BRIDGING THE GAPS

COMMUNITY FOOD ASSESSMENT
COOS COUNTY
THE ASSESSMENT TEAM

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All photos taken by the author unless noted otherwise.

ON THE COVER: top left: strawberries for sale at the Wednesday Farmers Market in Coos Bay; middle: smoked salmon ready for packing at Chuck’s Seafood in Charleston; right: salad greens growing at Valley Flora farm in Langlois; bottom: McCullough Memorial Bridge in North Bend at sunset. THIS PAGE: Oregon Dunes National Park at sunset.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To all of Coos County: we kindly thank you for opening up your houses, churches, meeting halls, restaurants, grocery stores, ranches, farms, boats, and lives to tell the stories that informed this assessment.
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.

Three 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
Community Food Systems Manager
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Nestled in the South Western corner of Oregon and sandwiched between the Pacific Ocean and Oregon’s coastal mountain range is Coos County, a humble, blue-collar area with deep community roots and a history of perseverance and adventure.

Established in the mid 19th century, settlers in Coos County were looking to make their livings in coal mining, the timber industry, and commercial ocean fishing. Small agricultural practices began sprouting up, mainly dairy and cattle ranching, due to the climate.

In the late 1800’s, the Coos Bay rail link was established allowing commercial trade between the Willamette Valley and the South Coast, and goods from the valley could then be shipped by sea to foreign markets. Today the rail still operates the 134-mile line connecting regional manufacturers to the nation’s rail system in Eugene.

Other relevant infrastructure includes the Southwest Oregon Regional Airport, which is the only commercial airport on the Oregon Coast; it is utilized by the U.S. Coast Guard, United Parcel Service (UPS), FedEx, and nearby hospitals. Recently the runways have seen heavy traffic from private jets carrying passengers visiting Bandon Dunes Golf Resort in Bandon, a world-class golfing destination and one of the top tourist attractions on the South Coast.

And one cannot forget about the bay itself. Coos Bay is Oregon’s largest estuary and shipping port, and the deepest bay on the coast between Seattle and San Francisco; used principally as a terminal to ship forest products, coal, salmon, and agricultural products to Portland and San Francisco.
Native Populations and Natural Food Resources

Radiocarbon dating for archeological sites along Oregon’s South Coast establishes the oldest site near the mouth of the Umpqua River called Umpqua-Eden at 2960 +/- 45 years old. The region was populated by what is now known as the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Siuslaw and Lower Umpqua Indians, and the Coquille Indian tribes.

South Coast Native populations living near the sea relied heavily upon its natural food resources. Salmon, steelhead, shellfish and surf fish were staple foods and commonly smoked for preservation. Some large game would be trapped like deer, elk, and at times sea lions. In addition to the fish and animals, the landscape of this region offers a plethora of forgeable provisions such as acorns, roots, a multitude of berries, seeds, mushrooms, and seaweeds, which provided salt. However, some tribal cultures frowned upon eating certain things such as octopus, frogs, birds of prey, seagulls, bears, wildcats, and others.

As there were several populations of native peoples, some near the coast and some more upriver, food resources were varied. Those living upriver relied mainly on foraging for roots, shoots, seeds, nuts, skunk cabbage, and berries, while also trapping elk and deer; rivers still provided trout and salmon.

Recounted in 1933 by Annie Miner Peterson, at the time a 73 year old Coos Indian, to anthropologist Melville Jacobs about food distribution among Coos Indians, “Whenever a poor person lacked food, he watched for where he saw smoke, and into there he went. He was given food indeed. When he had finished eating he would say, ‘I’ll take a gift of food.’ Then indeed he would be given food, he would be given a lot. He would take them back with him to feed his own home, he would gather up all the leftovers.”

Present day Coos County still has most of the natural food resources of the past, and are now shared with a much broader community. Industry has settled in, making the ocean-caught seafood and salmon a global commodity; the native gourmet mushrooms that are foraged throughout the area are considered delicacies and fetch high prices on the international market. The cool climate allow for some of the sweetest cranberries that can be grown in North America.
The Community Food Assessment
This report is the result of a FEAST (Food, Education, Agriculture, Solutions, Together) event held in April of 2013 by the Oregon Food Bank. Gathering individuals from across the county, who were either involved with or interested in the idea of a better local food system, the event’s purpose was to introduce community members to each other and to begin the discussion of local sustainability. Wild Rivers Coast Alliance, the philanthropic arm of Bandon Dunes, partnered with South Coast Development Council, a non-profit economic development organization, to sponsor the work of a RARE (Resource Assistance for Rural Environments) Americorps volunteer to be responsible for researching and authoring this report. RARE Americorps is a program based out of the University of Oregon planning department and partners with the Oregon Food Bank to publish these reports for all counties in the state of Oregon.

