



Community Food Assessment: **2015** Marion and Polk Counties



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Cover photos: starts at Fresh to You Produce & Garden Center in Stayton, participants at a cooking class in Grand Ronde, chicks at the Grand Ronde Community Garden. Main cover photo: Minto Island Growers' farm stand and food truck (photo by Sea Legs Media). Below: Mill City Community Garden.



Acknowledgements

Thank you to the farmers, ranchers, small business owners, teachers, and community members for letting me into your communities, onto your farms, and even into your homes. It has been an honor to learn from you, work with you, and tell your stories through this assessment. This work would not be possible without your honesty, insight, and ideas for improving our community food system.

Forward



W

hen 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.

Seven 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
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Table of Contents

Assessment team.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	3
Foreword.....	4
Table of contents.....	5
Introduction.....	8
Background & Methodology.....	10
Agriculture in Marion & Polk Counties.....	12
Brief History.....	12
Native Farming.....	12
A Changing Landscape.....	12
Recent Shifts.....	14
Migrant Farmworkers.....	14
Farming today in the Mid-Willamette Valley.....	16
USDA Census of Agriculture.....	16
Small-scale Producers.....	18
Profile: Bermudez Family Farm.....	19
Profile: Pearmine Farms.....	20
Mid-Large Scale Producers.....	21
Farmer Training & Support.....	21
Agricultural Products: Figures & Regulations.....	22
Vegetables.....	22
Berries.....	22
Profile: Minto Island Growers.....	23
Profile: Fordyce Farm.....	24
Profile: Arrowhead Wild Rice.....	25
Grains.....	26
Beef, Pork, and Lamb.....	26
Poultry & Egg Production.....	26
Profile: McK Ranch.....	27
Profile: Buchholz & Son Farm.....	28
Profile: Forest Meadow Farm.....	29
After the Harvest: Processing and Distribution.....	30
Food Processing.....	30
Local Foods Value-Added Businesses.....	30

Table of Contents

Profile: Full Circle Creamery.....	31
Profile: Willamette Valley Pie Company.....	32
USDA Meat Processing.....	33
Poultry Processing.....	33
Profile: Mineral Spring Poultry Processing.....	34
Opportunities for Agriculture in Marion and Polk Counties.....	35
Barriers to Accessing Food.....	36
Rural Food Deserts.....	36
Woodburn.....	37
Monmouth.....	38
Rural Challenges & At-Risk Populations.....	38
Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde.....	39
Homelessness.....	39
Farmworkers.....	40
Washington Elementary School—World Café on Food Access.....	40
Youth, Poverty, and Hunger.....	41
Addressing Hunger at School.....	41
Food for Traditional School Breaks.....	42
SuperFunHappyBreakTime at Colonia Amistad.....	42
Emergency Food System.....	43
Food Insecurity.....	43
Federal Resource Improving Food Security.....	43
Food Pantries & Free Meal Sites.....	44
Profile: Iskam Mək ^h Mək-Haws.....	45
Profile: James 2 Community Kitchen.....	46
Profile: Silverton Community Meal.....	47
Gleaning.....	48
Profile: Salem Harvest.....	49
Opportunities to Decrease Barriers to Accessing Food.....	50
Community Food Efforts.....	51
Demand for Local Food.....	51
Institutional Purchasing & Mid-Willamette Valley Food Hub	51
Farmers’ Markets.....	52
Profile: Polk County Bounty Markets.....	53

Table of Contents

Retail Outlets.....	55
Profile: Local Motive, Cooperative Grocery in Silverton.....	55
FEAST: Food , Education, Agriculture, Solutions, Together.....	56
Community FEAST: Silverton.....	56
Community FEAST: Grand Ronde.....	57
Community FEAST: Independence.....	58
Community Conversation: Stayton.....	59
Community Conversation: Woodburn.....	59
Community Organizations.....	60
Grow Our Own: Community Garden Projects.....	60
Profile: Silverton Grange.....	61
Profile: Rooted in Food.....	61
Profile: Planting Communities.....	62
Profile: Grand Ronde Community Garden.....	63
Farm to School & Youth Efforts.....	64
Farmworkers’ Rights & Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste.....	65
Profile: Power of Produce (POP) Club at Silverton Farmers Market.....	66
Profile: Dallas Youth Garden.....	67
Public Health Initiatives.....	68
Opportunities for Community Food Efforts.....	69
Conclusion.....	71
Works Cited.....	72
Pam Wasson’s Reference List.....	74
Appendix: Producer Questionnaire Results.....	75

Introduction



Marion and Polk counties are located along the softly sloping green hills and grassland in the mid-Willamette Valley. The geography of the region represents a rich diversity that is reflected in the history, as well as the interplay that exists between agriculture, timber, and tourism. The traditional homelands of the Kalapuya Native American tribe are along the Willamette River. The Kalapuya are one of the member tribes of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, whose reservation is located in Polk and Yamhill counties.

Both counties are home to large populations of seasonal and migrant farmworkers who have come to the region seeking employment in the agricultural sector. The cities of Woodburn in Marion County and Independence in Polk County both have high populations of Latin@s due to the history of farmworkers coming to Oregon in the 1940s as part of the agreement between the U.S. and Mexico called the Bracero Program.

East Marion County in the Santiam Canyon is home to several small communities that began as logging communities. Although a few mills remain active in the region, as the majority of the mills closed the economies of these small communities have struggled. The communities of Mehama, Lyons, Mill

City, Gates, Detroit, and Idanha are located along the Santiam River and Highway 22. This region is just west of the Willamette National Forest and borders Marion and Linn counties.

The flat field lands along the Willamette River in both Marion and Polk counties have long been active and rich agricultural lands. According to the most recent Census of Agriculture in 2007, Marion County ranks number one out of all 36 Oregon counties in the total value of agricultural products sold. Additionally, tourism is increasing in many of the rural areas that have recreational activities. Examples of tourism include: white water rafting along the Santiam River, wine and beer tours in both counties, bicycle tourism in Independence, and hiking/recreational activities in Marion County at Silver Falls State Park. There has also been a focus on agricultural tourism in Polk County where Travel Oregon hosted a workshop as part of the Rural Tourism Studio.

It is difficult to fully address the community food system without mentioning the relationship between the rural and urban areas. The rural and urban divide is present within Marion and Polk counties as Salem, the capital of Oregon, is located in the middle of the county line between Marion

Introduction

and Polk. Additionally, the Portland metropolitan area is approximately 45 miles to the north. Eugene, Oregon’s second largest city, is 65 miles to the south along Interstate 5. The urban markets and the demands of these markets often affect the rural food supply. The price of food increases the further away from the urban hubs and even more so in areas that are located away from main trucking routes. There are fewer choices for food shopping in these rural communities. There is a blurry line between Salem and some of the rural communities that are mentioned in this assessment; the closer the communities are to Salem, the more options the community members have for shopping, employment, and public transportation. Overall, the existence of a large urban center has a significant impact on the rural communities in Marion and Polk counties.

Community food systems play a large role in the lives of rural community members and their urban neighbors. Farmers must decide whether to sell their products for lower prices within their communities or travel farther to sell products at higher prices within the urban markets where demand is higher for “local and organic” products.

Rural consumers must decide how far they are willing and able to travel to purchase food from larger, lower-cost grocery stores.

The aim of the Community Food Assessment is to examine the entire food system within the two-county region—from farmers to processors, distributors to food consumption, barriers to access to food waste. This process began by asking a few key questions:

- What are the barriers or challenges in the community food system?
- Where are there unmet needs?
- What are the available resources?
- What are the opportunities in the food system?
- Where is there potential for change?
- Where is there momentum for action?

This Community Food Assessment showcases the information collected, efforts already occurring in the community food system, and opportunities for action.



Background & Methodology



While there have been individual community efforts around food system initiatives in the two-county region, there has not been a unified voice in community food systems work until recently. Throughout this year, Marion-Polk Food Share (the Regional Food Bank for Marion and Polk counties) took an active role in food system organizing. Through a partnership with Oregon Food Bank, they hired a RARE AmeriCorps member to serve as a Community Food System Coordinator for 11 months spanning 2014-2015. Additionally, they hired a part-time Food System Project Manager to work on specific projects around Farm to School and the creation of a mid-Willamette Valley food hub. This year, food system planning focused on working with individual rural communities, including Grand Ronde, Woodburn, Silverton, Independence, Dallas, and Stayton. Community engagement across all aspects of the food system was at the heart of the assessment process.

The community engagement process began by identifying and interviewing community stakeholders from all sectors of the food system. The interviews were conducted with the goal of discovering key issues and solutions from the

communities' perspective. Individuals interviewed included: farmers, ranchers, community garden coordinators, food businesses, food pantry volunteers, City and government employees, OSU Extension agents, and more. The profiles throughout this report reflect the interviews conducted and showcase the assets, challenges, and opportunities that exist on both a small and large scale. In order to aggregate certain information a Producer Questionnaire was created, which was given to farmers and ranchers in the region. Typically the questionnaire was filled out by the AmeriCorps RARE member while conducting an interview. A copy of the survey can be found in the appendix of this document.¹

In the winter and spring a series of community gatherings known as Community FEAST (Food, Education, Agriculture, Solutions, Together) workshops and Community Food Conversations were held in various communities across the region. A Community FEAST is a community-organizing workshop developed by Oregon Food Bank, which “allows participants to engage in an informed and facilitated discussion about food, education and agriculture in their community and begin to work

¹Parts of this section were adapted from the Linn County and Jackson County Community Food Assessments

Background & Methodology

toward solutions together to help build a healthier, more equitable and more resilient local food system.”¹ Community FEAST workshops were held in Silverton, Grand Ronde, and Independence. A Community Food Conversation is a shorter community gathering around a meal where participants identify their food resources and opportunities that they see will strengthen their food system. Two Community Food Conversations were held in Stayton and Woodburn. The Community Food Conversation in Woodburn emphasized food insecurity and emergency food delivery. There are plans for 2015-2016 to expand Community Food Conversations to other communities, including Grand Ronde, Mill City, and Detroit as well as host a longer forum in Woodburn (Hunger Free Community Forum). Attendees at these FEAST workshops and community conversations totaled over 140 people.

From FEAST events, projects were identified and people made new connections. Informal community groups were formed around certain ideas, including: methods for increasing food access in food deserts, the creation of a regional food network, and the formation of a community food hub. A group that

formed from the FEAST in Grand Ronde created a Food Access and Nutrition Survey, which is being distributed to community members in the Grand Ronde area in the summer of 2015. The past year represents the beginning step of food system organizing in Marion and Polk counties. This work will continue to grow next year with the work of another Community Food Systems Coordinator through RARE AmeriCorps.

This Community Food Assessment report is a living document and represents the current food system in the region. The report demonstrates the current assets and barriers that exist today; however, it is limited in its depth and scope. There is only so much research, interviews, and community organizing that can happen within one year. Community organizations and community members are encouraged to build off of this document—craft amendments, make changes as appropriate, build and refine, and develop new opportunities. While this report is intended to reflect the current state of the community food system as seen in 2015, there is still significant community organizing and effort needed to create a stronger and more resilient community food system.



Agriculture

Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens—Thomas Jefferson

Agriculture is the heart of any food system; the production of food is the most essential beginning. Marion and Polk counties are rich with quality soil and temperate climate. This assessment will begin by telling the story of the heart of our community food system—agriculture.

Historically the region has held agricultural prominence in Oregon and still does today. The variety of both small-scale and mid-to-large-scale farmers presents unique opportunities and challenges for current and new farmers. Additionally, the vicinity to major metropolitan areas presents unique opportunities—some small-scale farmers opt to sell their product in their smaller communities, while others can sell wholesale or at larger markets in Salem or Portland. This section describes historical agricultural background as well as current trends with profiles of farmers throughout the region.

A Brief History²

The Willamette Valley, in which Marion and Polk Counties are located, has been regarded as an agricultural paradise for hundreds of years.

Native Farming

The Kalapuya Native American tribe managed the

land through the early 1800's by digging, tilling, planting a variety of crops, and transforming the landscape to favor a diverse plant and animal population. By burning large portions of land, they promoted new growth and vegetation for large game and various food crops. Salmon and eel were part of their diet as were bear, elk, deer, and birds. Grasshoppers and caterpillars were considered delicacies. Acorns, hazelnuts, strawberries, blackberries, elderberries, salmonberries, huckleberries, wild plums and cherries, wild onions, parsnips, and camas root were all harvested.

A Changing Landscape

The first white settlers who traveled the Oregon Trail in the 1820-1840's described the Willamette Valley as the "Eden at the End of the Trail." Bountiful farmland, abundant water, and a favorable growing season made the Willamette Valley an excellent place to settle. Homesteaders carved out their farms from the oak and fir woodlands. Communities from Portland to Eugene grew up along the Willamette River, with their primary commerce based on agriculture.

The earliest farmers were retired hunters and trappers from the Hudson Bay Company. Farmers supplied fur trading posts in the Pacific Northwest

²Pam Wasson, a volunteer with the Marion-Polk Food Share, researched and wrote three sections: Native Farming, A Changing Landscape, and Recent Shifts. These sections were refined and edited by the primary author of this report. A list of her references is included in the appendix.



Agriculture



Photo from Oregon Historic Photograph Collections, Salem Public Library

and Alaska with grains, fruits, and vegetables. They traded wheat for furs with the Russians, making wheat Oregon's first farm export. The continuing arrival of pioneers along the Oregon Trail created new settlements and farmers continued to grow surplus crops for both sale and trade. Between 1850 and 1860, the populations of Marion and Polk counties tripled, largely due to overland immigration. River navigation was the primary means of transport for agricultural products. In 1890, river navigation was displaced by railroads as the key means of transporting goods to and from Marion and Polk counties.

In the early 1900's, mechanized farming, horses, and other animals began to replace manpower. Steam and gasoline powered equipment replaced laborious jobs that were once difficult and time consuming. The introduction of mechanical equipment to harvest grasses more efficiently prompted an increase of wheat production and the ability to grow and harvest more feed for livestock.

By 1920, Marion and Polk Counties were recognized as the agricultural and horticultural heart of Oregon, ranking first in the state in production of prunes, cherries, loganberries, blackberries, gooseberries, strawberries, corn, oats, clover, onions, hops and potatoes. This early success was based on several reasons. Most obvious was the abundance of natural

resources including fertile soil, access to water, temperate climate, and availability of affordable land. Also, farmers tended to diversify, growing a variety of crops in succession plus raising several different types of livestock. This decreased the risk of disease plus provided a year-round income stream. There was also the accessibility to local canning, processing, and packing facilities. Marion and Polk counties had 14 fruit and vegetable canning plants, 11 creameries, five cheese factories, and seven fruit packers. This enabled berries and fresh fruit to be shipped to markets throughout the United States. Vegetable farming was popular and profitable. Potatoes, carrots, peas, beans, squash, pumpkins, turnips, and rutabagas were grown under contract with local canneries for shipment along the Pacific Coast and to the Midwest. Another advantage was proximity to markets via established transportation routes including paved roads, ships, and trains.

Although in its infancy in the 1920s, the nut industry in the region showed great promise. Nuts were regarded as the "lazy man's crop" with little risk as they were non-perishable, required no irrigation, were easily harvested, and were becoming a staple, as opposed to a luxury, food item. Hazelnuts and English Walnut orchards were popular and many growers began integrating them into fruit orchards

Agriculture

or as a succession crop with berries. At this time, the region was the only place outside Italy where hazelnuts were commercially grown.

The Willamette Valley was the largest hop and flax fiber producing area in the US in the early 1900s. Hops were a profitable crop with an assured export market to England, who purchased 85% of the crop. Flax grown in the region was of superior quality to flax grown in Ireland or Belgium. The local flax market took off with the introduction of flax pulling equipment and the establishment of linen mills in Salem. Hay was also a profitable crop with the majority consumed locally by large dairies and the excess exported to Hawaii and Alaska.

Grain crops (wheat, corn, oats, barley, and rye) were popular as farmers could earn \$.15 to \$.25 higher per bushel price in Midwest or Eastern markets. This price advantage was due to a lower land cost, greater productivity per acre, and less risk of freeze damage. Grain crops were grown for both human and livestock consumption.

Although there were few large livestock holdings during the early 1900's, most farmers had a small herd. Raising livestock was cost effective due to the variety of available feed, mild climate, and less need for indoor housing. Dairy cows, particularly Jerseys, were popular as butterfat could be produced at a lower cost than in the Midwest. Poultry production offered a quick return due to year-round availability of grain and lower poultry house construction costs. Although farmers could manage up to 2,000 hens per acre, most kept under 400 hens as a side business. Hogs sold for more than the Chicago market and many farmers combined hog raising with dairy farming. Sheep were a very profitable "easy care" enterprise as they required little food or housing due to the mild winter. Another benefit was that wool from sheep could be produced more affordably than in the Midwest.

Recent Shifts

By the 1970's, agriculture had matured with productivity at an all-time high due to the use of more sophisticated farm equipment, fertilizers, pesticides, and improved irrigation. Processed vegetables dominated the commodity mix and many food processors were established. Bush beans and sweet corn each totaled over 15,000 acres and Marion County was known as the bean capitol of the US. Next in production output was grains, then grass and legume seeds, followed by field crops including hops, mint for oil, and sugar beets. Cattle, hogs, sheep, and dairy each represented less than 10% of the total. Ornamental horticulture only accounted for 6% of the total.

By the early 2000's, the region maintained its position as an agricultural powerhouse within Oregon. However, the size and mix of agricultural products changed significantly. Nonfood commodities such as ornamental nursery stock and grass seed expanded, together comprising 44% of total value in early 2000. Vegetables, fruits, and field crops declined as a percentage of total value. Grains shrunk to less than 1% of the total. Only dairy products showed growth on a percentage basis from 1970 to 2000.

Migrant Farmworkers

Marion and Polk counties have a rich and long history of immigration as people came to participate in the agricultural sector.

"The fertile Willamette Valley in Oregon... [was] able to produce a rich abundance of specialty crops, including a wide range of fruits, vegetables, nuts, berries, grapes, sugar beets, onions, hops, wheat, and many other crops. All of these crops; however, required an extensive –usually seasonal– labor supply in regions that were often sparsely populated. The need for labor led Oregon growers to recruit Mexican laborers away from the Southwest and from Mexico to

Agriculture

work on area farms. By 1910, Oregon ranked seventh among states outside the Southwest with Mexican-born residents.”³

Additionally in the 1910s-1930s, Mexicans came to Oregon to escape the violence of the Mexican Revolution and simultaneously filled a need within the agricultural sector. Portland became a large recruiting ground for Mexican laborers looking for work within the sugar beet fields. Migration decreased in the 1930s due to the depression as well as US policies of deportation and exclusion. There was continued growth of migration during the 1940s as the onset of World War II created a need for agricultural labor, which led to the establishment of the Bracero program. The Bracero program was designed to recruit Mexican laborers to replace men who went into the US armed forces or industrial work during the war. Between 1942-1947 over 15,000 Mexicans came to Oregon as Braceros and they worked in fields, harvesting sugar beet, apples, pears, asparagus, onions, cucumbers and peas as well as forest firefighting and planting pine trees.

In the 1950s, Woodburn became known as the berry capitol of the world and Mexicans began to settle

permanently in places like Woodburn, St. Paul, and Hubbard. At the same time, Operation Wetback started, which “was a military operation that rounded up a million undocumented Mexicans for deportation. In Oregon... ‘the city of Woodburn and other places where Mexican workers live were punctuated by the presence of sweeps through local farms and roads that picked up undocumented workers’.”⁴ Oregon growers still preferred to hire Mexican laborers because of cheaper wages and Mexicans continued to plant firm roots in the Willamette Valley. The next wave of immigration began in the 1970s when immigrants from Michoacan and Oaxaca, Mexico came to Oregon. Latin@ immigration to Oregon continued to grow throughout the 1970s and 1980s due to civil wars in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. “Between 1980 and 1990, the Latin@ population in Oregon grew by 70 percent... The creation of Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (Northwest Tree Planters and Farm Workers United, known as PCUN) in 1985 signaled the continued need to protect workers’ rights.”⁵

Currently, demographics of migrant farmworkers look different. In the 1970s the majority of migrant

³Stephen, L. (2007). *Transborder lives : Indigenous Oaxacans in Mexico, California, and Oregon*. Durham: Duke University Press. pg. 79.

⁴Jerry Garcia. (nd). “Latinos in Oregon.” Accessed on 9 June 2015: http://oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/hispanics_in_oregon/

#.VUPcONNViko

⁵*ibid.*



Photo from Oregon Historic Photograph Collections, Salem Public Library

Agriculture

workers were male who continued to travel back to their families in Mexico. Now, entire families are migrating and settling in Oregon. Woodburn illustrates the complex and rich diversity of immigrants who arrived in different waves, which is visible through the various businesses in the city: “The presence of residents from Michoacán, Jalisco, and Sinaloa became evident through the establishment of businesses identified with these Mexican states... some settlers from Oaxaca had also began to establish a few local businesses.”⁶ The rich cultural influence of Mexican and Latin American cultures in Woodburn is visible through the various restaurants, fruit/vegetable stores, bakeries, and other businesses.

Farmworkers are discussed throughout each part of this assessment to ensure inclusion of this important part of the community food system. The next section, Barriers to Access, will address the current demographics and food insecurity of farmworkers. In the last section, Community Food Efforts, farmworkers’ rights will be addressed through the efforts of PCUN.

Farming Today in the Mid-Valley

Food-producing small-scale farmers were the main focus for the agricultural section of this assessment. Information for this section was gathered through in-person interviews, the Producer Questionnaire, attending meetings, and informal conversations. The majority of farmers who participated in the Producer Questionnaire for this assessment (13) have small to medium-sized farms (up to 100 acres), and one larger farm was included to represent the commercial scale perspective. Additionally, two cattle ranchers who were interviewed had more than 100 acres.

Marion County encompasses approximately 1,200 square miles totaling 769,624 acres. It is the leading

agriculture producing county in Oregon, producing over 254 different types of crops on over 2,500 farms. Market value of crops raised exceeded \$639 million (10% of total state). Polk County is smaller than Marion County (67% the size) and also generates less revenue per acre than Marion County. In 2012, Polk County had only 1,150 farms totaling 144,748 acres. The market value of crops in 2012 was \$163 million.

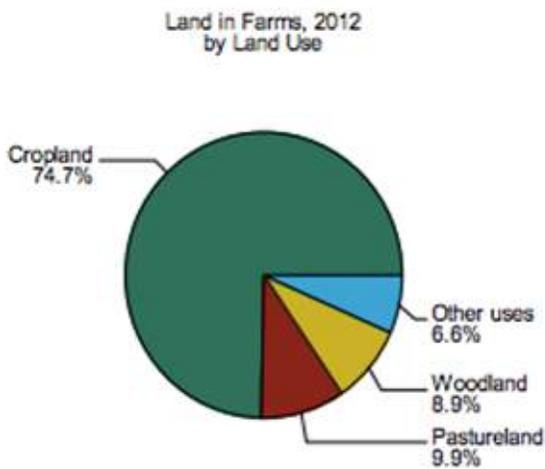
USDA Census of Agriculture

The US Department of Agriculture does a comprehensive Census of Agriculture every five years. The data collected in 2012 demonstrates the current trends of agriculture in Marion and Polk counties. The USDA Census of Agriculture includes information about farms that are growing non-food crops. Both Marion and Polk lost farmland and farms from 2007 to 2012. In the past 10 years Marion County has experienced a 21% decrease in the number of farms (from 3,203 in 2002 to 2,567 in 2012). Similarly Polk County experienced a 14% decrease in the number of farms in the last ten years. If one combines both counties as part of the same food shed, then there has been a 35% decrease in the number of farms within a ten-year period.

The acreage of farmland has also dramatically decreased in both counties over the same ten-year time period. Marion County experienced a 17% decrease over ten years and Polk County saw a 14% decrease over the ten-year period. There was an interesting change in the size of farms (measured by acres) in both counties between 2002-2012. In Polk County during the five-year period from 2007-2012 the average size of a farm decreased 5% (from 133 acres to 127 acres); however, during the previous five-year period the average size of a farm increased 4% (from 128 acres to 133 acres). Over these 10

⁶Stephen, *Transborder lives*, pg. 88.

Agriculture

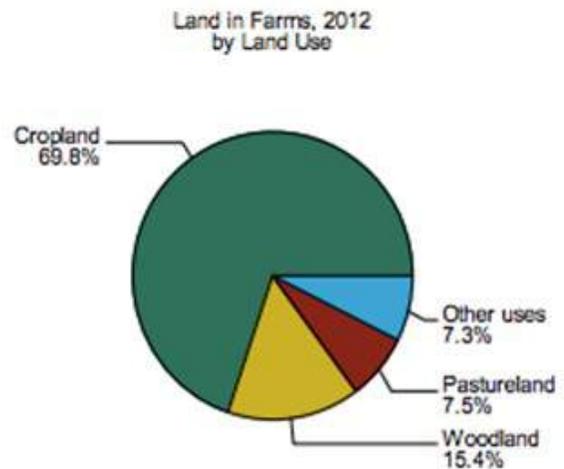


Marion County - USDA Census of Agriculture

years farmland only decreased by one acre. Marion County experienced a similar trend. In Marion County from 2002-2012, the average size of a farm increased by 5 acres. The most recent trend of the number of farms decreasing and the average size of farms decreasing suggests that as people sell their farms, some of the land is being transitioned out of agriculture.

