



Oregon Solutions Lane County Food Distribution Project

First Meeting: January 26, 2009

Results

Attendees: see list on pages 6-7

Action Items

The team decided to focus its work in two areas:

1. Explore possibilities of local aggregation, storage, and distribution resources for the 2009 growing season to serve farmers, institutional buyers and others.
A group formed to plan work in this area. The group brainstormed storage and distribution possibilities. Six potentially available refrigerated storage facilities were identified. Emerald Fruit and Produce will explore offering refrigerated storage space for farms selling directly to its accounts and to be included in its regular deliveries. Five group members committed to conversations exploring other local storage and distribution possibilities.
2. Compile comprehensive information on local growers to be shared with sellers and buyers this year and to be included in local and statewide databases serving institutional buyers and sellers in the future.
Distributors and institutions desire more information about local growers and the “story” that accompanies their products. A group discussed plans in this area, including connections between the databases of Eugene Local Foods, Locally Grown, and Food Hub.

The meeting resulted in team members making commitments in the following areas:

- Conduct an ODA survey of farmer interest in direct sales to institutional buyers
- Pursue funding from Oregon Commodity Commissions
- Connect schools with the Federal Fresh Fruit and Veggie Program
- Connect schools with farmers having surplus products and transitional crops

Future Meetings

- **The 2nd Team meeting will be held on Friday, February 20 in Eugene. Time and location TBD**
- **The 3rd Team meeting and Declaration of Cooperation signing ceremony will be held on Friday, March 6 in Eugene. Time and location TBD**

Minutes

Co-Convener Rick Wright welcomed the group to the first project meeting. Peter Bloome conveyed the regrets of Co-Convener, Senator Floyd Prozanski at not being able to participate in this first meeting due to responsibilities in the Legislature.

Peter Bloome reviewed the meeting agenda and the purpose, goals and timeline of the project.

Purpose: Assist institutional food buyers in Lane County in sourcing more food from local farms.

Goals:

- Address challenges in aggregation, processing, and distribution.
- Experiment (try things) during the 2009 growing season.
- Document commitments in a Declaration of Cooperation

The project team was reminded that the project was part of the larger context. Many people are seeking a different relationship with their food for a variety of reason reflecting their values, which could include:

- improving nutrition and health,
- supporting sustainable agriculture,
- strengthening the local economy,
- conserving energy,
- protecting the environment,
- reducing their carbon footprint,
- enhancing food security and
- knowing where their food comes from and the farmer who grew it.

The Team was asked to:

- view barriers as challenges accompanied by opportunity,
- think broadly about local food systems,
- be open to where the process may lead us,
- see others in the room as potential cooperators and collaborators, and
- focus on how we can remove barriers and what we can learn during this growing season.

The Oregon Solutions Process was reviewed as a public, private and civic partnership using Community Governance System, which involves:

1. a problem or opportunity defined by the community,
2. an impartial community convener,
3. an Oregon Solutions Team,
4. an integrated solutions drawing on the resources of the team, and
5. a Declaration of Cooperation.

Successes

Megan Kemple of Willamette Farm and Food Coalition shared a list of school district successes in sourcing food from local farms.

- Bethel School District Nutrition Services has purchased apples from Detering Orchards, carrots and potatoes from Winter Green Farm, and pears from King Estate Gardens. They have also purchased bagels from Daily Bagel and granola from Golden Temple.
- Crow Applegate Lorane District has purchased and received as a donation a variety of fruits and vegetables from King Estate Gardens. These were direct purchases.
- Springfield Public Schools Nutrition Services has purchased apples from Wildrose Orchards and plans to purchase Strawberries from Bush's Fern View Farms in June. These purchases were made through their distributor, Emerald Fruit and Produce.
- Emerald Fruit and Produce, which is the contracted produce distributor for Springfield Public Schools and Bethel School District, does business with fourteen Lane County Farms.
- Both Eugene 4J School District and Springfield Public Schools Nutrition Services have implemented Harvest of the Month programs. One Oregon-grown fruit or vegetable is highlighted each month and served weekly in all district cafeterias. The produce is purchased through their distributors, Duck Delivery and Emerald Fruit and Produce.

