries

more money per pound than California walnuts and are still in demand. Although it takes about 10 years for a tree to be considered completely mature, walnuts require very little labor and could be a lucrative tree for people to grow on their land if they have limited time to dedicate to farming.

The acreage walnuts cover is fairly insignificant to the 4,227 acres of bearing age hazelnuts (filberts) currently being produced in Washington County. The mild climate and consistent annual rainfall help to produce harder hazelnuts in both size and taste, making this land ideal for production. In fact, the Willamette Valley produces 95% of the domestic hazelnuts in the United States. While, Washington County is not the most productive region it is the hub of the Oregon Hazelnut Growers (OHG). OHG facilities in Washington County are the largest processor and marketer of hazelnuts in North America and their customers include many large names in the food service industry around the world.

The downside to hazelnut production is that the ground beneath the orchards must remain flat and bare, which means many farmers resort to using chemicals on their hazelnut groves. One hazelnut farmer opinion on why spraying is necessary is that, “you can’t go organic and not get worms in the nuts, you’ll get too high a percentage of rejected nuts from the processors and turn a low profit. Plus grass and weeds sap the energy from the trees and make for lower yields.” While this practice can be very harmful to the growing number of small vegetable farmers popping up throughout the county as well as have environmental consequences, it is deemed necessary by most hazelnut farmers to make a profit.



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Dick Smith in his hazelnut orchard in Hillsboro, OR perfectly suited to flat grass seed fields, and require lower maintenance than fruit trees. When the grass seed market plummeted during the recession, many farmers turned to hazelnuts as an alternative crop. Today 60% of the hazelnuts grown are exported with the majority heading to China. Young farmers who recognize the industry's growth are

Besides the downsides of chemical use, hazelnuts are a very lucrative investment. While a few years ago it seemed the state's signature niche crop might disappear, it has made a triumphant come back, as new blight-resistant varieties, developed by Oregon State University, are being introduced to farmers. Since established hazelnuts do not require irrigation, they are

acquiring language skills to navigate the market, continuing to strengthen the business ties in China and continue growing the hazelnut market.

Berries

Blackberries, blueberries, boysenberries, cranberries, currants, loganberries, black and red raspberries and strawberries are all present in Washington County, making it the second largest producer of berries in Oregon with 3,853 acres currently in production. Berry production is a small market in Oregon compared to the rest of the United States, and Washington County is only 15% of the state's market, but it is an important part of the agriculture in the

Unger Farms, Inc.



Cornelius, Or:

Originally an 80 acre farm in Cornelius, Oregon purchased by Matt Unger and his brother in the early 1980s, it has since grown into the 144 acre Unger Farms Inc., run by Matt and his wife Kathy. While primarily known for their 30 acres of strawberries, they also grow raspberries, blackberries, blueberries, and other delicious produce all freshly packaged in their trademark green boxes with the Oregon Summer logo.

Initially sending most of their product to a cannery, their booth at the Hillsboro Farmers' Market in the early days of the farm has evolved the farm into a fresh market/wholesale farm. Unger Farms now has brand recognition throughout the Portland metro area, vending at more than 15 farmers' markets every week, selling to 20+ local grocery stores/roadside stands/restaurants/school lunch programs, and running Unger's Farm Store.

Unger Farm is unique in that over 60% of their profit comes from the farmers' markets and at the height of the berry season a weekend market can need up to 8 people to run smoothly. With growing customer demand and expectation of quality fresh market/wholesale berries, they require many seasonal workers to pick and sell their product throughout the growing season. As with many farms, they struggle a bit with hiring and finding people to work the seasonal positions, but they are constantly looking for new ways to improve the hiring process.

The Unger's are also always researching the best varieties of berries and looking for new ways to practice sustainable farming. Although the farm is not organic, they strive to use only minimal spray and put a lot of focus into their Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan. IPM is an effective and environmentally sensitive approach to pest management that relies on a combination of common-sense practices with the least possible hazard to people, property, and the environment.



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county. With a plethora of farmers markets, farm stands, and u-picks, people in Washington County often equate summer time with berry production. Countless community members recall the days when the school calendar catered to the local berry production season, ending school early enough so children could be in the fields helping to pick berries.

This is mostly a memory of the past now as Washington County has seen the largest drop in berry production in the state and a huge switch from strawberries to blueberries.

Farmworkers are the backbone to berry production. The work involves hours of hand picking labor in the sun and without adequate workers, fields have been left unharvested in past seasons.

-Cornelius farmer on the decline of berries due to the difficulty of work and labor demands

The decline in strawberries is not special to Washington County, but is actually happening all over the state of Oregon, with only about 2,000 acres in the entire state today. Increased farm worker costs and competition from places such as California, Florida, and Mexico are leading reasons Oregon strawberries have been declining, while niche markets are keeping the commodity alive it will probably never return to the market it was years ago. Oregon strawberries reign supreme when it comes to quality, being picked ripe on the vine with wonderful texture, but competition and costs have contributed to a dwindling market. Oregon primarily produces strawberries that are not

suitable for long-distance shipping, and growers tend to pay more to pickers per pound than in places such as California.

In Washington County the strawberry acreage has lost half of it production in the last few years, but those continuing are staying strong in fresh direct market sales through farm stands and farmers' markets as well as sales through local grocery chains such as New Seasons Market. Farmers still focusing

Washington County Berries		
Berry Type	Year	Acres
Total Berries	1987	4,785
	2012	3,853
Strawberries	1987	2,675
	2012	302 (-90%)
Blueberries	1987	324
	2012	1,868 (+85%)

on the production of strawberries are also dabbling in the production of berries with stronger markets, but they keep producing strawberries because of the love for the tradition and the satisfaction of producing high quality strawberries for the local market. Farmers know locals will quickly buy up all advertised Hood variety strawberries from the local stores, farm stands, u-pick, and farmers markets.

One farmer in Cornelius explained, "Hoods are the only berry people ask for by name," but their short season, only about 3-4 weeks, have led to a steady fade to blueberries, which prove to be more commercially viable, easier to harvest and ship. But a Helvetia farmer stressed that although there is

demand the difficulty in finding available labor and



the effort put into the production is a huge reason for farmers transitioning away from berries. Despite declines in production the market for blueberries, raspberries, and blackberries are in fresh, frozen and processed forms and have held on throughout the years. Unlike most other berry growing regions, Oregon summers are warm and extremely dry with cool, crisp nights. These conditions enable our berries to hang on the bush for an extended period of time, allowing sugars to set, so that the berries can be harvested at the peak of flavor while retaining their firmness. Part of the reason the berries are able to continue doing so well in Washington County is through the strong local fresh direct market sales throughout the entire Portland metropolitan area and the access to processing plants and the Oregon Berry

Packing, Inc, which sells both fresh and frozen berries.

Blueberries at Smith
Farm in Hillsboro, OR

Blueberries are definitely the current star in the county. Acreage is continuing to increase and farmers do not seem to be shying away, even with last years' (2013) bumper crop that lowered prices of blueberries throughout the US. Blueberries are one of the most exciting, in-demand super foods of today's market, and their exterior is harder than most other berries produced in Washington County making them more resilient when packaged for shipping longer distances. Like Oregon strawberries, Oregon-grown blueberries are unsurpassed in quality and taste. The state's climate provides the optimal amount of chill hours necessary to grow the best blueberry varieties and, as a result of the ideal growing environment, blueberry bushes in Oregon yield more volume per plant than any other region in the world.

Vegetable Production

Vegetable production is the key agricultural product produced in terms of food for the local community is in vegetable production. The change in vegetable production that has occurred over the last 25 years is in the variety of crops and the amount of direct market sales. Today more of the vegetable production in Washington County is small scale with a wider variety of produce grown. There are no longer any places locally to get larger quantities of produce processed for sales, and therefore, many farmers that used to utilize the processing plants in the county, have changed to new products, such as field seeds, grass seeds, hay, forage, and silage. With the disappearance of local processing facilities, the acres of broccoli, snap peas, cucumbers, dry onions and sweet corn have all declined significantly. Most vegetables are only accounted for on less than 100

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acres of the county, but there is a plethora of variety and products available for the community from this small acreage.

The popularity of direct market sales, whether through community supported agriculture (CSA), farm stands, u-pick, and farmers' markets (all discussed further in the food access section), has increased the variety of produce available and increased awareness of produce. The direct market sales allow for farmers to interact more with their buyers and create connections with the community. Since the 2007 Census of Agriculture, the number of farms selling agricultural products directly to individuals for human consumption has increased by 114 farms, and the amount of income generated has increased almost \$100,000. The market is already there for current farmers to start vegetable production on a portion of their land, or for new farmers to network with land owners to rent land and begin producing vegetables. There is also still room for growth and education in the community about fresh food storage and preparation.

The changing vegetable market and lack of processing facilities are leading reasons for Washington County tending to have smaller than average farms. The average size of a farm is 83 acres with the median farm size only 13 acres. The small and medium size farms are main contributors to local food sales and a reason for the increased variety of produce grown in the county. These smaller farms usually tend to require more hands on work and have less reliance on machines, ideally making for the perfect situation for new farmers to intern and learn about farming. Unfortunately, in Oregon, employment laws have strict requirements for the compensation interns must receive and many farmers are unable to meet the requirements. The restrictions have deterred many farmers from being

able to provide the opportunity for new farmers to learn from successful farmers, so how can an interested person get involved in farming?

Harvested Cropland	Acres
Total	74,707
Total Vegetable Production	3,490
Direct Market Sales of Vegetables	1,148
Vegetables Processed	2,342

Supporting the Next Generation of Farmers

The average age of farmers in Washington County has steadily increased over the last decade and is currently sitting at 59.3. Only 34% of farmers in the county are currently under 55 year old. As the age of farmers continues to increase, more efforts need to be made to get younger people interested in farming. With the renewed interest in eating locally grown food, more people have become interested in starting to farm. But as they try to start an agricultural career, they are quickly aware of a key commodity missing: land. Most farm land is passed down within families and the land that does become available is usually very expensive. For aspiring farmers who either lack the money or family connections to farm land, renting has become an attractive new option.

Renting is not without its own downfalls. One farmer working in Helvetia for 20 years shared his unfortunate story of losing access to the land due to financial reason. "We built up the soil for 20 years and it still hurts, we left a piece of ourselves in that land." Sadly for this farmer the land has not continued to be farmed and has been converted into an auto mechanic location. This is a real concern for farmers that are not owners of their land, but a risk many are willing to take. The Helvetia farmer is now farming again with a group on leased land and

although still heartbroken about his loss is glad to still be able to farm.

As farming becomes more appealing to the masses it is important for people to know a few things before diving in. In an article published April 17, 2010 in the Oregonian titled “Renting helps new farmers grow their businesses,” Casey Parks makes eight recommendations to new farmers before beginning to hoe:

- **Try an apprenticeship first:** Farming is a lot of work. Make sure you're up to the challenge before investing money in your own farm. Internships are competitive, so consider classes, too.
- **Find money:** Securing a bank loan for a small farm sometimes is difficult, so you may want to apply for grants or find a partner.
- **Find land:** Check out iFarm Oregon, a Web database of landowners looking to rent and sell, as well as lists of grants and other funding opportunities. Try to find land close to a big market area (such as Portland) that you can afford to drive in to sell your product.
- **Study the land:** Has it been a farm before? Does it have a barn and irrigation system? Did the previous owners use pesticides or chemical fertilizers? You'll have to wait five years from the last pesticide use to certify your products organic.
- **Buy infrastructure:** You might need a greenhouse, an irrigation system and a tractor. If you're leasing, you can buy a portable greenhouse. In some cases, landowners and renter share the cost of infrastructure, but they also share the profits.
- **Know the laws:** The Oregon Department of Agriculture publishes Agripedia, a guide on everything from agricultural regulations and rights to grants and taxes.
- **Start small:** Start with a small base of customers your first year. They can help you decide which crops to plant, whether you should offer (or require) a work component for members and how many weeks your membership should cover.
- **Market:** Start a Web site, start a blog. Sign up with the Portland CSA coalition. Farmers markets may not have enough room for new vendors, so consider selling to restaurants or other institutions (such as hospitals or big corporations with cafeterias).