Another important trend is the slowing increase of the market value of products sold. From 2002-2007 both Marion and Polk counties experienced large increases in the market value of crop sales (36% increase in Marion and 64% increase in Polk) and the total market value of products sold averaged per farm (63% increase in Marion and 73% increase in Polk). While this trend is still occurring from 2007-2012, it is at a much smaller percentages. From 2007-2012 Marion County only saw a 1% increase in market value of products sold and Polk County experienced a 2% increase.

The Census of Agriculture also highlights the importance of agriculture in Marion County. Marion County ranks number one out of all the counties in Oregon (there are 36 counties in the state) in the total market value of agricultural crops sold as well as the value of crops including nursery and greenhouse. Polk County ranks tenth of all Oregon



Polk County - USDA Census of Agriculture

counties for the total value of agricultural products sold. Both counties do have a strong emphasis placed upon cut Christmas trees and short rotation woody crops. Both edible and non-edible agricultural products pay a large role in the food system and local economies.

Top Five Food Crop Commodities—measured by value of sale

Marion County:

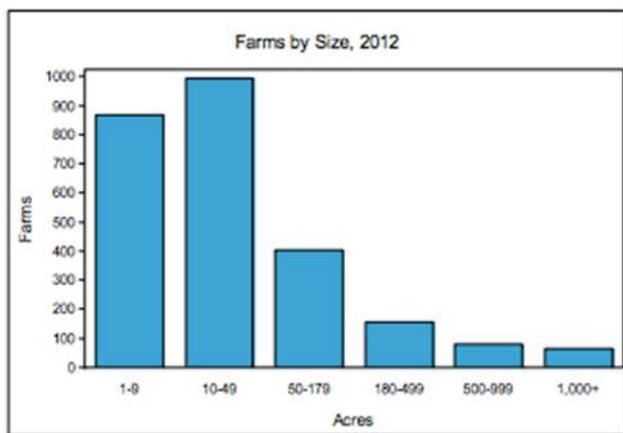
- Fruits, tree nuts, and berries (\$77,074,000)
- Milk from cows (\$60,564,000)
- Vegetables, melons, potatoes, and sweet potatoes (\$50,486,000)
- Grains, oilseeds, dry beans, and dry peas (\$20,399,000)
- Cattle and calves (\$9,209,000)

Polk County:

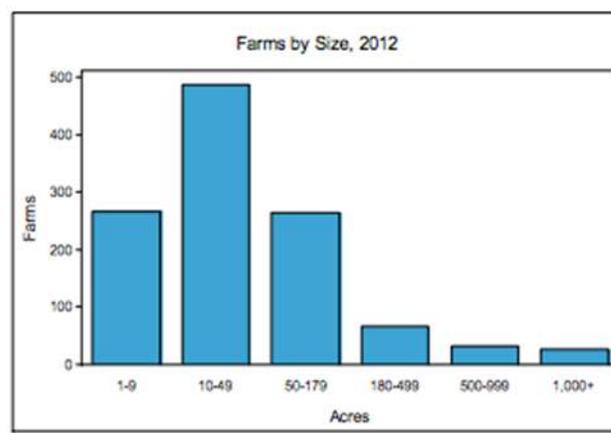
- Fruit, tree nuts, and berries (\$27,491,000)
- Milk from cows (\$22,162,000)
- Grains, oilseeds, dry beans, and dry peas (\$11,891,000)
- Vegetables, melons, potatoes, and sweet potatoes (\$7,976,000)
- Sheep, goats, wool, mohair, milk (\$621,000)

Source: 2012 USDA Census of Agriculture

Agriculture



Marion County—Source: USDA Census of Agriculture



Polk County—Source: USDA Census of Agriculture

Small Scale Producers

Close to 1,000 farms in Marion County are between 10-49 acres and close to 900 farms are 1-9 acres. Similarly the majority of farms, approximately 500 farms, are between 10-49 acres in size in Polk County. Close to 300 farms in Polk County are 1-9 acres in size. Small-scale producers were the targeted group to participate in this assessment process. Small-scale producers are more likely to do direct sales to consumers through farmers' markets, farm stands, you-pick areas, and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares. Smaller producers are most likely to have the flexibility to adjust to meet the needs of the local markets.

The vast majority of producers interviewed discussed various challenges around labor issues. Several farmers mentioned that small-scale production requires a lot of human labor. Three farmers discussed their challenges with finding additional labor. One producer mentioned that the farm is small and they only need help for a couple weeks a year. Another farm lamented the difficulty of finding seasonal labor, mentioning that often the farm hires college students who typically require training. Many farmers cannot afford the added cost of hiring more laborers and paying them minimum wage. One farmer also mentioned issues of insurance that

would arise if they hired someone to assist with labor. Five farmers mentioned that they rely on family members and friends to volunteer their time during times of high need.

Access to water and water rights were not identified as challenges for the majority of farmers in this assessment. However, several farmers mentioned their concerns about the recent increased inconsistency of the weather. Most of the farmers had to start planting a month early this year because of the warm temperatures and experienced the bolting of their vegetable crops earlier than normal.

For new and/or younger farmers the cost of land, access to water, and the capital needed to start a farm are barriers. A couple of young, new farmers mentioned the competition they faced when entering the market as the demand is lower for local, organic produce in Salem as compared to Portland or Eugene. Additionally, customers at smaller farmers' markets might feel loyalty to the more established farmers. While several farmers mentioned their struggles with access to capital, one farmer specifically mentioned the increase of available financial support for small farmers and organic farmers from state and federal agencies. This farmer mentioned that they had received funds from the Soil and Water Conservation District to assist with habitat restoration on their property.

Bermudez Family Farm

Malinda Bermudez has always loved growing things. Growing up in Monmouth, her family always had a vegetable garden in the backyard. It wasn't until she got to Central High School, however, that she really began exploring agriculture. "It's just really a passion," Bermudez, 35, said of gardening. "We always had a garden. I love that connection to nature and watching things grow."

While at Central [High School], she met her husband, Carlos, in horticulture class. Now she, Carlos and the whole family work two farms — one in Dallas and one in Independence — to supply three farmers markets in Polk County from April through October.

Bermudez earned her bachelor's degree in horticulture from Oregon State University, learning about nursery management, but always enjoyed farmers markets. "I have receipts from the (Independence) original farmers market that go back to 1997," she said, laughing. "It seems like I have always gravitated in that direction."

She was one of the founders of the Independence Riverview Market, seeing a need to expand and increase products offered. Bermudez said when Monmouth started a market last year, it meant three markets throughout the season. "One of our goals as a family farm is keeping our product really local," she said. "There's some financial perks getting into the big markets, but we really like dealing with local folks, taking them from start to finish."

She brings a variety of products to the farmers markets: broiler chickens, turkeys, eggs, vegetables, berries, dried beans, fruits and nopale — a flat part of the prickly pear cactus that is delicious, Bermudez said.

Bermudez is a Master Food Preserver and offers canned goods to customers, as well as tips and advice. "I always get asked questions about canning," she said.

"The Extension Service is a wonderful outlet to make sure you're doing everything right. There's a lot of help out there to help people do it, have fun at it and be safe while they're doing it."

Nothing gets wasted at Bermudez Family Farms. Leftovers from the market are either canned for the family, canned to sell at the next market, donated to the food bank, composted or fed to the chickens. "We do donate a significant amount of our leftover produce to our local food banks," Bermudez said. "It's nice to be able to give back that way and not have the waste."

The best part about running a small, farmers market farm is connecting people to the food they eat.

"We always encourage people at markets to talk to your farmer," she said. "The ones who are doing it themselves are going to talk to you because they're proud of what they're doing. They're knowledgeable."

**Written by Emily Mentzer - Published in the Polk County Itemizer-Observer on March 11, 2015*



Pearmine Farms



Pearmine Farms is a large-scale family farm that represents the opportunities and challenges faced by larger farms. Molly and her brother, Ernie, are the fourth generation of Pearmines farming this piece of land.

Back in 1974 Pearmine Farms joined NORPAC and began selling their product through the organization. Today Pearmine Farms has a little over 500 acres dedicated to cauliflower, broccoli, corn, and green beans. They also have 400 acres dedicated to grass seed and wheat and 20 acres dedicated to sweet cherries used for processing.

Molly and husband Lindsay decided to raise their three girls on the farm as well. “I saw a real value in raising my kids on the farm,” says Molly. “I learned a lot from growing up on the land and I want my kids to learn the same value of work I did when I was young.”

Like many other farms around the state, Pearmine is currently dealing with the challenges of navigating current changes in laws regarding everything from succession planning to land management.

“Family farms sometimes tend to operate as families and less like businesses,” says Molly. “We have realized that in order to grow professionally, we must grow personally and a lot of this has to do with investing in human capital.”

Along with changes in how the business aspect of the operation is run, the family has also made changes to how the land is managed and treated. Recently Pearmine Farms decided to transition about 20 acres of land into land used for organic farming. The process was valuable, but daunting as it takes a total of three years to create a certified organic piece of property. In 2010 the farm was able to grow and sell certified organic products. They began with a rotation of corn and beans that was produced and sold through NORPAC. In 2014 they experimented with broccoli in the organic field.

“This is not a new way to farm,” said Molly. “My grandfather essentially grew organic products, so we are actually going back to the old way of doing things. This land is ours and we control it. Farming is a responsibility and if we don’t treat the land right, it will stop giving back to us.”

Along with dedicating 20 acres of land to organic food production, in 2004 Pearmine Farms partnered with the Wetlands Reserve Program and Ducks Unlimited to convert 35 acres of land back into a natural wetland. The family now owns a private wetland that attracts many wild birds and animals and serves as an educational tool for children. Additionally, Pearmine Farms is a member with Farmers Ending Hunger, and participates with Salem Harvest to allow volunteers to harvest leftover crops, with half of the harvest donated to Marion-Polk Food Share.

This profile was adapted from an Agri-Business Council of Oregon member profile of Pearmine Farms, written by Shannon Larson (<http://www.aglink.org/events/memberprofiles/pearminefarms.php>)

Agriculture

Mid to Large-Scale Producers

There is also a substantial number of farms, particularly in Marion County, that can be identified as mid-to-large-scale. In Marion County approximately 750 farms are 50-1,000+ acres in size, with approximately 100 farms that are 1,000+ acres. Similarly, in Polk County approximately 450 farms are between 50-1000+ acres, with approximately 50 farms that are 1,000+ acres. This demonstrates that mid-large scale farmers exist in both counties, with larger numbers in Marion County. Typically, large scale producers are able to sell their products to large food processors or international markets.

The mid-scale producers are at a scale where they can access larger wholesale and institutional markets. Mid-scale producers have the strongest potential to participate in food aggregation or a food hub.

Farming Training and Support

The 2012 USDA Census of Agriculture showed that the average age of farmers in Marion County was 58 years of age and in Polk County it was 60.7 years of age. However, new young farmers are entering into the agricultural sector in the region. With farmer training programs, aspiring farmers are given the knowledge and opportunities needed to become successful.

The Rogue Farm Corps is a non-profit organization based in Jackson and Josephine counties in Southern Oregon. Their programs are expanding across the state of Oregon. The FarmsNext program through Rogue Farm Corps is “a full season farm internship program combining hands-on training and skill-based education in sustainable agriculture for aspiring farmers and ranchers.”ⁱⁱ As of 2015 Rogue Farm Corps programs have expanded to Linn County just south of our region as well as into the Portland Metropolitan area. It is feasible for these young farmers to participate in the programs of Rogue Farm Corps and then to buy/rent land in Marion or

Polk counties to begin their own farm.

Existing farmers can find a variety of resources and support through the Small Farms program at Oregon State University (OSU). OSU Extension offices exist in Marion and Polk counties; however, only Polk County has an instructor, Amy Garrett, through the OSU Extension Service Small Farms Program. Amy Garrett serves Benton, Linn, and Polk counties. Additionally, the Small Farms Program offers a variety of workshops for small-scale farmers that are offered across the three-county area. In 2012, Amy Garrett participated in organizing a Local Food Connection workshop in Independence, Oregon where local producers had the opportunity to connect with local buyers. In May 2015, a ballot measure passed in Marion County that provides increased funding for OSU Extension. OSU Extension may hire a staff member dedicated to supporting small farmers in Marion County in the near future.

Friends of Family Farmers, a state-wide organization, is working to promote and protect socially responsible agriculture in Oregon.ⁱⁱⁱ The organization recently relocated to Salem, Oregon. There are a couple programs of Friends of Family Farmers that are part of their Next Generation Campaign. iFarm is an online database that aims to connect new farmers with land and partnerships. Additionally, there is an Oregon chapter of the National Young Farmers Coalition called FarmON!, which connects beginning farmers to education, skills, and community.

Overall, there are several different mechanisms of support for new and young farmers as well as training opportunities for existing farmers. The majority of these opportunities exist outside of Marion and Polk counties; however, they are located in neighboring counties.

Agriculture

Agricultural Products: Figures and Regulations

Both Marion and Polk counties produce more fruit and vegetable crops than livestock. The following section pulls on research conducted by Pam Wasson, a volunteer at the Marion-Polk Food Share, about specific crops grown in Marion and Polk counties. This information includes crops sold on the commodity market as well as intended for local markets. Not all crops grown in Marion and Polk counties are listed below; however, the information paints a vivid picture of the large-scale food production that happens in the region. A list of her references is located in the appendix.

Vegetables

Consumers have increased their appetite for locally grown vegetables. The popularity of farmers' markets and farm stands, along with grocery stores and restaurants featuring local vegetables, have raised the level of demand statewide. More acreage in Oregon is dedicated for vegetables grown for processing than the fresh market. Marion and Polk counties perform well in both the processed and fresh vegetable sectors. Many varieties of fresh and processed vegetables come from Marion and Polk counties including broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, cucumbers, garlic, green beans, pumpkins, radish, rhubarb, rutabaga, spinach, squash, sweet corn, and

turnips. Snap beans and beets are two standouts recognized for their superior quality, taste, and color.

Marion County is the third highest producing county in Oregon for squash and the fourth highest for sweet corn. Both Marion and Polk counties are in the top four producing counties for snap beans. Total 2009 vegetable sales in Marion County exceeded \$17 million versus while sales in Polk County were lower at \$1.3 million.

Berries

Farmers in the region grow a wide range of berries including Marionberries, blackberries, raspberries, loganberries, boysenberries, blueberries, and strawberries. The Marion blackberry, marketed as Marionberry, was developed by the USDA ARS in cooperation with Oregon State University. It was released in 1956 under the name Marion, after the county where it was tested extensively. Oregon produces between 28 million and 33 million pounds annually, with Marion County and the Willamette Valley together accounting for over 90% of current production.

Capitalizing on the positive press of being one of the highest antioxidant foods, Oregon blueberry production has doubled from 10,000 tons harvested in the late 1990's to nearly 20,000 tons today. Currently, Oregon ranks fifth and third in terms of blueberry acreage and production in the US. Growers range from small family farms with less than ten acres offering on-farm sales, to large operations that ship their crops to international markets. Many apple and pear growers have faced declining profits in recent years and have switched to blueberries. Harvested blueberry acreage in Oregon has increased nearly four-fold over the last fifteen years to keep pace with increasing demand with 2012 production at 9,130 tons in Marion County and 1,012 tons in Polk County.



Minto Island Growers

Minto Island Growers is located just outside of Salem, near Minto Island Park and on the way to Independence along the Willamette River. Chris Jenkins and Elizabeth Miller are the farmers behind one of the most well-known small-scale, organic diversified farms in the Salem area. The farm began in 2008 when Elizabeth and Chris started converting several acres of land into organic vegetable production. It was certified organic by the Oregon Tilth in 2010. The farm belongs to the Miller family and used to be part of Mt. Jefferson Farms, which grew mint and had a native plants nursery. Currently, Minto Island Growers have about 30 acres in production with 40 types of vegetables and 80-100 different varieties.



Elizabeth Miller and Chris Jenkins. Photo by: Lindsay Trant

The Minto Island Growers are a familiar face for many Salem residents, as the farm sells produce at Salem Saturday Market, has a popular CSA (Community Supported Agriculture), operates an organic blueberry you-pick, and in the summer months has a farm stand and food cart on the farm. They also sell to LifeSource Natural Foods in Salem. The farm receives a lot of customers from Salem as it is located just about 10 minutes away from the downtown.

As young farmers Elizabeth and Chris have put a lot of time, energy, and thought into Minto Island Growers. One Salem resident referred to them as farmer philosophers who are aware of the environmental and social impacts of large-scale farming and deeply committed to the organic standards that guide their farming. The marketing of Minto Island Growers as well as the unique on-farm experiences and their commitment to the local community make the farm invaluable to the local food system.

Harvest at Minto Island Growers. Photo by: Elizabeth Miller



Fordyce Farm



Ray Fordyce began farming when as a child his father put him in charge of a you-pick strawberry patch. Now Ray and Annette Fordyce are the owners of Fordyce Farm, a farm stand and you-pick operation located between Salem and Silverton. Fordyce specializes in you-pick with several different varieties of berries (strawberries, blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, gooseberries, currants, etc.) as well as apples, plums, and pears. The farm stand also sells vegetables, summer-blooming bulbs, and baked goods that are cooked on-site in a commercial kitchen adjacent to the farm stand. In the fall they have pumpkins as well as a corn maze. The farm also has a beautiful flower garden that has been used for weddings in the summer months. Fordyce provides a welcoming environment for families to come pick fruit and experience a farm.

The farm is very labor-intensive – approximately 275,000 pounds of produce is grown on the 30 acres that are in production. While Fordyce is not certified organic, a variety of organic practices are utilized on the farm – with an emphasis on soil quality, cover crops, and compost. Ray does not mind the difficult work and enjoys working side-by-side with his children in the fields, just like he did with his father.

The farm has been able to grow as needed, especially with the addition of the farm store and kitchen. Ray is optimistic about the future—the farm typically does not have any surplus product and they are welcoming visitors from across Oregon who value the quality of the product as well as the experience.



Arrowhead Wild Rice



Jeff Ruef tending rice paddies. Photo by: Toni Ruef

Frustrated by flooding in some the fields where tall fescue (grass) and corn were typically planted, Jeff and Toni Ruef decided to try something different. After reading about a farmer planting wild rice in Brownsville, Jeff conducted a little research and thought he might be able to succeed with wild rice paddies on his land. He met with the farmer and others from the OSU Extension office. He began by planting 15 acres of wild rice, and now has eight rice paddies on 60 acres that produce about 500 pounds of cleaned wild rice per acre. The rice is a relatively easy crop to grow, requires no pesticides and is aquatic so the flooding of the fields works well. This has created a wildlife refuge for all types of frogs and birds. Jeff loves to visit the paddies and see the wildlife with his children. Oregon Tilth has provided organic certification to Arrowhead Wild Rice.

After the paddies are drained in July, the wild rice needs to be processed before it becomes edible. The Ruef's have invested in the appropriate equipment and have even built some of the equipment with help from other family members. The wild rice is sold to local wholesale companies, Hummingbird Foods and GloryBee, in Eugene, Oregon. Jeff proudly shares that Seven Brides Brewing in Silverton, Oregon also has used his wild rice to brew a unique beer. "One afternoon I had a completely local meal with wild rice from my paddies, frog legs that we also caught from the paddies, and the beer from Seven Brides." Arrowhead Wild Rice serves not only as a great example of the increased small-scale grain production, but also as an example of local farmers working with their land.

Agriculture

Grains

Oregon wheat producers raise primarily soft white wheat for use in pastries, cakes, pretzels, cookies and ramen noodles. More than 85% of Oregon-grown wheat is exported, making it the top agricultural crop shipped from the Port of Portland. Wheat is grown primarily in Eastern Oregon. However, Oregon State University (OSU) has introduced higher yielding varieties to the Willamette Valley. Although farmers regard wheat as a worldwide crop with good margins, it is not a primary crop for most farmers. Total 2009 production was 1,650,000 bushels in Marion County and 84,000 bushels in Polk County.

Though barley remains an important crop worldwide, its prominence in Oregon has decreased substantially in the past 50 years. OSU researchers and local farmers would like to see Oregon barley play a more prominent role in food and beer and have been testing 10,000 experimental barley varieties that are being monitored for hardiness, disease resistance, and yield.

Quinoa and wild rice are also becoming increasingly popular as crops in the Willamette Valley. Marion-Polk Food Share grows quinoa for use within their Better Burger program. A few other farmers in the counties are starting to experiment with quinoa, including a startup called Willamette Valley Quinoa.



Beef, Pork, and Lamb

Cattle production is Oregon's largest agricultural commodity in terms of sales, however, production in both Marion and Polk Counties is quite low and decreasing. The Willamette Valley is too valuable and productive for cattle who tend to be grazed on less fertile land. In 2012, 34,000 head were produced in Marion County, representing only 3% of Oregon's total production and down -43% from 2009. Production in Polk County was even lower at 15,200 head and also down -25% since 2009. Both counties have larger herds of dairy than beef cows. In 2012, Marion County sold \$61 million or 12 percent of Oregon's milk from cows.

Sheep production is also relatively low compared with the rest of the state. Total 2012 production was 8,214 head in Marion County and 3,921 head in Polk County, with headcount down significantly from prior years. The majority of hog farms raise small herds of 20 or fewer hogs who are grass fed and live on pasture. Total 2012 production was 1,094 head in Marion County and 434 head in Polk County.

Poultry and Egg Production

Oregon is not a major player in the national chicken production market. There are approximately 40 broiler (meat chicken) farms in the Willamette Valley. Foster Farms is a major chicken producer in the region. There are few mid-size chicken growers and processors. Smaller farms, some licensed organic, allow their chickens to forage, and process them in state licensed facilities. Marion County produced a large number of broilers and layers (egg production) in 2009 accounting for 20% and 44%, respectively, of total state production.

Oregon-grown eggs come largely from Willamette Egg, headquartered in Canby, Wilcox Family Farms in Aurora, and Skylane Farms in Woodburn. Marion County accounted for a substantial 49% of total egg production in Oregon in 2009, with production valued at \$36.7 million. Egg production in Polk County was much lower at \$346,000.

McK Ranch

The McKibbens run a 100 percent grass-fed beef ranch outside of Dallas, Oregon. Their interest in grass-fed beef began during a trip to England in 1998 where they saw several pasture-raised and free-range livestock operations. They were already running a successful cow and calf operation, mostly selling their calves to commercial feedlots, but what they saw got them thinking.

The McKibbens decided they would start transitioning their operation to grass-fed beef once pasture-raised livestock gained popularity on the U.S. East Coast. Their transition began in 2001. They continued their cow and calf operation and gradually added beef cattle while learning what they needed to run a grass-fed operation. They learned through self-teaching, trial-and-error and observing their cattle. It took four years to convert their ranch to grass-fed beef.

In the past McK Ranch kept 350 to 450 cows of mixed breeds. They graze the herd on their 450-acre ranch, supplemented by an additional 150 acres of pasture rented from neighbors. They've honed their pasture management system to grow enough forage on the ranch to feed the entire herd year-round. In February 2014 the McKibbens sold a big portion of their herd and now run 150 to 200 cows, which means they have an abundance of grass that they are now selling as hay to local ranchers, dairies, and horse lovers.

The McKibbens' philosophy is to do what's best for their cattle, which in turn benefits consumers. "If they're healthy and happy, we're going to be healthy and happy," David said.

This means not spraying their pastures with chemicals, not treating their herd with growth hormones or antibiotics, and only feeding the cattle forage. The McKibbens believe their choices have resulted in healthier cattle.

The McKibbens feel their cows are happy, too. How do they know? "If I talk to them they start mooing at me," David said. When he shouts, "come bossy" or "come babies," David said his cattle come running and mooing and circle around him, sometimes licking his hands. "They have a pretty good life," he added.

Customers want their beef for its better flavor, health benefits, and because the animals are raised humanely, the McKibbens said. And demand for their beef is growing. The ranch sells to both wholesale and retail customers, and their meat can be found in restaurants and stores as far away as Portland and Yachats.

Their customers are willing to pay more for it, too; McK Ranch beef is priced higher than grain-fed beef. This is partly because at McK they harvest their cattle later. Most producers harvest their animals at 15 to 18 months old, David said, while the McKibbens harvest at 24 to 36 months old. They keep their cattle longer because they feel the beef gets better with age.

The knowledge the McKibbens acquired while learning how to raise grass-fed beef has been a "real eye opener" into their own health. What started as a business decision to capitalize on an approaching trend also resulted in lifestyle changes. They've changed the way they eat and think about food. "We're picky about where we eat and what we eat," Bette said, "I want to know where that food came from."

Whenever the McKibbens sit down to enjoy their favorite cuts of McK beef—a rib eye with a rub for Bette and a slow-cooked tenderloin for David—they know for certain where it came from: the green pastured hillsides below their house.

**Written by Corey Staver for Friends of Family Farmers—full article can be viewed here: <http://www.friendsoffamilyfarmers.org/?p=3080>*

Buchholz & Son Farm



Carl Buchholz returned to the farm his father purchased in the 1950s in Mt. Angel, Oregon after working and living in Portland and the west coast for over several decade. Currently Buchholz & Son Farms sells chicken eggs, broiler chickens, turkeys, vegetables and hogs direct to consumer and to retail accounts. Through a personal connection, Carl is able to feed his animals juice pressings from Portland Juice Press as well as locally raised grains, which are ground and cracked on site. In March 2015, the laying hens have been certified as Animal Welfare Approved. The eggs are distributed via Bon Appetite wholesale to several locations in the Portland area and are available to consumers at Flying Fish Company in Southeast Portland as well as to several buyer's clubs and on farms sales. Additionally, consumers are able to order 30 dozen eggs (or more) for delivery.

