



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COMMUNITY EFFORT WILL INCREASE USE OF LOCALLY-PRODUCED FOOD

Eugene, Ore. – A diverse group of partners will gather on February 6th at 2 pm in Eugene to celebrate an agreement to increase the amount and value of locally-produced food that is purchased by Lane County schools, colleges and hospitals.

Representatives from 20 organizations will sign a Declaration of Cooperation addressing barriers to farm direct institutional sales and outlining collaborative actions to take this year. The Declaration of Cooperation becomes a blueprint for implementing the project.

Several years ago, Eugene Water and Electric Board became involved in efforts to promote local food markets and regional food security as part of its source protection efforts to increase the economic viability of local farms. EWEB and Ecotrust approached Governor Kulongoski for his support in this endeavor. The collaborative effort was designated as an Oregon Solutions project by the Governor and he appointed State Senator Floyd Prozanski and Rick Wright, CEO of Market of Choice to convene the group of farmers, distributors, nonprofits and public-sector participants.

The project partners quickly settled on two areas of work according to project manager Peter Bloome. In one, the partners will cooperate to provide local aggregation, storage and distribution of local farm produce during the 2009 growing season as a service to farms, institutional buyers and others. In the second area, the partners will compile information about what local institutional buyers need and what products local farms and distributors have available. This information will be entered into local and statewide databases available to institutional buyers, distributors and farms. The partners have agreed to meet in December to assess their progress, what they have learned and the appropriate next steps.

According to Bloome, institutional purchases of local food serve a number of important values – a diverse and sustainable agriculture, a healthy environment, a strong local economy, improved health and nutrition, and food security in its several forms.

Oregon Solutions is a program of the National Policy Consensus Center at Portland State University which assists in bringing government, business, and civic organizations together to address community problems or opportunities in Oregon.