For those people that are passionate about farming and have the work ethic to go with it, the opportunities are there. Some land owners in Washington County have a few acres that could be farmed if the right relationship is created through the land owners and farmers, but there does need to be more information made available to landowners. On the Friends of Family Farmers ifarmoregon.org website, there are far more people looking for land in the metro area than landowners hoping to rent, but connections are being made throughout the county to help new farmers get started. Another group working to help farmers connect to the land is Adelante Mujeres (pg 41). They are completing their last year on La Esperanza Farm, a site that they have been leasing, and they are working with local land owners to help connect their students of their sustainable farming class to viable land to farm. OSU

Extension is also a great resource in the county for new farmers to find assistance in farm-direct sales and with other farming issues. Although land is not always easily attained, Washington County has the market and resources available for new farmers to

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get started as long as they are willing to have a few initial years with little to no profit and to work on finding the right landowners to rent from to make their farming dreams a reality.

about gardening, Photo
by Kimberly
Martin

Farmworkers

The agricultural industry would not be productive or successful without farmworkers. Washington County is home to 6,722 migrant and seasonal farmworkers and an additional 5,642 non-

farmworker family members sharing in both migrant and seasonal farmworker housing. The farmworker community is nothing new to Washington County, in fact growth of the Mexican population in Oregon was spurred in the 1940s by three related factors: continuing growth in agriculture, the onset of WWII, and the existence of

Greg Malinowski, a county commissioner and owner of Malinowski Farm, is one such farmer who leases his land to beginning farmers. Instead of having a flat monthly fee, Malinowski's farmers pay either \$600 an acre or 10% of their gross income, which means if the farmer suffers so does Malinowski, but in a good year they both benefit. The relationship keeps Malinowski invested in the farmer's work and they work together to keep infrastructure upgraded when needed to ensure profitable harvests. While this exact agreement may not be for everyone, it could be useful for the aging farmers to transition their land over to new passionate farmers when their families are not interested in continuing agricultural production after they retire.

the Bracero Program (designed to recruit Mexican laborers to replace those who had either entered the U.S. Armed Forces or who had left farm work to working industry). The Bracero (guest worker) Program, which existed formally in Oregon from 1942-1947 allowed the importation of Mexican workers for annual harvests with the stipulation that they were to return to Mexico after their work was finished. When the formal program ended in Oregon, Mexicans continued coming, bringing their families and starting to settle more permanently. Today, individuals employed as farmworkers are 80% seasonal and 20% migrant, which is the biggest population split in all of Oregon. What this means is that there are more individuals who live close enough to return to their normal residences after work and fewer farmworkers that are unable to return home after work for parts of the year. Farmworkers account for about 2.5% of the



Students at Banks
elementary learning

county's population, with the majority residing in the more rural areas of the county in order to be closer to work opportunities. The farmworker population remains largely invisible to the community at large.

In Washington County, the two biggest obstacles faced by farmworkers are a shortage of affordable, humane housing and a lack of economic opportunities to move out of poverty. Poverty amongst farmworkers and their families is markedly higher than the county averages, with farmworkers earning about \$10,000-\$16,000 annually compared to \$64,000 as the average annual household income in the county. Low incomes lead to many people living in close quarters, with both migrant and seasonal workers in the community having an average accompanying household size of 4.32. Washington County has the 6th highest number of migrant and seasonal farmworkers (MSFW) and the 4th highest number of MSFW and accompanying families living in their households. Although there is not county specific data available on the number of children involved with migrant and seasonal farmworkers, statewide, about half of the people utilizing migrant or seasonal farmworker housing are children 19 or younger.

Making farmworkers part of the conversations and giving them a voice in improving their housing and economic opportunities can help create more of a sense of cohesion in the county. Communities are often unaware of the number of farmworkers residing in their communities and increased awareness can help improve the lives of many people. Agriculture is consistently ranked as one of the three most dangerous occupations in the United States and on top of that farmworkers are usually not protected by sick leave and risk losing their jobs if they miss work. When farmworkers do have medical

issues they are often left unresolved due to barriers such as: lack of transportation, limited hours of clinic service, cost of health care, limited or no interpreter service, and frequent relocation in search of farm work. The health disparities that farmworkers face are a leading reason for life expectancy rates that are well below the national average and an infant mortality rate 25% higher than the national average.

"I think the first thing people think about with food is whether it's organic or not. That's an easy distinction for people to make. I also think that people think about whether it's local or not. **But I don't think they think about who is harvesting it. That's the issue."**

- Roberto Jiménez, the executive director of Farmworker Housing Development Corporation (FHDC)

Although farmworkers and their families are a consistently underrepresented group, there are more advocacy and organizations working to help decrease the disparities between farmworkers and the rest of the community. Organizations such as Bienestar are working in Washington County are aiding the county by creating resilience and capacity of all human beings to help, change, adapt and lead in their own lives, their families, neighborhoods and communities. They accomplish this through an array of programs dedicated to finding and providing: quality, affordable housing located close to community services and mass transit; resident service programs that integrate housing, health, education and skill development; leadership development that promotes neighborhood participation, personal growth,

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appreciation of diversity, and human rights; and sustainable building practices and energy conservation. This is just one organization working in Washington County to help create a more cohesive community with less disparity.

Also supporting the farmworker community is the Virginia Garcia Memorial Center with clinics throughout the county. Their mission is to provide high-quality, comprehensive, and culturally appropriate primary health care to the communities of Washington and Yamhill Counties with a special emphasis on migrant and seasonal farmworkers and others with barriers to receiving healthcare.

In 1975, six-year old Virginia Garcia and her farmworker parents travelled from their home in Mission, Texas to California and Oregon to work in the fields. Along the way Virginia cut her foot, and by the time they reached Oregon, it had become infected. Due to economic, language and cultural barriers to healthcare, Virginia died from what should have been an easily treatable wound. Moved to action by Virginia's unnecessary death, the community quickly rallied together to open the first Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center in a three-car garage, determined to prevent similar tragedies from occurring.

Today, Virginia Garcia provides healthcare services to more than 35,000 patients a year in Washington and Yamhill Counties at four primary care clinics and pharmacies, three dental offices, and three school-

based health centers. Also provided is outreach to schools, community health fairs and to migrant and seasonal farmworkers at local camps and commercial nurseries through our mobile clinic.



Unripe Hazelnut

Harvesting Opportunity: A Strategic Vision for Farmworkers Housing and Economic Opportunities in Washington County, Oregon



Farmers picking berries at a field in Cornelius;
Photo by Andrea Castillo/The Oregonian

In a document created by Tierra Planning, the strengths, needs, and realities facing the farmworker community were explored and goals were established for how local planners, government officials, and service providers can help to improve housing and economic opportunities. Key concerns related to housing recognized that on-site farmworker housing is a poor option, but many farmworkers felt there were few

alternatives due to transportation barriers and the high cost of living in urban areas. Even with

subsidized farmworker housing, many still had difficulties meeting the eligibility criteria for residence, because of their immigration status. Although there are many barriers faced in housing, many farmworkers have the dream of homeownership as a life goal for either themselves or their families.

Key issues related to broadening economic opportunities were also discussed in the document. While farmers widely acknowledge the vital component farmworkers play in local agriculture, there is still a lack of public awareness of their contribution. The growing local food movement seems to be an opportunity to help spread awareness of farmworkers contribution to the agricultural industry as well as create avenues for farmworkers to become leaders. Although there are few Latino leaders to serve as mentors for the farmworker population, opportunities are becoming more readily available for farmworkers to grow their knowledge through universities, OSU Extension and organizations such as Adelante Mujeres. With the increase in local small scale production, more education on valueadded processing could be a strong avenue for farmworkers to learn and advance economically in the future.

The report, not only stated key issues in housing and economic opportunities, but also established four goals with recommendations. The goals vary in complexity and aim to provide guidance for County staff, planners, service providers, and nonprofits

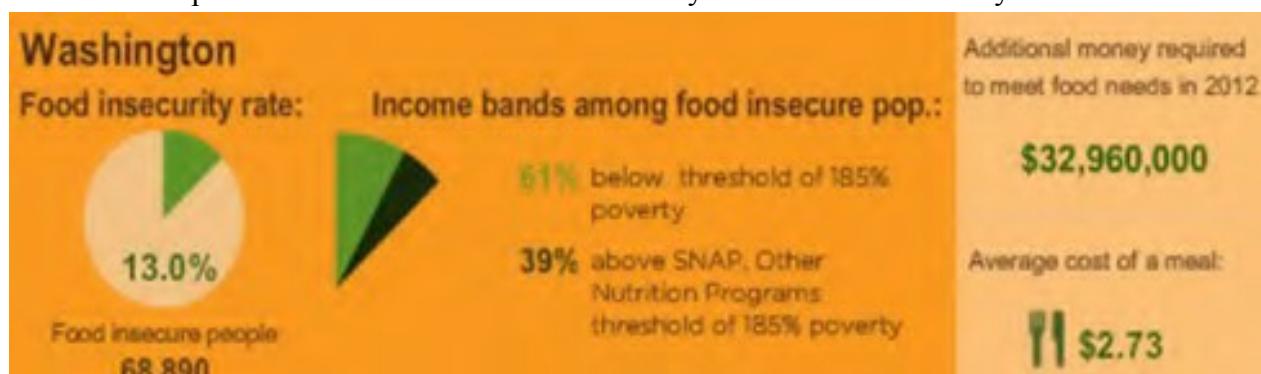
in employing a range of strategies to improve opportunities for farmworkers, without suggesting one specific model or solutions. The goals are:

- Expand awareness of and respect for farmworkers;
- Improve baseline living conditions and expand the spectrum of housing opportunities;
- Expand economic development opportunities; and
- Increase communication among farmers, services providers, and government agencies.

Many steps are already being taken to make the goals a reality, but there is also much more work to be done. The overarching goal is to benefit the farmworker community of Washington County by improving the visibility of, and respect for, farmworkers by placing farmworker issues on the planning agenda.

Statistically the number of food insecure is low in Washington County, but the sheer number of people facing food insecurity outnumbers the total population of over half the counties in Oregon. This fact alone makes the need in Washington County of great importance to creating a food secure community. While Washington County has fared better than most of the Oregon counties during the recession and into the recovery, there are still a growing number of residents that are being left behind economically. The percentage of the population in poverty has continued to grow significantly faster than the overall population, increasing 114% since 2000, while the population as a whole has only increased 22%. This means that today, one in eight people in Washington County (13% or 68,890) are living in a household with income below the federal poverty level. Amongst those living in poverty 42% are children, which puts 21.6 % or 29,210 children in Washington County living in food insecure conditions.

Food insecurity refers to USDA's measure of lack of access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members and limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods. Important aspects of creating a food secure county are in increasing awareness of the resources available and creating an understanding of the reasons food insecurity has not declined since the recession. From learning about reason and resources homeless community members need to helping people enroll for federal assistance programs to creating more classes to teach cooking, nutrition, budgeting and food preservation, connecting people and useful resources to help them become self-sufficient is the key to a food secure county.



Feeding America. Map the Meal Gap 2012. <http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/map-the-meal-gap.aspx>

COMMUNITY FOOD ASSISTANCE

Homelessness

Homelessness is an issue that haunts many people, and a contributing factor in people being unable to provide themselves and/or family with adequate food. As mentioned before, Washington County is a metropolitan area that has many people and organizations working to increase the prosperity of all its citizens; one part of that is ending homelessness. This report is not meant to offer new suggestions on ending homelessness, but instead highlights the work already being done throughout the county.

Currently in Washington County there is a document that was put together by philanthropies, housing and service providers, government officials, faith and civic groups, businesses, and concerned individuals called, “A Road Home: 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness in Washington County.” Now in its sixth year since the report was created, the plan has been hugely successful in developing strategies, programs, and activities that can best assist homeless families and individuals move to housing and self-sufficiency. But the work is not done yet.

The 10-Year Plan goals:

- Prevent People From Becoming Homeless,**
- Move People into Housing,**
- Link People to Appropriate Services and Remove**
- Barriers, Increase Income Support and Economic Opportunities,**
- Expand Data Collection, and implement Public Education on Homelessness**

The year 5 annual report, “A Road Home: 2013 Homeless Assessment Report,” provides the most up to date information on the road to ending homelessness.

Washington County Point-In-Time Homeless Count reported 7 causes for homelessness today:

- Inability to pay rent,
- Underemployment/unemployment,
- Kicked out by family/friends,
- Alcohol/drug addiction,
- Criminal history,
- Evicted by landlord, and/or
- Fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence

These causes and more have led to increased poverty with 13% or 69,607 people in Washington County living below the Federal poverty line in 2013. Without adequate housing, individual and families struggle to meet their needs and food is part of that equation.

Part of working to improve the local food system

This year marks the lowest number of homeless people in five years with a 7% decrease and continued decline anticipated in the future. In January 2013, the is that it not only makes the issue of “where is my food coming from today” less of an issue, but it also offers opportunities for economic growth and jobs. With inability to pay rent and underemployment/unemployment as the top reasons for homelessness in Washington County, a prosperous food system, in which the economy grows, would help to end homelessness. The unemployment rate has been dropping steadily since the recession, from 10.1% in 2009 to 5.8% as of March 2014, which has a direct correlation to the decline in family

homelessness. Other factors include new funding through the Emergency Solution Grant (ESG) and Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF).

Along with the causes stated by people experiencing homelessness in the January 2013 Point-In-Time Homeless Count, there are a range of barriers that keep people homeless:

- Poor credit and/or eviction history,
- Criminal background, lack of education and job skills to obtain or retain employment,
- Fleeing domestic violence, and · Other socioeconomic factors.

By prioritizing housing and services for those chronically homeless, the plan has decreased the chronic homeless people by 58%. In the 5th year Washington County experienced very low vacancy rate (<3%), so preventing people from becoming homeless, and moving people into housing, were very important. Rental assistance programs, Oregon Homeownership Stabilization Initiative - which provides loan forgiveness

and mortgage assistance - emergency shelters- which focused on getting people into permanent housing and economic support - as well as rapid re-housing and permanent supportive housing initiative were all integral in dropping the rate of homeless families and individuals. Homeless programs also had increased efforts in helping find financial resources and specialized services, such as domestic violence, mental illness, physical disability, drug abuse, etc.