Team members provided additional examples of successes including:

- Greater interest in buying local food.
- Farmer's markets are focused on expansion, extension and education of the public and working with Food for Lane County to redistribute excess products.
- Food for Lane County works to rescue or recover and use product that "falls out" of normal business paths.
- Organically Grown Company is selling to more institutions.
- Duck Delivery is working with Megan Kemple and Eugene schools to identify local produce and offer them to 4J schools.
- The University of Oregon Carson Dining is receiving weekly local food delivery through Eugene Local Foods.
- Chef Vince is making more food from scratch at the Sacred Heart Riverbend Campus in Springfield
- Macdonald Wholesale is distributing local frozen produce from NORPAC and Carmen Chips manufactured in Eugene.

Hummingbird Wholesale is providing bicycle delivery to U of O housing; assisting OSU with trials of gold and brown flax seed; contracting with a pumpkin seed grower in Scio, OR; and black bean grower in Noti, OR; sourcing local honey; building relationship with Stalford Feed Farms for growing garbanzo, black, and pinto beans; and producing products that feature regional ingredients.

Willamette Farm and Food Coalition is supporting Eugene 4J's Harvest of the Month Program, the Springfield Public Schools Harvest of the Month program and Bethel Schools purchase local program.

Emerald Fruit and Produce is marketing local apples.

Bethel school District is direct purchasing from local farms and through McDonalds Wholesale for local foods.

Obstacles

Megan Kemple shared a list of needs of the school districts.

1. Products which are affordable (all districts)
2. Products which are easily ordered online or via email preferably (Bethel)
3. Products which can be delivered to the districts distribution center or directly to schools (all districts)
4. Products kids will eat (all districts)
5. Products which are easily prepared by kitchen staff (all districts)
6. Products which are grown in Oregon or Lane County (all districts)
7. Access to a picture of the farm and/or information about the farm for Harvest of the Month promotional materials (Eugene 4J)
8. Processed products, which include locally-grown ingredients (all districts?)
9. Frozen, dried, or preserved products to be offered in winter months (all districts?)
10. A list of Lane County farms and/or processors interested in selling to schools (Bethel?)
11. Products from Lane County farms which are sold through Duck Delivery and/or Emerald Fruit and Produce (Eugene 4J and Springfield)
12. The ability to identify one Oregon-grown product to serve and highlight for each month of the school year at the beginning of the school year (Eugene 4J and Springfield)
13. Distributors or producers that do not have prohibitive minimum orders (Bethel)
14. Products from a farm that carries at least \$100,000 liability insurance or a distributor who takes liability for the product. (Eugene 4J)
15. Products from vendors that are on Sodexo's approved vendor list (Eugene 4J)
16. Nutritional information including nutritional analysis by serving for processed products. (all districts?)
17. Nut-free labeling for processed products—indicating if foods are processed in a facility that also processes nuts and if the item is nut-free. (Springfield)
18. Products that meet Dietary guidelines for fiber, fat and sugar. (all districts)

Team members offered additional obstacles for institutional purchases of local food:

- cost

- the mismatch between the school year and the growing season; seasonality; the local supply can be inconsistent, cost prohibitive and hard to plan for because of seasonality
- limited kitchens, cooks, and recipes
- the dominant food culture
- volumes that make sense for farmers and buyers
- sizing, refrigeration and pricing
- food safety issues
- distribution flow
- demand and compensation
- authenticity (certification, gap, etc.), price and quantity
- payment timing
- the definition of local
- costs of certification
- storage, cleaning/processing/packing facilities
- price of finished products
- perception of farmers that there is no long-term local market
- the lack of USDA approved local meat processing
- dealing with more vendors takes more time
- more venues are needed to direct sales from farmers to the public and institutions
- lack of local canneries and food processors limits institutional purchases of local food
- limitations for distributors include lack of information about what products are available, limited fresh availability and delivery requirements
- local delivery can mean too many trucks at the institution's dock
- the lack of procurement contracts
- duplication of efforts "compete to collaborate"
- lack of public knowledge of the value of local purchasing
- lack of funding opportunities to make resources, data, materials available to all interest groups
- One team member called for educational/culinary programs to train chefs and cooks in the fine arts of gardening, harvesting and preparing foods from ingredients by recipe.
- It was pointed out that an estimated \$100 million is spent on food in Lane County each month and that there is no complete assessment of the Lane County food system.

