



ADVOCACY ALERT



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Oregon Food Bank
Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force

The future of food in Oregon

Imagine a food and agricultural economy in Oregon that is strong, thriving and sustainable. Imagine Oregon producing sufficient food to feed its population and a stronger overall economy.

That was the message from Ken Meter, who presented "The Future of Food in Oregon," on April 24 in Portland. Meter's presentation painted a picture of the food system in the Northwest to inspire people to take action to improve it. Oregon Food Bank invited Meter to Portland.

Ken Meter is a farm and food system analyst from Minnesota and the CEO of Crossroads Resource Center in Minneapolis. He helps communities and states achieve com-

munity food security goals. Meter studies food systems and creates reports using hard economic data to demonstrate the importance of developing local, sustainable food systems.

Meter, has conducted state-wide analyses in Minnesota, Iowa, California and Hawaii to document economic losses suffered in America's farm communities. In addition to these findings, his analyses in Linn, Benton and Lincoln counties in Oregon and Clark County, Washington provide ideas for developing a strong, thriving, sustainable food and agricultural economy.

Meter's work has strengthened local food initiatives in 29 regions across 15 states. His

groundbreaking studies, "Finding Food in Farm Country," document economic losses suffered in America's farm communities.

Before coming to Oregon Meter told us, "I'm eager to be a part of the savvy local food efforts that have made the Portland metro area a national leader. Despite solid progress in building a local food economy, Oregon's farmland is losing acreage."

This was a tremendous opportunity for people to learn about the importance of strengthening Oregon's sustainable local food supply. Meter moves people from being passive recipients of the food system to active participants working toward positive change.

Probing questions...

- Has charity become more important than social justice?
- Has feeding the hungry become more important than ending hunger?

Dr. Larry Brown, former director of the Center on Hunger and Poverty at Brandeis University, recently gave a compelling speech asking advocates to rethink efforts to end hunger. To read his paper go to www.oregonhunger.org. Let us know what you think.

take five

(actions that take five minutes or less)

Message:

You've read the media accounts about Oregon's primary election. For the first time in decades our state's primary on May 20 will play a potentially significant role in deciding one of the presidential nominees.

So before you cast your vote this month, consider candidates' positions on hunger and its root causes. And please remember that elected officials from all levels of government — federal, state and local — can make a difference.

Action:

Take five minutes to investigate candidates' positions on key issues. What do they say about hunger in campaign literature or in the state Voters' Pamphlet? Look up how your state senator and representative voted last year on bills supported by Oregon Food Bank, the Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force, and other advocates. Go to <http://tinyurl.com/56apmc>.



Farm bill progress stuck in mud

It's taken a year but Congress has neared completion of its work on the farm bill, including new investments to feed hungry Americans. Unfortunately, as Advocacy Alert goes to press, progress on the farm bill has been buried under increasingly sharp words between Capitol Hill and the White House.

For weeks, discussions have been taking place to iron out differences between the House- and Senate-passed versions of the farm bill. Members of the House and Senate had scheduled a farm bill conference committee April 29, at which it was expected that the negotiators would continue their progress toward finalizing a bill.

However, the conference meeting was canceled, very likely as a result of remarks made by President Bush in which he strongly criticized the bill during a White House speech. Among other charges, he called the proposed agreement a "massive, bloated" piece of legislation. Earlier, a White House spokesperson threatened that President Bush would veto the farm bill if the legislation comes to the president in its current form.

Congress and the president must insure that the farm bill keeps pace with the ever-increasing cost of food. The farm bill must contain strong new investments in food stamps and in The Emergency Food

Assistance Program (TEFAP).

Food stamp benefits average a mere \$1 per person a meal and the minimum monthly food stamp benefit has been stuck at \$10 for three decades. Many food bank shelves are empty. The \$11.5 billion in new ten-year spending that the House approved in its version of the farm bill is critical to fund improvements in food stamp benefits, food stamp access, and increased TEFAP commodity purchases.

Time is running out on completion of the farm bill. And far too many Americans are still hungry.

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"Why would an Administration that is concerned about stimulating the economy choose to cutback spending for food assistance programs that stimulate the economy in the food and agriculture sector and help hundreds of thousands of low-income Americans who are dependent upon them?"

Representative James McGovern questioned OMB Director Nussell on his testimony before the budget committee about budget cuts that will impact the hungry here in the U.S.

Governor's Hunger Week: May 26-30

Governor Ted Kulongoski will host his spring Hunger Awareness Week from May 26-30, 2008. Since he took office, the governor has declared one week in the spring to be Hunger Awareness Week to educate Oregonians about hunger and to engage the public in becoming part of the solution. This year there will be two pre-week events: On May 22, the governor will participate in the Oregon Food Bank Stone Soup Luncheon and, on May 23, the Hunger Relief Task Force will release an executive summary for year five of Oregon's "Act to End Hunger." The summary will highlight successes and opportunities for addressing hunger's root causes. Communities are encouraged to plan events to raise awareness about hunger in their local areas. For more information go to: www.oregonhunger.org or www.oregonfoodbank.org where up-to-the-minute details and ideas will be posted.