The information in this report was gathered through personal interviews and meetings with local food system workers and interested community members/groups, textbooks, local museums, and Internet sources. The idea behind the information gathering was to gain an understanding of the main challenges faced by those involved in the different aspects of the food system, and to suggest reasonable opportunities for short-term community involvement and long-term investments which could be applied towards the betterment and sustainability of Coos County and its food.

Wild Rivers Coast Alliance (WRCA)
Wild Rivers Coast Alliance is the philanthropic arm of Bandon Dunes Golf Resort in Bandon. With a vision of a healthy eco-system driving a vibrant economy on the South Coast, WRCA funds projects geared towards promoting tourism, supporting new job opportunities, and caring for the well being of the area's natural resources. All proceeds from the Bandon Preserve golf course at the Bandon Dunes resort directly fund WRCA and its conservation, economic development, and tourism goals.

Jim Seeley, executive director for WRCA, has been working to create more jobs and promote better sustainable agriculture programs throughout the county including the branding of local products to a wider audience, and promoting the region as an agri-tourism destination. Furthermore, seeking out the challenges of the regions local food workers and formulating action plans in hopes to resolve them.

Focusing on three main objectives: conservation, community, and economy, WRCA has been integral to bringing this community food assessment to light.
Food Education Agriculture Solutions Together (FEAST) is a community-organizing event that engages participants in an informed discussion about food, education, and agriculture within their community. Facilitated by Sharon Thornberry, community food systems manager at the Oregon Food Bank, the events include local representatives presenting their involvement with and the importance of local food systems, small group sessions which engage interested individuals in focused action teams, creating a board of challenges and opportunities within the community food system, and identifying priorities for next step opportunities.

In April of 2013, FEAST was held in Coos Bay for the first time and saw a network of people commune to discuss the food system of Coos County. Action teams were formed to cover a variety of food issues in the area including branding local products, farm to school initiatives, food access, and nutrition education. To get the ball rolling, WRCA, Oregon Food Bank, and South Coast Development Council partnered to begin research for the community food assessment for Coos County.
What Is A Food System?

A food system is the path that food travels from field to fork. It involves everything from planting and harvesting, to processing and distribution, to retail sales and consumption, and finally the disposal of waste. Food systems are influenced by social, economic, and environmental factors. The way a local food system works relies heavily on human resources. Local communities with the right combinations of all these factors, in addition to citizens with a greater understanding of their food system, have the opportunity to create a more sustainable food system through networking and analysis of the challenges in Coos County.

Coos County offers many examples of all the aspects of the food system, from dairy farms to deep sea fishing operations, mobile meat slaughterers and canneries for fish, local markets and community supported agriculture (CSA) programs, and farmers markets. This report will focus on these topics and more, and in some instances operations nearby and just outside of Coos County will be included because of the high volume of interaction between communities (i.e. Langlois in Curry County and Reedsport in Western Douglas County).
In 2010 the Hunger in America study, which is released every four years by the hunger relief organization Feeding America, stated that approximately 5.7 million people in America receive emergency food assistance from a local food pantry (a 27% increase from 2006 which reported 4.5 million people). Furthermore, 11.5 million households around the country are considered food insecure, meaning they do not always know where their next meal will be coming from.

On a more local level, Coos County was reported in 2012 to have a food insecurity rate of 16.6% or 10,470 food insecure people and those numbers have been steadily rising each year. A food desert is an area where there is a great lack of fresh, healthful foods available to the public, whether because of distance, lack of transportation and infrastructure, or simply because no place nearby is selling those products.

An interactive map provided by the USDA (at right) shows that Coos County is home to numerous food desert zones (areas colored orange and red are low income and low access areas for up to 20 miles), from the unincorporated towns of Bridge and Remote along HWY 42, to smaller cities like Powers and Lakeside. Even more established places like Myrtle Point and Coquille still have plenty of residents who find it difficult to access fresh foods on a low income. Furthermore, people living outside of Coos Bay’s city limits have experienced closures of their local marketplaces, or their local marketplaces are not selling fresh foods, forcing individuals to make a 60-mile round-trip to a fully operational grocery store.