Opportunities

The team turned its attention to identifying opportunities for assisting Lane County institutions in sourcing more food from local farms. The opportunities were listed and team members voted on which of the opportunities are more important to pursue and which they were personally interested in working toward.

The voting identified the top two opportunities as:

- Exploring possibilities for a central aggregation, processing, storage, and distribution center. Such a center could ultimately provide cleaning, sorting and sizing, minimal processing, boxing and packing, refrigeration and storage, and distribution services. Overall transportation would be greatly reduced by a center. To begin to capture this opportunity we might start at an existing local distributor location with some excess capacity
- Compiling comprehensive information on local growers for use by institutional buyers, retail buyers and distributors. The information might include certifications, insurance, size and type of farm, annual sales, and interest in selling to retail, institutions, and distributors. This could include the “story” of the farm and its products. This effort would also include collecting information on what institutional buyers, retailer buyers and distributors are looking for, such as food quality/quantity restrictions, certification, insurance and delivery requirements among other things. The information could be made available in local and statewide databases and be incorporated into online services.

Other identified opportunities, in order of voted importance, were:

- Explore creative ways to share the risk of growers, such as planning a season ahead, contracting with growers for specific crops, providing partial payments before the crop is planted.
- Pursuing legislative opportunities for funding, institutional preference policy, or infrastructure.
- Funding of local food promotion from Oregon Commodity Commissions.
- Take advantage of the Federal Fresh Fruit and Veggie program
- Continuing education of schools and consumers tying local food to clean water, energy, climate change, food security, etc.
- Fostering leadership and management in creating and managing local food system infrastructure.
- Providing support for growers willing to transition from non-food to food crops or conventional to organic crops.

The team divided into the two groups mentioned on page 1. Group action commitments are summarized there.

The group reconvened as a large group, shared goals and action items, addressed the question “what value did we create today” and agreed on next meeting dates.

Acknowledgements:

- Eugene Water and Electric Board for sponsoring the project
- Karl Morgenstern for making the arrangements for the meeting
- Mazzi Hernandez and Hideaway Bakery for the delicious lunch
- Megan Kemple, Lynne Fessenden, and Kelly Hoell for contacting invited participants and assisting in the planning and facilitation of the meeting
- The team members for how they engaged in the process

Participants

Farms

Sophie Bello, Groundwork Organics Farm
Roger Detering, Detering Orchards
Mazzi Ernandes, Hideaway Hills Farm
Chris Overbaugh, Winter Green Farm

Distributors

Darlene Snell, Food Services of America
Ben Bocci, Food Services of America
Brad Goldsberry, McDonald Wholesale
Sharon Walen, Duck Delivery
Greg D`Agostine, Duck Delivery
Dennis Herbert, Emerald Fruit and Produce
Natasha Spoden, Organically Grown Company
Doug Frazier, Eugene Local Foods
Charlie Tilt, Hummingbird Wholesale

Potential Storage

Dan Armstrong, involved in design of proposed Ag Resource Center at Fairgrounds
Ron Detwiler, FOOD for Lane County

School Districts

Jennie Henchion, Bethel School District
Gary Cole, Springfield School District

Hospitals

John Duran, Sacred Heart Hospital

Universities

Tom Driscoll, University of Oregon

State Government

Jerry Gardner, ODA
Cory Schrieber, ODA
Joan Ottinger, ODE

Organizations:

Karl Morgenstern, EWEB
Lynne Fessenden, Willamette Farm and Food Coalition
Megan Kemple, Willamette Farm and Food Coalition (Farm to School)
Kelly Hoell, Good Company
Erica Palmer, Ecotrust
Deborah Kane, Ecotrust
Ross Penhallegon, Lane County Extension Service

Karen Strohmeyer, Cascade Pacific Resource, Conservation and Development

Oregon Solutions

Rick Wright, Market of Choice – Project Co-Convener

Peter Bloome, Project Manager