The Cornish Cross broiler chickens, turkeys, and hogs are all slaughtered on the farm. Occasionally customers request to come to his farm and personally slaughter their purchased animals. Since Carl uses a USDA facility on a limited basis for his hogs, and not an ODA certified facility for poultry to slaughter and process his animals, he is limited to direct sale from his farm to consumers for poultry, except for large custom orders. Buchholz & Son Farms raises approximately 250 birds a year and 30 hogs. While these numbers are increasing, Carl is still able to find a market to sell his animals direct to consumer. Carl seems to prefer this approach because it allows him to connect with his customers and maintain control over quality. His birds are air chilled and aged for 24 hours before placing in shrink bags, an option unavailable with most ODA facilities. While describing an interaction with a community member and potential customer, Carl said, "My intention is to teach her the right questions to ask." Buchholz & Son Farms sells eggs, poultry, produce and hogs; however, Carl Buchholz is just as concerned about educating the public about realities of meat production.

Forest Meadow Farm

Mike and Stacy Higby are active community members in Silverton, Oregon as well as owners of Forest Meadow Farm. They provide chicken and eggs as well as vegetables during the summer months to Silverton residents. People are able to directly purchase their products at the Silverton Farmers Market during the market season, as well as in the same location on Saturdays year-round. Their broiler chickens and egg-laying hens are all pastured raised and fed with organic feed. Mike takes pride in his chickens, even specifically raising three different breeds of egg-laying hens that lay three different colors of eggs so his customers can experience the variety.

He also utilizes organic farming practices with both the laying hens and broiler chickens. The hens have mobile laying hen houses that are rotated around the pasture. The broiler chickens also have mobile coops that are equipped with an inside shelter as well as a protected area where they can roam outside. The coops are moved across pasture and each year one of the rows where the coops have been is planted with vegetables, which they sell at the Silverton Farmers Market. Mike builds all of the coops and laying houses with recycled materials when possible. The Higbys often choose to reinvest their earnings back into the farm, and they are proud to provide quality chicken and eggs to the Silverton community.



Mike Higby with laying hens. Photo by: Stacy Higby

Agriculture



Photo by: Jared Hibbard-Swanson

After the Harvest: Processing & Distribution

Marion and Polk counties have a rich history of food processing, especially canneries. Currently there is still large-scale value-added processing in Marion County as well as several local businesses that utilize locally grown food. The complex regulations for slaughter and processing of red meat and poultry can be difficult to navigate for producers.

Food Processing

While a lot of the large-scale canneries have closed in Marion and Polk counties, there is still large-scale value-added processing in the region. NORPAC is a farmer cooperative and processor that has been operating in the Willamette Valley since 1924. NORPAC is a nationally-known processor and distributor of canned and frozen fruits and vegetables (FLAV-R-PAC is the brand of frozen product and the Santiam brand is for canned products). Overall, NORPAC's member farmers farm on over 45,000 acres throughout the Willamette Valley and grow over 600 million pounds of product annually, with 27 different crops. NORPAC is a huge contributor to the local economy and a lot of large-

scale farms in the region belong to the cooperative. The Willamette Valley Fruit Company is a fruit processor and distributor, which is discussed below within the profile for Willamette Valley Pie Company. Truitt Brothers is another large-scale value-added food processor in the region. Truitt Brothers processes food on the national market, while Truitt Family Foods has a line of regional bean products.

Local Foods Value-Added Businesses

Beyond large-scale value-added processing, there are a couple of businesses that create value-added food products with locally grown ingredients. The majority of these businesses are headquartered in Salem. For the most part, these businesses are fairly small scale and sell to local markets. For example, Esotico Pasta is a local business based in Silverton that creates pastas with seasonal, local flavors. The pasta is sold at several farmers markets in the region as well as local grocery stores and a few farm stores. These businesses, whether large or small, are vital to the local food system as they provide an opportunity for local foods to be preserved, sold, and eaten throughout the year.

Full Circle Creamery

Full Circle Creamery is an artisan cheese business based out of Independence that provides cheese to local markets. Kate and Brian Humiston started their cheese business in December 2010. Kate’s enthusiasm for selling and eating cheese combined with Brian’s talent and dedication to making cheese has created the perfect dynamic for success. The business started with Brian making cheese at the OSU Dairy Pilot Plant and the cheese was available for purchase in April 2011.

The operation then moved to a certified organic dairy in Scio, Oregon; however, due to a snowstorm in February 2014 the facility was damaged. Full Circle attempted to raise the funds necessary to build a creamery in Independence—although they have decided against that project, they are currently working with an organic dairy to build a creamery on their property. Even with these set backs, Kate and Brian’s passion for cheese is obvious through their dedication to their business. Kate said, “Even though making cheese is hard work, what keeps us going is the satisfaction that comes with being a part of the local food movement.” Kate’s passion for cheese draws farmer market shoppers to her booth at the Independence Riverview Market and they are hoping to make Independence their permanent home for their cheese-making operations.



Kate Humiston at the Independence Riverview Market. Photo by: Ron Aniker

Willamette Valley Pie Company



Willamette Valley Pie Company might be best known for their delicious marionberry pies or frozen blueberries, their most popular products; however, the company's rich local history makes their products even more appealing. In 1999 three local farms, including G&C Farms, decided to open Willamette Valley Fruit Company to provide a safe place and fair price to process fruit from local farmers.

A few years later, G&C Farms was seeking an opportunity to create a value-added product that would provide a connection with the community as well as establish stability with pricing. They purchased La Suisse Pie Company as well as created a line of frozen polybags and cobblers. The pies are still made with the original recipes from La Suisse. While Willamette Valley Fruit Company was sold in 2013 to Inventure Foods, Willamette Valley Pie Company still works closely with the other company and still purchases fruit for all their products from them. Willamette Valley Fruit Company works with 40-50 fruit farms annually and processes fruit for a variety of large businesses. Costco is one of the most well-known and one of the largest buyers.

The value-added pie business is still owned by G&C Farms, and there are times when they have to make financial decisions between farm and business needs – a new slab of concrete for the facility or a new tractor for the family farm. There is a feeling of family and community within the Willamette Valley Pie Company, and their connection with the community is a source of pride. Andrew Martin, a sales representative and family member, says, "Customers can come into the store and know they are buying from local farmers, and farmers can come here and know that the community is buying their product." Currently, the business sells approximately a million pies annually. Their products are sold across Oregon and in 10 other states and British Columbia. While Willamette Valley Pie Company will continue to grow, they strive to maintain a commitment to their Willamette Valley roots and the home cooked taste of their products.

Agriculture

USDA Meat Processing

Slaughter and processing of red meat (beef, pork, lamb, sheep, etc.) must be done in a USDA-inspected facility if the farmer or rancher wants to sell to any retail outlet. Of the fourteen USDA-inspected slaughter facilities in Oregon, one is located within Marion County, Mt. Angel Meat Company, two others are located nearby in Clackamas and Yamhill counties. There are two USDA-inspected processing facilities in Marion County, Voget Meats in Hubbard and Century Oak Processing in Mt. Angel. These facilities are licensed to process red (non-poultry) meat. While there are few options for meat slaughter and processing, compared to the south coast or eastern Oregon there are many options within 100 miles.

Another option for meat processing is the custom-exempt rule where farmers can sell a live animal to a consumer before slaughter, then the animal can be slaughtered at a state-inspected facility. Mobile slaughtering businesses are another popular option where someone can come to your land to slaughter your animal and will deliver it to a processing facility, if desired. Multiple meat producers in the region mentioned that they prefer mobile-slaughter

businesses as it creates less stress on the animal and produces a higher quality meat.

Poultry Processing

There is one poultry facility in the area that is set up for USDA-inspected poultry processing, Scio Poultry Processing in Linn County. Most of the producers that participated in this assessment mentioned that they do not need to use a USDA-inspected facility. There is a 1000 bird exemption under the HB2872 (“The Poultry Bill”) that allows for Oregon farmers to slaughter up to 1000 poultry per year that they raise themselves on their farms to sell directly to customers. The sales must happen on-farm. The conditions of slaughter should meet the guidelines for a state-licensed facility.

A poultry producer may process up to 20,000 birds per year in a state-licensed facility to sell off of the farm within the state of Oregon. Mineral Springs Poultry is a popular Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) inspected facility that several small-scale farmers use in Marion and Polk counties. Most farmers who participated in this assessment said that the 20,000-bird limit is typically above their annual operation. Large-scale producers ship their poultry out of state for processing.



Mineral Springs Poultry



Nels Youngberg has processed poultry since he was nine years old – for over 40 years. His parents, Howard & Esther Youngberg, along with other family members started Mineral Springs Poultry in 1979 outside of Carlton, Oregon. Nels, the oldest son, took over the business and moved it to Willamina. Mineral Springs is still a family business with Nels and Davina, his wife, along with their five children processing poultry.

Nels takes pride in his work, “I know it’s not the most glamorous work, but I enjoy it and we keep getting more customers as people start raising more poultry.” Several farmers mentioned Mineral Springs Poultry over the course of the assessment process because of the quality of their work. The business will process anywhere from 300-500 birds per day when they are open for business. Typically customers are charged \$3 or \$3.48 per bird and usually poultry are slaughtered and packed within 10 minutes. They have all kinds of orders – from farmers to backyard growers who raise poultry for personal consumption. Mineral Springs Poultry is more than a poultry processing facility – Nels is more than happy to give advice about raising poultry as well as processing.

Agriculture

Opportunities for Agriculture in Marion & Polk: Mid-Willamette Valley Farmer Network

Small-scale farmers who participated in this assessment expressed a desire to better communicate with one another and to have a stronger farmer community. Increased communication creates opportunities for new farmers to network with more established farmers, allows space for discussions about varieties that grow well in the region, builds the possibility of a farmer cooperative or equipment borrowing, and more. A network could be strengthened through the creation of an informal group or an email listserv as well as farmer support programs – such as creating linkages between farmers and institutions interested in purchasing local product. Future farmer support and/or the creation of a farmer network could be facilitated by OSU Extension in Marion County with the recent increase in funding and the potential creation of a Small Farms instructor position.

Regional Food Label

Farmers that sell product via local grocery stores often miss the opportunity to have their product labeled as grown within Marion or Polk counties. A local food label that identifies product grown within the mid-Willamette Valley region as well as showcases the specific farmers in some way, would help build support for local agriculture and strengthen the regional food economy.

New Farmer Support and Training

As more new/young farmers are looking for land in the region, Marion and Polk counties could become a more attractive place to put down roots if there are farmer-training programs in the area. Some ideas for farmer-training in the region are: bringing Rogue Farm Corps to the region, expansion of OSU Extension support for small farmers in Marion County, and demonstrations or workshops for new/young farmers. In Oregon there are multiple programs focused on small business development and sustainable agriculture for Latin@s, Huerto de la Familia in Eugene and Adelante Mujeres in Forest Grove both have strong programs. A similar program in this region could be very impactful in helping Latin@s overcome certain barriers to farming or starting an agri-business.

Mid-Willamette Valley Food Hub

Currently, the City of Independence is working to renovate a building in Polk County to serve as a location for local food aggregation. The next steps are to conduct outreach to food producers and institutional buyers and to create a sustainable business model.



Barriers to Access

Por ahora no pido más que la justicia del almuerzo – For now I ask no more than the justice of eating— Pablo Neruda

While Marion and Polk counties are rich in agriculture, there are still high levels of food insecurity across the region. Throughout the course of this assessment, it became clear that specific communities and populations are at a higher risk for food insecurity. In Grand Ronde, community members typically drive more than 20 miles to access a full-service grocery store in Dallas or McMinnville. Infrequent and/or expensive public transportation also presents a barrier to accessing food. In Woodburn, service providers and community members cited public transportation as a barrier to accessing food. Food pantries and meal sites in rural areas are mechanisms to reduce rates of food insecurity. James 2 Community Kitchen has a produce distribution in conjunction with their meal site in both Dallas and Falls City. In Falls City, roughly one third of the town’s population participates in the weekly produce distribution to receive fresh fruit and vegetables. There are also federal programs that aim to reduce food insecurity. Overall, it is essential to ensure that all community members have access to affordable, nutritious food.

Food Deserts

Food deserts are defined as “urban neighborhoods and rural towns without ready access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food. Instead of supermarkets and grocery stores, these communities may have no food access or are served only by fast food restaurants and convenience stores that offer few healthy, affordable food options. The lack of access contributes to a poor diet and can lead to higher levels of obesity and other diet-related diseases, such as diabetes and heart disease.”^{vi}

The USDA published an interactive mapping tool called the Food Access Research Atlas, which determines food deserts by intersecting US Census information with geographic locations of grocery stores. In rural communities, a food desert is considered to be when a grocery store is more than ten miles away (in urban locations it is defined as greater than one mile). According to the USDA’s Food Access Research Atlas, areas of Salem are considered urban food deserts, while



Volunteers harvesting plums with Salem Harvest. Photo by: Dick Yates

Barriers to Access

locations in Woodburn as well as Monmouth are considered rural food deserts. The Food Access Research Atlas does not always align with anecdotal evidence gathered from communities. Grand Ronde and Falls City in Polk County are not considered food deserts, even though people in these communities have mentioned the distance to grocery stores and the lack of access to food within their communities. The small cities in the Santiam Canyon in Marion County also have limited access to grocery stores; however, this region is not considered a food desert according to the USDA mapping tool. While the USDA mapping tool is helpful, it does not directly pinpoint all of the food deserts due to strict constraints, especially 10 miles from a grocery store, for rural areas.

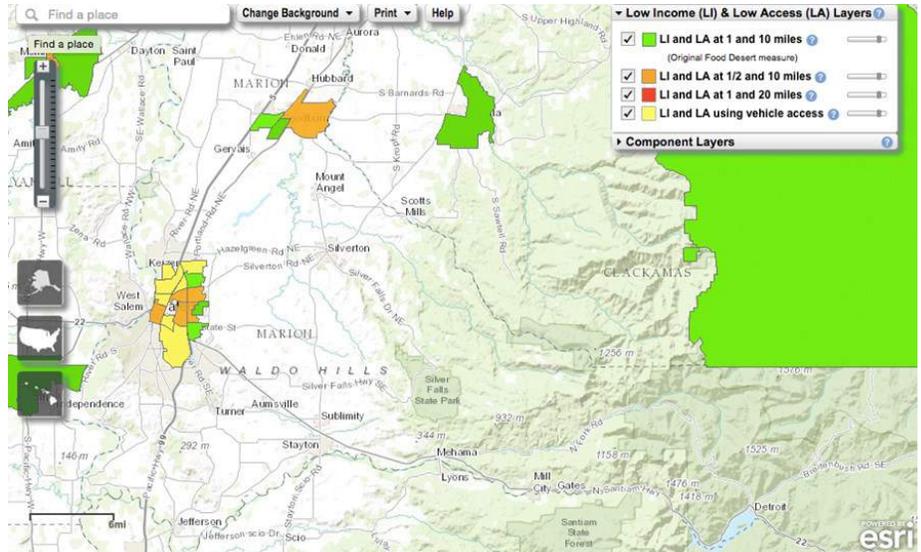
Woodburn

The entire city of Woodburn and the community of Mt. Angel are considered to be a food desert when measuring for low-income and low-access to grocery stores. According to the US Census, Woodburn had an estimated population of 24,395

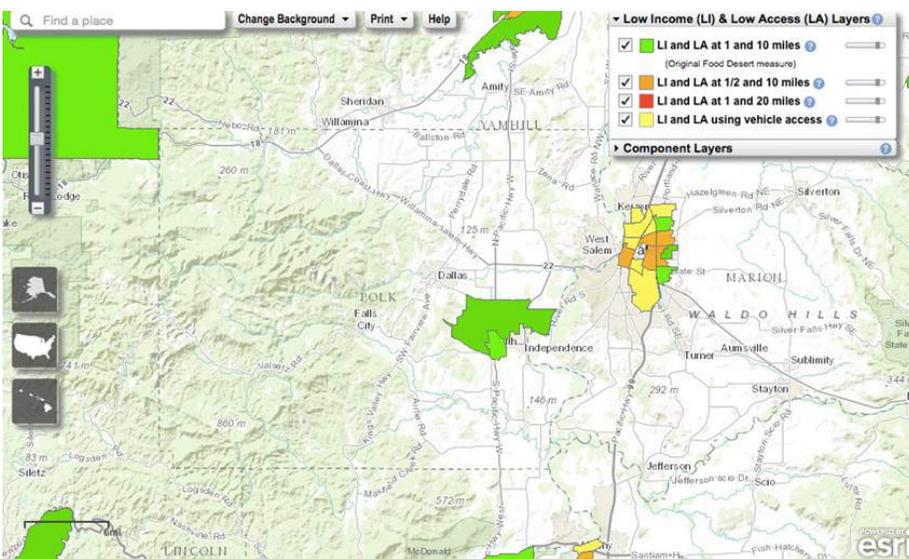
in 2013. 26% of the population is living below the poverty line compared to 16.2% of the state population.^{vii} All students within the Woodburn School District qualify automatically for free or reduced lunch because of the high percentage of low-income families – 78.1% of students received free or reduced lunch within the district in 2014.

33.7% of the population of Woodburn is foreign born and 60.1% of the population of Woodburn speaks a language other than English at home.

Spanish is used by 45.83% of the population and 60.41% of the population aged 5-17. Russian and Ukrainian are also common languages in Woodburn. These US Census statistics highlight the Latin@ population and the Russian community living in Woodburn. The area has three large grocery stores – Safeway, Mega Foods, and Walmart. However, Woodburn is still considered a food desert because of the distance between the grocery store and residential areas as well as the percentage of people who are considered low-income.



Marion County's Food Desert Map from the USDA Food Access Research Atlas



Polk County's Food Desert Map from the USDA Food Access Research Atlas

Barriers to Access



A mobile home neighborhood near Grand Ronde

During a community conversation in Woodburn, social services providers discussed the barriers that exist for people to access healthy, affordable food. Major issues discussed were the cost and availability of public transportation in Woodburn and the inability of people without legal documentation to obtain driver's licenses. Other issues discussed included: language barriers, cost of food, low-wage work, seasonality of agricultural work, availability of nutritious food in corner stores, fears of discrimination when accessing emergency food, and lack of knowledge about locations to access emergency food.

Monmouth

According to the Food Access Research Atlas, the city of Monmouth is considered to be a food desert. Monmouth is home to Western Oregon University and has an estimated 2013 population of 9,906.^{viii} In Monmouth 26.5% of the population is living below the poverty line compared to 16.2% of the state population. Both of the large full-service grocery stores – a Roth's Fresh Market and Waremart (WinCo Foods) – are located right on the border with the neighboring city of Independence.

Rural Challenges & At-Risk Populations

Transportation is a huge issue for rural residents

because of the distance from food resources. Smaller communities like Grand Ronde, Falls City, and the towns in the Santiam Canyon may struggle even more with issues due to limited transportation. However, even larger towns like Dallas, Independence, Monmouth, and Woodburn struggle with public transportation. There is a lack of public transportation available from all of the rural communities to Salem, where many social service providers are based.

Many community members without transportation or gas money shop at small, rural grocery stores in town. These stores often have limited selection of fresh produce and groceries are expensive at these stores. Community members who travel out of town for groceries also spend a significant amount of time driving as well as money on gas.

Certain rural households struggle with limited cooking and food storage equipment, including households in Grand Ronde and the Santiam Canyon. Some residents may not be able to refrigerate or cook food because they lack (consistent) access to electricity, and others with small or mobile homes struggle to store food. It can be a challenge to provide social services because the population is sparse and people live far away from city centers where social service providers are primarily based.

Barriers to Access

Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde (CTGR) consists of 27 different Native American tribes, who were removed from their land and relocated into the same reservation. The reservation exists in Yamhill and Polk counties. The CTGR was disbanded by the Western Oregon Indian Termination Act of 1954 and the tribes lost their reservation. Many members migrated to other parts of Oregon. In 1983 President Reagan signed the Grand Ronde Restoration Act and in 1988 the CTGR received almost 10,000 acres of land. Grand Ronde is located off of Highway 18 on the way towards the Oregon coast. The community of Grand Ronde has an estimated population of 1,661.^{ix} The Grand Ronde community also has a large population of residents that are not members of the CTGR. The CTGR is governed by a tribal council of nine members. The CTGR receives most of its income from the Spirit Mountain Casino, which is located in Grand Ronde.

According to the Food Access Research Atlas, the community of Grand Ronde is not considered a rural food desert. Through conversations at the Community FEAST event as well as informal interviews with community members, we learned that the community of Grand Ronde struggles with food insecurity and access. Community members must drive 25 miles to McMinnville or 22 miles to Dallas to access full-service grocery stores. There is a smaller rural grocery 8 miles away in the town of Willamina in Yamhill County and a corner store located just off Highway 18 that serves the community of Grand Ronde. The corner store has limited fresh fruits and vegetables—community members have frequently commented about the higher prices at the store.

Beyond the geographical isolation of the community, the tribal members have faced additional food-related challenges. Traditionally, there was a strong emphasis placed on hunting, gathering, and fishing. However, throughout the history of CTGR, people lost their land and their

ability to maintain their traditional diet. As Federal Tribal commodity programs came into existence the diet changed dramatically and the increase in sugary, processed foods led to high levels of diabetes and other diet-related diseases. The tribal government has made a commitment to improving access to healthy and nutritious food for members of this community. Grand Ronde now has a community garden, a new food pantry (Iskam Mək^hMək-Haws), a tribal elder meal site, a new farmers' market, and recently held a First Foods Celebration. The tribal government contracted with Marion-Polk Food Share (MPFS) to create a five-year food system plan that will further strengthen food access and availability.

Homelessness

People experiencing homelessness face an increased risk of food insecurity, as they may not have the resources to store or prepare foods. There are a variety of definitions of homelessness from chronic homelessness to people temporarily staying in a friend or relative's home to people living in a vehicle. People experiencing homelessness may be mobile and move frequently; however, the majority of services are located in Salem thus people may stay closer to Salem.

Every January the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency works with various community partners to conduct a homeless count in the region. The January 2014 homeless count totaled 1,815 people. Only 39 people surveyed described that they would be staying in rural Marion County that night and 5 people in rural Polk County; however, 94 people did not respond or did not know.

Those experiencing homelessness may relocate to outdoor areas during the summer. Residents of Grand Ronde have mentioned that typically in the summer families migrate to a hill in their community. These individuals and families use tents for shelter during the summer and have limited space and equipment for preparing meals.

Barriers to Access

Farmworkers

A seasonal farmworker is considered to be someone working seasonally in the agricultural sector and “who has been so employed within the last twenty-four months.” While a migrant farmworker is someone engaged in a similar type of work, they usually do not have the ability to travel home at night and might find temporary housing for the work.^x

The MSFW (Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers) Enumeration Profiles Study Oregon Update^{xi} was completed in May 2013 and includes estimates of the numbers of farmworkers per county as well as the numbers of non-farmworkers (children, family members, etc.) living within the same household. As seen in Table 1, Marion County has a total of 23,013 farmworkers and non-farmworkers living in the area. Marion County has the highest number of farmworkers in the state, and yet these estimates only include workers in field agriculture, nursery/greenhouse, and food processing. The study also highlighted the fact that farmworkers of indigenous descent live in Woodburn and other parts of Marion County.^{xii} If farmworkers are from indigenous communities within Mexico or Central America, they might speak an indigenous language and not Spanish or English. Within the housing complexes of Farmworker Housing Development Corporation (FHDC) at least seven different languages are spoken.

Farmworkers face particular challenges that put them at-risk for hunger or food insecurity. The work

is temporary in nature, and many farmworkers are paid low wages and may only receive income for part of the year. FHDC cites that 40% of their residents were food insecure, according to research conducted in 2008.^{xiii} Farmworkers have an average life expectancy of only 49 years, while the general population of the United States has an average life expectancy of 73 years.^{xiv} The children of farmworkers might face challenges in school, if they are traveling to different farms with their families. Issues of documentation or legal status within the United States may also create a sense of fear and isolation among this community. Farmworkers are essential to food production in the region, yet at the same time they are one of the most vulnerable and food insecure populations in our region.

Washington Elementary School– World Café on Food Access

Through a partnership between the Fostering Hope Initiative and Catholic Community Services, Washington Elementary School in Woodburn hosts monthly World Café Conversations. The belief of the Fostering Hope Initiative is that “every child and youth in every neighborhood lives in a safe, stable, nurturing home, is healthy, succeeds at school, and goes on to financial self-sufficiency.”^{xvi} The World Café Conversations provide an opportunity for parents to discuss specific topics, support each other, and share resources. The monthly meetings take place in the evening at the school and are facilitated by the Community Connector who works at the school with the Fostering Hope Initiative. The World Cafés are conducted entirely in Spanish and

Table 1.^{xv}

County	MSFW Worker Estimates	Migrant Workers	Seasonal Workers	Non-farmworkers in migrant households	Non-farmworkers in seasonal households	Total MSFW Workers and Non-Farmworkers
Marion	13,118	4,394	8,723	3,315	6,580	23,013
Polk	4,782	1,602	3,180	1,208	2,399	8,388
State of Oregon	87,057	27,257	59,800	20,987	46,715	154,759

Barriers to Access

the parents who attend are typically Latin@s. In April 2015, the World Café focused on the issue of food access. The parents shared stories about their struggles finding time to grocery shop and with transportation to the two main stores in Woodburn. One mother described the difficulties of sharing one car with her husband who works long hours—when the whole family goes together to the grocery store it is stressful and she feels pressure to give into her children’s desire for sugary treats. The group shared tips about utilizing coupons and methods for freezing vegetables, which they received through a direct distribution of fresh fruit and vegetables at high-need schools (facilitated by MPFS). The participants also talked about personal gardens—one mother mentioned that she used to have a personal garden, but she moved into an apartment and no longer has space. Other participants talked about having small gardens with cilantro, tomatoes, tomatillos, and peppers. The group expressed interest in receiving information about community garden plots, as several people did not have space to garden at their apartment or home.