Responding to the Coos County Consumer Survey provided by the RARE Americorps member, 13.5% of people said that they have to travel between 11 and 25 miles to get groceries, while 26% travel 6 to 10 miles. Furthermore, 37% of respondents had said that high fuel costs and transportation were barriers to accessing the food they need.
Food Literacy

Many define food literacy differently, but the overarching idea behind the term remains consistent: understanding and practicing healthy eating habits. As there is no real way to measure the amount of food literate or food illiterate persons within a population, one can find the facts by looking at an area’s health and well-being.

According to the 2013 Coos County Community Health Assessment over 36% of Coos County’s adult population was reported as overweight, with 27% obese. In middle and high school aged children, 10% were reported as obese. The causes of obesity are complex, however poor nutritional choices are understood to be a definite factor that contributes to obesity, and poor nutritional choices can be rooted in a lack of education regarding healthy eating habits.

What is also evident is that children are not receiving education about food choices and preparation in schools. Classes teaching home economics have all but vanished from the nation’s classrooms resulting in the youth not even knowing where food is coming from, much less how to prepare meals. However North Bend School District does offer a cooking course at North Bend High taught by Frank Murphy. Murphy’s cooking course reach over 100 students each school day and gives students the idea that they can learn how to cook a variety of ingredients. “I’m trying to break a cycle [of uninformed eating]”, says Murphy, and on a budget of $2,000 a year, still manages to teach the fundamentals of cooking fresh ingredients.
In terms of nutritional health and eating habits of a community, it is evident that poverty and lack of education are serious contributors to the problem. According to the US Census 17.6% of Coos County lives under the poverty level with 22.9% of these under the age of 18. It seems that there is a trend in multigenerational poverty, and poverty can be attributed towards behaviors adverse to health.

Coos County Public Health published their Community Health Assessment in June of 2013 with some alarming numbers regarding the health of Coos County’s citizens. Probably one of the most eye-opening statistics is that Coos County ranks 28th out of 33 counties in Oregon for overall health of its residents.

With the high obesity rates among Coos County adults, it’s not a surprise that in 2011, heart disease ranked as the second leading cause of death (188 deaths), followed by diabetes and high blood pressure. As a result, obesity and diet were ranked just behind smoking as leading preventable causes of death in the area.

It’s also not much help that 36% of the restaurants in Coos County are fast food; a source for low cost, belly-filling, yet, unhealthy foods, contributing towards obesity even more.

Health in Coos County

Public Health Initiatives

Coos County Public Health, in their 2013 Community Health Improvement Plan, outline many goals regarding public health in a variety of sectors. From improving end-of-life care, increasing Oregon Health Plan (OHP) enrollment levels, and improving health outcomes of persons with chronic illnesses. By utilizing education outreach staff at OSU Extension, a three-year objective of increasing provider knowledge about whole food, plant-based diet is underway. Clinicians around the county have been encouraged to attend workshops, and continue their understanding of plant-based, healthful diets to their patients who experience diabetes and heart disease.

Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program (FVRx)

Another initiative outlined was to determine which healthcare providers would be interested in a fruit and vegetable prescription program. Run by a national non-profit organization called Wholesome Wave, the Fruit and Vegetable Prescription program (FVRx), is designed to provide assistance to overweight and obese children who are at risk of developing diet-related diseases, such as type 2 diabetes and heart disease. The program is intended to provide direct economic benefits to small and midsize farmers while bringing additional resources into the local economies. The prescriptions would be distributed by community healthcare providers and redeemed at participating farmers markets for fresh, locally grown produce.
Much of coastal Oregon experiences a short growing season with very high levels of rainfall during the winter months. The South Coast is no different with the addition of strong wind gusts throughout most of the year that have been known to damage many crops that are not protected by a hoop house or greenhouse. Therefore, there has always been a myth surrounding what kinds of crops can thrive in these conditions. As far as commercial agriculture production goes, most land is dedicated to pasture for cows and lambs, while cranberry bogs take up much of the remainder. However, many families find gardening a worthwhile activity when supplementing their personal diets with fresh garden vegetables and greens; for local consumers, however, there is only one Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program within the area, located in Langlois.