All the goals are seeing positive outcomes due to collaborative efforts of the provider organizations participating in the Housing and Supportive Services Network (HSSN), the Interfaith Committee on homelessness (IFCH), private citizens, and community advocates. Their collaborative effort is working to connect opportunities and help serve vulnerable populations to address hunger, lack of housing and need for health care services. For further information on the document “A Road Home: 10Year Plan to End Homelessness” visit www.co.washington.or.us.

COMMUNITY FOOD ASSISTANCE



People in line to receive lunch at Project Homeless Connect;
Photos in page 30 and 31 courtesy of <http://www.phcwashco.org>

Project Homeless Connect (PHC)

Project Homeless Connect is a national movement to create access to services for the homeless and those at risk of being homeless, while engaging the community in finding a solution for homelessness. For seven years the event, led by the passionate and dedicated Kim Marshall, has been helping people to get critical care, services and information. The event served 157 people it's first year and during the recession, there were over 500 people coming to receive services. This past January in 2014, just over 300 people came through to receive services and resources such as medical and dental, counseling, housing and job guidance, hot meals, haircuts, bus passes and more. One volunteer commented on their experience by saying, "What a remarkable array of services meeting so many needs. One older man found a long tweed coat that fit, so then he decided he needed a matching sweater and shirt for a full, new 'look.' He enjoyed just 'shopping' so much and having someone help him compare what items of clothing would match and how they would look on him. He also really enjoyed the attention and having someone to interact with. He looked at clothes for a while, then came back later, I think just for more interaction."

The events can help people with smaller needs such as a new outfit or haircut, but it also helps connect people to the right resources to help them regain their independence. Kim Marshall shared a story of success that came out of January 2014's PHC:

"T's first encounter with HomePlate occurred at the Project Homeless Connect resource fair in January of 2014. He was staying with a lot of people in a small apartment where everyone was being evicted. He took interest in the resources and support that HomePlate provided, and shortly after became a regular at all three weekly drop-in dinners. During this time T was referred to the transitional living program entitled Bridges to Change. Bridges provided T with a secure living environment, while he searched for employment. However, with limited work experience, T was finding it difficult to gain employment. It was during this time that HomePlate created the work experience program, Sit-n-Stay, which while providing a dog sitting service to the visitors of the Beaverton Farmers Market, also allowed for youth to gain further work experience that would benefit them in their search for employment. T improved greatly in his comfort talking with people and providing good customer service, as well as exceptional dog care skills. T applied and was accepted to the Tongue Point Job Corps work program, and is currently residing and taking classes at their facility and pursuing his goals; something he thought wouldn't be possible."



Federal Assistance Programs:

Many residents in need of the assistance are in rural parts of the county where access is limited. The county is only home to three Department of Human Services (DHS) offices, which is Oregon's principal agency for helping Oregonians achieve wellbeing and independence through opportunities

that protect, empower, respect choice and preserve dignity, especially for those who are least able to help themselves. DHS accomplishes that by helping people buy food and avoid hunger with foods such as, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains needed for good health, helping low-income Oregonians with medical coverage through an



eligibility determination process, helping stabilize low-income families with cash assistance through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families federal program (TANF) and assisting seniors and people with physical disabilities with activities of daily living. They also have adult and child protective services, adoption services, and domestic violence services to help people in need. The offices are all located in the largest incorporated cities, with the furthest office to the west located in Hillsboro and therefore not easily accessible to all those in need of the services they provide.

A thriving community would be one where families and individuals have sufficient resources to be economically secure. However, today many families and individuals are unable to afford stable housing, adequate food and health care costs with their current income in Washington County. Recent job loss, cut wages and hours and medical expenses are the top three treasons for people needing rental assistance and are contributing factors to food insecurity. Even with the persistent percentage of people experiencing food insecurity, there are still many people flocking to Washington County for the hope that opportunities will be available. The problem is that there are an increasingly high number of high-wage jobs, but they are not opportunities for everyone. When times are tough, federal assistance can be a great resource to help individuals and families make ends meet.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Federal assistance programs are one option to help increase the access to food in communities. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps, brings in

\$75.5 million federal dollars to the local economy each year. SNAP benefits families and individuals' whose income is below 130% of the federal poverty level, with a few exceptions for those up to 185% of the federal poverty level with mitigating circumstances. Although the program is designed as a supplement, many people are relying on the program for all or most of their grocery budget. Since the benefits can only support the purchasing of food, people use their income for other household and personal needs.

The economic benefit SNAP has on the economy and personal budgets makes it startling to learn that Washington County has one of the lowest eligibility -to-participation rates in all of Oregon. The counties rising suburban poverty rate, rapidly diversifying population and sprawling urban-rural geography are all perceived factors leading to the low enrollment in SNAP yet social service agencies and county government are still asking "why here?" The number of people enrolled has increased about 10,000 people since 2009 to over 65,000 people currently using SNAP monthly, but there are another 45,000+ people that are eligible, which could bring millions of addition federal dollars to support the local economy.

The growing demographic diversity is one possible reason; new cultures and languages introduce challenges to social service outreach groups. For instance the population now has 16% of people identifying as Hispanic or Latino which often require Spanish-speaking staff and an intimate understanding of cultural backgrounds and potential stigmas associated with social services. Also for those in rural western Washington County, transportation serves as another potential problem in accessing social services. Over half the county residents lie outside the urban centers and are not

close to major public transit. Although still able to use the online resource, many still prefer to go to the DHS offices.

Access to SNAP is just one step in helping people in need. The Oregon Food Bank 2012 Hunger Factors Assessment noted that over half (56%) of food box recipients said that SNAP only lasted them two weeks or less and therefore there needs to be more resources and education available to help create food secure living situations for all.

Seniors and Assistance

A consistent problem throughout the entire state of Oregon and nation is in getting seniors' enrolled with

SNAP. Only 1 in 3 eligible seniors participate in SNAP because of a perceived misconception on the part of eligible seniors that they only qualify for a low rate (\$16). Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon used Washington County to conduct a series of focus groups in 2008 and 2012 because of its diverse geographic area, demographic groups and income groups to better understand the barriers seniors face in accessing nutritional assistance programs. The county has the lowest percentage of seniors in the state, with just over 10% of the population 65+, but the total number of seniors (65+) living in the county is the second highest in the state.

The study concluded that barriers to increasing senior participation included lack of information, stigma, technology and mobility limitations. In addressing these barriers the study worked with seniors to help develop ideas for future advertising. Most seniors wanted advertisements to contain information about:

- (1) What is SNAP?**
- (2) Who can qualify?**
- (3) How they can apply for benefits.**

These three points were identified as being key in helping seniors understand SNAP, but where and how they presented the information was also important. Larger signs and more visible brochures at places such as faith based organizations, libraries, doctors' offices, and other places seniors frequent with catchy phrases such as "SNAP is like Social Security" were suggested. Seniors were most receptive to the comparison to Social Security because it took away some of the negative perceptions of government assistance, disconnected it from the idea of welfare, and gave the perception of paying into it and therefore deserving something back. One of the most important suggestions was to not just put SNAP, but also food stamps so seniors are aware of what the signs and brochures are referring to at first glance. Other ideas that came out of the focus groups were to create PSAs on radio and television and adding specific transportation information and/or promotion of telephone interview and online options.

Working with social services to improve outreach is important as many seniors are not only in need, but can also serve as valuable resources. As senior members of the community, many can offer years of knowledge and hours of volunteer time to communities in schools, places of worship, pantries, meal sites and much more and it is vital to the community to make sure they are aware and able to receive the nutrition assistance available.

Women Infants Children (WIC)

The WIC program provides food vouchers for low-income pregnant women, women breastfeeding for up to 6 months after giving birth, infants and/or

children under the age of five, to purchase from a predetermined list of groceries. WIC eligible participants are also allowed to be part of the Farm Direct Nutrition Program (also for seniors), which

At Echo Shaw in Cornelius, 88.1% of students are eligible to receive free/reduced meals, which is the highest percentage for any school in the entire county. With the obvious need at Echo Shaw, efforts were made this year to open Washington County's first School Pantry (an emergency food pantry based at a school). The grand opening was on January 30th, 2014, and 43 families and 214 individuals were served. The pantry is now open every Thursday from 4:30-6:30 pm, helping the families of students and their community in Art classes while their parents need, serving an average of 35+ families a week (150-200 shop

people/week). With the success of the pantry opening, there is hope to be able to use Echo Shaw as a model to open more school based emergency pantries at other schools with high need in the near future. The benefit of a school pantry is that parents or guardians are most likely already going to the location to and they don't have to go out of their way to access the food, it is also a chance for the school to build community and for parents to be more connected to their child's education.

allows participants to purchase fresh produce from local farms and markets. In 2013, 19,591 women, infants, and children participated in WIC serving 8,534 families in Washington County. This service brought in over \$7 million to healthy food retailers and \$36,944 in money spent directly with local farmers. WIC also offers other services to its participants:

- 1. Individual assessment of growth;**
- 2. Education and counseling on nutrition and physical activity;**
- 3. Breastfeeding partnerships with birthing hospitals, support through peer counseling and education;**

- 4. Nutritious foods purchased with WIC vouchers;**
- 5. Immunization screening and referral; and**



- 6. Referral to other preventative health services**

School Lunches (see appendix II)

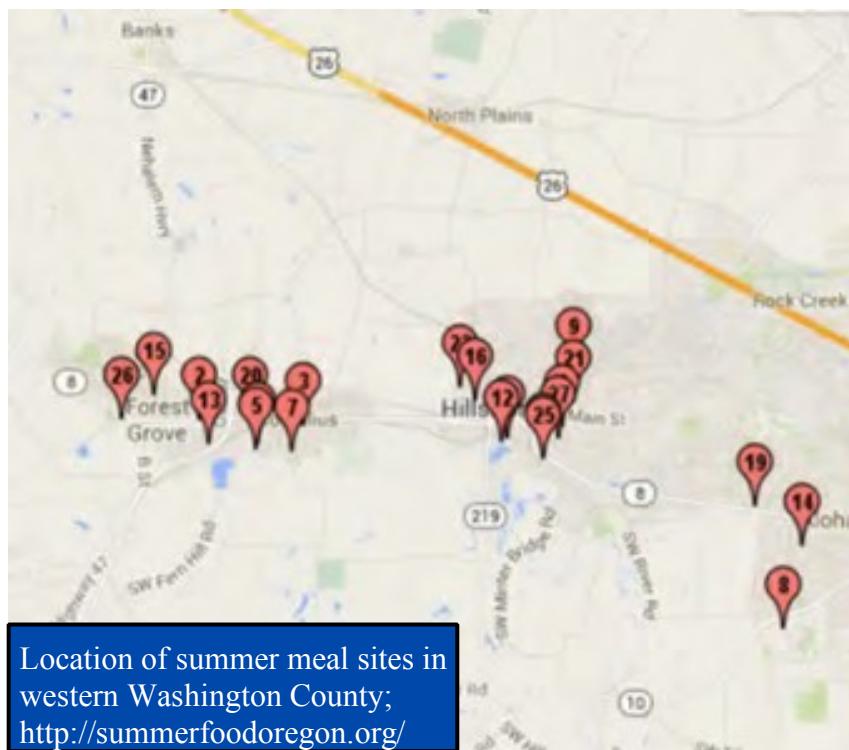
School breakfast and lunch offered at a free or reduced cost are part of federal nutrition assistance provided to low income students during the school year. Overall 39% of Washington County students are eligible for free/reduced lunches, whereas over 50% of students in the rural areas surrounding the major cities are eligible. This high eligibility rate in rural areas is consistent with the higher poverty rates and less access to food resources experienced in the Western part of the county.

Students can qualify for free or reduced lunch based on a family's income. Families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the poverty level qualify for free meals and families with incomes between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty line qualify for reduced-price meals. Since a higher rate of eligible students means more families living below 185% of the federal poverty level, new ways to get food are being implemented to help make sure families are receiving adequate nutrition in and out of school.

meals at a free or reduced cost during the school year, but in summer the site are limited. The summer meal sites are in areas where at least half of the students in nearby schools qualify for free or reduced-price school meals and mostly centrally located in communities. The lack of transportation and scarcity of sites in rural areas creates a challenge to reaching children

Summer Meals and Backpack Programs

All schools have programs for children to receive with summer meals, thereby potentially increasing the number of children hunger in the summer months.



Although some of the rural communities in Washington County are without sites, people are closer knit and know who needs a little extra help and which kids are hungry. For example the Banks Community Food Conversation brought up that they currently have 343 student's eligible for free and reduced lunches, but no meal programs available in the summer. A representative from the YMCA Family Resource Center said, because of the small number of people in their community, the resource center and pantry are able to have more personal relationships with people. Therefore, they are more aware of who is with or without food and they work to help meet clients' needs in any way possible.

communities to support each other and help supply meals for children in need during the months they are not in school.