None of the participants realized that there are five food pantries and one meal site in Woodburn. One participant mentioned that she was discriminated against at a food pantry because of the car she drove. Through sharing resources about food pantries in Woodburn, the participants can share the resources with others and empower their community.

Youth, Poverty, and Hunger

Oregon has a relatively high rate of childhood food insecurity at 25.9%. Childhood food insecurity is “the percentage of children under eighteen years old living in households that experience limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods at some point during the year.”^{xxvii} In Marion County the childhood food insecurity rate is 26.4% compared with 14% of the overall food

insecurity rate. There is a similar trend in Polk County as the childhood food insecurity rate is 25.1% compared to 14.2% of the overall food insecurity rate.^{xxviii} With these trends throughout Oregon, it is important to have a solid understanding of the programs and initiatives working to reduce childhood food insecurity.

Addressing Hunger at School

The National School Lunch “is a federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. It provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to children each school day.”^{xxix} The program also provides “cash reimbursement to help schools serve snacks to children after their regular school day ends. Afterschool snacks give children a nutritional boost and draw them into supervised activities that are safe, fun and filled with learning opportunities.”^{xxx} The School Breakfast Program is another federal program that offers “cash assistance to states to operate nonprofit breakfast programs in schools and residential childcare institutions.”^{xxxi} Lastly, the Summer Food Service Program “ensures that low-income children continue to receive nutritious meals when school is not in session.”^{xxxii} All of these federal programs are offered throughout Marion and Polk counties.

During the 2014-2015 academic year, 37,323 students (61.2% of enrolled students) were eligible for free and reduced price meals in Marion County^{xxxiii} and only an estimated 16% (approximately 4,069 students) ate meals through the Summer Food Service Program.^{xxxiv} In Polk County, 3,351 students (49.7% of enrolled students) were eligible for free and reduced price meals.^{xxxv} Yet, only 616 students received a lunch each day on average; and only 23% ate meals through the Summer Food Service Program.^{xxxvi} In Marion and Polk counties each school district is responsible for providing meals during summer break. Each school district runs their Summer Food Service Programs differently – one

Barriers to Access

mother in the Santiam Canyon reported that the schools closer to Salem offer lunch more frequently and remarked, “my kids are just as hungry as those kids, but don’t have the same opportunities.”

Additionally, MPFS has started to do select direct distribution of fresh fruits and/or vegetables at high-need schools. A staff member will contact specific schools to schedule the drop-off of a pallet of a certain fruit or vegetable that is in abundance. Washington Elementary in Woodburn received onions, corn, melons, and squash through these produce distributions. Parents are notified, and children and parents are welcome to bring as much produce home as possible. While this method of distribution is new to MPFS, it has been well-received by the community and will continue as local farms have surplus to share.

Food for Traditional School Breaks

Through a partnership with several different organizations, including MPFS, Salem-Keizer Education Foundation, and the Salem-Keizer Schools Child and Adult Care Food Program, the SuperFunHappyBreakTime program was established over ten years ago. The goal is to provide a free, nutritious meal to children (age 0-18) and families during the traditional break period.

This year the program provided over 6,900 meals to children in Marion and Polk counties. Beyond the sites in Salem and Keizer, the program provided meals at 16 sites in 13 different rural communities. These communities include: Aumsville, Dallas, Gervais, Grand Ronde, Hubbard, Independence, Jefferson, Mt Angel, Silverton, Stayton, and Woodburn. Each site provided a lunchtime meal with an optional activity and free books the children could take home. In Falls City and Scotts Mills food boxes were provided to families before spring break so families could easily prepare lunch for their

children. The spring break lunch food box is provided in rural communities where a host site and volunteers were not available or distances were too great for students to easily walk to a site. Sites for the program are at schools as well as apartment complexes and community centers. Three of the housing complexes managed by the Farmworker Housing Development Corporation served as sites for spring break lunch in Woodburn, Independence, and Salem.

SuperFunHappyBreakTime at Colonia Amistad in Independence, Oregon

Colonia Amistad is a housing complex made up of 38 units and it is managed by the Farmworker Housing Development Corporation (FHDC), which is a nonprofit dedicated to serving farmworkers and their families living in the mid-Willamette Valley. The housing complex offers a variety of programming for families as well as community center space, garden, and beautiful murals.

The SuperFunHappyBreakTime program does not just provide meals, but also activities and free books for every child. Immediately after grabbing lunch,



Photo provided by Marion-Polk Food Share

Barriers to Access

several children would run to the table with books and select a book. During the lunchtime, children would read with parents while eating their lunch. The children also had the option of participating in activities focused on garden education. The highlight of the week was the day where the children planted seeds in cups. Each child picked out a seed, put soil in the paper cup, and watered their plant. They learned about the importance of sun, warmth, and water. One volunteer said, “This activity was so great because it went beyond a free meal with an activity and became a great community building day!” The activity took place outside on a sunny day, and as children participated their mothers and caregivers came out and also asked if they could plant a seed or take home an extra packet of seeds. Spring Break Lunch at Colonia Amistad provided food and a respite for parents and caregivers during a traditional break period, and also helped foster a sense community.

Emergency Food System

There are a number of ways people needing food assistance are able to access it. This section covers the main programs and opportunities that exist within the emergency food system.

Food Insecurity

According to the USDA, low food security is defined as “reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet. Little or no indication of reduced food intake.”^{xxvii} Very low food security is defined as “Reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake.” According to 2013 statistics published by Feeding America, 14% of Marion County (44,520 people) and 14.2% of Polk County (10,790 people) communities are food insecure.^{xxix} Furthermore it is estimated that 18.8% of Marion County community members are living in poverty and 18.3% of Polk County community members.^{xxx}

Federal Resources Improving Food Security

SNAP (Supplement Nutrition Assistance Program) provides funds that allow people to buy food, with limited restrictions, in stores. SNAP provides “nutrition assistance to millions of eligible, low-income individuals and families and provides economic benefits to communities. SNAP is the largest program in the domestic hunger safety net.”^{xxxii}

In 2012, Marion County had a 79% participation rate in SNAP of eligible people and Polk County had a 60% participation rate. Approximately 78,577 people in Marion County and 11,800 people in Polk County receive SNAP benefits.^{xxxiii} There are consistent lower levels of participation in SNAP among the senior population – only 54% of eligible seniors (65+) in Marion County and 36% in Polk County receive SNAP benefits. On the Oregon Food Bank Hunger Factors Survey in 2012, 56% of food pantry clients indicated that they needed an emergency food box because their SNAP benefits were not sufficient enough to last them the entire month.

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) offers “federal grants to States for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age five who are found to be at nutritional risk.”^{xxxiiii} In 2009, WIC served 25,338 pregnant or breastfeeding women, infants and children under five, which represents 54% of all pregnant women in Marion County (compared to 38% statewide average).^{xxxiv} In Polk County the participation rate in WIC was slightly lower at 44%.^{xxxv}



Barriers to Access

Food Pantries and Free Meal Sites

As a Regional Food Bank affiliated with Oregon Food Bank, MPFS plays a crucial role providing food to low-income families and individuals. MPFS supports a network of over a hundred food pantries and meal sites across Marion and Polk counties and distributes food to over 44,000 people each month. There are 17 food pantries in rural Marion County and eight food pantries serving rural Polk County. There are two meal sites in rural Marion County (Woodburn and Silverton) that offer a free, warm meal on a weekly basis. James 2 Community Kitchen serves meals in two locations in Dallas on a weekly basis and monthly in Falls City in Polk County. Food pantries are either independent nonprofit organizations or associated with a nonprofit or church. Each food pantry has its own leadership and volunteers. Food pantries choose their own schedule – some are open daily, weekly, or monthly. Community members are able to access a food pantry that is most convenient for them. Clients are able to receive a food box monthly, although certain pantries (if there is sufficient food) allow clients to receive food boxes multiple times per month. The experience of receiving a food box looks different depending on the food pantry. MPFS encourages pantries to become a shopping-style pantry so clients are able to choose the foods they

want in a grocery store-like environment. This encourages conversations about healthy eating habits, decreases waste, and can provide a better experience and a sense of dignity for the guests at the food pantry.

There are four main programs that MPFS manages: Farm & Gardens, Agency & Client Services, Meals on Wheels, and Community Food Systems. Client & Agency Services provides support to food pantries and meal sites, including printed copies of healthy recipes that utilize certain foods that are currently in abundance, recipe-tasting samples, cooking guides for grains and vegetables, and more. Since spring 2015 MPFS has piloted cooking classes at certain food pantries in partnership with OSU Extension as well as Cooking Matters at the Store tours where participants learn tips for buying healthy food on a budget. Cooking Matters at the Store tours were piloted in Silverton—participants found the tours informative and useful. One participant commented that she was so excited to save money by using unit prices and to try recipes that another participant mentioned. Given the success of the tours, MPFS facilitated other tours in Salem and Woodburn. The cooking classes have been piloted in Grand Ronde as well as locations in Salem.



Iskam Mək^hMək-Haws



Iskam Mək^hMək-Haws opened in December 2014 and is the food pantry serving the Grand Ronde community. The name translates into “The House Where You Get Food” in the Tribal Chinuk Wawa language.

MPFS has provided food to the pantries in Grand Ronde for several years. In 2014, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde built a new food pantry and approached MPFS to play a larger role in the management. With the Tribe’s support, MPFS operates Iskam Mək^hMək-Haws, including hiring and supervising the coordinator, Francene Ambrose. Francene has rallied the community around the new food pantry, including, recruiting and managing over 50 volunteers per month who help organize, distribute, and shop with people coming to distributions. The food pantry is designed in a shopping-style so people are able to select the food from shelves that they would like to take home. Currently, Iskam Mək^hMək-Haws is averaging over 300 food boxes distributed per month, and that number continues to grow.

Iskam Mək^hMək-Haws is a gathering place focused equally on food and community building. Francene hopes that “the pantry to be a community hub—that people were coming to get job resources, network with family and friends, learn about other community resources—and at the same time they would be able to just grab a box of food”

The building hosts a beautiful community kitchen and will link closely with the local community garden. The goal is to listen to the community members to determine the best ways to serve the community and programming is driven by the desires of the community. A cooking class in May focused on cooking with whole grains that are readily available from the food pantry. There have been two Bucket Gardening days hosted at Iskam that focused on growing container gardens in buckets for community members who do not have access to land to have a personal garden. Bucket gardens were an idea that arose from the Community FEAST event in Grand Ronde and Francene worked with several partners to ensure the success of the events.

James 2 Community Kitchen

The James 2 Community Kitchen is a place where community members of all walks of life can come to gather around a table, eat a freshly prepared meal, and get to know other members of the community. Through support from MPFS and the many volunteers of the James 2 Community Kitchen, these meals are provided to the guests free of charge. James 2 originated in 2008, and has since expanded to three locations - two in Dallas and one in Falls City.

The dining experience of the James 2 Community Kitchen closely resembles that of a restaurant. When guests walk through the front door a host greets them and walks them to their table. At their table they are served their entire meal by one of the many friendly volunteers – from drink refills all the way to dessert. Whether a guest comes alone or with a group, they are sure to be surrounded with welcoming smiles and great conversations.

James 2 is made possible through the nearly 230 volunteers who put in an average of 700 combined hours a month. This enables the community kitchens to serve 1,400 meals per month. Wayne Kester, the James 2 coordinator, organizes each meal site and its volunteers in order to create the best possible experience for everyone involved. If you ask Wayne what keeps him going through all of the hard work, he will tell you it is the “little things - the community, the faith, and making the guests feel special.”

Falls City has a produce distribution site, also managed by James 2, every Friday at Mountain Gospel Fellowship. Community members come to get in line 30 minutes early, and over 100 families are served each week – roughly one third of the town’s members. The distribution site is set up shopping-style, allowing each visitor to walk through and select the food items that interest him or her most. They skip the ones that do not fit their needs to limit waste and serve more members of the community. There are volunteers available to walk through the selections and to assist with carrying groceries back to the visitors’ cars. The volunteers enjoy their work and often remember visitors by name. MPFS supplies the food that changes weekly, which offers families increased access to healthy foods, as well as adding variety to their diet. Many fun conversations happen during the distribution about new foods or recipes the visitors tried from the selections they made the week before. This volunteer run distribution site helps improve the nutrition of Falls City residents who have limited access to grocery stores and healthy food options.

**This profile was written by Jessica Watson, a nursing student at OHSU who interned with Polk County Family & Community Outreach*



Photo provided by Marion-Polk Food Share

Silverton Community Meal

Every Wednesday, the parking lot and the streets surrounding the First Christian Church in Silverton are filled with parked cars. It is obvious that people come to the free meal at the church for more than the food. The bright, big room is filled with people from all walks of life chatting with each other. There are many hugs between people who have not seen each other for a week or two. There are children talking and playing at tables. Another table is filled with teenagers and even another with people communicating via American Sign Language. An attendee proudly said that there was a big celebration in 2014 when they had served over 100,000 community meals. People are free to walk into the church to receive the meal and are not required to sign-in or sign a statement about their income level. Another attendee mentions that the lack of requirements really helps to foster a community feeling. He quickly points out the table in the corner of the room where people are welcome to pick up some extra fresh or canned food to take home with them.

The Silverton Community Meal feeds between 450-500 people weekly, and has significant community support. Various churches around Silverton have volunteers that help with the preparation and serving of the meals. Local Boy Scout and Girl Scout groups volunteer at the community meal. The Silverton Community Meal not only feeds the Silverton community, it also fosters a sense of pride and connection among community members.



Barriers to Access



Salem Harvest strawberry harvest. Photo by: Dick Yates

Gleaning

Traditionally gleaning is when a group of people harvests a farmer's fields after a commercial harvest. The process of gleaning benefits people in poverty and is rooted in biblical traditions. Gleaning is being practiced in a variety of methods in Marion and Polk counties. There is no official network of gleaning organizations or groups in the two-county area; however, the Linn-Benton Food Share does support a network of gleaning groups throughout their two-county region. A couple of their gleaning organizations are located in communities that border Marion County, including the Canyon Gleaners in Mill City. The gleaning groups associated with the Linn-Benton Food Share are member organizations and people must actively participate (to the level of their ability) in the daily operations to become a member. During a visit with the Canyon Gleaners in Mill City, a young woman said that she moved to Mill City not knowing anyone, and through Canyon Gleaners she was able to find a community of people who were willing to help her and welcome her to town. The gleaning organizations create a sense of community and support beyond simply receiving food. Gleaning groups also allow people to

avoid the feeling of receiving a “handout” as they actively work in the organization.

There are a couple of independent gleaning groups in Marion and Polk counties, including the Monmouth-Independence Gleaners. As homesteading is increasing in popularity, there are several unofficial Facebook pages dedicated to gleaning and/or food preservation. There is a Silverton gleaning and preservation Facebook page as well as a couple Facebook pages dedicated to similar activities based in Salem.



Salem Harvest

Salem Harvest is a nonprofit organization with the mission “to feed the hungry by harvesting food that would go to waste.” The organization was established by a group of community members in south Salem in 2010 that wanted to decrease the waste and mess created by falling fruit in neighborhoods. The organization quickly expanded and now “connects farmers and backyard growers with volunteer pickers to harvest fruits and vegetables that would otherwise go to waste. At least half of each harvest is donated to the Marion-Polk Food Share or its affiliated food pantries, and volunteer pickers take home the remainder.”^{xxxvi} Salem Harvest donated 293,754 pounds of fresh produce in 2014, participating in 162 harvests with 32 farmers. In 2013 the organization participated in 90 harvests and donated 77,222 pounds of produce. This growing organization is currently planning for Elise Bauman, the current President, to become the Executive Director in July 2015. They are also hoping to increase their number of harvest leaders. The harvest leaders oversee each harvest and ensure that both the farmers and volunteers are protected and safe. They would also like to increase the number of volunteers. In 2014 there were 1,200 distinct volunteers who came to assist with a harvest. Salem Harvest tables at events and tries to target low-income families and individuals to be volunteers. While Salem Harvest does not track the income levels of its volunteers, the need for food is one of the motivating factors for someone to volunteer. During a harvest of broccoli in fall 2014, one volunteer mentioned that she had participated in three broccoli harvests – the first harvest she took some home for herself, the second harvest she took some to her elderly neighbors and family members, and the third harvest she was planning to take some broccoli to a co-worker with mobility issues. Salem Harvest fosters a sense of community as well as providing a mechanism for farmers and backyard growers to ensure that the food they grow is not going to waste.

When asked about the ultimate goal of Salem Harvest, Elise responded without hesitation. “We will go out of business, either because there will be no food wasted to harvest or there will be no hungry people.”



Salem Harvest squash harvest. Photo by Dick Yates.

Barriers to Access

Opportunities for Increasing Food Access:

Latin@ Outreach and Involvement

There has been little effort to include Latin@ communities in food systems work or outreach to Latin@s regarding programming. Marion-Polk Food Share should investigate the possibility of creating a survey or community needs assessment focused on the Latin@ population. This could be based on *Las Comidas Latinas: Community Needs Assessment for Nutrition Education Programming* that was done for Linn and Benton counties.

School-Based Hunger-Relief Efforts

There are several school-based hunger relief efforts that are happening across Marion and Polk counties, including various summer lunch programs, spring break lunch program, school gardens, nutrition classes, and more. Community members have frequently stated they do not have information about all of the programs and would like to have a better understanding of the other programs happening in the region. A way to consolidate this information into one central location that is easily updateable would be useful for a variety of community members and service providers. Currently, there are no formal pantries that are based at schools. The creation of food pantries at high-need schools would reach a wider population and be easily accessible by families.

SNAP at Farmers Markets

While further research is needed on methods to outreach to SNAP participants for farmers' markets, the creation of a pilot SNAP Match Incentive program is feasible. Additionally, support is needed to assist farmers' markets as they transition to adding SNAP payment systems.

Rural Emergency Food Assistance

Parts of Polk County (Falls City) and the Santiam Canyon (Lyons, Mehama, Mill City, Idhana, and Detroit) area were identified as communities where emergency food assistance was not meeting the need. Hours could be increased at certain pantries with more volunteer support. A mobile food pantry would allow some of the more isolated communities to be served more frequently without more volunteer participation of these small, rural communities. Additionally, Marion-Polk Food Share could investigate the feasibility of conducting a deeper evaluation of their partner agencies to locate clear gaps in service.

Advocacy Work

Marion-Polk Food Share does not have an advocacy department; however, the organization participates in Oregon Food Bank's Hunger Response Day at the State Capitol and publically supported the Farm to School Bill in 2015. MPFS is a powerful voice in the region and could work with other community organizations to develop policy initiatives and publically support more legislation that helps to eliminate the root causes of hunger.

Community Food Efforts

Many things grow in the garden that were never sown there—Thomas Fuller

Community efforts in support of local food are relatively new to Marion and Polk counties. Recently there has been a large increase in these efforts, including: Farm to School, regional food hub, community gardens, youth education, farmers' markets, and more. These activities have created space for collaboration and new partnerships between institutions, farmers, nonprofits, school districts, and city and government officials.

Although there has been an increase in community activities focused on food systems, there is a lack of regional leadership for community food system efforts. Neither county has a regional food system organization or farmer advocacy group. While there are a wide variety of groups working hard to push food system initiatives forward in certain communities, there is not a cohesive voice that brings everyone together. Starting this year, Marion-Polk Food Share (MPFS) began the conversation about the importance of a thriving, healthy community food system. OSU Extension Small Farms Program has also declared an interest in food systems work more broadly through the creation of

the Center for Small Farms & Community Food Systems. While interest is clearly growing in the region for community food efforts that strengthen the food system and the community, leadership is needed to truly advance this work.

Demand for Local Food

One area that has seen a lot of growth is demand for local food in the region. As demand increases for local food in Salem, farmers in smaller communities outside of this urban hub are able to increase production and find new markets for their products. While institutional demand is growing in urban areas, growth is also visible in rural areas through increased farmers' markets and interest in retail markets.

Institutional Purchasing and Mid-Willamette Valley Food Hub⁷

Institutional buyers provide a significant financial opportunity for farmers, ranchers, food processors and manufacturers. Potential institutional buyers include area school districts, universities, hospitals,

⁷This section was prepared by Kim Hanson, Food Systems Project Manager at Marion-Polk Food Share



Community Food Efforts



State agencies and cafeterias. Smaller buyers include restaurants and retailers. Over the past two years, a discussion has emerged around the need for a Mid-Valley Food Hub to aggregate product from small-to-mid-size farmers into quantities that meet the need for institutional buyers, and to help make the linkages to these larger markets.

In June 2013, a University of Oregon Masters student worked with the Mid-Willamette Valley Council of Governments to complete a study entitled, *"Bringing Food Systems Home: Preliminary Analysis for a Regional Food Hub in Oregon's Mid-Willamette Valley."* The study noted the strengths of the Mid-Valley for hosting a food hub and the ways that a hub could resolve barriers for producers in accessing larger markets, and for buyers in connecting with the quantity and quality of product needed on a year-round basis.

In response to the study findings, the City of Independence worked in partnership with Marion-Polk Food Share in fall 2013 to apply for Oregon Regional Solutions funding to conduct community outreach and design a sustainable business model for a Polk County Food Hub. The project was not

funded and given limited capacity at both agencies, the project fell to the back burner.

In June 2015, the City of Independence was invited to again apply for Regional Solutions and was recently allocated \$200,000 that will be realized pending legislature approval and lottery bond sales in spring 2017. This infusion of support is allowing the project to move forward once again. To be sited in Polk County, near Independence, the food hub will likely serve Polk and Yamhill County growers. Next steps will be to reach out to stakeholders including producers and buyers and design a solid business model. Depending upon the reach of the Polk County Food Hub, there may still be a need to explore the feasibility of a Mid-Valley Food Hub more centrally located in Salem and/or near the I-5 transit corridor.

Farmers' Markets

Farmers' markets facilitate interactions between small-scale farmers and their customers. Farmers are able to explain their farming practices, talk about their products, and create connections directly with community members. Farmers' markets create stronger communities through providing space for community interaction. As of

Polk County Bounty Markets



The Dallas Area Visitor Center organizes both the Dallas and Monmouth Bounty Markets. The Dallas market is currently in its sixth season and the Monmouth market began in 2014. The Monmouth market was created when the City of Monmouth approached the Dallas Area Visitor Center about opening a farmers' market in Monmouth. Both markets run seasonally (May-September/October). During the height of the season, the Bounty Markets typically has 15-17 vendors. The Bounty Markets work to foster community through having local musicians, activities for children, and prepared food from local restaurants available for purchase.

The Bounty Markets utilize wooden tokens for people who want to pay with SNAP (formerly "food stamps"). The wooden tokens are transferable between markets so people are able to run their SNAP card for as much money as they want to spend and if they do not spend all of their tokens they can save them for another week or use them at the other market. In 2014 the Polk County Bounty Market in Dallas had over \$4500 in SNAP purchases.

Community Food Efforts

2014 there are 8,268 farmers' markets in the United States.^{xxxvii} Within the state, the Oregon Farmers Market Association provides support for 127 member farmers' markets, including the majority of farmers' markets that exist within Marion and Polk counties.

Outside of Salem, there are five farmers' markets in Polk County and two in Marion County: Independence (two different markets), Dallas, Monmouth, Grand Ronde, Woodburn and Silverton. The majority of these markets started within the past five years with the Woodburn Farmers Market and the Grand Ronde Farmers' Market opening in 2015 and the Polk County Bounty Market in Monmouth opening in 2014. The farmers' markets in Dallas, Monmouth, and Woodburn are weekday markets while the Silverton, Grand Ronde, and both Independence markets occur on Saturdays. There are no farmers' markets in the Santiam Canyon.

All of these farmers' markets are smaller markets averaging between 8-18 vendors a week. As new markets the Woodburn Farmers Market and Grand Ronde Farmers Market are small markets with less than 10 vendors. As the community sees the market become successful the amount of vendors might increase. Most of these markets only have a couple different farmers, which means that customers do

not have a lot of variety but farmers do not have to compete with larger farms that might sell items for less money.

Malinda Bermudez of Bermudez Family Farm who serves on the Board of the Independence Riverview Farmers Market and is a regular vendor at both Bounty Markets in Monmouth and Dallas said that she enjoys selling at these smaller markets outside of Salem. "By selling at the local markets I am able to call the farm if I run out of something at the market and my family can easily pick more and run it over to me at the market. I wouldn't have that ability at the larger markets in Salem." Malinda also mentioned that she enjoys these markets because she is supporting the vitality of the local community where she lives and works.

The poor public transportation in the region means that the majority of these markets might be difficult to access for people without personal transportation. Most of these markets are located in central locations in each town and people living in more remote locations can face difficulty accessing the markets. Additionally, only three of these farmers' markets accept SNAP benefits. No farmers' markets in Marion or Polk counties, including Salem, have SNAP incentive programs, like SNAP-Match where markets are able to match the



Photo by: Aaron Poplack

Community Food Efforts

amount money spent by people using SNAP thus making their SNAP dollars stretch at the farmers' market. Overall while there is still work needed to ensure that the markets are inclusive for all community members, the increase in farmers' markets in the region represents a growing interest in supporting local farmers.