Due to the high winds, mild temperature, and heavy rainfall for much of the winter months, crops would fair much better by using season extenders such as a hoop house or greenhouse, both of which would also help in reducing wind damage. Furthermore, as the average age of the principle owners of farms is steadily increasing (currently the median age is 56), there will soon need to be a change of hands to keep up the pace of agriculture in Coos County. Access to land, farmers training programs, and communication networks between existing farmers will all be factors that impact the future of farming in the county.
Community Supported Agriculture (or CSA) is a direct marketing tool for farmers to connect with community members through purchase of “shares” on the land. An individual will pay a farmer a set price for period of time, and receive fresh, seasonal produce directly from that farmer, often on a weekly basis, and the produce will vary depending on the season.

The philosophy behind it is that a symbiotic relationship forms between the farmer and the customer, and the community can get a better understanding as to what it means to eat seasonally. In Coos County, residents are receiving CSA shares from only two farms, and one is located in Western Lane County. Valley Flora, located in Langlois, is the only operating CSA farm in Coos County (Langlois is located in Curry County, but Valley Flora interacts heavily with Coos County residents). One small grocery chain has recently started promoting its CSA-style produce buying club. Ray’s Food Place in Bandon has begun a brand new “Eat Fresh and Local” produce campaign where it sources fresh produce within a 300-mile radius of its warehouse located in Portland. Jed Arrington, store manager at the Bandon location, says that the response has been great among customers, but he hasn’t had many area farmers contacting him to sell their produce at the store. “I’d like to the see the local farms nearby represented, it would be a great venue for them.” The produce is accompanied by photos and the name of the farms where they came from, and customers pay $15 for five small baskets of their choosing on a weekly basis. Arrington echoes the company’s slogan for the campaign calling it “a farmers market, seven days a week.”

Most of the agricultural products within Coos County are shipped to various locations for handling and processing, namely dairy products, cattle and lamb for meat, and cranberries. However some small-scale farmers manage to value-add their products at home. David Leff, owner of Twin Creek Ranch just south of Bandon, grows blueberries and manages to wash and pack them there on his ranch. His three and a half acres produce enough berries that he’s running out of fresh and frozen storage space, all the while he’s trying to expand his operation to nine acres in the coming years. With berry farms, too, U-Pick marketing tends to draw in a dedicated consumer base that wish to visit the farm and pick their own desired amount of berries, and pay by weight. U-Pick operations are an excellent tool for farmers to connect with the consumers, as well as drawing in tourists off of highway 101 to visit local food producers. Not only do these operations require less storage and processing infrastructure, but also both the farmer and consumer are happy that there is a direct connection being made.

The need for more local processing facilities is evident. Commercial kitchens are scarce, but also under-utilized. These facilities are a great asset for anyone looking to add value to their agricultural products, and can be as simple as washing and packaging them with a label. There could also be the opportunity to boost economic development through the establishment of a regional food hub on the South Coast. However a clear definition of how it would run would be key for starting it up. It would provide producers a more stable market for their products, and be able to brand the products of the South Coast for retail sales.
For the many skeptics in the region who find it hard to grow certain kinds of produce year round, the ladies at Valley Flora Farm (notably called the “Florettes”) have been proving them wrong for over a decade.

Abby started her “Abby’s Greens” salad green business in 1997, and began cultivating her base of clientele which included local grocers and restaurants, and continues to supply several venues with her quality salad greens. In 2008, the family business rounded out with Abby’s mother, Betsy, and her sister, Zoë, starting their own lines of vegetable production, and the three-way venture known as Valley Flora began.

Currently growing over 100 varieties of fruits and vegetables, Valley Flora offers a farm stand from April to December and also provides U-Pick services on their land where customers can pick their own berries and ornamental flowers. And with the farm stand accepting SNAP benefits (by special arrangement) as well as operating totally on an honor system (the stand is not manned but customers pay for what they take), Valley Flora truly embodies what a good community food system can look like.

The CSA program currently sells 110 shares, which provides Valley Flora two-thirds of the total income. The Florettes have settled at this for now and don’t see the need to expand their services, as the workload would be too much for the three of them (and their farm hand and volunteers).

When discussing the future of farming, Zoë mentioned farmer’s markets, and how they are a reliable way to get produce out to the public and dollars into the pockets of growers. But the real key to a successful small-scale farm is diversification. By diversifying the product, the farm can always fall back on other produce in the event of disease hurting a particular crop, and it puts more healthful foods onto plates around the community.
After reading Allan Savory’s book, “Holistic Management”, Marilyn Pratt’s interest in cultivating her own life off the land was sparked. Even though she never had experience as a farmer or rancher she was always aware of how to use the land available to her and made sure that food was always being produced on her property.