Another way communities and organizations are working to make sure children are receiving an adequate amount of food is through backpack programs. These programs are designed to help provide food to

Banks community member and mom also stated that families are more aware of which kids are from lowincome families and will frequently invited kids over for lunch that may not eat otherwise. Friends and neighbors throughout the rural areas have strong students in need when they are not in school, specifically over the weekends during the school

year. Many teachers and school staff noticed that students that receive free and/or reduced lunches often came to school hungry on Monday mornings making it challenging for them to focus on their school work. Backpack programs have grown up around this need. The idea behind them is to provide children with supplemental food on a Friday to keep hunger at bay through the weekend when they are not receiving school meals. The program idea has been used throughout Washington County by different social organizations and groups to help provide at least 1 to 2 meals of non-perishable food geared towards children for the weekend.

SNAP at Pacific University

SNAP usage amongst college students has been relatively unmonitored, but with college tuitions continuing to increase, more financial assistance is being sought out by students. At 4 year colleges in Oregon, tuition and fees have gone up 106% from 2000-01-2010-11, making the financial investment into a college degree even more of a challenge, and creating a sharp increase in the participation and need for government assistance amongst students.

Although many college students are eligible for SNAP, there is a general lack of awareness about the program and benefits on college campuses. For a student to qualify, they must both meet the income guideline and one of the following criteria:

- Full-time student who works at least 20 hours per week
- Full-time single student who is caring for children younger than the age of 12
- Full-time married student who is caring for children younger than the age of 6

- At least a half-time student who is actively working any hours in a work-study program
- Students who receive unemployment benefits are exempt from the 20-hours per week work requirement.

Also, federal financial aid including Pell grants, Perkins loans, Stafford loans and most work-study is not counted as income against student eligibility. Students may defer federal student loan payments while receiving SNAP benefits without incurring interest charges. For more on eligibility for students and how to apply, visit: <http://www.pdx.edu/healthycampus/nutrition-its-snap>.

The city of Forest Grove in Western Washington County has grown around Pacific University since its establishment in 1849. The school lies in the city center and has been a contributing factor to the city's growth throughout the last 165 years. During their final year at the university most students complete senior projects on a topic that interests them. This year an economics student chose to explore student attitudes and usage of SNAP at Pacific University. The study surveyed 160/1783 (~10%) undergraduate students about food security, food expenditures, consumption, and college affordability. The study was limited by the number of SNAP participants, 21, but it did include an additional 65 SNAP eligible students (determined by their enrollment in the federal work-study program). There was an additional challenge of people being unaware of SNAP which impacted their responses to some questions.

Some of the main findings that came from the study were:

- Consumption of fruits and vegetables was about equal, but that SNAP recipients consumed more

snack foods and frozen meals. Overall all survey participants tended to follow typical college student dietary patterns.

- 95% of SNAP recipients stated they could not maintain their current level of food consumption without SNAP benefits.
- SNAP users were less likely to spend money on entertainment and fast food
- The eligible candidates not participating in SNAP scored very similar to ineligible candidates, suggesting that they didn't participate because the aid was not needed. There were also many survey respondents that did not know what SNAP was, which could show that there is inefficient awareness of the benefits amongst work-study students about the option to enroll in SNAP.
- The majority of SNAP recipients felt federal assistance made college and nutritious meals affordable, but also believed others abused their benefits, whereas less than half of non-SNAP recipients believed these claims.

Although several limitations existed in the study, it demonstrated that amongst Pacific University students, SNAP is meeting the program goals of increasing food security and nutritional outcomes, but there is still room for improvement. Presenting all students, especially all federal work-study students, with SNAP eligibility information and a list of resources in the community they can access, could improve knowledge and awareness of SNAP for college students. Other steps include offering classes or talks to learn about SNAP, food preparation, nutritional needs, and budgeting.

OSU Extension gardening class in North Plains ;



Courtesy Photo by Vanessa Vandomelen

Food Literacy

In Washington County, 39% of the overall food insecure people and 45% of the children are ineligible for Federal Assistance because they are part of households that make more than the 185% of the Federal Poverty Level. Although not eligible for Federal Assistance, these people are still struggling to get adequate food on the table. For both people receiving federal assistance and those ineligible, public education is another important method to help eliminate food insecurity.

Oregon State University (OSU) Extension

Washington County OSU Extension main programs currently in the community are: 4-H Youth Development, Agriculture and Field Crops, Citizen Participation Organization, Family and Community Health, Nutrition, Forestry, Master Gardeners and Tech Wizards. The Extension Program is working closely with the county government and other extension offices throughout the state to improve the

local food system. Some of their upcoming collaborative programs in Western Washington County are:

- OSU Extension Master Gardeners and Nutrition Education programs partnering with Washington County WIC (Women, Infants and Children) to provide garden education to WIC participants, a large majority of whom are Latino. WIC bilingual staff will support the annual fair time activities at Master Gardener Demonstration Garden at Fairplex to deliver special programs suited for WIC and other Washington County Latino audience.
- Partnering with Virginia Garcia Memorial Wellness Center on a weeklong class called "Hydroponics, Horticulture and Healthy eating" by OSU Extension 4-H. Master Gardner volunteer speakers will be delivering hands on educational programs at the on-site garden at their building.
- Master Gardener volunteers will be supporting Dairy Creek Community Food Web's upcoming Backyard Food Garden Tours (July 2014).

Oregon Food Bank

Oregon Food Bank (OFB), while primarily known for the distribution of emergency food to hungerrelief agencies, is also working hard to create a more food secure communities throughout the state. The organization provides technical assistance and trainings to hunger-relief agencies and has a Fresh Alliance program to collect and distribute nutritious and perishable foods. OFB is also involved with community organizing workshops to build stronger and more equitable local food systems and in advocacy efforts to find long-term public policy solutions that benefit low income

people, and educational programs. Their educational programs are targeted at low-income people to learn how to grow food and stretch food dollars while cooking healthy meals.

A newer program being implemented by OFB this year with an impact on Western Washington County is the Seed to Supper program in Spanish. OFB has teamed up with Centro Cultural de Washington County in Cornelius to bring this class to the community. The program is a 5-week beginning gardening course that gives novice, adult gardeners the tools they need to successfully grow a portion of their own food on a limited budget.

Other Food Literacy Opportunities

While OSU Extension and OFB are making great strides creating new programs and reaching more people, the rural areas of the county are still often left out. Areas such as Gaston and Banks face geographical limitations and asking for a 6 week commitment has been unsuccessful in being able to retain consistent attendance from participants.

Partnerships with organizations in those areas working with people living on low incomes need to be continued and expanding. Currently at the Banks United Methodist Church they have partnered with the National College of Natural Medicine in Portland to use their Food as Medicine curriculum to offer cooking classes with sponsorship from their local grocery store, Jim's Thriftway, and Bob's Red Mill. Their classes are limited to fewer than 25 community members and only offered a few times. In Gaston, Wapato Valley Church helped to start a monthly after-school cooking class for students in grades 7-12. The assistant pastor hopes the class will foster community and build relationships that might not

otherwise be formed. Gaston is lucky to have a currently unused home economics classroom to host the class and hopefully with more assistance they can extend the use of the classroom to host classes for the rest of the community as well.

In Forest Grove and Cornelius, they are challenged to find a balance between Spanish and English in the classes they offer. In one instance a gardening class hosted by OSU Extension was held at the Forest Grove public library with high attendance for the English speaking version, but failed miserably on attendance for the Spanish speaking version and organizers are unsure of why. The way classes are advertised could be one issue. A representative from Adelante Mujeres expressed that the most reliable way they have found to advertise events to Spanish speaking residents is through calling potential participants and that for them, e-mail has been unsuccessful in spreading the word about opportunities.

Another issue in bridging the language barrier for is at events when there is either no translation available, or simultaneous translation. Spanish participants may not feel welcomed or like they can take part. At the Forest Grove FEAST headsets were provided for participants to receive real time translation, but the translator admitted to being fatigued and unable to translate everything. Participants at the Forest Grove FEAST expressed concern with how they were going to be able to continue to participate in community projects when email was picked as the best method to communicate and most Latino/as lack email. These, and more, are issues that Forest Grove and Cornelius communities need to continue to work on to create a more cohesive community and ensure equal opportunity for all people.

In order to help provide resources to those in the rural areas, it is ideal to offer short classes (a few hours on a single day) and to integrate the classes into activities already happening in the center of town. During the warmer months, people in need of emergency food services are more likely to hang out before the opening of the food pantries because they won't have to wait in the rain or cold. In North Plains the pantry will even put out some chairs for people, who often arrive 1-2 hours early to socialize with other people using the pantry. The lively discussion is sometimes even used to discuss alternative ways to cook food items they receive from the pantry. The time could be utilized with organized cooking demos and quick gardening, shopping or budgeting lessons.

Food Pantries:

Food pantries are sites where people can go to obtain an emergency allotment of groceries that should last their family for 3-5 days. Originally designed for emergencies such as job loss or an unexpected medical or home repair bill, but today many individuals and families rely on this resource once a month to help supplement their food purchases.

Spanning a ten mile radius around Forest Grove, including Gaston, Banks, Cornelius, and North Plains, 14 emergency food service sites are available for people in need, with eight more located on the western edge of Hillsboro. Gaston, Banks, and North Plains all have only one available location in their cities. Rural food pantries are often open only a select day and time, so some people in those areas might utilize other locations that are open at times that fit their schedules for their needs.

Food pantries initially set out to supply individuals and families with primarily shelf stable foods, but there is a new push to get more healthy foods and produce into the hands of those in need. With the increased produce come some difficulties though. At a pantry in Gaston, they share the space with a preschool and is only open one evening a week, so the manager stressed the importance of the timing of delivering fresh produce to the pantry because of both lack of storage space available and limited open days. Donations have to be coordinated to spend minimal time before reaching the homes of intended recipients. Many food pantries are also starting to switch away from prepacking boxes for clients and running shopping style pantries. At SVDP at St Anthony's, they made the transition to pantry style in November of 2013, and have heard nothing but excitement from clients. Clients are wasting less food and enjoy the freedom to make their own food choices. At the YMCA Family Resource Center, they have less space, but are using a hybrid method of the shopping style by packing some of the prepackaged foods and allowing clients to choose all their meats, breads, dairy, and produce. They are also scheduling clients at 10 minute intervals to allow them a freedom to shop on their own leading to people feeling less stress and more dignity in using a food pantry.



Man gleaning blueberries

Gleaning:

Gleaning is the ancient practice of collecting the remaining crop from the field after it has been harvested. In Oregon, low-income gleaning groups were first established in the early 1970's. The idea was to take low-income volunteers to gather crops and surplus or salvage foods to share equally among themselves and with food banks and meal sites. This practice was originally designed to have the recipients of the food join in the harvest, but in many places around the country, the work is done by volunteers and then redistributed through emergency food programs.

In western Washington County, there is currently no organized group working on gleaning, but the interest is there. At the FEAST follow-up in Forest

Grove in March 2014, gleaning was identified as



one of the top priorities for the community. Unfortunately there are no people interested with time to allot to establishing a gleaning group.

Although there is nothing formalized, some gleaning activities do take place. On farms, mostly

FEAST idea strategizing, where the topic of gleaning was prioritized; Photo credit to Guthrie Straw

The project resulted in a few gleaning outings and new connections, but the program has lost momentum. Today some people are still informally collecting fruit on their own and Adelante Mujeres is inviting their

friends and family are welcomed after the harvest, as farmers in Western Washington County tend to be wary of allowing strangers onto their property. One farmer in Forest Grove hasn't allowed strangers to glean his fields in 20 years. This is due to a group he invited to harvest a windblown section of his corn fields, which disrespected his generosity by attempting to glean portions he had not specified as available. This is not an uncommon story passed along from 20+ years ago, and many older farmer continue to be hesitant to the idea.

Gleaning is not just for farmland. Volunteers are also working throughout the county to glean products from grocery stores and other food venues to redistribute to emergency food programs, as well as gleaning from fruit trees in people's backyards, or in the public domain.

In 2012, a senior at Pacific University used her senior project to research gleaning of fruit trees throughout Forest Grove, and worked to create community partners to develop a sustainable gleaning program.

adult education students to help glean some prune trees in the area and then using the fruit to teach canning.

The informal group outings are keeping the gleaning present in Forest Grove, but for a sustainable and consistent gleaning project, new volunteers with time to allocate to the project need to be found to create a formal group. Some ideas for the future have been to map possible trees to be gleaned and projected dates of harvest, combine gleaning projects with cooking and preservation classes, as well as compiling contact information for trees on personal properties or a place for people to post when trees have excess product to gather. The interest is there,

with the right leadership and time available a gleaning group could be very successful in Western Washington County.

New Earth Farm

At New Earth Farms Scott Olsen has turned a composting hobby into a small scale production experimenting with black soldier fly composting, vermicomposting, community-supported agriculture, and food scrap recycling services. Initially, composting for local kitchens the transitional way, Mr. Olsen soon realized turning the piles and curing them until they produced soil was a time-consuming process and difficult to keep up with in the winter months because the piles struggled to reach high enough temperatures to change the material. He researched other methods of composting and came across Bokashi-style composting.

Bokashi is a Japanese term meaning fermented material, and the process uses microorganisms in an anaerobic environment to ferment the organic materials. The process breaks down the material in a quick 2-3 weeks when mixed with soil and gives off no heat, requires no water, and produces limited carbon dioxide. There is no need to balance carbon/nitrogen ratios (browns and greens) as in hot aerobic composting because Bokashi is anaerobic and takes place in a sealed container, which also eliminates pests. In contrast to traditional composting, the only odor produced is one of sweet vinegar and that is only evident when the container is opened to add more waste or to empty the contents when fermentation is complete.