Retail Outlets

There are a select few retail outlets, both restaurants and grocery stores, that carry local food products. The majority of these retail outlets are located in Salem, and many community members mentioned that if they want to purchase local food they drive into Salem, especially when farmers' markets are not in season.

Roth's Fresh Markets is a local chain of large grocery stores with several locations in Salem as well as stores in Independence, Silverton, and Stayton. Roth's does place an emphasis on local purchasing; however, the local products may be sourced from

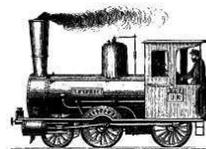
the "Northwest" region of the United States. Additionally, several community members in Silverton, Stayton, and Independence all mentioned that they do not typically shop at Roth's because the food is more expensive than other grocery stores.

While there are several restaurants in Salem that prioritize serving local food, there are just a few restaurants with the same focus outside of Salem. The Silver Grille in Silverton utilizes local foods within the menu as well as the Gathering Spot Café in Silverton. Stacy Higby of Forest Meadow Farms mentioned that she usually orders the dishes with chicken at the Gathering Spot since it is her farm's chicken. Community members want to support their local restaurants as well as their local farmers. Outside of Silverton and Salem there are only a few restaurants in Marion and Polk counties that focus on local food within their menus. This could be due to the low populations in cities in the region outside of Salem, and the difficulty to cultivate interest among community members.

Local Motive Cooperative Grocery

Stacy Higby of Forest Meadow Farm was often asked at the Silverton Farmers Market if there were any cooperative grocery stores in the area where people could shop after the end of the seasonal market. She heard this question so often that she began considering starting a cooperative grocery. A farmer called Silverton Area Community Aid, the food pantry in Silverton, and asked if they could take hundreds of pounds of peaches to distribute. After hearing about the peaches, Elyse McGowan-Kidd helped to organize the distribution of the peaches across the town. Soon people were posting photographs of their canned, frozen, and cooked peaches to various social media websites. "All of the enthusiasm over the peaches made me realize that there was more interest in local food and food preservation than I assumed," recalled Elyse. The peaches helped solidify the dream of having a Silverton cooperative grocery store for Stacy Higby and Elyse McGowan-Kidd.

Local Motive has begun the process of starting a food cooperative in Silverton with the mission of becoming "a member-owned grocery store that provides convenient access to a variety of locally raised or produced foods and other products" and fosters "a healthy and economically viable environment for our farmers and our community." While Local Motive has not opened a brick and mortar storefront yet, the founding members of Local Motive are hard at work reaching out to the Silverton community. The goal is to create a space that is community-owned, community-operated that serves healthy, local foods with affordable options, and can serve as a setting for informational workshops. While Local Motive may not have a physical space to call home quite yet, it demonstrates Silverton's ongoing commitment to supporting local food.



LOCAL MOTIVE
silverton food co-op

Community Food Efforts

F.E.A.S.T.—Food, Education, Agriculture, Solutions, Together

Food Education Agriculture Solutions Together (FEAST) is an organizing event designed by Sharon Thornberry who is currently the Community Food Systems Manager for Oregon Food Bank. FEAST events serve as an opportunity for community members to learn about food systems, examine existing efforts happening in the region, and create plans for action. Every FEAST event includes a panel presentation by local experts (farmers, emergency food providers, and local business owners, and more), small group sessions for action planning, and a meal with local ingredients.

In 2015 there were three Community FEAST events in Marion and Polk Counties – Silverton, Grand Ronde, and Independence. Additionally, there was a shorter version of the Community FEAST, called a FEAST Community Conversation, in Stayton. There was also a FEAST Community Conversation focused on the emergency food system and food insecurity in Woodburn.

Community FEAST: Silverton

In Silverton the FEAST planning process began in October with meetings that included representatives from Rooted in Food and the Silverton Grange. Over the course of the next three months there were regular meetings with representatives from these two groups as well as local farmers, farmers' market coordinators and vendors, community garden coordinators, and interested community members. The group worked hard to source a local meal with pasta from Esotico Pasta, wild rice from Arrowhead Wild Rice, eggs from Buchholz & Son Farm, vegetables from Pitchfork & Crow and Honest to Goodness, homemade kombucha from Cate Tennyson from the Silverton Grange, goat cheese from GeerCrest Farm, and pasta sauce from SortaSausage. The Silverton Grange hosted the event on Saturday, January 24, 2015 and there were approximately 30 attendees. In the morning there was a lively discussion and panelists spoke about a variety of local food efforts. During the lunch, people were able to mingle and many morning discussions continued in small groups over lunch. In the afternoon, the group broke into four small work groups.

Silverton community members decided to work on four food initiatives after FEAST:

1. Continue to support the food cooperative efforts with Local Motive
2. Support Farm to School efforts
3. Create a local food resource guide
4. Improve community awareness about the importance of local food with the idea of becoming a self-sustaining city with a goal of 20% of fresh produce to be produced locally by 2017

Since the Silverton FEAST, a group of community members has continued to meet. They have talked about several ideas since the FEAST, including:

- Starting a farmer speaker series in fall 2015 to promote community education about farmers in the area
- Coordinating a community food council with quarterly meetings for representatives from various organizations to gather and share information about food-related projects
- Creating a nonprofit organization dedicated to connecting community members with local food

Community Food Efforts

Community FEAST: Grand Ronde

Through meetings between the tribal government and the Marion-Polk Food Share, the community of Grand Ronde became interested in hosting a Community FEAST. Throughout the winter, tribal employees representing a broad spectrum of different departments and community members came together to plan the various aspects of the FEAST and to reach out to community members. On Saturday, February 21' 2015, in the Education Building approximately 25 community members from Grand Ronde came together to discuss their food system. A panel of speakers included: Bare Farms, Mineral Springs Poultry Processing, the Grand Ronde Community Garden, a nurse from the Community Health Center, and a community member spoke about the importance of traditional foods. The group broke out into small groups and worked through lunch to decide on important initiatives for the Grand Ronde community.

Grand Ronde community members focused on four initiatives after the Community FEAST:

1. Connect the community with local farmers and producers – through a farmers' market or increased information about local farms. This group wants the community to be educated about the value of local food, to value the work of local farmers, and to purchase from local farmers.
2. Support the Grand Ronde Community Garden – through composting and increasing the number of volunteers. This group hopes that the Community Garden can become a place where youth learn about self-reliance and sustainability.
3. Improve consistent and immediate access to nutritious and affordable food. This group decided that the first step is to gain a better understanding about issues of food access in the region.
4. Empower individuals/families through education on healthy food, gardening, and food preservation with an emphasis on food sovereignty.

Since the Grand Ronde FEAST, several community members, service providers, and Confederate Tribes of Grand Ronde Tribal Council Members have formed a group to examine issues of food access in their community. The group is coordinating a food access survey and community conversations at Iskam Mək^hMək-Haws (the food pantry in Grand Ronde). Through relationships formed during the FEAST, Iskam Mək^hMək-Haws has hosted two bucket gardening events. These events have helped to connect the broader community with the food pantry as community members who do not receive food came to learn about bucket gardening.



Community Food Efforts

Community FEAST: Independence

A variety of community members, including the City of Independence's Economic Development Director, an owner of Full Circle Creamery, City of Independence's Community Liaison, a representative from the Polk County Soil and Water Conversation District, an owner of Bermudez Family Farm, and an OSU Extension Small Farms Instructor helped to coordinate and plan the Community FEAST in Independence. The FEAST was held on March 14, 2015 in the Independence Civic Center and the City of Independence donated the space for the event. Approximately 50 community members from Independence, Monmouth, Dallas, and Falls City participated in the day. The panel included the coordinator of James 2, a farmer from Bermudez Family Farm, a cheese maker from Full Circle Creamery, the City of Independence's Economic Development Director, and coordinator of the Dallas Youth Garden. The Bread Board is a restaurant based in Falls City that sources local ingredients, and the owner baked a special focaccia pizza for lunch. There was a lot of energy in the room and several community members commented that they really enjoyed the opportunity to learn more about community food efforts.

Small groups broke out around the following topics:

1. Education: ensuring that the community knows about growing, preparing, processing and consuming fresh and local foods. This group focused on ways to improve communication between stakeholders in the community and workshops about gardening or food preservation.
2. Gardens: supporting community and youth gardens as well as education for the public about gardening. This group talked about creating new community gardens in Polk County and ideas for gardening classes in the area.
3. Food Waste: waste reduction and resource sharing with the desire to improve systems of recapturing waste resources to be used in food production. Community composting was an idea that arose as well as methods to encourage others to start composting.
4. Food Economics: focused on the creation of a Community Food Center with the tagline "a taste of Polk County." The Community Food Center would provide space for educational programs/classes, aggregation of crops, a community kitchen, shared tools and gardening resources, a CSA pick-up/drop-off location, and support for new/young farmers.
5. Food Access: making food accessible and affordable to all ages and abilities in a way that respects the dignity of those in need. This group wanted to learn more information on local gleaning groups and to gain a deeper understanding of the gaps in service for people who are home bound.



FEAST participants assist with grouping of food system visions. Photo by: Spencer Masterson

Community Food Efforts

Community Conversation: Stayton

A FEAST Community Conversation was held in Stayton for community members of Stayton and Scio. The Community Conversation was held on a Thursday evening in April. There were 10 community members who participated in this conversation. First, participants mapped out their food system with different colors of stickers to mark food production areas (farms and gardens), food access and retail (food pantries, grocery stores, etc.), food businesses, and infrastructure around food (community kitchens). A discussion followed the mapping activity that focused on resources, opportunities, and barriers that exist within the local food efforts. The group identified three priorities for the Stayton community.

1. Cooking education—cooking classes and sample recipes at Stayton Community Food Bank.
2. Backyard garden swap—where community members can trade different vegetables.
3. Creation of school gardens—there are currently no school gardens in Stayton.

Since the Community Conversation in Stayton, the group has reconvened one more time and a women's group from a local church expressed interest in bringing Cooking Matters at the Store to Stayton.

Community Conversation: Woodburn

On a Thursday morning in June, over 25 Woodburn nonprofit and social service providers came together. The event was held in space donated by Silverton Health's Woodburn Clinic. The two-hour conversation was a hybrid of the longer model of the FEAST Hunger Free Community Forum and a FEAST Community Conversation. Overall, the FEAST Hunger Free Community Conversation was a success with participants eagerly sharing information and requesting an email list after the event. After mapping out the emergency resources that exist in Woodburn, a discussion followed that focused on barriers, resources, and opportunities that exist within the delivery of emergency food. The group identified three priorities for Woodburn:

1. A community resource map that is printable and has locations and basic information for social services, including food pantries and community gardens, and the farmers' market.
2. An emphasis placed on bringing produce/food to people where they live. The group discussed the idea of a mobile veggie van that could have distributions at apartment complexes, neighborhoods, and schools. The idea of having produce distribution at free meal sites was also mentioned as an option.
3. A stronger farmers' market. The group enjoyed hearing about the new farmers' market that accepts SNAP. They want more people to access the market so the market can attract more produce vendors. The power of word-of-mouth outreach and the idea of using graphics as well as text for flyers were mentioned. They also talked about reaching out to nonprofit growers as vendors (like the Youth Farm at MPFS).

The group agreed that they would be willing to reconvene in the fall or winter to have the longer Hunger Free Community Forum. The next event will serve as an opportunity for sharing about the progress made on the above priorities as well as for more in depth action planning.

Community Food Efforts

Community Organizations

As previously mentioned, there are a variety of community organizations that are working on distinct food efforts within their communities. Overall, Marion-Polk Food Share (MPFS) has taken the important first step to better examine what role the organization could play in community food systems work in the long term. Silverton is a hub for community food systems work with a very active grange and Rooted in Food. Both of these organizations have the goal to connect their community members with local food.

Grow Our Own—Community Garden Projects

Marion-Polk Food Share (MPFS) supports a network of 63 gardens in Marion and Polk counties, including youth gardens at local schools, a youth farm in Salem, and many neighborhood gardens. The community gardens produce food for distribution at the pantries, as well as for the gardeners themselves, many of whom rely on the food they grow. But the gardens do much more than produce healthy food. They bring people together, across age, cultural and economic barriers. They unify neighborhoods and build strong relationships. While a large percentage of the network of 63 gardens are located within

Salem and Keizer, there are 10 gardens supported in rural communities and one gardening nonprofit supported in Woodburn. Some of these gardens focus on growing food for the hungry, some on educational programming for youth, and others offer rental plots for individual families. All of the supported gardens can receive free starts and seeds as well as training and resources. There are other community gardens that are not associated with MPFS; however, the garden program does provide leadership and serves as a resource for community gardens across the region.

At every FEAST community members expressed interest in community gardens and increasing access to gardens, including education about gardening. While community members have to take initiative to start a garden in their community, MPFS does provide a manual on how to start a community garden that can assist interested community members. Additionally, in spring 2015 MPFS piloted a gardening course called Seed to Supper. Seed to Supper is a series of five classes that teach people “practical, low-cost gardening techniques for building, planning, planting, maintaining, and harvesting a successful vegetable garden.”^{xxxix} Seed to Supper is a collaboration between Oregon Food Bank and OSU Extension. The course was piloted at



Silverton Grange

There are many granges spread out across Marion and Polk counties. In the past, granges served as a resource for the farming community. Currently, there are many granges that are no longer active. The Silverton Grange is an example of a grange that has revitalized itself and supports the Silverton community. The Silverton Grange is one of the most active granges in the area, and members are becoming involved in community food efforts. The Silverton Grange is used as a local gathering place for community events as well as a resource for community members to learn about sustainable agriculture. There are several educational activities that members of the Grange organize for the Silverton community. Once a year they hold a harvest dinner and throughout the year members teach classes on sustainable living and food preservation. One of their most popular events is the annual Seedy Saturday where community members come to the Grange to get free garden seeds and trade their own seeds. During the 2015 Seedy Saturday, Master Gardeners were present to answer questions about gardening, there was a worm composting demonstration, a nutritionist discussed fresh vegetable meals, children participated in hands-on activities, and more. The large turnout demonstrated the role that the Grange plays in supporting the community food system in Silverton.



Community members choose seed packets at Seedy Saturday.

Rooted in Food

Rooted in Food started in 2013 with the Rooted in Food Fair at the local grange in Silverton. The single event brought together vendors, educators, and food lovers. From this event, a group of volunteers came together to work on the fair together. In March 2014 the Rooted in Food Fair grew in size and moved to the Silverton Community Center. The fair was such a success that the group of volunteers has started hosting other local events including, a Garden Tour and a Small Farm Tour & Harvest Dinner. Rooted in Food's events focus on providing a connection between Silverton area community members and local food. Their website also provides a list of contact information for local farmers, producers, and processors geared towards aiding community members in locally-sourcing their holiday meals. In 2015 people involved with Rooted in Food helped to organize the FEAST event in Silverton. Overall the dedicated members of Rooted in Food look for opportunities to spread their "love of local, healthy, and sustainable food" while connecting with their community.

Planting Communities



Building of garden beds. Photo by: Rob Loucks

Planting Communities is a community and school gardening nonprofit located in Woodburn that is supported by MPFS. Originally Planting Communities was a network of interested individuals, but it grew into an official nonprofit organization with the mission of “helping Woodburn enhance its ability to grow their own food, as well as provide a way to fight hunger and increase education about environmental justice issues.”^{x1} Ian Niktab is the president and co-founder of the organization and is a teacher with the Woodburn School District. He says that the organization saw an opportunity to strengthen the connection between the schools and community. Currently, Planting Communities! supports three elementary school gardens and one middle school garden, with the goal of establishing garden space in all of the community’s schools. Beyond school gardens, the organization has helped to establish four community gardens. In a guest editorial for the Woodburn Independent, Ian Niktab wrote about the community gardens, “knowing that many of our neighbors may be struggling with food insecurity, we decided to find one possible solution. Planting Communities would find spaces for them to grow their own food. By providing them space, water, tools, plants and some garden guidance, in the end, they would have some food in their belly and a sense of accomplishment. We desired to create not only a healthy community but a resilient one as well.”^{xli} Planting Communities is not only planting gardens, but sowing seeds of change in Woodburn.

Grand Ronde Community Garden



Volunteers at the Grand Ronde Community Garden. Photo by Kristy DeLoe

The Grand Ronde Community Garden was started a couple of years ago with the goal of increasing access to fresh produce for the Grand Ronde community. The garden provided just over 3,000 pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables to the community last year. This year the garden has continued to grow and expand. They have added flock of almost 30 laying hens, a chicken coop, and are taking full advantage of their green house. With support of the tribal government, they have started a farmers' market where local food producers and artisans are able to sell their products.

The garden is collectively tended without individuals owning specific plots. The produce is donated to Iskam Mək^hMək-Haws, the local food pantry, distributed among the volunteers, and sold at the newly opened Grand Ronde Farmers' Market. Soon the eggs from the laying hens will be available at the food pantry. The Grand Ronde Community Garden is a great example of the creation of a more resilient community through gardening and bringing the community together around food.

Community Food Efforts

four locations in Salem with two courses taught in Spanish. The course was highly successful and other communities have expressed interest in having a course in their community next year. Gardening and community gardens can create stronger, resilient communities while enabling people to grow their own nutritious food.

Farm to School and Youth Efforts⁸

Farm to School is a rapidly growing national movement linking preschool age to K-12 youth with local food in the cafeteria, and hands-on learning related to food, agriculture and nutrition, most often in a school-garden setting. Farm to School provides a viable market for local farmers, builds awareness of the importance of area agriculture, promotes healthy nutrition, and teaches kids the basics of growing their own food. According to the National Farm to School Network, “farm to school enriches the connection communities have with fresh, healthy food and local food producers by changing food purchasing and education practices at schools and preschools.”

Over the past five years, Farm to School efforts have grown in the area. Gervais School District in rural Marion County was one of two districts who participated in the “*Impact of 7 Cents*”—a pilot project/study conducted by Ecotrust in 2010. The study examined the effect of a \$.07 per meal investment in local purchase on economic development, lunch participation, and student preferences for fruits and vegetables. The study found multiple beneficial impacts from the fund infusion, in particular noting a significant positive multiplier effect of 1.86—meaning that for each dollar invested in local food purchase, another \$.86 rippled through the local economy.

In 2011, Ecotrust received a grant from Kaiser Permanente to work with districts across Oregon who had at least 50% of students

eligible for the Federal Free and Reduced Meal Program to increase the purchase of healthy, regionally produced food. Over a three-year grant period, Ecotrust surveyed and/or provided technical assistance to multiple districts in Marion and Polk counties, including Cascade (Turner), Central (Independence), Falls City, Gervais, Jefferson, Mt. Angel, North Santiam (Stayton), St Paul, Woodburn, and Salem-Keizer.

Mike Vetter, Food Service Director, manages all of the Polk County school districts (Central, Dallas, Falls City, and Perrydale). Vetter grew up on a Century Farm in north Albany and sees tremendous value in supporting local farmers as much as possible while at the same time ensuring that his program remains profitable. Each year for about three months, Vetter purchases apples from River Wood Orchard and Farm located in Monmouth. During the fall apple season, he pays a “few dollars more per box, but says it is absolutely worth it for the increase in flavor and quality.” He loves seeing the enthusiasm on the kid’s faces when the apples are on the salad bar.



Photo by: Stephanie Haynes

Community Food Efforts

“My kids ask for the apples by name and are so disappointed when the season is over.” MPFS is working with Vetter to build more farm connections like this one, and to develop cafeteria marketing that educates students and the community about the value of supporting local agriculture. More technical assistance, especially on local sourcing, is needed to grow Farm to School efforts in the region.

The Oregon Department of Education’s Farm to School Specialist has identified 605 youth/school gardens in Oregon. The majority are at K-12 schools, with some at Head Start facilities, preschools, youth corrections, etc. In Marion County, there are 31 school gardens, with three in Polk County. Expanding school gardens, especially in Polk County and rural Marion County, would provide the opportunity to reach more kids with the hands-on educational aspects of Farm to School. MPFS can provide expertise for start-up and support with supplies, but community partners are needed to coordinate educational activities and maintenance.

Beyond Farm to School efforts, there are a variety of different projects occurring throughout Marion and Polk counties that are focused on educating youth about food. Some efforts take place in partnerships with local schools, while others are independent projects. The Mi Tierra Project in Independence is a youth garden project at a housing complex operated by Farmworker Housing Development Corporation. The project was funded for nine months with a small grant from HEAL (Healthy Eating Active Living) Cities. Hour-long weekly classes took place in the garden with a small meal at the end of each class. The group cleaned the garden, built garden beds, added soil/compost, and planted. With the help of a Master Gardener they also built a shed. There has been a request to extend the grant so the program can be expanded to include summer work with the youth.

The hope is that the garden will be sustained and utilized by residents in the future. Other programs take place at farmers’ markets, community gardens, farms, and more. Farm to School and other youth education efforts create space for children to gain a better understanding of local agriculture, learn new skills, and establish healthy eating habits.

Farmworkers’ Rights & Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste

While the focus of this Community Food Assessment has been on small-scale agriculture, it is impossible to ignore the social impact of large-scale agriculture in the community. Marion County is the leading agricultural county in the state of Oregon and farmworkers provide the foundation of the labor needed in this sector.

“While farmworkers are key to Oregon’s agricultural production, they do not enjoy many of the basic protections provided for other workers. Federal laws that govern wages and hours, overtime, and many benefits do not apply to farmworkers... For example, while Oregon farmworkers can now join a labor union, growers are not required to recognize it. Until 1990, farmworkers were prohibited from picketing during a harvest. In addition, farmworker housing is often substandard and farmworkers may be overcharged for housing, food, and transportation by labor contractors, ending up with very little in their paychecks. In sum, farmworkers are treated as a second-class group of workers who do not deserve the same rights and protections that others do.”⁹

In response to the struggles faced by farmworkers and the large population of farmworkers in Woodburn, Woodburn became home to the

⁸This section was prepared by Kim Hanson, Food Systems Project Manager at Marion-Polk Food Share

⁹Stephen, Lynn. The Story of PCUN and the Farmworker Movement in Oregon. Publication. University of Oregon, 2012. Web. 16 June 2015. Pg. 6.

Power of Produce Club



Children participating in the POP Club activities. Photo by Jacquie Curtis

Jacquie Curtis, co-manager of the Silverton Farmer's Market, saw many children being pulled around the market by eager parents or caregivers, but not being engaged or excited. The Power of Produce (POP) Club is a new program for the Silverton Farmers Market focused on engaging children (aged 5-12) in the market, as well as creating a sense of enthusiasm about healthy fruits and vegetables.

The POP Club started at the Oregon City Farmers Market in May 2011 and has spread across the United States and Canada. There is no cost in participating in the POP Club. When a child signs up for the POP Club, they receive a reusable shopping bag and sign their "Passport to Health." The passport is kept at the Information Booth and is used to track participation. Each week participating children can receive two tokens worth \$2 to spend at the market on fruits, vegetables, or food plants.

Participating vendors have a small section of their booth dedicated to produce that the children can buy with their two dollars. Biweekly the vendors are reimbursed the money by the Silverton Farmers Market. Local businesses in the Silverton area have donated funds to support the POP Club.

Saturday, May 9th was the first day of the Silverton Farmers Market and the premier of the POP Club. The success of the POP Club was visible everywhere as children toted around the bright green POP Club reusable bags and engaged with farmers about the options available to them. Jacquie Curtis is certain the POP Club will be a success in Silverton because of the large amount of families in the community as well as the strong community support of local food. The POP Club will be a great addition to the small, yet thriving Silverton Farmers Market.

Dallas Youth Garden



The Dallas Youth Garden provides Dallas-area high school students with job training and experiential education. The Dallas Youth Garden was established for three main reasons: teens in the community want jobs and expressed interest in job training, to provide education about agriculture and food production, and to create a mechanism to address food insecurity. Each spring students apply to be interns at the Dallas Youth Garden. After interviews, the students who are selected spend the summer planning, developing, and maintaining a 20' by 50' market garden utilizing sustainable gardening methods. The fresh produce is donated to a local food pantry. In 2013, the Dallas Youth Garden was built and six interns were hired who grew and donated over 800 pounds of food. In 2014, the garden was expanded to have nine market gardens, fruit trees were planted, and eight interns grew and donated 6,200 pounds of food. The interns also participated in the Polk County and Oregon State Fairs with over 20 exhibits. Additionally, throughout the summer the interns are required to complete three leadership projects focused on vision, self-direction, planning, effective communication, and the ability to work with others.

The Dallas Youth Garden is a partnership between Polk County 4H (program support), City of Dallas (water), Dallas High School (students), Polk County Family & Community Outreach (funding & support), Trinity Lutheran Church (land), Polk County Master Gardeners (plants/supervisors), and the Willamette Valley Food Assistance Program (food distribution).

Currently there are eight interns and the leadership of the Dallas Youth Garden is exploring the idea of expanding to Monmouth/Independence.