In a time when farms are disappearing much faster than they are starting up, Pratt still decided to invest in some land, and found a parcel in the Coquille Valley along highway 42S. When thinking of a purpose for the land, she decided that a value-added product was going to be essential for helping her ranch thrive, and the idea of starting a creamery for sheep milk would be her main venture. “Cows are just too big for one person to handle,” said Pratt regarding her choice of livestock. “Plus, I can potentially get three products from a sheep: milk, meat, and wool.”

Marketing has been a challenge in the early stages of setting up her ranch. She doesn’t have a finished product yet (she’s still building the creamery itself), but can offer other farm products like eggs, and wool from her sheep, which she has been trying to sell in wool markets in California where she is from.

She hopes to continue selling directly to customers through a farm stand she will build outside of her property, and right off of highway 42S. Once her creamery is all set up and ready to go, the products will be marketed in niche areas and farmers markets, but she is confident that being a rare treat, sheeps cheese will do well throughout the area.
Agriculture in Coos County - The Land

Charles Dexter McFarlin established the first cranberry bed of the Pacific Northwest in 1885 in Coos County. Arriving from Cape Cod, McFarlin brought with him cranberry vines from Massachusetts and soon learned that the climate of Oregon’s South Coast was favorable for the bright red, tart-sweet fruits we enjoy today. By 1927, others had followed suit, and the number of bogs in Oregon grew to 130. Currently, Oregon is fifth in cranberry production in North America and the South Coast produces 99% of Oregon’s cranberry crop, with Coos County representing roughly 59% or Oregon’s total production.

The success of the cranberry, known in the region as “red gold”, is one of only three fruits native to the soils of North America. Due to an extended growing season and mild temperatures, allowing the berries to ripen on the vine for longer; a deeper red hue and sweeter flavor is a stamp of recognition for an Oregon-grown cranberry.

Mining For Red Gold

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According to the 2012 USDA Agriculture Census, Coos County dropped both in farm numbers and total acres for cranberry production from 2007. In 2012, 121 farms were reported to be operating in Coos County totaling 1,936 acres, a decline in numbers from 2007, which showed 137 farms with a total of 2,096 acres.

Ocean Spray

Ocean Spray is easily the most recognizable brand when referring to cranberry products. Founded in 1930 by independent cranberry growers, the cooperative helped market and popularize the cranberry from a holiday side dish to an everyday staple snack. Currently, the Ocean Spray cooperative includes over 700 grower families across North America, and holds a significant presence in Coos County.

Nearly all of Coos County’s cranberry bogs are located in and around the city of Bandon, and roughly 45 growers, out of 100, are growing for Ocean Spray. When working with Ocean Spray, cranberry growers have three-year contracts and are limited to a set amount of acreage which they can harvest for Ocean Spray. If a farm is only harvesting a portion of their total acreage for Ocean Spray, they must find other markets or buyers for any remaining produce they harvest. In addition, Ocean Spray pools their grower-members into two pools, Pool “A” and Pool “B”. It has been with great controversy that Ocean Spray treats members in Pool “A” and Pool “B” unfairly in regards to price paid per barrel of harvested cranberries (Pool “A” members receiving a much higher price than Pool “B” members). However, Ocean Spray growers are still receiving a higher price per barrel (one “barrel” = 100 pounds of berries) than independent growers, which can be upwards to 40% higher.
**2014 Cranberry Volume Regulations**

As worldwide marketing for cranberry products increase, pressure has built in the past several years to expand the production of cranberry bogs in Canada, specifically Quebec. The high yields resulting from that expansion eventually flooded the market, driving the buying price way down for cranberry growers worldwide. Thus, in 2014, the Cranberry Marketing Committee (CMC) has issued their volume regulation for the year’s harvest, in hopes to stabilize the market.

As stated by CMC, the volume control is “a unique tool that may be used … to tighten supplies and reduce pricing volatility during periods when supply is out of balance with demand.” In the 52 years since the establishment of the CMC, this method of regulation has been used five times to regulate the pricing of the cranberry market. This year’s regulation comes after the unexpected surplus of harvest cranberries from 2013. The Ocean Spray Cooperative issued a statement to the CMC regarding the issue saying, “…to ensure that the current surplus does not continue to increase… [Ocean Spray] proposes that the 2014 crop is capped at the size of the 2013 crop through the use of the Marketing Order specifically through the mechanism of a Handler Withholding.”