Bokashi is not without its limitations though. The fermentation is so efficient, that there was limited soil to add the fermented matter to in the winter months. To decrease the waste, he started Dipterra, a year-round Black Soldier Fly composting operation in 2013. This enclosed operation houses the full life cycle of the Black Soldier Fly, where the larvae stage processes tons of fermented food waste into mature larvae and flies that can be used to feed the 35 chickens on the farm and a residue that can be added to the worm composting operation.



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Left: Scott Olsen feeding the chickens Black Solider Fly larvae; Right: Bokashi bins (blue) next to a traditional compost pile of coffee grounds

Western Washington County faces some barriers to creating a food secure community, but there are many assets available to create a thriving local food economy. This section highlights many of western Washington County's' assets, but is in no way comprehensive.

Western Washington County is rich with people interested in food related opportunities and groups such as CommUnity Meeting and Dairy Creek Community Food Web are useful in bringing those people together to share ideas and collaborate to strength project outcomes. The vast array of venues to sell produce directly to the consumer has heightened consumers awareness of local foods and made the people more invested in gardening and places to purchase local foods.

The diverse population in western Washington County makes for an additional strength, as it brings together people from different sexes, generations and races to work together on food related projects or bond over a trip to the farmers market. There is no telling what will happen the next few years, but the energy is there to create a secure food system.

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A booth at the Forest Grove Farmers' Market; photo credit: Shawn Linehan

Diversity in Washington County

Oregon is not a comparatively diverse state, but Washington County is in a unique situation drawing in many different people. The close proximity to the Portland Metropolitan area, the “silicon forest,” farm labor jobs, and much more, have created a notable trend in the growing ethnic diversity in the county’s demographics.

In the three-county metropolitan region, Washington County is ranked as the most ethnically diverse

county. The same opportunities that have drawn streams of immigrants to Washington County for 150 years are now attracting individuals and families from throughout the world. The county offers a high quality of life driven by good jobs, quality education and a healthy respect for the land and environment. The luring qualities of the county have led to 14% of the population representing populations born in other countries.

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The growing ethnic diversity is not without its challenges. In communities that are still predominately white, disparities are common due to issues such as differing cultures and language barriers. As the ethnic diversity grows, new programs are being developed to provide more resources for community members with differing backgrounds. An example of a newer program is the nutrition education/cooking classes OSU extension has implemented in the Somali language to create a welcoming environment for the growing Somali

currently have seven programs: Adult Education, Sustainable Agriculture, Chicas Youth Development, Early Childhood Education, Small Business Development, Conflict Resolution, and Forest Grove Farmers' Market.

Sustainable Agriculture director, Alejandro Tecum has coined the Agriculture Program and Farmers' Market "twin programs", providing aspiring Latino immigrant farmers and gardeners with the training and skills necessary to grow produce using

Washington County Demographics (2012 United States Census Bureau)

White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	68.9%
Black or African American alone	2.1%
Asian alone	9.3%
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander alone	0.5%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	1.2%
Hispanic or Latino	16.0%
Two or More Races	3.9%

population. Programs like this one are important because they provide a space where people can learn necessary skills in an environment they feel comfortable asking questions and surrounded by peers in similar situations.

Adelante Mujeres

Cultural competency is key in reaching minorities. One organization in Western Washington County that fully embraces and understands Hispanic/Latino families' culture is Adelante Mujeres. With 16% of the population identifying as Hispanic and varying degrees of English proficiency Adelante Mujeres presence in the community is greatly needed. The organization provides holistic education and empowerment opportunities to low income Latina women and their families to ensure full participation and active leadership in the community. They

sustainable methods and to successfully market their products. All participants involved in the sustainable agriculture program are initially enrolled in a 12 week sustainable farming class taught in Spanish. About 50% return for refresher years. The class runs two hours once a week from January to April and costs \$30. The course covers topics such as farming techniques, soil maintenance, crop planning and pest management and includes practical workshops and opportunities to participate in farming related conferences and networking events. The class is very similar to the current Master Gardner program taught throughout the state by OSU Extension, but is taught in Spanish. Many of the participants are already knowledgeable on farming, but are unfamiliar with crop varieties and practices best suited for the climate in Washington County.

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After the course, participants are offered the opportunity to put their course fee towards a plot at the community garden in Forest Grove, or to pursue other gardening or business ventures in agriculture.

Adelante is in the last year of their lease on the 12-acre La Esperanza Farm and is now switching focus to community garden expansion and aiding farmers in accessing land. The community gardens will be more dispersed throughout the county so people can have plots near their homes. Increased access to land will help connect interested farmers to land owners with acres available for agricultural production. At Victory Garden, the community garden in Forest Grove, Adelante is the administrator for 1/3 of the space and uses it to provide plots for their participants to grow products for personal consumption and for profit, as well as for a demo plot. The demo space is a 600 sq. ft. plot marked with educational signage to teach about irrigation and to introduce participants to unfamiliar varieties of crops.

After the course, the learning continues. The educators visit personal gardens and farms to help troubleshoot problems and provide workshops throughout the year on various topics. As part of the Sustainable Agriculture Program, Adelante is working hard to help provide ways to distribute the food produced locally. Currently there



Photo of the Adelante Agricultura booth at the Farmers Market; Photo courtesy of <http://www.adelantemujeres.org/get-involved/>

are three methods Adelante participants can utilize through the organization to sell produce: Forest Grove Farmers' Market (pg 44), Adelante Mujeres distributor, and through an aggregated CSA. Participants are not limited to these options and

many farmers are also involved in farmers' markets throughout the Portland Metro area, farm stands and other agricultural related business ventures too.

The farmers' market is not exclusively for Adelante participants, farmers that are able and want to sell products at the weekly market are able to have their own booth or sell at the Adelante Mujeres Sustainable Agriculture Program Collective Booth. The Distributor and CSA function as another market outlet and training opportunity for the program's participants. All farmers involved must have completed the 12 week sustainable farming class and practice organic farming methods. The Distributor is in its third year and is up 700% in profit sales from its initial pilot year with plans to recruit new farmers from both Yamhill and Washington County to increase their capacity. They are currently selling mostly to institutional buyers throughout the county, and plan to have 50% of their sales going to institutions providing food to low-income individuals and families by 2016. The aggregate CSA is also fairly

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new, starting its second year providing options for both SNAP recipients and other people interested in the community.

Through all of the garden education and produce distribution, Adelante is connecting participants to their communities and providing valuable networking and educational advocacy opportunities. In some cases they provide waived fees and transportation to events, while in others they simply spread the word so participants are aware of the opportunities available. While language can be a barrier at times since participants have varying levels of English proficiency, attending classes and events throughout the community helps to develop their voice and leadership in the community. The gardeners and farmers recently had a meet and greet with the institutions and CSA members to whom they sell produce and were able to talk about their practices and learn about what and why their buyers are interested in the product. There has been a struggle to make the farmers see each other as allies and resources and not as competition and events such as the meet and greet are beneficial to helping gardeners and farmers connect and understand the communities need and that working together will help to provide a better outcome. All the work being done through Adelante and the Sustainable Agriculture program is important to not only empowering the Latino community, but also in strengthening the entire community and bringing people together.

Direct Market Sales

As mentioned in the agriculture section, vegetable sales are up in Washington County, and one of the main reasons is because of farm direct consumer relationships through farmers markets, community supported agriculture (CSA), farm stands, and

upick options. The 2012 Census of Agriculture shows Oregon as a top leader in farm direct marketing, coming in sixth in the nation and grossing \$44 million (ninth in the nation). People all over are becoming more educated about ecological footprint, health and agriculture, which is creating a growing desire from the consumer to purchase food locally.

Washington County is a major contributor to Oregon being a national leader in direct sales and CSAs. The 2012 census of agriculture reported 411 farm producers participating in farm direct marketing, which raked in \$3.2 million. Being located on the outskirts of the state's largest city, Portland, Oregon, is a huge reason farm direct marketing has been so successful here. For CSA farms, which tend to lean towards the small size in acreage, the close proximity to the market reduces cost of delivering the product to the consumer and increases the gross per acre. As the public continues to become more educated on the concepts of CSAs and other direct purchasing methods, there is plenty of room for growth in Washington County.

Farmers' Markets

In 2013, sixteen different farmers' markets were open throughout the summer months in Washington County, with an option available every day, but Monday. Of those sixteen markets, four of them were in the "rural" parts of the county (Forest Grove, North Plains, Banks, and Cornelius). At the beginning of the 2014 farmers' market season, both Banks and Cornelius markets chose not to reopen due to struggles faced the previous year. They struggled with finding a balance between craft vendors and produce vendors, as well as in continuing to draw in customers each week. Without an inconsistent customer base for vendors, many farmers are unable to justify the time and money it takes to be present at

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the markets. Since residents of Washington County are already in close proximity to many other farmers' markets and stores, the markets will need to revamp their appeal to continue having both vendors and community members returning each week.

North Plains and Forest Grove have been growing over the past few years and are part of a group of markets in the county participating in a Market Sprouts Kids Club program, a grant funded program from New Seasons Market, to encourage kids to come to the market and learn about local produce. The program is available at Hillsboro, Beaverton, North Plains and Tigard Farmers Markets too and involves activities such as tastings, coloring, finding and identifying vegetables in the market to engage kids. Those two markets also have funding available to support a SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) match program, which means that they not only accept SNAP, but will match the

amount spent for up to \$5-\$10 depending on the available funds for purchase of fresh produce.

Although the Forest Grove market is thriving, North Plains market has undergone many changes to keep afloat. The market has switched from Saturday to Thursday evenings, to avoid competing with surrounding markets, and relocated onto NW Commercial, the main street in North Plains. The move to Commercial Street has not been without its difficulties. This summer, 2014, the volunteer market managers and chamber had to petition to remain on NW Commercial Street to the North Plains City Council due to one store owners' apprehension, but with strong community support and support from Oregon Farmers' Market Association (OFMA) the markets future looks promising. While the market will remain open, the market manager stated that, "there is still a huge learning curve for food security in North Plains."

Forest Grove Farmers' Market

Kaely Summers has just completed her second year as the Forest Grove Farmers Market Manager in 2013, rounding out the 8th year of the local non-profit Adelante Mujeres run market. As the market has grown, it has relocated to Main Street and now sees close to 2,000 people each week. Some of the original vendors from 2005 have continued to participate and new vendors are joining each year.

The first market of the season is a collaborative market with the City Club of Forest Grove who organizes craft vendors and other community booth space leading to multiple blocks of booths instead of the customary one block event, but as the summer goes on the market is focused mostly on food sales. As with most markets there is a fluctuation of vendors throughout the season, with reasons ranging from internal logistical issues to limited seasons and running out of product to sell, but most come back year after year. Even with changing vendors from time to time the market is consistently able to provide a diverse array of items available each week ranging from fresh produce, eggs, meat, honey, baked goods and prepared foods to flowers, plant starts, hand-crafted soaps and more, while also being a venue for the community to interact and foster cross-cultural exchange.

While farmers' markets are typically thought to be for the affluent members of society, the Forest Grove Farmers' Market is striving to provide an inviting place for all demographics present in the community. Although, like any event, they are continuing to experiment with the

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Farmer picking lettuce inside the hoop house for a CSA basket

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA):

The plethora of high-value crop land, ideal temperatures for year round farming, and connection to the Portland metro area makes Washington County ideal for profitable vegetable production. One way for small farmers to infiltrate the local consumer market is through Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). A CSA is a combined effort between a farm and a community of supporters that creates a direct relationship between the production and consumption of food. The idea began as

“Farming with a Face on it” in Japan during the 1960s with the goal to link urban families to the seasonality of food production and farm life. Twenty years later in the 1980s, the idea made its way to the United States where it became known as community supported agriculture.

Supporters (members) usually contribute a payment before the season to support the operation of the farm and a “share” of the season’s harvest. A member benefits from their investment in the CSA

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by knowing the farmer and place their food is coming from directly as well as fresh, healthy, local food during harvest season. The farmer benefits because the CSA model creates an economically viable way for small scale farmers to produce and market a wide variety of high quality vegetables.