Community Food Efforts

farmworkers movement in Oregon. PCUN – one of three farmworker unions in the entire country – is headquartered in Woodburn. PCUN was formed in 1985 and “has been a crucial part of Latino history in Oregon over the past three decades. From a small office providing legal services for immigrant workers to being a national leader in defending the rights of farmworkers and immigrants, PCUN has become a role model for the positive integration of Latino immigrants in the United States.”^{xliii}

Currently PCUN operates a service center for members of the union as well as Radio Movimiento, a 24/7 radio station that broadcasts on 96.3 FM with a reach of 300 square miles out of Woodburn. Radio Movimiento has programming in Spanish and indigenous languages. In 2012 the CAPACES Leadership Institute was completed. CAPACES “originally a project of PCUN, is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization whose mission is to prepare leaders with the political consciousness and capacity to lead and support social justice work.”^{xliv} PCUN has eight other sister organizations, including: CAUSA (Oregon’s immigrant rights coalition), Farmworker Housing Development Corporation (farmworker housing), Latinos Unidos Siempre (youth leadership), Mano a Mano Family Center (social service),

Mujeres Luchadoras Progresistas (women’s economic development), Oregon Farmworker ministry (faith-based solidarity), Salem-Keizer Coalition for Equality (education reform), and Voz Hispana Causa Chavista (voter organizing and civic engagement).^{xlv} PCUN and its sister organizations continue to fight for the rights of farmworkers and to support the Latin@ community.

Public Health Initiatives

At the higher level of policy, public health departments determine priorities for community health initiatives within the community. In 2014-2015 there were Community Health Assessments conducted in Marion and Polk counties. One of the health indicators measured in the Community Health Assessments is obesity. Access to affordable, nutritious food is needed to lower rates of obesity. Additionally, access to gardens and garden education can provide motivation to be outside and exercise. There are clear linkages between community health initiatives and community food efforts.

The Healthy Corner Store Initiative (HCSI) is a food access project taken on by the Marion County Health Department. The Marion County Health Department received a three-year grant from the Kaiser Permanente Northwest in 2011 to fund the HCSI. The goal of the project is to work with corner stores to offer fresh produce and other healthy food options in areas that are considered food deserts in north Marion County and Salem. The Marion County Health Department worked with each store to establish individual goals and personalize the work. There were four stores in Woodburn that participated and one store in each of these communities: Mt Angel, Hubbard, and St. Paul.



Woodburn Hunger Free Community Conversation. Photo by Spencer Masterson

Community Food Efforts

Opportunities for Community Food Efforts:

Community Food System Leadership

There is a strong need for leadership for community food systems efforts in Marion and Polk counties. This would allow networking between different initiatives, projects, and groups of people working in the region, including: farmers, farmers' market managers, food pantry coordinators/volunteers, youth garden educators, city/local government officials, and eaters. Either a nonprofit organization or a regional food network would provide the leadership necessary to create lasting improvements in the community food system. A regional food network that meets at regularly scheduled intervals (monthly or quarterly) could be the first step in identifying needs and interests before a new nonprofit potentially emerges. Another alternative could be a project or program focused on strengthening the community food system housed within an existing nonprofit, such as the current food system work occurring at Marion-Polk Food Share. If an existing organization does take on community food system work, it is important that there is internal support from the board and leadership and that the work fits with the mission and scope of the organization. Currently Marion-Polk Food Share and OSU Extension appear to be the strongest leaders in community food systems work in the region, and seem best suited to move food system work forward.

Education about Local Agriculture

Throughout this assessment farmers and community members mentioned the need for more education about the importance of supporting local farmers and purchasing local food. Through purchasing local product, money stays in the community and supports the local economy, land is kept in farming, and food security is ensured for years to come. Community education about the importance of local agriculture could happen through the creation of a local food guide or through a nonprofit/local food network. Events such as panels on agricultural/food systems topics, a "get to know your farmer" speaker series, film screenings, and more could help expand community education.

Local Food Guide

A local food guide can highlight farmers that sell locally, farms that have u-pick opportunities, restaurants that source local ingredients, locations and times of farmers' markets, and more. A local food guide was brought up in some capacity in every FEAST event and in informal conversations with farmers and community members. It could also serve as a project for a local food network or a nonprofit devoted to food systems. Additionally, it would increase the visibility of local foods and could serve as a vehicle to increase agri-tourism in this rich agricultural region. The creation of a local food guide could begin with a web-based platform and then become available in print as funding is secured.

Community Food Efforts

Social-Impacts of Agriculture

Marion and Polk counties are rich agricultural areas with large-scale farming operations that sell on the commodity market. There is very little focus on the social impacts of large-scale agriculture within community food system efforts. Farmworkers are not acknowledged for the essential role that they play in the food system. PCUN is a great resource for community education about farmworkers. Additionally, an emphasis should be made to ensure that other community food efforts are inclusive of this population – such as making sure that there are bilingual Farm to School opportunities. Farmworkers should also be included in considerations in policy and advocacy. General awareness about the role farmworkers play in the community food system could happen through inviting PCUN to speak at appropriate events, hosting community forums, and including the history of farmworkers in other educational opportunities.

Farm to Institution

Although the local food aggregation project with the City of Independence could help bridge this gap, currently there are regional institutional buyers – especially in Salem – that might be interested in purchasing local product. Some of these institutional buyers may not know how to access or work with local farmers. With the help of another party, such as a nonprofit or local food network, technical assistance can be provided to institutional buyers to build relationships with local farmers and processors.



Photo by: Jared Hibbard-Swanson

Conclusion



This assessment is meant to provide a snapshot of the community food system that exists in Marion and Polk counties. There are other farmers, ranchers, organizations, and community members who are working tirelessly to improve their community food system.

There is an abundance of resources available for community members—learning opportunities, farm experiences, social gatherings, services available for low-income families, and organizations. While all of these opportunities exist, there needs to be increased communication between organizers as well as better sharing of information to potential participants.

The momentum that has been built over the last year will continue with the placement of another Community Food Systems Coordinator through RARE AmeriCorps at the Marion-Polk Food Share.

Next Steps for August 2015-July 2016:

- Marion-Polk Food Share will host another Community Food Systems Coordinator through RARE AmeriCorps—the RARE member will write an Addendum to this assessment with a specific focus on Grand Ronde and Woodburn.
- FEAST Community Food Conversations will be held in two towns in the Santiam Canyon.
- A FEAST Hunger Free Community Forum will be held in Woodburn. A food access needs assessment will be designed and implemented for diverse communities in Woodburn, including farmworkers and native Spanish and Russian speakers.
- After the Food Access and Nutrition Survey is completed and analyzed, a series of community conversations will occur in Grand Ronde.
- The RARE member will coordinate a regional gathering for farmers, ranchers, service providers, community members, and food system advocates in spring 2016.

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Producer Questionnaire

Producer Questionnaire

Name: _____

Operation: _____

Date: _____

How long have you been farming/ranching?

Less than 1 year 1 to 2 years 3 to 4 years 5-6 years

7-8 years 9 years or more

What type(s) of agricultural products are you producing? (Check all that apply)

- Vegetables
- Fruit
- Dairy/Cheese
- Grains
- Pork
- Poultry
- Beef
- Lamb
- Eggs
- Beer/Wine/Spirits
- Value-added products
- Other: _____

During what season(s) do you have product available? (Select all that apply)

- Spring
- Summer
- Fall
- Winter

How many acres do you use for production?

- 0 to 2 acres
- 3 to 6 acres
- 7 to 15 acres
- 16+ acres

Where do you sell your product(s)? (Select all that apply)

- Growers Markets
- Farm Stand
- CSA (Community Supported Agriculture)
- Grocery Stores
- Restaurants

Producer Questionnaire

- Schools/other institutions
- Wholesale Distributors
- Other (please specify): _____

What have been your most successful avenues of sale? (Select all that apply)

- Growers Markets
- Farm Stand
- CSA (Community Supported Agriculture)
- Grocery Stores
- Restaurants
- Schools/other institutions
- Wholesale Distributors
- Other (please specify): _____

What sales outlets would you be interested in selling to that you DO NOT already? (Select all that apply)

- Growers Markets
- Farm Stand
- CSA (Community Supported Agriculture)
- Grocery Stores
- Restaurants
- Schools/other institutions
- Wholesale Distributors
- Other (please specify): _____

How many seasonal employees do you have?

- 1 to 2
- 3 to 4
- 5 to 7
- 7+

How many year round employees do you have?

- 1 to 2
- 3 to 4
- 5 to 7
- 7+

Is your farm/ranch a main source of income for you?

- Yes
- No

What challenges do you face as an agricultural business? (Select all that apply)

- Access to land
- Access to capital
- Access to water

Producer Questionnaire

- A market for your product
- Transportation
- Other (please specify): _____

Would you be interested in learning more about being part of a cooperative of producers in order to sell to larger retailers?

- Yes
- No

What are your needs for infrastructure? (Select all that apply)

- Distribution route
- Packing facility
- Dry storage
- Cold/freezer storage
- Value-added processing facility (non-meat processing)
- USDA meat processing facility

Would you be interested in being part of an agro-tourism network for the purpose of coordinating and promoting any or all of the following: on farm classes, farm tours, or farm stays?

- Yes
- No

What do you currently do with surplus product? (Select all that apply)

- Compost it
- Feed to animals
- Preserve it
- Contact Salem Harvest or a gleaning group
- Donate to food bank, (please specify): _____
- Donate to meal site or community organization, (please specify): _____
- Other (please specify): _____

Are you aware of the 15% tax credit for donating crops?

- Yes
- No

If yes, does this provide incentive for your donation? Yes No

If no, would you be interested in learning more about 15% tax credit or having someone from Marion-Polk Food Share contact you about donating? Yes No





Addendum Community Food Assessment: **2016** Marion and Polk Counties



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Cover photos: Seed to Supper participants at a bucket garden day at Marion-Polk Food Share (MPFS), fresh garlic from MPFS Youth Farm, volunteers at Youth Farm (photo by Chemeketa Community College Marketing Department). Main cover photo: Elizabeth Miller and Chris Jenkins from Minto Island Growers on a farm tour as part of the Mid-Valley Food Summit

Below: Fresh cherries at Dallas' Bounty Market



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Thank you to the farmers, ranchers, small business owners, teachers, and community members for letting me into your communities, onto your farms, and even into your homes. It has been an honor to learn from you, work with you, and tell your stories through the original Community Food Assessment and this addendum. This work would not be able to continue without your support, enthusiasm, and dedication to make lasting improvements to our community food system.

Foreword



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.

Eight 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
Rural Community Liaison
Oregon Food Bank

Table of Contents

Assessment Team	2
Acknowledgements	3
Foreword	4
Table of Contents	5
Introduction	7
Local Food Production & Distribution	8
Strengthening Support for Producers	8
OSU Extension Small Farms Instructor	8
Friends of Family Farmers—Salem Listening Session	9
Producer Engagement with Urban Markets in Portland	10
City of Salem Food-Related Development Projects	10
Rural Farmers Markets—Successes & Challenges	11
Accomplishments & Opportunities	12
Profile: Queener Farm	13
Profile: Silverton Food Co-Op	14
Community Food Efforts	15
Grand Ronde	15
Creating Opportunities for Food Literacy & Education	16
Nutrition Education: Cooking Classes	16
Garden Education: Seed to Supper & Container Gardening	16
Food Preservation Classes	18
First Foods Celebration	19
Community Food System Development Efforts	19
Food Access & Community Team (FACT)	19
Food Access & Nutrition Survey	20
FEAST Follow-Up: Community Conversation	20
Food Access & Nutrition Survey—Executive Summary	21
Woodburn	22
Creating Opportunities for Food Literacy & Education: Planting Communities Receives Farm to School Grant	22
Food System Development Work: Woodburn Community Organizing	23
Salem	25
Community Food Efforts	25
Friends of Family Farmers: inFARMation	26

Table of Contents

Youth Farm Moves to Chemeketa Community College	27
Seed Exchange	28
Community Food System Development Efforts	28
Prescription CSA Efforts	29
Youth Garden Educator Hub	30
Farm to School Grant	30
Opportunities to Expand Community Food Efforts	31
Regional Food System Development Efforts	32
Mid-Willamette Valley Food Summit	32
Mid-Willamette Valley Local Food & Farm Network—Interest Meetings	35
Marion-Polk Food Share Hires Community Food Project Manager	35
Conclusion	37
Next Steps for August 2016-August 2017	37
Appendix: 2016 Mid-Valley Food Summit Agenda	38
Appendix: 2016 Mid-Valley Food Summit Breakout Session Descriptions	39
Appendix: 2016 Mid-Valley Food Summit Poster	41



Youth Farm CSA Share, photo by Stephanie Haynes

Introduction



Volunteers at MPFS' Youth Farm, photo provided by Chemeketa Community College's Marketing Department

This Addendum to the Marion and Polk Community Food Assessment serves as a one-year update to the original report and expands on the work that was conducted in July 2015-June 2016. At the end of the Community Food Assessment five next steps were identified: another year of RARE AmeriCorps service with a written addendum that focuses on Woodburn and Grand Ronde, FEAST Community Conversations in two towns in the Santiam Canyon, a FEAST Hunger Free Community Forum in Woodburn, finishing of the Food Access & Nutrition Survey in Grand Ronde with a follow-up community conversation, and a regional gathering for people engaged in food system work in the Mid-Willamette Valley. The majority of those goals were completed this year and are discussed within this Addendum. Within the second section, Community Food Efforts, there are three subsections: Grand Ronde, Woodburn, and Salem. This highlights the work

done in three different communities over the last year. The last section, Regional Food System Development Efforts, discusses the work that has been conducted on a regional level. This work arose from the need highlighted in the Community Food Assessment to have leadership on a regional level for community food system work. The only goal that was not met this year was to conduct community organizing in the Santiam Canyon. We did not accomplish this because the Mid-Valley Food Summit turned into a much larger project than originally envisioned. However, the success of the Food Summit highlighted the energy that exists for developing a more consistent method for folks engaged in food system work to connect and collaborate. This year has seen exciting growth in community food system efforts in Marion and Polk counties and demonstrates that there will be continued growth in the future.

Local Food Production & Distribution

At the heart of the food system, food production and distribution are critical components of a healthy community food system. In the original Community Food Assessment four agricultural opportunities were identified that would create a stronger community food system. Those opportunities were: the creation of a Mid-Willamette Valley Farmer Network, creation of a regional food label, expansion of new farmer support and training, and the creation of a Mid-Willamette Valley food hub. In the year since the original Community Food Assessment was written, it was not possible to make progress on all the opportunities identified. This Addendum will cover progress made on the strengthening support for producers and new developments regarding the potential for a food hub. This section also profiles an innovative new farm and projects that have developed this year as well as certain challenges that have arisen.

Strengthening Support for Producers

The Community Food Assessment identified various methods of support that could be strengthened for food producers in our region. Over the course of this year, there have been several endeavors aimed at strengthening support, including: OSU Extension hiring a Small Farms Instructor for Marion County,

Friends of Family Farmers hosting a listening session for Salem/Keizer farmers, and possibilities of a regional food hub located in Northeast Salem. Furthermore, local farmers have been actively engaging with the urban markets in Portland. The relationship between urban and rural was discussed briefly in the original report and it will be further examined in this Addendum. Increasing new farmer support for the region is also happening nearby – one farm located just outside of Silverton, Diggin' Roots, is hosting a Rogue Farm Corps member. Rogue Farm Corps is a nonprofit that helps aspiring young farmers gain the skills they need to become farmers.

OSU Extension Small Farms Instructor

After a successful ballot measure to expand OSU Extension funding in Marion County, Javier Fernandez-Salvador was hired as the new OSU Extension Service Small Farms faculty in Marion County (Professor of Practice). Javier has a wealth of experience from working with both traditional and organic farming systems and businesses in Oregon and Florida, as well as, from growing up on a farm in Ecuador. His most extensive research and work has been in berry crops, organic farming systems and food safety with Spanish-speaking underserved farmers. He has Bachelor's degrees from both



Local Food Production & Distribution



Ecuador (Agricultural Engineering, Agribusiness Management) and OSU (Horticulture) and a Master's degree in Horticulture from OSU. He is on track to finish his PhD in Horticulture at OSU in September 2017. He will provide advice and training for small farms throughout Marion County.

Friends of Family Farmers—Salem Listening Session

Friends of Family Farmers (FoFF) is a nonprofit formed in 2005 that primarily serves as an advocacy group for family-scale, environmentally and socially responsible farmers. FoFF also does programmatic work providing trainings and social opportunities for Oregon farmers. Both their advocacy and the direction of their programming is driven by input from farmers. Every year that the legislature is out, the staff of FoFF travels across the state of Oregon to hold listening sessions. It is from these listening sessions that FoFF develops priorities for their advocacy agenda and programming.

In December 2015, FoFF hosted a listening session for Salem and Keizer farmers at GeerCrest Farm. Three priority issues emerged from the facilitated conversation: land use laws, insurance, and new/young farmer programs. Land use laws resonated among farmers and aspiring farmers because of complications that arise with on-farm labor and

activities. One farmer mentioned that volunteers with World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF) built a cob house, but since it did not meet the guidelines it was not considered an appropriate “guest” house and could not be used for its intended purpose.

Insurance issues often arise for farmers when they want to expand their operations to include innovative on-farm activities, such as teaching classes to community members or engaging in agritourism activities. The more diverse farm offerings, the harder it can be to even locate an insurance company that can offer an appropriate policy.

Lastly young and new farmers face a lot of additional barriers to entry, including: housing, insurance, education, cost of land, and more. The group talked about the fact that in this region the number of new farmers has not kept up with demand or interest. FoFF is conducting at least 20 listening sessions throughout Oregon during winter 2015 and spring 2016. Through information gleaned from the listening sessions, FoFF will identify some of the most pressing issues facing Oregon's family farmers. This information will drive their policy program and assist them in advocating for their constituents, including farmers of Marion and Polk counties.

Local Food Production & Distribution



Photo by Stephanie Haynes

Producer Engagement with Urban Markets in Portland

The relationship between rural and urban is complex in the Mid-Willamette Valley. Food producers must decide whether to sell their products for lower prices within their communities or travel farther to sell products at higher prices within the urban markets where demand is higher for local and organic products. Salem has a population just over 160,000 and is located in the middle of the intersection of Marion and Polk counties. Additionally, the Portland metropolitan area is located approximately 45 miles to the north and Eugene is located 65 miles to the south. Many food producers commented over the course of the last year about their engagement with the urban markets, especially in Portland. While the Salem Saturday Market has food producers from Marion, Polk, Linn, Clackamas and other counties – many producers have commented that Portland provides an even better market. From food producers who are mainly selling on a small-scale direct-to-consumer market to food producers who are selling to larger scale markets, they have all mentioned the benefits and necessity of engaging with the urban market in Portland.

Last year, one farmer commented on being able to sell lettuce for \$2 more a head at the Portland State University's Farmers Market. This year a farmer who recently bought land in Polk County said that it is been easier for her to continue keeping her customer base in Portland than to find new customers in region. Several small-scale farmers sell at farmers markets closer to Portland and some even have CSA drop-off sites in Portland. This spring two farms from the Mid-Valley region participated in the Portland Area CSA Coalition's CSA Share Fair. Minto Island Growers and Queener Farm have drop sites in Portland for their CSA and Apple Club members. Most small-scale producers mention the trade-off between higher demand/price point and the time/cost of transportation. In some instances it may not be worth the time and cost of transportation, the majority of the farmers said the benefit outweighs the extra costs.

City of Salem Food-Related Development Projects

The City of Salem created an Action Plan for Portland Road Corridor in northeast Salem. This part of Salem is considered a USDA urban food desert and has a high percentage of Latinos. According to the 2013

Local Food Production & Distribution

American Community Survey, 42% of community members in the area identify as Latino compared to 19% in Salem. The City of Salem’s Urban Renewal Agency approved an action plan for this area in November 2014 and is moving forward with strategies that “maximize private investment, job creation, and economic vitality in the area, and leverage other local, state, and federal resources.”¹

One project identified in the Action Plan is the concept of a public market, “Farm-to-Table” food incubator, and food hub. Currently, the project identifies three possible avenues that have benefits for the community members in the corridor as well as the broader mid-Valley community. A public market place/Portland Mercado concept that exists in Portland would “help to foster entrepreneurship, generate a sense of community, and respond to the needs of existing residents.”² This could include a farmers market-style grocery store, small business incubator, food carts, small restaurants, commercial kitchen, and a food hub that aggregates products from small to mid-size local farms and sells to larger, institutional markets. The project is still being developed. Currently an advisory committee is being formed and the Salem City Council has approved up to \$80,000 for a feasibility study.

Rural Farmers Markets—Successes & Challenges

Farmers’ markets provide an excellent opportunity to connect community members with farmers – markets create a sense of community while also providing a space for food producers to talk directly with consumers. Unfortunately small rural farmers’ markets face certain challenges even more so than larger markets in urban areas. Markets need to have enough vendors to attract community members, in addition to being centrally located and on a good day/time. Simultaneously markets need to have enough community members and customers to attract vendors. This balancing act can be tricky to manage. The Polk County Bounty Market in Monmouth closed after the 2015 season. Additionally, the Woodburn Farmers’ Market faced similar challenges during the 2015 season. However, the City of Woodburn is funding the management of the market for another year. To address these challenges, this year the market has changed locations, shortened the season, and will be held in conjunction with the summer concert series. The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde (CTGR) started a monthly farmers market last summer. It occurred on a monthly basis at the Shell gas station next to

¹City of Salem Urban Development. *Portland Road Corridor Action Plan*. Rep. N.p., Winter 2016. Web. 16 June 2016.

²*ibid.*



Photo by Stephanie Haynes

Local Food Production & Distribution

Spirit Mountain Casino. In the beginning, the market had a strong support for vendors but both vendors and visitors diminished week after week. In an effort to re-energize the market, it will be moved to CTGR's campus, which has 400 employees working as well as tribal housing located nearby. Kristy DeLoe, Nutrition Manager for CTGR, is hopeful that the market will grow and eventually have SNAP acceptance and serve as a venue for community members to gain access to nutritious local food. While rural farmers markets have a unique set of challenges, they also can serve as a venue for community building while strengthening the local food economy.

Accomplishments & Opportunities

Four opportunities for agriculture were identified in the Community Food Assessment: development of a Mid-Willamette Farmers Network, creation of a regional food label, expansion of training opportunities and support for new farmers, and exploration of the feasibility of a mid-Valley food hub. While progress has not been made in all of

these arenas – only so much work that can move forward within one year. Clear strides have been made towards expansion of training opportunities and support for new farmers with the hiring of a new Small Farms Instructor for Marion County as well as engagement with Friends of Family Farmers. The City of Salem is moving forward with a feasibility study of a food hub, retail, business incubation space on Portland Road in Northeast Salem. Overall small and medium-scale agriculture is continuing to thrive and grow in the mid-Willamette Valley. Ideally over the course of the next year, progress could be made towards the creation of a Mid-Willamette Farmers Network as well as regional food label. One new opportunity that has emerged over the course of this year is the idea of a farm incubator project. Potential partners in a farm incubator could be OSU Extension, Chemeketa Community College, and Marion-Polk Food Share. While there has been much action over the past year and exciting projects are evolving, there are still many opportunities to strengthen local agricultural in the Mid-Willamette Valley.



Queener Farm



Photo provided by Queener Farm

Queener Farm is predominantly an apple orchard located between Stayton and Scio. Andrew Jackson Queener established the farm in 1865 and it is now home to 2000 apple trees in 119 varieties. Jeannie Burg leased Queener Farm in 2013 and began re-energizing the farm. From the very beginning, Burg committed to organic practices and next year the farm should be certified organic after the three-year transition period. Queener is a diversified farm with about five acres in apple orchard along with a small amount of vegetable production. The farm is also home to over 1000 currant plants.

Burg is a former Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) vegetable farmer and had the unique idea to try the CSA model with apples. The Heirloom Apple Club started in 2015 and provided biweekly boxes of apples to 50 members in the Willamette Valley from July-December. For the upcoming 2016 season, Queener Farm is hoping to double the number of Apple Club members and increase the quality and quantity of the apples. They are also introducing three different sizes of boxes for their members who either want to primarily eat fresh apples and for those who are more interested in baking and food preservation. For all of the Apple Club's members, it provides an opportunity to experience a wide variety of apples that you cannot access in grocery stores. Members can receive 12-35 varieties of apples.

Since the orchard is transitioning to organic, it is important to the farmers "to keep quality high during the organic transition, especially when the orchard is used to being reliant on chemical sprays," says Kate Humiston an employee at Queener.

While the farm has several on-farm opportunities for consumers, including u-pick apples and u-press cider with a refurbished 100-year-old cider press, the majority of Heirloom Apple Club members have been from the Portland. Portland is a larger market with more demand, and Humiston mentioned that she thinks Portlanders have more appreciation for their product. Restaurants are more interested in local products and they are able to receive a better price point. While there are a lot of advantages for Queener Farm to spend time marketing to Portland markets, there are a few challenges. They spend a lot of time trying to locate drop-off sites for the boxes that have a degree of flexibility. Independent grocery stores or co-ops have been great partners for Queener – letting them drop off the boxes and allowing their consumers to pick up their box during normal business hours. More flexibility benefits both the producer and the end consumers as it allows the farmers to not spend as much time on distribution and allows consumers to pick up when it works best for their schedules. While Queener Farm benefits from the Portland market, they also hope to encourage more locals to buy into the Apple Club by offering an on-farm pickup discount.

Silverton Food Co-Op



Photo by Stephanie Wynnes

The Silverton Food Co-Op, originally called Local Motive, is continuing to grow as a grassroots effort by Silverton community members to create “a member-owned grocery store that provides convenient access to a variety of locally raised or produced food and other products.” Over the past year, the Silverton Food Co-Op has hosted several Pop-Up Co-Op events at Seven Brides Brewing in Silverton. These events are free and open to the public. Community members are able to shop with the co-op and experience what the co-op can offer Silverton. Customers can purchase pickled jalapeño peppers grown and preserved by Gardenripe, fresh eggs and chicken raised by Forest Meadow Farm, as well as other fruits, vegetables, meats, and other goods. Around the room there are posters featuring the 15+ participating local farmers and producers who participate in the Pop-Up Co-Op events.