What this means for growers in and out of the Ocean Spray cooperative, is that it is likely that they will be forced to sell a smaller harvest than in previous years to the market in order to avoid another surplus. By doing so, growers will potentially be left with thousands of pounds of fruit that they are unable to market. This leaves the growers and the market in quite a conundrum, as some growers are concerned with the future of farming the fruit. For independent growers the trouble of growing the fruit just isn’t paying the bills anymore. The commodity price is diving lower and lower and since there aren’t many opportunities on the South Coast for value-added processing, it is clear that a change needs to occur. The idea of marketing the Oregon berry as a separate product from the rest of the berries produced throughout the region could be a way out of the slump. With the rise of cranberry powder being sold in pharmacies as a supplement for urinary tract infection, and with Oregon’s berries being sweet enough to eat fresh, getting away from the national commodity price is a big goal.

“As long as we don’t establish ourselves as something different, we’re stuck with commodity prices.” – Scott, J&R Cranberry LLC, Bandon
Marketing The Oregon Cranberry

Many of the growers here on the South Coast will tell you that their berries are better than anywhere else. The climate, soils, length of season, and cultivars of berries produce a redder, riper, sweeter berry that isn’t recognized when processed with all the other berries grown throughout the country and world.

Internationally, cranberries are seeing an increase in popularity, not only due to taste preferences changing, but also due to research which shows that cranberry powder can inhibit a bacterium commonly found in complicated urinary tract infections (UTIs). This powder can be found in pharmaceutical aisles as a supplement to treat those symptoms. In addition, cranberries are a powerful anti-oxidant offering many general health benefits.

Creating new markets for the berries grown in Oregon could be a safe way to ensure the stability of cranberry enterprises on the South Coast. It’s one thing to assume that the berries are better than the rest because of environmental factors, but it’s another thing to be sure that those assumptions are, in fact, true. By researching the berries grown here and comparing various traits to berries grown elsewhere, conclusions can be made as to how the berries could be marketed outside of the greater Ocean Spray cooperative; which could also help avoid situations like volume regulations because the Oregon berry would be in a market of its own.

Furthermore, with a quality berry proven to be superior than the rest, branding can be established and as Jim Seeley envisions for the future, the cranberries of the South Coast could be as desirable as the fine wine out of Napa Valley, California.
Being a cranberry farmer is not always a lucrative task. In an article for Portland-based 1859 Magazine, Timothy Vincent, third generation cranberry grower in Bandon stated, “You can’t make a living off of cranberries unless you are very big and automated.” As a result, Tim and his brother Ty who, together, run the family business, have to keep steady jobs on the side to keep the operation afloat.

And that operation is a boutique cranberry product aptly branded as Vincent Family Cranberries. With twenty-three acres and fifteen cranberry bogs producing the quality fruits going into the product, the hope is to show the region that cranberries in Oregon are delicious, nutritious, and above all, marketable.

The decision came from watching the business slip deep into desperation as the Ocean Spray payout was getting smaller and smaller. In 2000, the Vincent family cut ties with the corporate cooperative to work on their own brand as an independent entity. “Maybe we should make some juice,” thought Tim, and he began searching for a processor; he found Dundee Fruit in McMinnville.

Tim and his wife Dani do most of the up-front type of work; marketing the product to grocery stores, setting up booths at farmers markets, and getting the public aware of the difference between the Vincent brand’s 63% cranberry juice versus Ocean Spray’s cocktails which dilute the cranberry with apple and pear juices.

Their success has been growing, and gaining dedicated fans in larger Oregon cities like Portland and Eugene. Though they sell for a higher price than the curvy plastic bottles branded with the ubiquitous wave logo, the quality and craftsmanship of the product is what shines through, giving hope to other Oregon cranberry growers that maybe someday the Oregon berry will stand out among the rest.
Ranching and Meat

Much of the land in use for agriculture in Coos County is set aside as pasture land for cattle. With over 25,000 cows, either for beef or dairy production, it can be easily understood that ranchers are a large, if not the largest users of land in the area. In 2012, there were a reported 654 farms in Coos County, with 383 of those farms producing some kind of livestock product; well over half of the total farms. Total sales for meat and dairy products exceeded 33 million dollars, also solidifying ranching as an important economic asset for the South Coast.