Portland Area Community Supported Agriculture (PACSAC) is a local program of the Oregon Sustainable Agriculture Land Trust (OSALT) which provides education and resources about CSA to farmers and the community. PACSAC offers communities educational opportunities about CSA as an option for healthy, local, sustainable eating

potluck meetings/farm tours at various CSA farms throughout the tri-county area. Our Table in Sherwood, Love farm Organics in Forest Grove, Full Plate Farm in Ridgefield, WA, La Finquita del Buho and Pumpkin Ridge Gardens in Hillsboro all hosted the group for lively discussion about farming as well as monthly specialized topics. The meetings were used for connecting farmers as well as discussion of important topics such as CSA education and outreach, growing winter vegetables, CSA retention, and guest speakers on seasonal NW vegetables recipes and rogue Valley Farm Corps. Farmers find the meetings useful for gearing up for the next season. “The meeting and tours have provided an amazing outlet for meeting other farmers and

Some things to consider in picking a CSA:

- Size of the weekly box – Share sizes range greatly. Some are designed for single people, some for two to three people, and others for large families.**
- Length of season – From 18 weeks to 50, different farms offer different options for seasonal eating. A few distribute year round; some only operate in the winter.**
- Share distribution days, times and locations – Does the farm drop off shares at a place and time that is easy for you to get to on a weekly basis?**
- Experience – Some farmers have more than twenty years of experience and some are just getting started. Contact farmers to ask questions about the farm, history, and for a possible visit.**
- Add-ons – For additional cost, some farms offer eggs, meat, flowers, coffee, honey, ice cream or other items.**
- Growing practices – Some farms are certified organic, some use sustainable growing methods, and some are conventional.**

through presentations, their website, tabling at events, and print materials. The farmers involved with PACSAC are offered opportunities for networking and resource sharing through a listserv, on-farm events (October-March), and workshops. Last off-season, October through March, the group held 4

discussing best practices for CSA farming in the Portland area,” said a CSA farmer after a meeting.

A CSA is a wonderful way to connect with the freshest seasonal produce and local farms. People join CSAs for many reasons: to eat the freshest

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produce available, to educate children (and themselves!) about where food comes from, to improve health, and more. Washington County is fortunate to have 30 CSA farm options to choose from, providing the surrounding community with a variety of choices and many opportunities to try out a CSA close by and support the local economy. The PACSAC directory and farm websites should provide most of this information along with examples of what will be grown during the season.

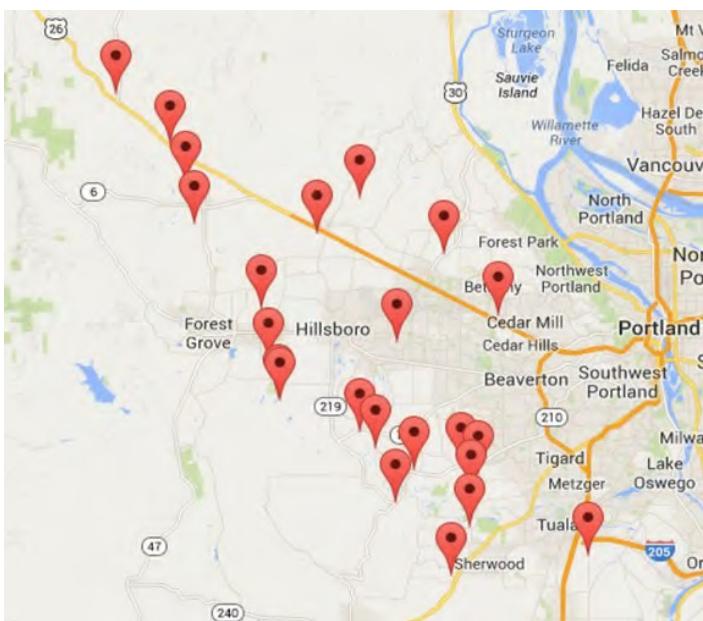
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Farm Stands and U-Pick

If a CSA seems like too much of a commitment or is not a right fit, there are other options for producers and consumers to work directly with each other. TriCounty Farm Fresh Produce is an organization of local farms offering produce for sale directly to the public through u-pick and farm stands in Washington, Clackamas and Multnomah counties. The organization has both a website and the printed Farm Fresh Food Guide available to receive information about farm products. The website is updated frequently with the products available and events happening on farms throughout the tri-county

information and brief information about the farm and products.

Besides using the tri-county Farm Fresh Food Guide, the summer also brings many temporary farm stands, which take advantage of the high volume of traffic on highway 26, attracting many people to fresh produce while on their daily commute or while travelling to the coast or mountains. U-picks are another option for people to buy directly from farmers. U-picks have the added bonus of ensuring the freshest produce because you picked it that day, as well as a glimpse at the effort behind fresh food production.



area, while the annually published Food Guide displays crop availability chart by month as well as which farms have which products. The Food Guide is organized by county to display contact

Rural Grocery Store Survey

In Western Washington County small independent grocery stores used to be scattered all around, making for easy access to necessary food items. Today most of those stores are gone. Competition from big-box chain stores, coupled with a high number of people commuting to the cities for work and subsequently food purchases, has made many of the small independent grocery stores close.

One store that though it had found its perfect niche market was Grande Foods. Grande Foods, the first traditional grocery store, originally Hank's Thriftway, in Oregon to undergo a transformation to a Latino Market. It opened in Cornelius, an area where over half the population is Hispanic/Latino, but only lasted four years before closing in 2010. Grande Foods was a 35,000-square-foot market

“cocina” or deli. Cornelius thought the store would be a step towards encouraging diversity and bringing service to the entire community, but the yearly decline in business was discouraging. Larry Hering, one of the former owners thought the opening of a local Walmart would bring in more people, but

Map of farm stands and u-picks from Tri-County Farm Fresh Produce. For more information visit:

<http://www.tricountyfarm.org/>

featuring a Mexican bakery, tortillería, creamery, and a

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“Walmart was the tip of the iceberg, Walmart was a factor, but mainly it was the economy.” In an area that struggles with high poverty rates, the store was ultimately unable to stay competitive against the neighboring chain stores during the recession and closed business. While Grande Foods and other smaller store have not survived the urbanization of Washington County, some independent rural grocery stores are still standing and serve as important establishments in the community.

The rural stores are all about 8-15 miles for big-box chain stores, but survive because of their connections to their surrounding communities. Joan Mangan-Stuck the newest owner of Gales Creek County Store and Deli reopened the doors after a few years of the building lying vacant and gutted. With high initial cost put in from her and her family to

get the building up to code, making the store known was very important. Although Joan herself is not a drinker, she will spend a few nights a month at the local bar passing out cupcakes and mingling with the community members or pass along a dozen cookies to loggers to share with their friends. “Having a successful business is dependent on the community knowing you love them and are there for them,” says Joan and she shows it. The store reopened April 1, 2014 advertising, “We don’t fool you we feed you!” They serve daily hot meals and fresh baked goods cooked by Joan herself. The store is also a village post office, currently selling stamps and flat rate boxes, with the goal to bring back mailboxes by the beginning of the year due to popular demand from the community.

In communities such as Gales Creek, Gaston, and Banks, the close proximity to big-box chain stores might be a hindrance, but they still serve an important role in the communities. Store managers have stressed that the summer is the season for business. Travelers driving to the wineries, coast, lakes, and rivers boost the stores traffic, but in the winters the stores rely on the local communities to keep them afloat. The communities depend on them too. The winters in rural Western Washington County can limit transportation options, but the stores know their communities and are there to check in on them and help provide a meal when needed.

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The success of any rural grocery is very dependent on connection to the community. Mark Ward, the owner of Jim's Thriftway in Banks, Oregon said, "Give to the community and it gives back." The store not only serves as a locate place to make foods purchases, but is part of the community. Mr. Ward said he like to keep his involvement with the community "fun and interesting" to keep the community shopping there instead of the stores in Forest Grove or Hillsboro. He enjoys being able to donate to local causes,

provide food for the local cooking classes, supply the local high school football team with snacks to refuel on

away games, and his favorite community involvement, sponsoring the



n-Stuck, owner of Gales Creek Country Store and Deli



almost doubled its size since its initial establishment. Elena and Jeff Rasmussen's friendly and welcoming presence is a

Jim's Thriftway Open Street Stock National 100 during the summer.

Community involvement can help a rural grocery store succeed and expand as an anchor in the community. Gaston Market is a shining example of the presence a store can make on a community. With 52 years under their belt, this second-generation, family-owned grocery store has

huge contributor to their success throughout not just Gaston, but surrounding cities too. One yelp review wrote, "Sure, the prices may be a bit higher than you might find in one of the chain stores, but when you just need something and don't feel like driving all the way into the city this place is great. They have a fantastic selection of products, and I have actually discovered some new things here that I have never seen in the chain stores." While the Rasmussen's community involvement is key to spreading attention to their store by word of mouth, they back their claims and personality with a full-service deli that specializes in hard-to-find meats and cheeses, house-made take-and -bake pizzas, fresh produce, local produces, such as wine, honey, cheese, jams and nuts and a unique selection of groceries.

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Granges:

Washington County has ten active Grange Halls, with four serving the more rural areas of the county: Forest Grove #282, Washington #313 (North Plains), Kinton #562 (Beaverton), and Dixie Mountain #860 (North Plains). Historically granges served as a fraternal organization that encouraged families to band together to promote the economic and political well-being of the community and agriculture. Today, the shrinking farm population has forced granges to broaden their range to include a wide variety of issues, and open to any interested party to join.

Many of the grange halls in the county are used for more social purposes like community meeting space and dance classes, but there are still people loyal to granges throughout the county. Not all of the granges are working to serve as a resource to the local farming community, but there is a new wave of people trying to bring granges back to their roots.

The Forest Grove Grange is currently working on a plan for remodeling their kitchen

so it can be used as a commercial kitchen for small local businesses and cooking classes. They also have opened their doors to host monthly food related film nights and an annual indoor farmers market. Both the Kinton and Dixie Mountain Granges hold annual events revolved around food to bring together the community. Kinton's annual meal is a turkey dinner in October and Dixie Mountain's hosts a strawberry festival in June.

While granges are not as big of an influence on the local farming community as they were in the past, there is potential to return supporting local food. The granges in Washington County could serve as physical hubs in our food system network with the kitchens being used for food processing and cooking classes. They could also be the venue for new and young farmers to network. Since food assistance is a growing need, granges can also be another venue for people to get information on food assistance efforts.

Community and School Gardens

Growing food in Western Washington County is fairly common since many people tend to have space available, but communal spaces are still in high demand. Currently the western part of the county has two community gardens, in Forest Grove and North Plains, 13 school gardens, and a few other gardens at churches and other community organizations. Community gardens are not only a piece of land for people that lack the space at home, but also a space to interact with their fellow community members and an inviting environment for new gardeners to learn from experienced gardeners. The Forest Grove and North Plains community gardens are both thriving with high interest from their community's for more space. North Plains held winter gardening and seed growing classes for the first time this year and Forest Grove is working to teach water conservation by introducing more efficient methods of watering to its members.

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Gaston, Banks, and Cornelius are all currently without community garden spaces, but interest is present. A group in Cornelius have been trying for a couple years to find a space to garden, but still



Banks elementary school/ community garden; photo courtesy of Kimberly Martin haven't found a site in the city that will allow for a

long-term commitment. One group invested in the process is Adelante Mujeres, who is hoping to use part of the garden to provide space for graduates of their sustainable farming class. In Banks, the elementary school is currently re-starting their garden in hopes of making it a combined effort with the community. The school garden can be the start to gauging interest for a potential community garden. Gaston, a much smaller town, with most people having access to land, need more surveying of the community to gauge whether a community garden is desired. Currently their local food pantry offers plant starts to interested people

provided by the local high school, and the town is full of garden enthusiasts, boasting a garden club and a few master gardens.

As of the spring of 2014, 13 out of 19 schools in Western Washington County have garden spaces, but the top three schools for food insecurity are all without. School gardens are tough to keep up; schools rely on volunteers to help with maintenance, especially during school holidays and

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many times the project is tacked on as side project to already busy teachers. Limitations do exist in having a successful school gardens, but teachers utilizing the gardens for some classes at the Forest Grove Community School and Banks Elementary School believe any space available no matter how small provides an invaluable place for students to learn.

Community Food Conversations:

FEAST (Food, Education, Agriculture, Solutions, Together) is a community organizing model developed by the Oregon Food Bank. FEAST events are designed to engage community members interested in their local food system in a discussion about food, education, and agriculture in their community. The community members present then work towards solutions together, through the identification of shared priorities and the creation of action plans, to help create a more equitable, healthy, and resilient local food system. A FEAST event was held in Washington County in

February 2011 in Forest Grove at which five action groups were formed:

- 1) Feeding Hungry People**
- 2) Supporting New Farmers**
- 3) Establishing Year-round Farmers Market and Community Kitchens**
- 4) Developing School Gardens, Nutrition Education and Farm to School Programs**
- 5) Creating Appropriate Land Use Policies**

In March 2014, follow-up event was held in Forest Grove. Seven community members presented on the work being done in the community to secure the food system since the previous event:

- John Moore from SVDP at St Anthony's discussed the transition to "shopping style pantry" in November 2013 after discovering some foods were going to waste when clients were given a pre-packed box. He also talked about the support the emergency food pantry receives from the community, from the local community garden (Maple Street) and three local churches growing 7,056 pounds of fresh food for the pantry to local organizations, churches, schools, and a retirement center collecting 16,590 pounds of dry goods in the last year.
- Ellen Hastay talked about meeting the immediate need for fresh food. Maple Street Community garden has 2000 sq. feet dedicated to donations for pantries in Forest Grove, and 145 plots for community members to grow their own food. To encourage people to grow their own food, the community garden and Dairy Creek Community Food Web co-sponsored with OSU Extension and the FG library a series of four classes on gardening topics at the library spring 2014 and two gardening classes at the Forest Grove Senior and Community Center. All class participants are given vegetables seeds from the OFB and they are

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working on a more permanent seed saving/exchange to be available year round.