Beyond the Pop-Up Co-Op events the Silverton Food Co-Op has hosted a movie screening, general meetings, and has taken over the planning of the Silverton Local Food Fair. The Silverton Co-Op is steadily increasing their ownership numbers in order to demonstrate community support to potential lenders. The overall goal is still to have a brick and mortar storefront; however, in the meantime the efforts of the Silverton Co-Op continue to demonstrate the community’s ongoing commitment to support local food.



Jason Codner presenting about the Silverton Food Co-Op (formerly Local Motive) at the Mid-Valley Food Summit

Community Food Efforts



Volunteers harvesting strawberries during a Salem Harvest, photo by Heather McPherson

Many of the individual community food efforts described in the 2015 Community Food Assessment report are still in operation and many are continuing to grow. There is a thriving network of community gardens across Marion and Polk counties, expanding Farm to School efforts, educational opportunities for youth, rural and urban farmers' markets, and much more. Additionally, this year there have been new efforts made to help create new networks and collaboration across the food system. This section of the addendum will focus on opportunities for food literacy and education as well as community food system development efforts in three individual communities: Grand Ronde, Woodburn, and Salem. Grand Ronde and Woodburn have been communities heavily focused on throughout this year, while Salem was not covered in the original community food assessment. The next section will focus on the regional food system development efforts that have occurred over the past year.

Grand Ronde

Grand Ronde is located off of Highway 18 between Salem and the Oregon coast. The community of Grand Ronde has an estimated population of 1,661. Community ethnicity, according to U.S. Census, is 56% Caucasian, 25.6% American Indian, 11.3% multi-racial, 6.7% Hispanic, 0.4% Asian, 0.06% Black, 0.06% other. The population is 43% male and 57% female. The median resident age is 43. Many people living in this community are low-income. More information about the Grand Ronde community is covered within the original CFA report.

Marion-Polk Food Share (MPFS) has partnered with the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde (CTGR) to manage Iskam Mək^hMək-Haws, the food pantry, for the past two years. The unique relationship between MPFS and CTGR has sprouted innovative new efforts to increase individual and community food security.

Community Food Efforts



Participants of the Seed to Supper class in Grand Ronde

Creating Opportunities for Food Literacy & Education

Both the tribal government and the food pantry have championed efforts to increase food literacy and education. This year has seen a large increase in the amount of activities related to food literacy in Grand Ronde. Members of the Grand Ronde community have had the opportunity to gain skills and knowledge about healthy cooking, traditional native foods, food preservation, and more.

Nutrition Education: Cooking Classes

After a successful trial of cooking classes led by OSU Extension at Iskam Mək^hMək-Haws, over the course of the past year there have been regular cooking classes. The classes have focused on cooking nutritious meals with ingredients that are currently in abundance at the food pantry. Participants are able to actively participate and share their own recipes and tips with each other. The cooking classes compliment sample tastings during food

distributions. The tastings are distributed with recipes and also incorporate foods currently available at the food pantry. In response to community input, there will be a new cooking series designed for youth. The classes will focus on safe, easy to prepare recipes that are nutritious and fun for youth to cook for themselves. The nutrition education classes at the food pantry in Grand Ronde continue to create space for community members to learn new skills while encouraging healthy eating.

Garden Education: Seed to Supper & Container Gardening

During the FEAST event in February 2015, the group expressed a lot of interest in the beginning gardening class curriculum developed by OSU Extension and Oregon Food Bank. Seed to Supper is a six week course that covers the following topics: garden planning, soil development, planting, tending, and harvesting. In spring 2015 Seed to Supper was offered at various sites across Salem and Keizer in a partnership between Marion-Polk Food

Community Food Efforts

Share and Salem-Keizer Education Foundation. In part because of the interest generated at the FEAST event as well as the support of Iskam Mək^hMək-Haws, Seed to Supper was offered in Grand Ronde in spring 2016.

The course was taught in the evenings by a team of Master Gardeners. While Seed to Supper was taught in several sites in Salem as well as one site in Monmouth, the coordinator said that the Grand Ronde class was unique. Surabhi Mahajan mentioned that while community building is a large component of the course itself, it normally takes a couple weeks for the participants and instructor to bond; however, in Grand Ronde “folks came ready to the class to learn and participate completely.”

Each class included a dinner and participants were able to chat and eat before the class started. The participants were eager for hands-on learning and came together the week after the course ended to help plant in the raised garden beds at Iskam.

Bucket gardening has had continued success in Grand Ronde as well. In 2015 there were three bucket garden days where community members who do not have access to land for personal gardens were able to create a container gardens in buckets. Bucket gardens were an idea that arose from the Community FEAST event in Grand Ronde. There was one bucket garden day in Grand Ronde in the spring of 2016 – approximately 100 bucket gardens were created. Additionally, due to the



Participants of the Seed to Supper class in Grand Ronde

Community Food Efforts



Patti LeClaire with the Grand Ronde Community Garden at the Grand Ronde Farmers Market

popularity in Grand Ronde, Marion-Polk Food Share hosted a bucket garden day in Salem. All the participants from Seed to Supper classes in Salem and Monmouth were invited to participate. Approximately 150 bucket gardens were created in one afternoon. People were excited to have the opportunity to plant starts in the buckets and were equipped with the knowledge to tend a container garden. The success of the bucket garden events in both Grand Ronde and Salem demonstrate the need and desire to have container garden spaces. Container gardening might eliminate transportation barriers that might exist for folks traveling to a community garden as well as space issues that might exist for folks who do not have personal

garden space at their home. As more people are given access and knowledge to gardening skills and garden space, they are able to grow a portion of their own food.

Food Preservation Classes

Based on the success of the Seed to Supper class as well as input from the Community FEAST, Iskam Mək^hMək-Haws is hosting a series of food preservation classes during the summer and early fall of 2016. The classes will follow the growing season and serve as beginning food preservation courses as well as an opportunity for people to refresh their skills. Participants will have the opportunity to learn tips and techniques to improve food safety procedures for food

Community Food Efforts

preservation. The classes will be taught by a volunteer who is a certified Master Food Preserver and Master Gardener with OSU Extension along with an Extension agent. It will be a series with one class a month that people can attend in its entirety or just attend the classes that interest them. The topics covered will be: jams and jellies, kids in the kitchen (fruit leathers, dehydrated fruit, etc.), tomatoes, pressure canning, preserving apples, and meat canning in preparation for hunting season.

First Foods Celebration

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde's Culture Committee hosted the First Foods Celebration on Saturday, May 21, 2016. The theme of the celebration was "Food is History. Food is Life. Food is Medicine." The event aims to incorporate more traditional foods and celebrate these foods. The celebration consisted of a meal with traditional foods – all the foods were placed upon a table with their names in English and Chinuk Wawa. Food and beverages served at the First Foods Celebration included: salmon, venison, elk, bear, eel, quail, game hen, duck, turkey, rabbit, crab, shellfish, tarweed, acorn soup, camas cakes, bitterroot, wild rice, mushrooms, nuts, berries, fry bread, jams, and huckleberry ice cream. A lot of dedication and time went into making the meal, for example camas cakes take "four hours of digging and three days of cooking to get the camas bulbs ready to make camas cakes for the First Foods meal."³ More than 100 people, including Tribal Council members, tribal elders, members, and general community members came together to share the meal, learn about first foods, and celebrate community together.

Community Food System Development Efforts

A Community FEAST⁴ was held in Grand Ronde in February 2015. Overall there were four action groups were formed: increasing connections between the community and local farmers; continuing to support the Grand Ronde community garden; improving consistent and affordable access to nutritious and affordable food; and empowering individuals/families through education on healthy food, gardening, and food preservation with an emphasis on food sovereignty. Since then much work has been accomplished both in creating opportunities for food literacy and education as well as community food system development efforts.

Food Access & Community Team (FACT)

Since the FEAST, several community members, service providers, and Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Tribal Council member have formed a group to examine issues of food access in their community. This group has continued to meet monthly for over a year and has named themselves FACT (Food Access & Community Team). They have the mission of improving access to affordable, healthy food in the West Valley. The group consists of: Francene Ambrose, Pantry Coordinator with Iskam Mək^hMək-Haws; Ian Dixon-McDonald, VP of Programs at Marion-Polk Food Share (MPFS); Lexi Stickel, Community Food System Coordinator at MPFS; Chris Mercier, Tribal Council Member; Jerald Harris, volunteer with Iskam Mək^hMək-Haws; Alinna Ghavami, Healthy Community Coordinator for Polk County Family & Community Outreach; Pat Cully, Meals on Wheels in Sheridan; Judy Adams, Grand

³Merrill, Brent. "First Foods Celebration Thanks Mother Nature." *Smoke Signals* [Grand Ronde, Oregon] 31 May 2016: n. pag. Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, 31 May 2016. Web. 20 June 2016.

⁴FEAST (Food, Education, Agriculture, Solutions, Together) is an organizing event designed by Sharon Thornberry who is currently the Rural Community Liaison at Oregon Food Bank. FEAST events serve as an opportunity for community members to learn about food systems, examine existing efforts happening in the region, and create plans for action. Every Community FEAST event includes a panel presentation of local experts (farmers, emergency food providers, local business owners, and more), small group sessions for action planning, and a meal with local ingredients.

Community Food Efforts

Sheramina Food Pantry; Patti LeClaire, Grand Ronde Community Garden.

The goal of the group is twofold, to gain a deep understanding of the needs and desires of the community around issues of food insecurity as well as to build partnerships and create projects that meet the desires of the community.

Food Access & Nutrition Survey

The first step that FACT decided upon was the creation of a 30-question survey focused on food access and nutrition. The goal of the survey was to gather a baseline of information from the community that will guide the themes and discussions in a community conversation.

The survey was designed on Survey Monkey with certain questions required to answer and other questions intended only to be answered if the person also utilizes the food pantry. For incentives the CTGR Tribal Council providing funding for prizes. The survey was then printed off and volunteers from FACT distributed the survey at Iskam Mək^hMək-Haws and Grand Sheramina Food Pantry during distribution days, Meals on Wheels in Sheridan, Elder's Activity Center, the City of Sheridan, and elsewhere in the community of Grand Ronde.

FEAST Follow-Up: Community Conversation

On the evening of January 28th with stew steaming on a table and fresh fry bread made by a community member, over 35 people gathered to discuss food access in their community. The meeting was co-facilitated by Chris Mercier and Lexi Stickel. The conversation flowed between discussions of the challenges, resources, and opportunities that exist in the community.

At the beginning of the Community Conversation the Executive Summary from the Food Access and Nutrition Survey was shared to the group. Then, three questions were posed to the attendees of the community conversation:

-What are the barriers (challenges) for people accessing healthy, affordable food? What are your personal barriers?

-What are the resources that already exist that might help to address these challenges?

-What are some opportunities for change/improvements?

Overwhelmingly the group decided that the most important improvement needed in Grand Ronde is a new grocery store or more affordable, nutritious foods available at their local corner stores. The group decided they wanted to be involved with creating a food resource-sharing fair where community members share their knowledge with each other – how to make fry bread, basic fishing skills, mushroom gathering, and more. Additionally the community conversation highlighted the importance of renewing traditional manners of hunting and fishing – some community members expressed interest in creating a youth hunting and fishing club. One tribal member said, “I’m worried that we will lose our collective knowledge of traditional ways of hunting and fishing within a few generations, we need our youth to have opportunities to learn these skills.” At the end of the evening the FACT asked people to raise their hands if they made a new connection with someone else at the event and if they wanted to continue to be involved in this work – everyone raised their hands in response to both questions.

The Community Conversation provided clear direction for FACT to move forward. Perhaps even more importantly, it reminded FACT that the community connections that we make are not always obvious – they may not be measured by RSVPs to a community conversation, but instead measured by the willingness of the people who cooked the stew and made the fry bread and sat at a table with their neighbors to discuss their personal challenges and hopes for their community.

Community Food Efforts

Food Access & Nutrition Survey—Executive Summary

Demographic Information:

- 222 people filled out a survey
- 62% identified as female
- 24% are between 55-74 years of age
- 62% identified as White/Caucasian
- 37% are registered tribal members
- 66% reported having zero children (18 and under) living in their household

“Make local grocery stores on the cheaper side so people don’t have to travel so far to make their budgets stretch enough to survive.”

Food Access:

- 90% get food from a large grocery store
- 55% get food from a food pantry or food bank
- 42% receive SNAP benefits
- 48% access no benefits (SNAP, tribal commodities, WIC, School Lunch Program)
- 79% travel 10-20+ miles to get food, with 48% travelling further than 20+ miles
- 83% rely on a personal vehicle to get food

“I would love to buy local fresh food.”

Improvements to the Food System:

- 52% want a new large scale grocery store
- 50% want more fresh fruits and vegetables at the local corner store(s)
- 31% want a farmers market
- 19% want fresh fruit and vegetable mobile grocery store

I would like to have a “bigger community garden available to Tribal and non-Tribal. Food coop! Coupon sharing group”

Community Health:

- 49% stated that the cost of healthy food is one of their biggest challenges when trying to be healthy
- 40% stated that time to exercise is a barrier to healthy living
- 45% said that having a place to grow their own food would help them to live a healthier lifestyle

Community Education:

- 32% want to learn more about food preservation
- 29% want to learn about cooking and eating on a budget

“Our local stores are too expensive. We would like to be able to travel closer to home and spend less.”

Major themes:

- Desire for grocery store
- Affordability of food
- Access to fresh fruits & vegetables
- Community gardens
- Transportation

“We need an accessible grocery store!”

Community Food Efforts

Woodburn

Over the past year Woodburn has been a specific focus for community organizing work. In June 2015 there was a successful Hunger Free Community Conversation, which is discussed in depth in the original CFA Report. From that gathering there was momentum to dive deeper into these issues. In November 2015, close to 40 Woodburn nonprofit, health, education, and other social service providers came together for a full morning and early afternoon – they shared lunch and discussed opportunities to increase food access in their community. Beyond these efforts, the Farmers Market has continued in Woodburn. Another market opened along I-5 by the Woodburn Outlet Mall; however, this market closed early into the season and City of Woodburn decided to continue to manage the farmers market in the center of Woodburn. Planting Communities received their biggest grant yet from Oregon Farm to School and will expand their programming in the upcoming

academic year. Overall, Woodburn has seen great growth that has both originated from community organizing as well as independent community food projects.

Creating Opportunities for Food Literacy & Education: Planting Communities Receives Oregon Farm to School Grant

Planting Communities, a nonprofit focused on school gardens, received a \$26,000 Farm to School grant this year. The grant will expand the organization's ability to offer after school garden clubs. This year only one school garden was supported during one season with a garden club, and this grant will allow expansion to all of the supported school gardens year long. Planting Communities will also put together Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) kits to expand educational opportunities for teachers in the school gardens. The STEM kits will have tools for measuring, studying, and observing the gardens as well as Chrome Books



San Juana Acosta-González with Planting Communities

Community Food Efforts

and Oregon Harvest curriculum. Additionally, in all of the schools with established gardens there will be monthly tasting tables featuring one local fruit or vegetable. Currently Planting Communities has three school gardens with four schools utilizing the gardens – Washington Elementary, Nellie Muir Elementary, as well as Lincoln Elementary and French Prairie Middle School sharing one garden. This is the largest grant that Planting Communities has ever received and they are excited to expand their programming in the upcoming school year.



Mobile garden creation with MPFS' Americorps service members

Food System Development Work: Woodburn Community Organizing

The Hunger Free Community Forum was held on November 12, 2015 at Chemeketa Community College's Woodburn campus. Approximately 40 community members attended the Forum and there was representation from the City of Woodburn, Woodburn School District, Sauld Medical Center, Woodburn Pediatrics, OSU Extension, WorkSource Oregon, Oregon Human Development Corporation, and several food pantries in the area. The day began with participants revisiting the map of Woodburn used in the community conversation and marking locations of emergency services. After that a representative from Oregon Food Bank described the concept of Hunger Free Communities, and then the group reviewed the Hunger Free Community Inventory that was put together based on information about social services available in the community. Next, a panel of social service providers discussed their work and the trends they see

regarding food access. The panelists were: Yuritzy Gonzalez Pena from OSU Extension, Kristin Wierenga from City of Woodburn's Farmers Market, Wilbur Kauffman from AWARE Food Bank, and Daniel Quinones from WorkSource Oregon. Daniel gave a particularly powerful talk about the migrant/seasonal farmworkers that pass through Woodburn and the issues they have with transportation, housing, healthcare, education, and food. After the panel, the participants engaged in a facilitated conversation to gain a better understanding of the gaps, either in terms of service, geographic gaps, or access issues. Participants prioritized issues that arose from the conversation and then broke up into small groups. Four small groups emerged and worked through lunch and into the afternoon on a planning exercise aimed at thinking about next steps to increase the community's capacity to address food access issues. The four groups that emerged each have different themes and each group came up with a broad vision statement:

Community Food Efforts



1. **Food Pantry Services:** Increasing access and distribution of healthy/nutritious food to community members. Capacity of food banks to increase hours is not always there due to volunteer needs, so increasing their capacity to do so. Delivery of food boxes as an option for transportation. Conversations with families/clients about their dietary and cultural needs and abilities to prepare food they are given.
2. **Coordination/Communication:** Having a central committee as a coordinating unit to create a common agenda for nutritious food.
3. **Reducing barriers for the underserved:** Reduce barriers to food access to lower-income populations and transitional people in the Woodburn area with a focus on migrant, homeless populations.
4. **Nutrition Education:** Everyone in Woodburn have access to education to make healthy food choices affordable, referrals accurate and make the proper connections.

After the Forum the group decided to pause for the holidays and some groups made plans to reconvene in January 2016. Due to other circumstances these groups ended up cancelling their plans and did not

reconvene. In April 2016 the entire group was invited to come back together. When the group came back together they flushed out a few potential projects including a mobile food pantry serving migrant farmworkers, school-based food pantry or backpack program, and conducting an assessment of service providers in Woodburn.

The group worked together to create a survey that was distributed at the Día de Niño event at Woodburn High School. OSU Extension distributed the survey and spoke with the respondents. Over 110 people responded to the survey that focused on knowledge of food pantries in Woodburn. Overall 75% of respondents knew about the food pantries in Woodburn, the biggest challenges identified by respondents were the schedule of the food pantries (41%) and transportation (19%). When asked what times are most convenient to visit a food pantry there was an even distribution of responses amongst respondents to all possible answers: in the morning during the week, in the afternoon during the week, in the evening during the week, and during the weekend. Based on anecdotal information gathered by the OSU Extension staff most of the people were familiar with only two of the food pantries in Woodburn.

Community Food Efforts

The next step of the group is to create posters and flyers for service providers that contain information about all of the food pantries, meal sites, and community gardens in Woodburn. Additionally in July the monthly gathering of service providers in Woodburn will focus on food access issues. The group has discussed which questions to ask to Woodburn Community Forum to gain insight into methods to increase food access for their clients. Ideally the posters and flyers will become available for Woodburn service providers in August or September 2016. The Woodburn Hunger Free Community group will continue to develop actions plans once more information is gleaned from additional service providers at the Community Forum.

Salem

The focus of the 2015 Community Food Assessment was on the rural communities outside of Salem. However, it is difficult to discuss our community food system without discussing the urban and rural connections. Additionally there are many community food efforts happening in Salem to strengthen the food system. Salem-Keizer Educational Foundation (SKEF) runs a school garden program and has received a Farm to School grant. There is a robust network of community gardens in Salem alone. Salem Saturday Market runs three different markets – a Monday market at the Salem Hospital, a Wednesday market in downtown, and the main Saturday market. There are a number of farms, both within Salem and beyond, that serve Salem residents through Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares. There are many opportunities to expand the community organizing work done in rural communities to Salem. This section will contain information about community food efforts and food system development efforts happening in Salem over the past year. While it is not a complete

account of the scope and berth of the efforts based in Salem, it is intended to paint a picture of the type of work occurring in Salem.

Community Food Efforts

This section highlights three community food efforts happening in Salem – inFARMation events, the annual Seed Exchange, and the Youth Farm. These events and program reflect the diversity of work occurring in Salem. While inFARMation is intended for a smaller audience of people who are interested in learning more about how they can positively impact of our food system, Marion-Polk Food Share's (MPFS) annual Seed Exchange is a yearly single event that impacts the community by providing free seeds for personal gardens. Both of these events are based in Salem and are open to the



Seed to Supper container gardening event at MPFS

Community Food Efforts

broad community and both events tend to draw participation from outside of Salem as well. MPFS' Youth Farm is a program that works with youth to provide skills beyond farming – the youth developed basic job skills as well as customer service and leadership. They assist in the daily operations of farm business that sells produce to the public at the farmers market. The Youth Farm move to Chemeketa Community College creates opportunities for expansion and also increases community involvement and community education at the Youth Farm site. All of these events and programs are helping connect community and strengthen our food system.

Friends of Family Farmers: inFARMation

In addition to Friends of Family Farmers (FoFF) work with farmers, they also have programs directed at eaters. FoFF coordinates inFARMation events across

the state. The event series has the goal of bringing “the issues that Oregon family farmers face onto the radar of urban consumers and the community in general. Changing monthly, the topic always focuses on the larger picture of the connection between food and farms in our state. When eaters connect with farmers, it makes our food web stronger and makes real changes in our local food system possible.”⁵ InFARMation has been a popular event in Portland for several years and this year FoFF expanded the event to McMinnville, Eugene, and Salem. The monthly events are hosted Gilgamesh Brewing in Salem and have focused on a variety of topics, including: farm-direct meat purchasing, food insecurity and efforts to expand local food for all, new and beginning farmers, and the cider industry. Each month community members from across Marion and Polk counties come together to listen, eat, and discuss how they, as eaters, can make

⁵"InFARMation Series." Friends of Family Farmers, n.d. Web. 20 June 2016.

⁶Adapted from an press release written by Heather McPherson, Marion-Polk Food Share



Photo by Heather McPherson

Community Food Efforts



Youth Farm volunteers, photo provided by Chemeketa Community College's Marketing Department

lasting improvements to the community food system.

Youth Farm Moves to Chemeketa Community College⁶

In three years, the Marion-Polk Food Share Youth Farm has grown 23,000 pounds of food as well as helped 30 youth grow into future leaders. Now, a partnership with Chemeketa Community College means that the farm itself will grow. The Youth Farm will more than double in size by moving to a new site on the Chemeketa Salem campus. The new partnership between Chemeketa and MPFS will give the Youth Farm an even greater impact in the community.

The new Youth Farm site will be housed on the Chemeketa Salem campus and will have up to six acres of irrigated land that will be planted with vegetable beds and orchards for food production. There will be a barn, greenhouse, office space, and yurt used as an outdoor classroom for gardening classes and workshops.

“Having the Youth Farm at Chemeketa is more than just a bigger farm; we have the opportunity to create a garden education site for the entire community,” said Ian Dixon-McDonald, Vice President of Programs at the Food Share. “The Youth

Farm will serve more youth, raise more food, and engage more community volunteers and mentors.”

The new farm will integrate into Chemeketa’s agricultural sciences curriculum and give students an opportunity to see a working farm in action.

“This partnership with Food Share is exactly the kind of collaboration we seek to integrate educational opportunity with community needs,” said Julie Huckestein, President of Chemeketa.

Construction on the new farm began this past winter and continues through the summer and fall. Half of the produce from the Youth Farm will be distributed through MPFS’ network to families in need in our community. The rest of the produce will be for sale to the public in summer 2016 at the Salem Saturday Market. For the past three seasons the Youth Farm has sold produce to the public at the Saturday Market and via a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) share model where customers pay the cost up front and then receive produce weekly. The CSA will return in the 2017 season with an added component for a Prescription CSA model. Overall the Youth Farm move to Chemeketa increases opportunities for program expansion and community engagement.

Community Food Efforts



Photo by Heather McPherson

Seed Exchange

Marion-Polk Food Share's Farm & Garden Program hosted the 6th Annual Seed Exchange in March 2016. Each year the event draws over a hundred community members to the warehouse at MPFS. People line up to pick out seeds to plant in their gardens. It is a bustling morning with people chatting with each other about their hopes for their upcoming garden and the various types of seeds.

The event builds community as people are welcome to share their own seeds as well. "Local gardeners and seed savers are encouraged to bring seeds to share," said Jared Hibbard-Swanson, Farm & Garden Program Manager at MPFS. "Any seed saved from backyard gardens or seed packets dated 2013, 2014 or 2015 are welcome. Seeds that have been stored in the freezer are good for decades."

"Everyone will take home some seeds, even if they don't have any to exchange," Hibbard-Swanson

explains. "This is a great opportunity to get your home garden ready."

Additionally, the Seed Stewards were on site to share information and seeds. Currently, the group has more than 15 members who are growing locally acclimated plants for seed saving purposes. Their goal is to increase the number of local growers committed to saving and distributing open pollinated seeds to families in need. This year thousands of seed packets have been given away through the Seed Exchange and community garden efforts of MPFS.

Community Food System Development Efforts

While the Community Food Assessment process was occurring in rural areas surrounding Salem, over the last two years there have been other efforts focused on the Salem community. Overall this year has seen

Community Food Efforts

a tremendous amount of growth in the connections and collaboration of regional efforts; however, more leadership and communication across efforts focused in the Salem area would be beneficial for all involved. This section will highlight three efforts that have happened over the past year; however, there are other new efforts and dedicated community members working on food system projects. For example, the Salem Saturday Market has launched the Power of Produce (POP) Club at the Saturday Market in June and July 2016 – the POP Club provides children with \$2 to spend at the market each week as well as weekly educational activity, weekly exercise activity, fruit and vegetable tastings, and other prizes. Additionally, Marion-Polk Food Share (MPFS) has taken the lead on several other projects within the realm of community food systems work with a focus on farm and gardens. This section will describe two projects facilitated by MPFS – the Youth Garden Educator Hub and prescription CSA efforts. The non-competitive funds from Oregon Farm to School that affect school districts’ purchasing power in Marion and Polk

counties of local products in will also be described in this section.