Sheep herds also take up a significant portion of the area’s grazing space with 78 farms keeping a total of 12,399 sheep and lambs (down from 88 farms in the last 10 years). JoAnne Mast raises her Romney sheep (a long-wool breed well known for its quality fleece and mild meat flavor) in the Coquille River Valley. She has a fairly dedicated customer base, all marketed by word-of-mouth, that purchases the lambs for meat; she averages about ten to twelve lambs a year going into that market. Selling directly has been easy and convenient for her, and has made no plans to expand her market in the meat sector. Most of her income is from the quality wool that she sheers during the winter months. Langlois, just south of Bandon, has a commercial wool processing facility, but JoAnne sometimes sells further south into California where the prices are often higher.
The Bussman family operates one of the custom butcheries, located just south of Bandon; providing their services to the surrounding community and beyond. With their mobile slaughtering unit, they can come to an individual’s home and get the job done there on site. With a client base of 500-600 customers between Florence, Oregon and Crescent City, California, Chris Bussman is “going crazy for about five months out of the year.” However, still makes the claim that “cranberries make our money”. The Bussman family supplements their income from their meat processing with thirty acres of cranberry bogs. Due to a small facility and limited cold storage for their carcasses, the Bussman family has to work fast, and keep a small clientele.

They also purchase USDA approved meat from Mohawk Valley Meats and produce varies types of jerkies, pepperoni sticks, and other cuts for retail sale at their shop.

In 2011 a business plan was rolled out for a USDA meat packing facility due to great interest from the Bussman family. It has been put on hold due to lack of private funding for the operation. The new facility could cost upwards to $8 million for a new brick and mortar facility, plus the need to supply the plant with enough product to keep it open and busy. “Those big money grants are only available for non-profits,” said Chris Bussman, yet he is certain that ranchers and customers alike would help keep the facility afloat if it comes to fruition. “The door’s there just got to get the key in and turn the dang thing!”
**USDA Meat Production**

If there were one struggle regarding the production of meat products on the South Coast, it would be the absence of a USDA certified meat-processing facility. The same can be said for much of Oregon. According to a report by the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA), less than 5% of livestock that is raised, slaughtered, and processed in Oregon under USDA inspection. The current closest facility for Coos County ranchers is Mohawk Valley Meats in Springfield, roughly 120 miles away. Formally, there was B&D Meats, a USDA-inspected slaughter facility in Roseburg. They were forced to shut down in 2012 because of a lack of funds to support facility upgrades.

Most, if not all, of the meat which is produced in Coos County will go to Mohawk for processing, and because of the high volume of animals going into the facility for slaughter, the wait list can be weeks to months long. A USDA inspected animal is the only way for direct sales to happen within an area, and because of the double cost of freight to get the animals out to Springfield for slaughter, it’s typical that the product does not come back to Coos County for retail sale, unless by special order.

The only options existing are a limited number of custom butcheries (one mobile) that will slaughter, cut, and wrap a privately owned animal (or game meat) for the individual to use, but not to sell. It is common for families to purchase shares of an animal from farmers to have for long periods of time; this requires the ability to freeze and store the meat at the home.

**Satellite Cut/Wrap Facilities**

USDA slaughtering facilities require a lot of volume to cover operation costs. In most cases for the coast, as explained by Lauren Gwin, Oregon State University assistant professor and Co-coordinator of the Niche Meat Processing Assistance Network, “Ultimately there weren’t enough ranchers with enough livestock [on the coast] to keep a plant busy enough to make enough revenue to cover operating costs and [not enough] markets for the meat [which] pay enough of a premium to cover … niche production costs.” Because of this, as noted above, animals on the coast have to move inland to the only remaining USDA slaughter facilities, and because of cost, likely don’t come back into the local marketplace.

Gwin proposed a “very preliminary” idea that could help small communities like Coos County to consume more local meat products, called “satellite cut and wrap facilities” for retail cutting. The idea would be to have a centralized slaughter facility (which would be Mohawk Meats where most animals are already going to for slaughter) that would produce hanging halves or quarters. These pieces can be purchased by the existing custom meat butcheries within the county for cut, wrap, and retail sales. Gwin concludes “It is by no means an easy proposition and would involve multiple independent companies collaborating and sharing some of the costs.”
Meat comes in many forms, grades, cuts, and flavors, and most consumers already know what they are looking for when they’re shopping for animal protein at the store. Langlois resident, businessman, and rancher Joe Pestana is trying to get consumers to think about a different way to supplement their thirst for meat with his Blacklock Grass Fed Beef.