- Charlene Murdock from Nana Cardoon, a gardenbased learning center, talked about the programs offered through the center as well as community connections. The center supports Adelante Mujeres by providing land for two of their gardeners to utilize for food production. They've partnered with Pacific University students and Virginia Garcia Memorial Center for hands on work revolving around agriculture. This year

some events that have taken place at the center have been a seed to table bread workshop, classes on living soils, seed saving, bean, grain, and edible seeds, grain trials and much more. For current events at Nana Cardoon visit <https://www.facebook.com/NanaCardoon>.

- Richard White, also from Nana Cardoon and a member of the Forest Grove Grange, spoke about the granges plan to update their kitchen, "Thelma's Kitchen". Many small scale produces are interested in being able to produce value-added products to sell and the updates would make the kitchen certified for this process. As a certified kitchen, it could also be used for more cooking and preservation classes.
- Natasha Spoden from Meals on Wheels at the Forest Grove Senior and Community Center spoke about making more connections for local donations and increasing the healthy food options for the program. They currently serve about 3050 hot meals daily and delivers meals to about 90 seniors in the community 7 days a weeks.



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- Kaely Summers from Adelante Mujeres discussed the Forest Grove Farmers Market (pg. 41) as well as the pilot of a produce prescription program with Virginia Garcia Memorial Center. The program would give people more fresh produce to improve nutrition.
- Robin Lindsley from Dairy Creek community Food Web, discussed the projects the group has worked on since the last FEAST (pg.55).

North Plains Community Food Conversation

This years opportunities identified by the community in creating a more sustainable local food system are:

- Year-round market/store (pg 49),
- Gleaning (pg 37), and
- Community and school gardens (pg 50).

Forest Grove is not the only area where FEAST events were held. In North Plains, Gaston, and Banks, FEAST Community Food Conversations were held to engage the communities and bring light to old and new projects and ideas revolving around the local food system. Community Food Conversations are a shortened version of a FEAST that focuses on having participants compile lists of the main challenges, assets, and opportunities within the community and set goals for follow-up projects to enhance the local food system. The goal is for community members to drive the outcomes. The meeting is designed to be informal and encourage participation from everybody. Ideally by the end, the group will have a list of opportunities to improve the local system and a plan for next steps to start pursuing the opportunities that were identified.

In all, 84 people attended the four events held in March and April, forming new connections and sparking new project ideas. Challenges varied from place to place, but there were some consistencies across the three. All three areas are geographically very spread out and experiencing an increasingly higher volume of people commuting to the larger

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cities for work, creating a disconnect within the communities. This disconnect can also be attributed to the lack of a formal way to relay information and communicate to a wide audience. All the areas were also seeing increases in the number of people utilizing their food pantries, and a need for more food literacy education.

Following the event in North Plains Vanessa VanDomelen, the North Plains Farmers Market Manager, wrote an article, *Seed class and swap inspires new gardeners*, for the Hillsboro Tribune. She wrote that “a garden class and seed swap in North Plains last weekend brought together green thumbs and those with an interest in the local food system. The events were a direct result of the North Plains Community Conversation event hosted by the Oregon Food Bank and the North Plains Farmers’ Market last month, where community members and city leaders decided to make gardening classes a priority.” The community was able to work with OSU Extension and local farmer Polly Gottesman of Pumpkin Ridge Gardens for classes on seed-

starting and preparing for winter gardening.

These areas are not just full of challenges, there are many assets to living in rural Washington County, such as quality soil with maritime climate, the ability to grow year round, and the presence of Dairy Creek Community food Web. People living in Western Washington County enjoy the land and community and want to live in this area, away from the more metropolitan areas. These conversations are just the start, but have sparked new community connections and in the words of a Banks community conversation participant,

“I’m excited to see the conversation begin and hope to assist in communication and networking to strengthen the existing food web. I appreciate the efforts of all involved. This is an important topic for our community, especially since there are untapped resources that we can put to good use.”

Community Meeting

August 2013, a group of community members in the Forest Grove and Cornelius area started meeting to connect about how to be a united community. Dale Phipps, part of Real Life Church and the Boosters Club in Cornelius, has been organizing email lists and agendas for the group each month. The group currently meets the 3rd Thursday of each month from 10-11:30am at various locations throughout the Cornelius and Forest Grove area. The group initially focused on looking at the resources available and brainstorming ideas of what they dreamed a better community would look like, while also looking at the greatest struggle their organizations faced.

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They focus half of the meeting on introductions and updates of community projects and half on discussing how to build trust within the community. There are barriers to achieving the dream of a cohesive community in Western Washington County, but the group has spurred some new projects and provides a venue to share current projects happening in the community. Some of the current projects the group has been discussing are:

- Resource Mapping: Vision for a practicable referral system of social services available to our local communities; currently working with 211info to educate faith based advocates and service agencies to all collectively update their available

resources on 211info to provide the most up to date information for the community

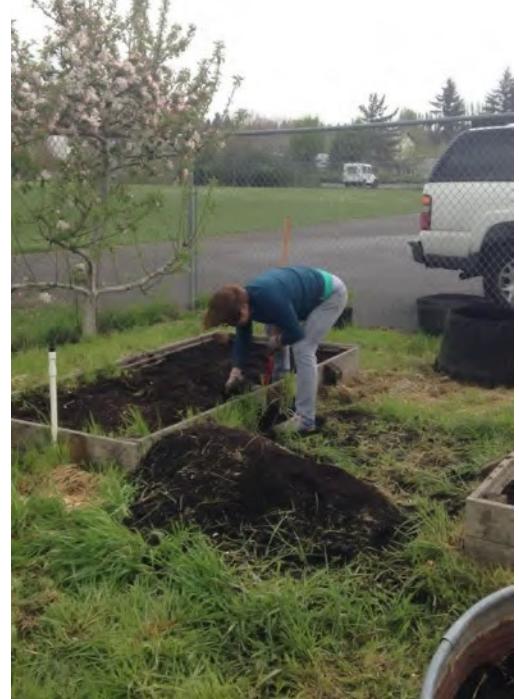
- Love Inc.: A Christian based organization linking Christian volunteers and ministries to people in need and better serve the community with combined efforts from all faith communities in Western Washington County. They are in the process of filing for 501c3 and engaging volunteers to help in their efforts.
- Plaza Project: This project was spurred from the CommUnity meetings and is currently discussing their purpose, vision and development, but they hope to become a center for community building, economic development, faith communities, youth, and the arts in the old Grande Foods building. Currently they are looking to host a trial event to showcase the idea and solicit buy in from other community members to decide whether this is a fit for the community.
- Resource Fair and Homeless Resource Center: Both of these are initiated by Sonrise Church in Forest Grove. The resource fair is a one day event to provide services, food, and information for the homeless community. The homeless resource center is a proposed idea to get a building for people in Western Washington County to go for a bed and resources when in need.

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Left: A farmer roasting peppers to sell outside of the Fill Your Pantry event;

Right: A Volunteer helping to prepare the beds for the Banks elementary school and community garden; photo courtesy of Kimberly Martin





The Dairy Creek Community Food Web (DCCFW), named for the Dairy Creek watershed, is an organization that builds connections within the local food system. From the humble start as a group of individuals interested in a canning class in 2010, the group has since grown its presence in Forest Grove by exchanging knowledge and resources to grow, process, share and celebrate food in Western Washington County. The DCCFW partners with local governments, businesses, landowners, farmers, educators, growers and social service providers to host events revolving around local food and is applying for a 501(c)3.

DCCFW is currently collaboration with the Forest Grove Grange, Adelante Mujeres, Community Matters, City of Forest Grove, FG/Cornelius Chamber of Commerce, Oregon Food Bank, Meals On Wheels People, FG/Banks School District, faith community members, Family Resource Center, B St Permaculture Farm, Pacific University, City of Forest Grove and the Forest Grove Senior & Community Center.

With the partnerships, the group is instrumental in hosting and supporting activities to create a thriving food community in which all residents have the opportunity to grow, prepare and consume local food in order to support the health of the land and its people. Some of their projects have been:

- DCCFW hosts monthly environmental/food film nights at the Forest Grove Grange and “stone” soup or salad dinners at the Forest Grove Community and Senior Center. A founding member Robin Lindsley, says she “hopes the monthly movies and meals continue to bring new people together to keep discussing local food issues”
- Working with the Forest Grove public library to make farm, garden and environmental books and a seed swap available. Also working together in conjunction with OSU Extension to host gardening, cooking, and canning classes in both English and Spanish
- Sponsoring Annual Farm Your Yard Tour, where participants pay a small fee to tour home gardens throughout the city of Forest Grove and learn more about the sustainable joy of home food gardening.
- Fill Your Pantry Market, hosted the last two years at the Forest Grove Grange. This is a once a year, end of the season (November), indoor farmers market. It provides a place where producers can sell and consumers can stock up on winter provisions, such as: winter squash, garlic, nuts, grains, jams, carrots, apples, vinegars, pickles, canned goods, corn,

- **Create more avenues for new farmers to access land and trainings:**

Friends of Family Farmers has created a site called iFarm where people can post wanted land or available land throughout Oregon to rent, lease, or buy. There are currently many more people seeking land to farm than land available, but this site is a great start to creating connection between farmland and potential farmers as people become more aware of it. Adelante Mujeres is another resource working to connect local farmers with land owners.

- **Increase farmer networking**

Farm work is demanding and can take up the majority of a farmers' day, but more opportunities for farmers to better connect can provide many benefits. Meet and greets with consumers, support for new and young farmers, opportunities to share equipment and discuss farming practices, as well as discussing available grants and trainings available.

- **Assess farmers interested in increased local food aggregator/ distribution system**

Small farms are the norm in Washington County, and with more small farms appearing the competition in selling locally increases. In making local food more available, an aggregate/ distribution system could be a great way for small farmers to work together to help supply local schools, hospitals, and other institutions with local produce. Adelante Mujeres is already doing this with small farmers, in Western Washington County and hoping to be able to expand to increase the produce available for buyers in the future.

- **Address Farmworker Housing**

The shortage of able farmworkers is a consistent problem for agriculture in the state. A significant issue for farmworkers is housing. Traditional migrant farmworker housing is minimal and uncomfortable. Creating a highly sustainable model for eco-friendly housing that would allow farmworkers to live closer to their work would benefit a number of groups in addition to traditional farmworkers. Many enthusiastic younger and older people are looking for a way to participate in agricultural work so creating a form of agricultural settlement, or eco-village, would be a way of providing housing and helping ensure a supply of able farmworkers.



- **Establish a gleaning group in Western Washington County:**

The Forest Grove FEAST event identified gleaning as a top opportunity for the local community. With vast amounts of produce being farmed and fruit trees planted throughout the cities, this could be a great opportunity to bring more fresh produce to the community and reduce food waste.

- **Increase availability and variety of food literacy classes in Western Washington:**

Work with local schools, churches, social service agencies and pantries to create one day classes on nutrition, cooking, food preservation, gardening and budgeting for communities. Food demos at pantries by OSU Extension and OFB teachers would introduce people to new products and create discussion around different ways to prepare foods to eat. A balance of classes offered in both Spanish and English would be useful in increasing food literacy programs available throughout Western Washington County.

- **Increase access to fresh, local produce to people receiving federal assistance:**

Classes to teach people how to stretch their federal assistance to buy healthier foods; more marketing on which local farm stands and farmers markets accept SNAP and WIC. Collaborating with the OSU Extension and the newly established Neighborhood Networks to discuss best methods for getting more fresh food to clients or working with Washington County Public Health as they are working towards a grant to increase access to fresh produce and physical activity in Washington County.

- **Create a more cohesive group amongst social service groups:**

Neighborhood Networks, a pilot program with OFB, in Washington, Multnomah and Clackamas counties. Networks are regional coalitions of emergency and supplemental food and service providers. Regular network meetings provide a space for the organizational representatives to discuss

successes and challenges, and to work together on joint initiatives to provide the best possible service to their community. Also, there has been initiative to work with 211 to have all services up to date and present for 211 staff to be able to direct people to the best source to meet their need. Continued efforts are needed so all social service agencies are more aware of the work and resources around them.

- **Continue helping pantries to switch to “shopping style”**

Switching to “shopping-style” or a hybrid of box and shopping style is highly preferred by clients because they are able to choose the foods they want to consume.

- **Increase the number of eligible citizens enrolled and using federal assistance**

In Washington County less than 2/3rd of eligible citizens are enrolled in federal assistance programs. There needs to be more education on the benefits of using federal assistance to improve the economy as well as in increasing the amount of healthy food options a person is able to buy. More culturally specific messaging would help promote the programs as well as increasing overall awareness of those who will benefit from the programs. Using a variety of social venues to decrease stigma of the use of federal benefits and promote the knowledge of them at churches, doctors’ offices, coffee shops, and other places people frequent during their day to day lives

- **Map all certified kitchens and support development for more shared-used kitchen facilities where there is community need**

Kitchens are useful for both education classes, such as cooking and preservation, as well by food producers to prepare value added products to sell locally.

- **Generate new ways to engage volunteers in the community**

As with many areas, there is volunteer fatigue and many of the same people involved in an array of different community projects. Tapping into the senior population, high school and Pacific University students, and OSU Extension personnel could be useful to draw in more volunteers for teaching classes, generating ideas for future projects and finding people with skill sets to continue strengthening the local food system.