Prescription CSA Efforts

The Youth Farm program at MPFS is investigating the possibilities of creating a prescription CSA utilizing produce grown by the youth farmers. Prescription CSA programs offer a subsidized Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) share through the creation of a network of health clinics referring Medicaid patients with diet-related illnesses. This project will be spearheaded by an AmeriCorps VISTA member starting in fall 2016. It will begin with building partnerships and collaboration with health clinics and practitioners who will then prescribe CSA shares to patients. The goal will be to enroll 20 people in the prescription CSA program and offer on-farm educational opportunities for participants throughout the CSA season in summer 2017. CSA prescription programs connect people who could greatly benefit with fresh produce with the opportunity to access the Youth Farm in a new way.



MPFS' Seed to Supper participant container gardening event

Community Food Efforts

Youth Garden Educator Hub

In the past MPFS has coordinated after school garden programs in Salem in addition to the Learning Gardens supported by the Salem-Keizer Education Foundation (SKEF) with FoodCorps service members. In an effort to support the school garden programs being managed by volunteers, MPFS launched the Youth Garden Educator Hub in 2015. Emma Pesis, Youth Garden Education Coordinator at MPFS, said that the development of the Youth Garden Educator Hub served as a solution to AmeriCorps driven youth garden education and increased opportunities for collaboration and cultivation of leaders within youth garden education. Over the past year the hub has quarterly meetings focused on met and great, peer-to-peer learning, sharing of information, and a garden tour. Currently MPFS is helping the Hub establish roles for members and hopes that the group will begin meeting independently.

Farm to School Grant

Across Oregon, Farm to School efforts connect local

farmers with school cafeterias, increase access to healthy foods for school children, and provide educational opportunities through school gardens, cooking classes and farm field trips. In 2015, Marion-Polk Food Share (MPFS), Salem-Keizer Education Foundation (SKEF) and other statewide partners worked to secure \$4.5 million for the 2015-17 biennium to expand Farm to School programs in Oregon. In the Mid-Valley, the result is that 15 area school districts, reaching approximately 66,000 K-12 students, are receiving a total of \$275,641 to purchase Oregon grown and processed products. In addition, through a competitive grant process, SKEF was awarded \$63,548 to: 1) take students on field trips to local farms and food businesses, including the MPFS Youth Farm, Minto Island Growers, Truitt Family Foods, and Norpac, and; 2) construct two new elementary school gardens in high-need neighborhoods, and provide hands-on garden education, Tasting Tables, and an Urban Ag Fest for Salem-Keizer students.



Youth Farm volunteers, photo by Jared Hibbard-Swanson

Community Food Efforts

Opportunities to expand community food efforts:

Farmers Market in NE Salem

Parts of NE Salem, near Chemeketa Community College, are considered an urban food desert. With the Youth Farm moving to Chemeketa there is an opportunity to start a farm stand or farmers market that would serve the NE Salem community. There are many large apartment complexes walking distance to Chemeketa and residents would benefit from access to fresh, local fruits and vegetables at affordable prices. It is possible that this could start as a farm stand at the Youth Farm to determine interest in a farmers market that could include produce and products from other farms. There are many models of farmers markets that focus on serving diverse and low-income populations, including the Lents International Farmers Market in Portland.

Mobile food pantry in Woodburn

A mobile food pantry in Woodburn could increase the ability to provide emergency food to community members that find it difficult to access the existing food pantries. A mobile food pantry provides flexibility in locations and times of distribution and provides the opportunity to bring emergency food to people. During the winter and early spring months the mobile food pantry could visit different elementary schools in the Woodburn community allowing parents to pick up food when they pick up or drop off their children at school. Schools are often considered a safe place that parents trust. There are models of school-based pantries; however, a mobile pantry could visit various schools in Woodburn. The mobile pantry could also serve the migrant farmworker population during the harvest seasons. Farms, churches, parks, and temporary work agencies where farmworkers pick up their paychecks are all potential locations where a mobile food pantry could distribute to farmworkers.

Healthy Corner Store Project in Grand Ronde

All three of the small corner stores in Grand Ronde do not frequently or consistently sell fresh fruits and vegetables. Through the community organizing work many community members mentioned that they would like access to fresh, affordable fruits and vegetables. With that in mind, Marion-Polk Food Share applied for a grant to start a Healthy Corner Store Project in Grand Ronde that would work with two stores. Unfortunately MPFS did not receive the grant; however, MPFS should continue to pursue funding sources for this project. A significant amount of research and program design has already been done through the grant application process.

Community organizing in the Santiam Canyon

The Santiam Canyon communities were originally identified as rural areas with potentially unmet food needs. Given time constraints, community organizing work never began in this area. These communities have limited access to full service grocery stores, limited transportation options, and few food pantries and community gardens. The first step is to engage community members in community conversations about the food issues that exist in the Santiam Canyon and then continue to work with the communities to implement projects to increase food access.

Regional Food System Development Efforts



Chris Jenkins & Elizabeth Miller of Minto Island Growers chatting with participants of a farm tour before the Mid-Valley Food Summit

Over the course of the past year there have been major successes for regional organizing for community food system development. In the Community Food Assessment leadership for food system work was identified as the biggest opportunity for growth. While progress was made in individual communities across the counties, Marion-Polk Food Share (MPFS) also put effort in organizing regional development efforts. Most notably, MPFS brought together partners from across the food system to form an Advisory Committee to assist with the planning of the first regional Food Summit. The Food Summit provided an opportunity for people to gather from across the region to share knowledge, network, and provide ideas on next steps for regional level work.

This section provides in depth information about the Food Summit (with agenda and breakout session

descriptions in the appendix), describes the outcomes of the interest meetings for creating a local food and farm network for the region, and profiles the new Community Food Project Manager position at MPFS. Overall, there have been new levels of collaboration on a regional level and a lot of support to move forward with some manner of a network that provides communication and networking opportunities. The creation of a new position at MPFS demonstrates the level of continued support and commitment to strengthening the community food system in Marion and Polk counties.

Mid-Willamette Valley Food Summit

On February 6th at Willamette University in Salem, people gathered from across the Mid-Willamette

Regional Food System Development Efforts

Valley to learn, share, and strengthen the community food system. The first ever Mid-Valley Food Summit had two main goals: to share information from the Community Food Assessment with the broader community and to build networks and connections among community members who are actively engaged in community food system work.

The idea for a Food Summit grew from the Community Food Assessment (CFA) process in Marion and Polk counties last year. Led by a RARE AmeriCorps member, one of the main opportunities for action that emerged from the grassroots community organizing process was to create space for networking and leadership among the various food system efforts across the region.

Although there is not one overarching food system organization in Marion or Polk counties, there are impactful projects, organizations, and initiatives happening throughout the Mid-Valley. With the leadership from some of these groups an advisory committee was formed and the planning of the Food

Summit began. MPFS spearheaded the planning. The advisory committee members were: Elizabeth Miller from Minto Island Growers, Joe Abraham from Willamette University, Derek Godwin from OSU Extension, Jonelle Newton from Fresh 'n Local Foods, Chloe Hanson from Osprey Farm, Alinna Ghavami from Polk County Family & Community Outreach, Wendy Peterson-Boring from Willamette University, Forrest Peck from MERIT NW, Shawn Irvine from the City of Independence, Spencer Masterson from Oregon Food Bank, and Sharon Thornberry from Oregon Food Bank.

The Food Summit kicked off on Friday, February 5th with a farm tour of Minto Island Growers in Salem. Elizabeth Miller and Chris Jenkins discussed everything from the soil on their land to their tea plant propagation and CSA program with tour participants. The participants were able to grab fresh kale and cabbage from the field while learning all about the rewards and challenges of being a small-scale farmer in the mid-Valley.



Breakout session on rural challenges to food access, photo by Marshall Curry

Regional Food System Development Efforts



Nate Rafn of Rafn's Restaurant speaking at the Mid-Valley Food Summit

Bright and early on February 6th farmers, gardeners, volunteers, nonprofit organizers, and more flooded into Willamette University to attend the Food Summit. Almost 200 people were in attendance. In the morning, participants heard a presentation about the Community Food Assessment and ten 5-minute talks from local people actively engaged in the food system. Presenters included: Jesse Weller from Osprey Farm, John Zielinski from EZ Orchards, Evann Remington from Fresh 'n Local Foods, Jason Codner from the Silverton Co-Op, Nate Rafn from Rafn's Restaurant, Chris Mercier from the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Brad Agenbroad from Planting Communities, Elise Bauman from Salem Harvest, Dan Quinones from WorkSource Oregon, and Josie Riggall from WIC.

Lauren Gwin from OSU's Center for Small Farms and Community Food Systems did a keynote presentation on food system networks across Oregon as well as led attendees in an engaging

activity. After a delicious locally-sourced lunch prepared by Bon Appetit, attendees broke off to attend various breakout sessions. The breakout sessions focused on a range of topics – popular choices focused on linking buyers and producers, creating access to local food for all, building the local food economy, and learning about the farmworker movement in Oregon.

At the very end of the day, during the final activity the attendees were invited to share their ideas for improving the community food system in the mid-Valley. Top responses were increasing local food access, building a local food network, and creating a local food guide. Even as volunteers were cleaning up after the end of the Food Summit, community members lingered as they networked among each other and talking about exciting opportunities for the future of the community food system in the mid-Valley.

Regional Food System Development Efforts

Mid-Willamette Valley Local Food & Farm Network - Interest Meetings

After compiling the data from the Food Summit and having conversations with key stakeholders, Marion-Polk Food Share (MPFS) reconvened the Food Summit Advisory Committee in the spring and decided to host two interest meetings for the idea of the Local Food & Farm Network. The interest meetings were well attended and overall there was a lot of support from community partners about a Local Food & Farm Network for the region. While no one stepped up and offered leadership to start the Network, the positive response has motivated MPFS to continue to spearhead this project. The next step is currently being conducted – to invite specific partners to form the executive committee. Ideally the Network will meet consistently throughout the

year and provide a platform for collaboration and information sharing for people engaging in food system work.

Marion-Polk Food Share Hires Community Food Project Manager

The community food system organizing work started with a Community Food System Coordinator through the RARE AmeriCorps program. For two years the Coordinator led a participatory, grass-roots Community Food Assessment process; facilitated community teams post-FAST organizing events; coordinated the Mid-Valley Food Summit; and assisted in shaping the future of community food system work at MPFS. To continue the community food system efforts, MPFS decided to shape a position that would move



Lunch at Mid-Valley Food Summit

Regional Food System Development Efforts



forward community food system efforts that have a specific focus on addressing food insecurity and increase food access.

The Community Food Project Manager (CFPM) has three core areas of responsibility: community engagement and facilitation, food system planning and policy development, and community development. The CFPM will facilitate events and assemble teams to address local community food system challenges as well as incorporate organizing into other aspects of MPFS' programs. Based on the organizing work, the CFPM will advance and implement identified programs and policy changes, such as SNAP acceptance at regional farmers' markets and rural grocery store development. The CFPM will work with community stakeholders to develop programs that increase affordable access to healthy food, while also supporting the local food economy. Key projects for the CFPM in the first year are: continuing efforts to establish a local food and farm network, coordinating exploration for Meals on

Wheels expansion to the two counties, building upon work started in community-based teams in Grand Ronde and Woodburn, begin community organizing in new communities, and other possibilities that emerge in the future.

Lexi Stickel was hired by MPFS to become the new CPFM starting in August 2016. Lexi served as the Community Food System Coordinator with RARE AmeriCorps for two years at MPFS. She is a graduate from the University of Oregon with Masters of Arts degrees in Conflict & Dispute Resolution and International Studies with a certificate in nonprofit management. Before working at MPFS, she was the Director of Operations for a small non-profit organization based in central Mexico working on educational opportunities for youth. Born and raised in Oregon, she is thrilled to stay at MPFS and continue developing community food system efforts in Marion and Polk counties.

Conclusion



This addendum provides a snapshot of the efforts started and progress made within the community food system in Marion and Polk counties during 2015-2016. There are other farmers, ranchers, organizations, activists, and community members who are working tirelessly to improve their community food system.

During the course of this year community food system efforts have continued to develop in the two counties. While more opportunities exist and other areas still need improvement, a lot has been accomplished and those successes should be celebrated. These two years of community organizing have created a much stronger understanding of opportunities, challenges, and resources within the community food system. Momentum has been built over the last two years that will continue with the placement of a permanent Community Food Project Manager at Marion-Polk Food Share.

Next Steps for August 2016-August 2017:

- Work with established community partners to create an executive committee for the Mid-Valley Local Food & Farm Network. Executive committee will coordinate two listening sessions focused around issues of food access and agriculture. The executive committee will create membership criteria and hold quarterly networking meetings.
- Marion-Polk Food Share will investigate the possibility of expanding their Meals on Wheels program to the two counties, in partnership with Northwest Senior & Disability Services that currently runs Meals on Wheels outside of Salem/Keizer.
- Community Food Project Manager will work with the Food Access & Community Team in Grand Ronde to coordinate MəkʰMək-Mania as well as secure funding and begin a Healthy Corner Store Initiative in partnership with the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde.
- Community Food Project Manager will continue to collaborate with service providers in Woodburn to create outreach materials regarding food access opportunities for Woodburn residents as well as investigate the possibilities for a mobile food pantry and/or school-based food pantry.

Appendix

2016 Mid-Valley Food Summit Agenda

8:30am - Registration

9:00am - Welcome, opening remarks

9:15am - Community Food Assessment presentation

9:45am - 5-Minute Community Talks

Chloe Hanson & Jesse Weller, Osprey Farm

John Zielinski, EZ Orchards

Evann Remington, Fresh 'n Local Foods

Jason Codner, Local Motive Cooperative Grocery

Nate Rafn, Rafn's Restaurant

Chris Mercier, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde

Brad Agenbroad, Planting Communities

Elise Bauman, Salem Harvest

Dan Quinones, WorkSource Oregon

Josie Riggall, WIC

11:00am - Break

11:15am - Keynote Presentation/Activity, Lauren Gwin

12:15pm - Locally-Sourced Lunch, Bon Appetit

1:15pm - Afternoon Breakout Sessions 1

Linking Producers & Buyers: Making local food connections

Creating Access to Local Food for All

Growing Food & Community: Building a successful community garden

Why Buy Local? - Understanding the economic impacts of local purchasing

2:15pm - Break

2:30pm - Afternoon Breakout Sessions 2

Building the Local Food Economy in the Mid-Valley

Understanding Rural Challenges to Food Access

Teaching the Next Generation: Youth & the local food system

Who's Picking Our Food? - Learning about the farmworker movement

3:30pm - Capnote Activity

What can we do from here to support our community food system? Would a Mid-Valley Local Food Network benefit our region? What would you like a Local Food Network to focus on?

Appendix

2016 Mid-Valley Food Summit Breakout Session Descriptions

Linking producers and buyers: making local food connections

How can we get more locally produced food into our retail markets, schools, and other institutions? Farmers will share what they have learned about selling to wholesale and institutional markets; buyers will discuss how they purchase from and contract with area growers. We will also explore what it takes for farmers to enter these larger markets, and potential infrastructure or support needed locally in order to increase local food connections.

Moderator: Amy Garrett, OSU Extension

Presenters: Chris Linn from Bon Appetit, the food service management company at Willamette University, will share about their commitment to sustainability and how they work with local farmers through their Farm to Fork program. Evann Remington from Fresh 'n Local Foods will share about how they work with area farmers as they produce healthy, locally sourced food at affordable prices for schools, hospitals, and other institutional buyers. Jerimiah Traub from Charlie's Produce will discuss working as a distributor with area farmers and Fresh 'n Local Foods. Dave Eskeldon with Egor's Acres Farm will discuss his experience working with Bon Appetit.

Creating access to local food for all

Local food access can be limited for many reasons. Some of the biggest are the connections to low wages, poor working conditions, and limited access to fresh and local food. This breakout session will focus on some of the systemic reasons why there is such a problem accessing local food and identify efforts taken by community and statewide organizations to help connect local communities with nutritious, local food.

Moderator: Surabhi Mahajan, Community Food Education Coordinator, Marion-Polk Food Share

Presenters: Chloe Eberhardt with Partners for a Hunger Free Oregon will discuss SNAP match programs that are happening across the state of Oregon. Kaely Summers with Adelante Mujeres in Forest Grove will discuss the Forest Grove Farmers' Market, prescription Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, and more. Josie Riggall will discuss her work with WIC (Women Infants and Children Federal Nutrition Program) and the ways WIC promotes access to local foods at farmer's markets, farm stands, and grocery stores. Elise Bauman will talk about the creation of Salem Harvest, a gleaning group, and the connection between the farmers, volunteer harvesters, and the Marion-Polk Food Share.

Growing food & community: building community gardens in the Mid-Valley

At the Marion-Polk Food Share, one of our strategies to end hunger is to "shorten the line" at emergency food assistance areas by connecting community members to garden plots to grow their own food.

Community gardens help people grow a portion of their own food and become more food secure in a more nutritious way. This session will explore the different community garden structures that exist in Marion and Polk counties and give models of how community gardens help the fight to end hunger.

Moderator: Jared Hibbard Swanson, Farm & Garden Manager, Marion-Polk Food Share

Presenters: There will be four community garden coordinators from across Marion and Polk counties explaining the origins and structures of their unique community garden model. Annalivia Palazzo will speak about the origins of the Northgate Forgiveness and Peace Garden showing how gardening can unite a community. Alicia Chacon-Thacker will explain the structure of a rural community garden in Mill City. Pamela Lyons-Nelson will speak about the origins and complexities of a garden that has incorporated the low-income community it is situated in. And lastly, Lee Schlenker will speak about a thriving garden in a farmworker

Appendix

residential complex. Each garden is unique and lends itself as an example on how to build community around growing food.

Why buy local? Where to buy local? – Understanding the economic impacts of local purchasing

How does local purchasing really impact our communities? What is a CSA share? These questions and more will be answered during this interactive session. The focus of this session is twofold: first to create a shared understanding of the economic impacts of buying local food. Then there will be a question and answer portion for attendees to ask two local experts all of their questions about where and how to buy local food products.

Moderator: Spencer Masterson, Community Food System Manager, Oregon Food Bank

Presenters: Spencer Masterson will explain the economic impacts of local purchasing, drawing on institutional research as well as examples from across the state of Oregon. Nate Rafn, founder of Rafn’s Restaurant, and Elizabeth Miller with Minto Island Growers will discuss where and how community members can purchase local food – whether it is from local retail stores, directly from farms, or other cooperative models.

Building the Local Food Economy in the Mid-Valley

Where is the intersection between local economic development and food system work? How can we join forces to strengthen markets for farmers, create jobs, and link more consumers to local food? In this breakout, we will explore the Food Hub model, learn about other economically oriented food system efforts happening locally and statewide, and connect with tools that can support food system projects in your own community.

Moderator: Lexi Stickel, Community Food System Coordinator, Marion-Polk Food Share

Presenters: Sydney Deluna with Ecotrust will discuss their new REDD Food Hub in SE Portland. Michael Held with Rural Development Initiatives (RDI) will share about their food system work in rural communities across Oregon. Kim Hanson with Marion-Polk Food Share will discuss the food hub model. Mark Metzger with the City of Salem will present about the early stages of a Food Hub/Mercado project on Portland Rd.

Understanding rural challenges to food access

How far do people have to travel to visit a grocery store? What happens when public transportation is unavailable? While the mid-valley is rich in agriculture, there are still high levels of food insecurity across the region. Rural communities are at greater risk for food insecurity for a plethora of reasons. Public transportation, lack of full-service groceries, higher food costs at smaller stores, lack of access to fresh fruits and vegetables, lack of economic opportunities, and other barriers will be discussed in this informative session. Methods to increase access to food in these rural areas will also be examined.

Moderator: Sharon Thornberry, Rural Community Liaison, Oregon Food Bank

Presenters: Francene Ambrose, the coordinator of Iskam MekMek Haws (the food pantry in Grand Ronde), and Jennifer Ohren, the coordinator of the Mission Benedict food pantry in Mt. Angel, will both discuss the unique challenges that community members face.

Teaching the next generation: youth & the local food system

Across Marion and Polk counties there are several efforts that are connecting the next generation with their community food system and sustainable agriculture. Some of the most food insecure people in the United States are children. Thus this connection has the impact of increasing local food security to children right

Appendix

now as well as creating a future system where people have the experience necessary in maintaining the local food system they grow into. This session will explore these efforts and their impact on youth in Marion and Polk counties.

Moderator: Aaron Poplack, FoodCorps Fellow with Oregon Department of Agriculture

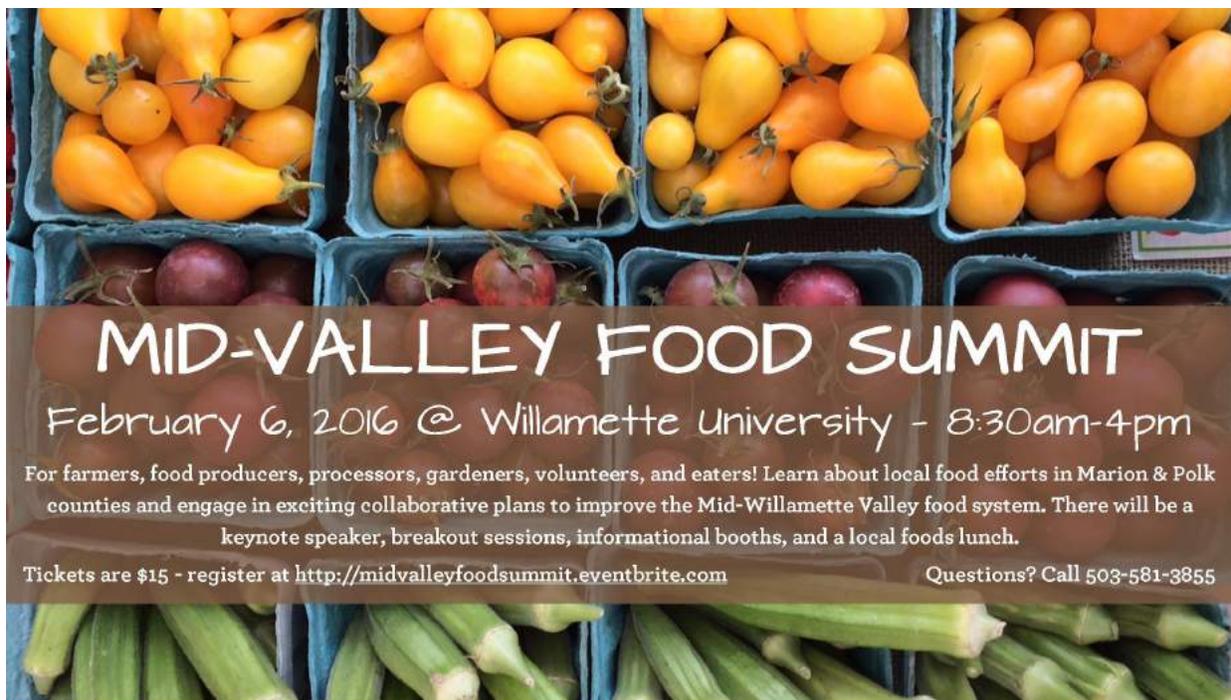
Presenters: Each presenter will describe their work with unique involvement and methods for connecting our community's youth with the local food system. Emily Griffith is the Coordinator for the Youth Farm with Marion-Polk Food Share. Dean Anderson will discuss the Dallas Youth Garden project in Polk County. Molly McCargar of Pearmine Farms will explain the Adopt a Farmer program. Brenda Knobloch with Salem-Keizer Education Foundation will discuss her work with the Learning Gardens program.

Who's picking our food? – Learning about the farmworker movement

Marion and Polk counties are rich agricultural areas with large-scale farming operations that sell on the international markets. Farmworkers play an essential, and frequently undervalued, role in our food system. Often they are tending, growing, harvesting, and packing food in the Willamette Valley that they cannot afford to buy from the grocery store. In this session, three local experts who work with farmworkers will discuss their work and the history of the farmworker movement in Oregon.

Moderator: Aileen Careaga Cutz, Latino Program Coordinator, Merit NW

Presenters: Dan Quinones with WorkSource Oregon will describe the history of immigration to Oregon and discuss his work with farmers and farmworkers. Erubiel Valladares tells the history of the farmworker movement in the Northwest with the formation, triumphs and struggles of PCUN (one of three farmworker unions in the United States), and discusses issues of food access facing farmworkers today. Frances Alvarado will speak of her work with farmworker families in Woodburn as they seek additional training and educational opportunities.



MID-VALLEY FOOD SUMMIT
February 6, 2016 @ Willamette University - 8:30am-4pm

For farmers, food producers, processors, gardeners, volunteers, and eaters! Learn about local food efforts in Marion & Polk counties and engage in exciting collaborative plans to improve the Mid-Willamette Valley food system. There will be a keynote speaker, breakout sessions, informational booths, and a local foods lunch.

Tickets are \$15 - register at <http://midvalleyfoodsummit.eventbrite.com> Questions? Call 503-581-3855

