

PROJECT TITLE

Local Food Systems and Community Food Security in Lincoln County, Oregon

Abstract: The aim of this project is to establish a direct and economic relationship between growers and consumers in Lincoln County that will enhance the overall economic base and health of the community. Of special interest is the establishment of the link between growers and chefs of major restaurants in the county. A coastal county like Lincoln is an ideal location where both the local people and visitors can have a special sampling and appreciation of local foods in Oregon. Lincoln county OSU Extension will serve as the platform to make this happen by educating local growers, consumers, and students on sustainable methods of food production and then linking growers to local markets that in turn have a direct influence on the local economy. Our hope is that this project will self-sustain after partners realize benefits of a food system between farmers, chefs and consumers at the completion of this grant.

Project Team:

Dr. Sam Angima OSU Extension and Small Farms Agent for Lincoln County Extension Center in Newport. Sam's work includes working and promoting small farms and forestry in Lincoln County and will be spearheading this project. Sam joined OSU in January of 2006 from University of Missouri Extension where he worked with small scale farmers and ranchers enhancing their continued survival in the 21st century farming. He was part of the success story for the community food systems in the Kansas City area.

Dr. Garry Stephenson is the coordinator for the OSU Small Farms Program. He has been working with farmers' markets and other forms of farm direct marketing for 10 years. He is particularly interested in developing local food economies to benefit communities and area farmers. Garry will help in the infrastructure for marketing local produce and teaching at the workshops for this project.

Mr. Lee Stuart is a local citizen and member of Lincoln County School District. Lee has a vision of integrating community needs to the education of both the youth and adults. Lee will oversee the promotion of our program in the public and on the curriculum in schools and after school programs to ensure that youths share in the functions of a community food system

Mr. Tom Nash is the Farmer's Market Coordinator in Newport and will coordinate our efforts to enlist farmers who can support our initiative with chefs to meet food production that match local needs. We will also use the consumer base that sells and buys at farmer's market as ambassadors in educating other consumers.

Target Audience

Small to mid scale growers, consumers (general public), chefs and restaurants (to promote use of local foods in their menu items), and students in the Lincoln County School District.

Project Goals & Objectives

- To increase the knowledge of the concept, design and implementation of community food security and community food systems between consumers and growers to residents in Lincoln County.
- Establish a staffed center equipped with computer/fax/email/telephone messaging system to facilitate communication between growers and chefs
- Educate growers on best management & sustainable practices for food production that meet chefs' and environmental criteria
- Educate consumers on benefits of embracing a local food system
- Incorporate a community foods system curriculum as part of agricultural teaching in schools

Justification for Project's Importance and Need

In the past few years, farmers across the nation have been suffering from continued low prices for farm commodities and continue to receive a decreasing share of the food dollar as big multinational dominate markets. Continuing concentration in the food and agriculture system has led to market domination for bulk commodities by a few dominant transnational agro-food corporations, reducing both prices and market options for farmers. Economic and social damages extend to rural communities as farmers either leave agriculture, depleting the business base, or reduce their expenditures with other community businesses. This changing structure of the food system has also impacted consumers in urban and rural areas. Mergers between food retailers in the late 90s have been matched by recent mergers in all phases of the distribution network, including wholesale grocers and cooperatives.¹ Rural and inner-urban consumers – who are forced to rely on retailers that have little access to good grocery distribution networks – find higher food prices, substandard quality, and poor selection. Moreover, few consumers understand where their food comes from or the vulnerability of the current system.

Local food systems employing the concept of community food security are another emerging alternative. Community food security means that all members of a community have access to safe, culturally relevant food in a sustainable, vibrant, locally-based food system. Further the interrelationships among all sectors of the food system from production to distribution, marketing and consumption become an integral part of the community. Thus, community food security seeks to build local food systems that encourage community relationships and provide healthy, sustainable economic development.² There are a number of emerging alternatives that need to be examined and promoted through outreach to educators, consumers, legislators, agriculture teachers and even county schools. Our program will act as a pilot project that other rural counties particularly those along the coastal region, can adopt in developing a new vision of a food system that would enhance the wellbeing of farmers and their communities.

Anticipated Project Outcomes

- Increase of knowledge on community food security and community food systems among key educators, students, consumers, growers, and chefs
- Established economic base for local food growers and chefs
- Appreciation and consumption of local foods
- An established local food and community food security system as another alternative source to the supply of local foods

Proposed Project Activities

Three training workshops on community food security and community food systems will be held in Newport, Lincoln City and Yachats in summer of 2006 open to the public with special invitations to targeted groups. The workshops will cover the basic concepts, design and implementation strategies, and challenges of starting a community food security and local food system. Details will be provided on how to develop strategic plans and find new ways to sustain family farms, become independent food producers and to maintain a viable rural community through local and regional food systems. Specialized workshops will be held for science and agriculture teachers in the local schools to promote incorporation of these concepts in their teaching curriculum and after school programs. For OSU, this project provides an opportunity for Extension to lead the way in helping communities develop a secure food system using local resources thereby meet the goal of sustaining rural communities.