- **Development of more community and school garden spaces**

Cornelius has been in the works to find a place to start a garden for a little over a year and Forest Grove has added this as a goal to the food action place section of the community’s sustainability plan. Developing a model for school gardens that address code issues and could be duplicated would assist additional schools in creating gardens by not requiring them to “re-create the wheel”.

- **Development and support for Cornelius and Banks Farmers Markets:**

Work with communities to help grow the markets customer and vendor attendance and finding funding to be able to accept SNAP and WIC at their markets. Before re-launching the markets questions about why the markets failed need to be answered. To assess what is right for the community.

- Host food events/free meal nights to bring together communities:**

With the growing population, community events are important to bring all people together, no matter age, gender, race, or sexual orientation. Events revolved around food, possibly highlighting food from different cultures once a month or stone soups, where people all bring items to contribute to making a meal together, are a great way to bring people together to both meet and share ideas.

- Establish a centralized place for people throughout the entire county to access information about the food system:**

So much is happening in the local food system that it is hard to follow what is already being done. A website/list-server where all food related resources and information is compiled for people to easily access. Possibly work with equity atlas to be able to provided maps with all resources available and designated centrally located spots for people to post and learn about events in community for those without access to internet.

- Development of a store to sell locally produced foods**

Forest Grove is currently in the process of creating a store to sell locally grown and produced foods. Continued efforts with this group should be made to assist in the process.



Farm along highway 8 in Gales Creek

The western Washington County Community Food Assessment used combined methods of quantitative and qualitative data to create this document. The qualitative data was gathered through interviews with farmers, pantry managers, social service organizations, farmer's market managers and other citizens involved in the local community food system, as well as through attendance at community meetings and food related events throughout the county. The quantitative data was mostly collected from agricultural and socioeconomic data online. The simultaneous collection of data created a range of material to analysis in order to create the most comprehensive perspective on the local food related issues. By involving a diverse array of people and resource to explore the local food system of western Washington County, the report was able to focus on county specific recommendations to create a more secure local food system directly expressed from community members.

Western Washington County Community Food Assessment: Bridging the Gap Between Rural and Urban provides the first steps in engaging the local community and outlining potential opportunities to pursue to help strengthen the local food system. Due to the vast size of the county, the report is focused on the western part, but many of the assets and needs addressed in this document can be filled from further collaboration with organizations in the rest of the county. The intent is for this document to be used as a working document for the community to grow and expand upon as more and new assets, needs and potential solutions are discovered

that will positively affect Washington County's food system. Documenting and understanding local food system is an ever changing process and it is the hope that the community will continue to update changes to keep the information relevant and Washington County moving in a positive direction to creating a secure food system.

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Websites for Select Groups and Organizations Mention in Report

- <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/washington/>
- <http://www.oregonfoodbank.org/>
- <http://www.newearthfarm.net/>
- <http://www.adelantemujeres.org/>
- <http://fggardens.wordpress.com/>

- <http://www.portlandcsa.org/>
- <http://pumpkinridgegardens.com>
- <http://www.tricountyfarm.org/>
- <http://www.corneliuscommunitygarden.org/>
- <http://dairycreekcommunityfoodweb.org/>
- <http://www.phcwashco.org/>
- <http://www.friendsoffamilyfarmers.org/>

ADDENDIX I



Rural Grocery Store Owner Survey

Oregon Food Bank
Rural Community Food Systems Assessment Project

Name of store: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

Contact person for store: _____

Email address: _____

Would you like to be added to a listserv for rural grocery store owners and advocates?

_____ yes _____ no

1. What major products and services does your store offer? *Check all that apply.*

_____ ATM Bank	_____ Hunting/fishing/camping supplies
_____ SNAP /Food Stamps*	_____ WIC**
_____ Books/cards/gifts	_____ Institutional supply (school, hospital)
_____ Café/restaurant	_____ Pharmacy
_____ Catering	_____ Photo development
_____ Delicatessen	_____ Pre-packaged snacks
_____ Fuel	_____ Self-serve snacks/drinks
_____ Groceries	_____ Video rental
_____ Other (specify) _____	

* Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

** Women, Infants and Children Program

2. Who is/are your primary grocery supplier(s)?

3. What products do your secondary suppliers supply?

4. Do minimum (purchasing/ordering) buying requirements create a problem for your grocery store?
_____ yes _____ no

If yes, how?

5. If minimum buying requirements are a problem, what solutions might you suggest?

ADDENDIX I

Rural Grocery Store Owner Survey – Oregon Food Bank Rural Community Food Systems Assessment Project

6. As an independent grocer, do you feel you are getting fair pricing from your suppliers compared to chain stores?

yes no

Comments:

7. Have you had problems getting products delivered because of your location?

yes no

Comments:

8. Do you sell locally-produced food in your store?

yes no

If yes, what products?

9. Which of the following are major challenges for your store? *Check all that apply.*

<input type="checkbox"/> Availability of satisfactory labor	<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of community support
<input type="checkbox"/> Competition with large chain grocery stores	<input type="checkbox"/> Low sales volume
<input type="checkbox"/> Debt and/or high payments	<input type="checkbox"/> Narrow profit margins
<input type="checkbox"/> Government regulations	<input type="checkbox"/> Required minimum buying requirements from vendors
<input type="checkbox"/> High inventory costs/low turnover	<input type="checkbox"/> Shoplifting/bad checks/internal theft/unpaid accounts
<input type="checkbox"/> Shortage of working capital	<input type="checkbox"/> Taxes
<input type="checkbox"/> High operations costs (utilities, building lease, repairs/maintenance, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____

10. Do you collaborate with other small independently owned stores?

yes no

If yes, for which purposes? *Check all that apply.*

<input type="checkbox"/> Cooperative advertising/marketing
<input type="checkbox"/> Grocery distribution purposes
<input type="checkbox"/> Sharing concerns and/or ideas
<input type="checkbox"/> To achieve minimum buying requirements
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

If no, would you be interested in doing this?

yes no

ADDENDIX I

Rural Grocery Store Owner Survey – Oregon Food Bank Rural Community Food Systems Assessment Project

Why or why not?

11. Do you feel that a statewide alliance of small, independently owned grocery store owners may have value?

yes no

If yes, how could it help?

12. What marketing strategies have you used in your grocery stores that have been effective in drawing in customers?

Advertising

Newspapers
Radio
TV
Flyers/inserts
Facebook
Internet/WWW

Promotions

Word of mouth

OTHER: Please identify: _____

ADDENDIX I

Rural Grocery Store Owner Survey – Oregon Food Bank Rural Community Food Systems Assessment Project

When running a grocery store, how important is it to you to offer each of the following? Rate the importance of each by circling the number that best fits your response.

		Not Very <u>Important</u>		Very <u>Important</u>		
1. Quality of food		1	2	3	4	5
Comments:						
2. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)		1	2	3	4	5
Comments:						
3. Prices of items offered		1	2	3	4	5
Comments:						
4. Customer service		1	2	3	4	5
Comments:						
5. Business hours		1	2	3	4	5
Comments:						
6. Buying locally		1	2	3	4	5
Comments:						
7. SNAP/ Food Stamps/WIC		1	2	3	4	5
Comments:						
Which of the above do you feel is the most significant for you and your store?						
<hr/>						

ADDENDIX I

Rural Grocery Store Owner Survey – Oregon Food Bank Rural Community Food Systems Assessment Project

How does your store do at providing the following to customers? Rate your store by circling the number that best fits your response.

		<u>Not Very Well</u>			<u>Very Well</u>
1. Quality of food		1	2	3	4
Comments:					5
2. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)		1	2	3	4
Comments:					5
3. Prices of items offered		1	2	3	4
Comments:					5
4. Customer service		1	2	3	4
Comments:					5
5. Business hours		1	2	3	4
Comments:					5
6. Buying locally		1	2	3	4
Comments:					5
7. Accepting Food Stamps/SNAP and WIC		1	2	3	4
Comments:					5

Which of the above do you feel is the most significant for you and your store?

How do you assess the buying needs of your customer?

Is your stocking of products responsive to customer requests?

What other concerns or comments do you have?

ADDENDIX I

Rural Grocery Store Owner Survey – Oregon Food Bank Rural Community Food Systems Assessment Project

Tell us about your store:

How long have you been in the grocery business as an owner? _____

How long has there been a grocery store at your current location? _____

Do you have more than one location? _____ How many? _____

What are your hours of operation?

Mon	_____	to	_____
Tues	_____	to	_____
Wed	_____	to	_____
Thur	_____	to	_____
Fri	_____	to	_____
Sat	_____	to	_____
Sun	_____	to	_____

Are you open on the major holidays (Christmas, New Years, Thanksgiving, etc.)? _____

Are there other grocery outlets in your community?

_____ a 'quick shop'
_____ another full service grocery

How far is it to the nearest discount grocery (Wal-Mart, etc.)? _____

How many employees do you have, not counting yourself?

_____ full-time (40 hrs/week minimum) _____ part-time (less than 40 hrs/week)

What are your average weekly gross sales?

_____ Less than \$5,000
_____ Between \$5,000 and \$10,000
_____ Between \$10,000 and \$20,000
_____ Greater than \$20,000

This survey was developed by Kansas State University Center for Civic Engagement and is being used with their permission. We thank them for their support of this project. For more information, please contact Sharon Thornberry, Community Resource Developer, Oregon Food Bank at 800-777-7427 ext. 228, or sthornberry@oregonfoodbank.org.

Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch 2013 - 2014

School	Eligible for Free Lunch	Eligible for Reduced Lunch	Percent	Student Enrollment	Total Eligible	
Washington County	30,199	4854	30.10%	85,184	35,053	
Banks High School	66	12	20.30%	384	78	Banks
North Plains Elementary School	61	11	23.30%	309	72	North Plains
Dilley Elementary School	60	*	26.80%	250	67	Dilley
Forest Grove Community School	46	*	29.50%	190	56	Forest Grove
Banks Junior High School	47	11	30.40%	191	58	Banks
Gaston Jr/Sr High School	78	*	35.10%	251	88	Gaston
Banks Elementary School	171	36	37.00%	559	207	Banks
Harvey Clarke Elementary School	160	18	37.30%	477	178	Forest Grove
Farmington View Elementary School	77	13	40.50%	222	90	Hillsboro
Gaston Elementary School	109	20	49.80%	259	129	Gaston
Forest Grove High School	876	112	52.10%	1,897	988	Forest Grove
Neil Armstrong Middle School	445	59	59.60%	845	504	Forest Grove
Joseph Gale Elementary School	166	29	62.30%	313	195	Forest Grove
Tom McCall Upper Elementary	495	56	66.20%	833	551	Forest Grove
Free Orchards Elementary School	293	45	70.30%	481	338	Cornelius
Fern Hill Elementary School	276	*	77.70%	367	285	Forest Grove
Cornelius Elementary School	351	36	83.40%	464	387	Cornelius
Echo Shaw Elementary School	230	28	88.10%	293	258	Cornelius
Groner Elementary School	69	*	n/a	143	74	Hillsboro
	4076	486		8728	4603	

Source: <http://www.ode.state.or.us/sfda/reports/r0061Select.asp>

- **Oregon Land Use Laws** - www.oregon.gov/LCD/pages/goals.aspx; www.oregon.gov/LCD/Pages/history.aspx
- **Washington County** - www.co.washington.or.us/; www.co.washington.or.us/reserves/
- **Metro** - www.oregonmetro.gov/
- **Urban Needs/Rural Government Series in the Cedar Mill News** - Local land use activists Virginia Bruce and Bruce Bartlett have written a series of articles describing the history and nature of Oregon's land use laws as they pertain to Washington County and what our urbanization choices are and how those are playing out. Read the *Urban Needs/Rural Government* series in the Cedar Mill News (Virginia Bruce publisher) at <http://cedarmill.org/news/UrbanNeeds/>
- Other articles in the **Cedar Mill News** which discuss the Urban/Rural Reserves process and other topics can be found at <http://cedarmill.org/news/710/urban-rural-reserves.html> and <http://cedarmill.org/news/1210/WaCo1210/> and <http://cedarmill.org/news/710/adelante-agricultura.html>
- **Save Helvetia** - A major controversy among residents of the Helvetia area developed in 2010 with the designations of lands to be included in the Urban Reserves north of Hwy 26 in the Helvetia area. The Save Helvetia group created website which provides in-depth information on their involvement with the process and the considerable results they achieved. See <http://savehelvetia.org/>
- **Citizen Participation Organizations (CPO)** – CPOs are official volunteer-led groups sponsored by Washington County to provide a way for community members to participate in the workings of county government. They are analogous to Neighborhood Associations except they cover a larger geographic area. CPOs 1, 7 and 8 all include land which was affected by final decision of the Urban/Rural Reserves process. News letters can be requested at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/washington/cpo>

- **Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center** - The Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center provides healthcare services to more than 35,000 patients a year in Washington and Yamhill Counties at four primary care clinics and pharmacies, three dental offices, and three school-based health centers. They also provide outreach to schools, community health fairs and to migrant and seasonal farmworkers at local camps and commercial nurseries through their mobile clinic <http://virginiagarcia.org/>

