



**Minutes from Growers-Buyers Workshop
Lincoln City Culinary Center
February 27, 2009, 9:30 am–3:30 pm**

What do buyers need?

Mike Downing, Quimby's restaurant (Nye Beach) – price for local food has to be low enough to not have to pass on large charges to customers; it helps if the farmer can deliver or at least have pick-up at the farmers market. Mike wants to buy mesclun mix if it's the right price; vegetables of all kinds. He would welcome year-round local produce. Affordability and easy delivery are the keys.

Charlie Branford, Local Ocean Seafoods (Newport) – he gets in lots of well-priced local fish. He wants to buy local vegetables. He pays a little more for the local fish; can do the same for local veggies. He needs easy delivery. There are options for delivery via other trucks going in the same direction. He's interested in pooling delivery somehow. He needs reasonable prices on lots of fennel and cabbage and wants more salad mixes. He needs reliable delivery dates since he runs out of room to store the food. He gets eggs and pork from Walker Farm now. He'd buy winter produce if it were available.

The key is to build relationships with farmers so they can provide the product the way you like it. In exchange for loyalty to the farmer, the farmer can grow the products the chef needs with the presentation needed.

Isaac Knott, Camp Westwind (just no. of Lincoln City) – Last year, the camp bought lots of produce from Dave Pickering (Fog End Farms). Camp employee picks it up at the farm and brings it to the camp. He wants to buy meat. Has a limited budget, so needs affordability.

Martin Reynolds, Chinook Winds Casino (Lincoln City) – they have very large volume. 1000 guests come through their buffet every day. He needs to buy in large volume, say 40 cases of lettuce at a time. But the Casino is committed to local food and wants to do business with local farmers. They hope to set up “festival” days where they highlight a particular local food, cooking it in several different ways. Want to focus on different local foods through the seasons. He needs consistent volume and quality and a very structured delivery system. While the casino would pay a little more for local food, the prices have to be competitive. Since the casino doesn't pay its bills for a month, farmers may have to be patient. He really wants to be able to “put a face on” the casino's food.

Greg Hill, Surftides restaurant (Lincoln City) – they try to buy as much local produce as possible. They buy beef from Snake River. They want to buy local produce year-round. On their menu, they just say “seasonal” vegetables. That way, they get what’s fresh farm-picked.

Tilly Miller, Lincoln City Food Pantry – they depend a lot on donations. The City has given them funding to buy local food. They’re interested in whatever’s available, not particular about what type of produce they get. They will take whatever people have to sell.

(Mike Forrest, Price’n Pride in Lincoln City – while Mike wasn’t able to attend the workshop, he came for lunch. He spoke with each of the growers, giving out his business card and letting them know he’s interested in buying local produce)

What can producers provide?

Dave Pickering, Fog End Farms (Otis) – during the winter, it’s hard to grow things since there’s very little light. He does use season extenders in the summer. Due to climate, he harvests a couple of weeks later than Valley farmers. The coast can grow lettuce. But fancy lettuce has become industrialized and prices have collapsed. Dave’s prices haven’t changed in 15 years. Instead, the prices for industrial food have gone down. He gives a price break to Camp Westwind because of its limited budget. Over the years, Dave has gotten help from chefs giving him direction on what to grow. As a result, he learned to grow premium vegetables like baby squash and French beans, as well as basil and other herbs. Dave delivers. He would love to sell everyone to one restaurant, rather than several.

Karen Edwards, Island Wild Seafoods (Toledo) - she sells seafood product from her boat. She and her husband have a plant at Port of Toledo. Her fish is very fresh, unlike the big fisheries like Ocean Beauty that gas their fish to hide the fact that they are not fresh. She sells to IGA, a grocer that wants local fish. She also has a truck that goes into Corvallis. Safeway and other large grocery chains are hard to do business with.

Ron Schindler, Schindler Farms (Amity) – all produce is dependent upon weather. It very much affects availability. Also, the cost of labor and supplies is getting higher. Basically, you can only charge enough to sustain yourself, not get wealthy. His farm has been in his family for generations. They have 35 acres in which they grow tomatoes, corn, onions, peppers, other veggies, all the berries. They also have more than 100 acres of cherries, which he sells mostly to the brinery. Recently, he’s had cherries for more months since he started using ever-bearing varieties.

Vicki Daniels, Vic’s Veggies (Logsdon) - her farm grows lots of cabbage, lettuces, sweet corn, beans, squash, chickens, bees, etc. Crops are picked as fresh as possible. She sells her produce at the Toledo farmers market and by word of mouth.

Liz Kevek, Kevek Farms (Logsdon) - sells at Toledo (on Wednesdays) and Newport farmers markets. Sells tomatoes and peppers. She also has a farm stand for her neighbors, which runs well on the honor system. At the stand, she sells squash, cucumbers and other veggies.

Sarah Walker, Walker Farms (Siletz) – she and her husband are fairly new at vegetables. They grow chickens, ducks, lamb, goat and pork. The biggest challenge is that, while most customers only want a certain section of the animal, she needs to sell the whole animal. Customers willing to buy whole chicken and hog are what the farm needs.

Tim Miller, Miller Farms (Siletz) – has cattle only, which he uses for forage. To get to a processor, he'd have to drive two hours. He sells cows by halves or wholes to individuals through word of mouth. The next step in growing his business would be a lot of work – processing animals and cutting them into pieces.

Betty McKibben, McKay Ranch (Dallas) – grows grass-fed, grass-finished beef. The ranch markets to wineries, grocery stores and restaurants. They do nitrite-free product. They had to learn to market the rest of the cow – through pepperoni, salami, etc. They educate young ranchers on how to raise meat sustainably. They want to expand their markets. She delivers every other week to Lincoln City. If she can do several deliveries at once, she can lower her prices. If there is more business in Lincoln City, she can come more often. In April through September, the meat is better because more marbled. She services ten high-end restaurants. She uses two packing plants – Mohawk and Dayton meats.

Brian Perry, Heavenly Harvest Farms (Corvallis) – they have 77 acres, 80 crops, and 150 varieties. They have a farmstand, a CSA, and are starting to do restaurants. They also sell at Newport and Eastbank (Portland) farmers markets. They're transitional organic. They always harvest the day before they sell their product. They are flexible in growing anything that restaurants need. They send out a hotsheet every week on what they have available.

Action Steps

(Since many people left after lunch, this session consisted of about half the participants, mostly growers)

1. Karen Edwards offered to pick up other people's food on her way to or from making deliveries in Eugene or Corvallis. There could be a central pick-up point. Some growers could use this help; others commented that their delivery routes were so local it was not an issue for them.
2. Charlie Branford said that restaurants could go in together on whole animals, then divide it between them. He knows the restaurants in Newport that would be interested in buying local.
3. The group was interested in selling to "buying clubs" (an idea that Larry Lev had). This is where groups of people come together to buy produce and meat from a farmer. This could be organized at a church or in a neighborhood.
4. Farmers' coops were also discussed, particularly the idea of offering a Community Supported Agriculture share together, so customers get a wider variety of foods.
5. Given the small number of farmers in the area right now, it's best to focus on increasing sales to restaurants and individuals, rather than to large institutions.
6. OSU Extension's website is an important new tool. Growers were trained on use of the site at the end of this meeting. We discussed making personal invitations to a

selected group of restaurants, those particularly interested in buying local, to participate in the website.

7. Some growers felt that the Lincoln City farmers market was in a poor location. If the location changed, they would be interested in selling there.

Notes taken by Rosemarie Cordello, March 3, 2009.