The next phase is to have special small workshops with restaurant managers and their chefs from several popular restaurants in Lincoln County. This will provide a framework through which they can

¹ Stanton, John. 1999. "Rethinking retailers' fees." *Food Processing*, Vol. 60:32-33. & Hendrickson, Mary. 1999. "Food Retailing." Bulletin. Department of Rural Sociology. University of Missouri. *U.S. Distribution Journal*, September/October 1999, page 16.

² See the work done by the Center for Integrated Agriculture Systems at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (<http://www.cias.wisc.edu/>).

allow farmers to provide local foods for their restaurants at specific times on a calendar approved by chefs and farmers. The other workshops will be with farmers initially using the farmers' market as a source for growers. Farmers will be presented with what chefs require and try to match production to need. Concurrently, we will establish a manned station that will facilitate communication and delivery of foods and requests between chefs and farmers through use of appropriate medium such as phone, emails, and faxes.

For the general county consumers, we will publicize workshops where we invite chefs, growers and well known speakers to present to the public how local food systems can work. Educated and informed consumers will broaden the economic base for local farmers to sell their produce.

Evaluation Plan

The project will be evaluated at different stages depending on what is happening at that time. Workshops to the general public will be evaluated for clarity, understanding, breadth of subject matter, and relevance and appropriateness of information to local needs. Also, at each workshop, participants will be asked to **assess changes** in their level of knowledge about community food security and local food systems, and ways in which they expect to use this knowledge in their communities. Similarly, we will evaluate how growers benefit from information provided in terms of how well they produce their market products and also how much they gain in **monetary terms** from improved and expanded marketing of their produce. We will document how restaurants expand their customer base as a result of advertising local foods on their menu. This will help us gauge the overall economic benefit to the local economy. We can then carefully extrapolate on the gains on the **local economic impact** from this project. Science and agriculture teachers will help evaluate **learned concepts** by youth on the importance of local food systems in their community and how the youth will be engaged in making this happen.

Four months after the workshops, surveys will be sent to workshop participants asking them to report on how they are implementing the knowledge they gained at the workshop, and how the workshop has changed their approach to their way of thinking and buying local foods. Surveys will also give workshop participants a chance to critique our methodologies based on the usefulness in the course of their selection on source of foods. As a pilot project, these critiques will provide a foundation on what can be improved and general reception of the concepts to consumers. Before the completion of the project in summer 2007, follow-up surveys to document consumer trends on local foods in the county.

Relevance to OSU Extension Service Strategic Plan

This project fits well within the three thematic areas of OSU strategic plan

- Strengthening Communities and Economies – growers will have a sustained market for their produce and establish links that promote identity within the community. This also falls in the category of sustaining rural communities by using technologies that are adapted to benefit local growers.
- Sustaining Natural Resources – knowing how to grow target produce for the consumers allows growers to learn how to do it best and also continue doing this every year (sustainable). At the same time sustaining natural resources requires a stable economic, social and cultural base, all of which can be realized with this model
- Promoting Healthy Families and Individuals – many consumers marvel at the good flavor and taste of locally grown food. Buying and eating local will contribute towards healthy individuals.

Curriculum

The workshop's curriculum will include a mixture of lectures, small group discussion, case study exercises, field trips, and presenters from successful local and national projects. We will incorporate whenever practical, farmers and other end-users/practitioners as resource persons and trainers in the workshops, based on their field of expertise and experience.

Budget**Funds Requested:** \$20,000

	<u>Amount (\$)</u>
Personal Services	
Salaries (590 hours in 33 weeks @ \$10/hr)	5,900.00
Other Personnel Expenses (OPE)	600.00
<i>Total Personal Services</i>	<i>6,500.00</i>
Travel	
Workshops (materials, mailings, handouts and room rentals, school curriculum)	1,500.00
Meals for workshops	600.00
Mileage for co-PIs & invited guests	2,000.00
Airfare, lodging & food for invited special guests	3,000.00
<i>Total Travel</i>	<i>7,100.00</i>
General Supplies	
Phone line with 1-800 #	962.00
Computer & software support	1,000.00
Fax line	600.00
Fax machine	170.00
General Office & Supplies & workshops support	988.00
Printer & printing services	442.00
<i>Total General Supplies</i>	<i>4,162.00</i>
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>17,762.00</i>
OSU Lincoln Co. Admin Overhead (10%)	1,776.20
Total	<u>19,538.20</u>