In 2008, Pestana purchased a lease on a family ranch and started with 9 animals. By the end of the second year, he had bumped up to 64, and continued to grow his herd. “Blacklock” refers to the cattle, which originated from Blacklock Point in Southern Oregon, and Pestana manages to feed them only the good, natural grasses that are healthiest for cows. His product is a locally flavored, leaner, healthier beef, albeit at a higher price. Also using Mohawk for processing, Pestana estimates that a single animal from start to finish costs him $2,000, and expects that cost to rise several hundred dollars more through the coming years.

His custom packaged meat products are marketed to higher-end grocers in more populated cities, mainly on the I-5 corridor as he found that rural towns aren’t buying as much specialty meat products as metropolitan areas. He also sells them at his market in Langlois, aptly named, Langlois Market. Pestana agrees that having a USDA facility closer to home would produce a more quality meat product, as the lengthy ride out to Springfield adds stress to the animal, which in turn diminishes quality of meat.

JOE PESTANA
OREGON GRASSFED BEEF

Joe Pestana at his market in Langlois

Photo courtesy of Lou Sennick at The World Link
Agriculture in Coos County - The Land

Dairy

The Coquille valley boasts some of the finest grazing lands for cattle on the south coast. The topsoil is a deep, river alluvium almost completely free of rocks, and well irrigated using the Coquille River. According to the 2012 Ag Census, 25 farms and 3,420 dairy cows have been making their home there and nearby. Nearly all of the dairy operations in Coos County are members of the Organic Valley cooperative based out of Wisconsin; an incredibly successful farmer cooperative which posted nearly $1 billion in sales for 2013 shipping nation wide as well as to Canada, China, and Japan.

The first dairy cows were brought to Coos County in the early 1860’s by an ancestor of Bob Ross about five generations back. They may not be the same cows, but the profession hasn’t changed, and Ross now oversees the operation known as Lee Valley Dairy in Coquille. As a member of the Organic Valley cooperative, Ross currently produces, on average, 5.5 million pounds of milk per year (16,000 per day) from their 250 cows. Ross is also lucky to have an organic feedlot in Eastern Oregon, which he sources much of his winter stock of feed from. Otherwise, dairy farmers have a hard time sourcing affordable organic feed for their cows. With Organic Valley buying from the majority of dairy producers in the region, an ample supply of organic feed is a necessity.

As the standards for organic dairy products is highly regulated and monitored, getting the proper diet into each cow can be expensive. A cow relies of a heavy diet of proteins to produce quality milk for human consumption, and as noted by Cassie Bouska, agriculture specialist at OSU extension, alfalfa is a desired crop to get into diets of dairy cows. Cassie also notes that Coos County’s soils are far too acidic for quality growing of alfalfa, and would like to see trial runs of the crop in the near future. It is unsure how much area farmers are spending on quality feed that comes from outside of the county, but having a reliable source within the area would certainly prove beneficial.

Currently there is only one dairy processor in the county, Face Rock Creamery in Bandon. While nearly all of the dairy producers in the region are affiliated with Organic Valley, Face Rock Creamery is working with two area dairies to produce milk for the creamery’s cheese products.
Cheese making had been a major asset to the greater Bandon areas in the 1800’s. Unfortunately, wildfires plagued the city of Bandon in 1914 and 1936, burning down much of the architecture, and with each rebuild, the city embraced cheese making as a continued asset to the community. However, in 2000, a larger cheese maker in the state purchased the Bandon Cheese Factory (as it was once known), eventually shutting the factory down and demolishing the building, leaving an empty lot at the north entrance to the city.

In 2011, negotiations began with the then owner of the Bandon Cheese Factory and the city of Bandon, and the location was repurchased by the city in hopes to rebuild the cheese making legacy, envisioned by local entrepreneurs Greg Drobot and Daniel Graham. This partnership has made it possible for the cheese factory to return to Bandon, now called Face Rock Creamery. The beautiful, modern retail space offers artisan cheeses, ice creams, and specialty items from Oregon and abroad.

Having celebrated its one-year anniversary in 2014, Face Rock has become a community staple, offering its products throughout many area grocers and being featured on menus of local restaurants throughout the state. Their achievements are a testament to the strength of local communities, and hope to expand and employ more local work in the future.
- **Strengthening communication between farmers, ranchers, fishermen, and their markets.** Creating a reliable network for individuals to communicate can be very beneficial for a community. Farmers and ranchers, though not always, tend to be an isolated group, yet there are needs that can be met through consistent and reliable communication methods. By providing a forum for these individuals, notifications of services and products available can be beneficial in terms of trading, hired hands, bartering products, borrowing equipment, and leasing land.

- **Access to land and future farmer trainings.** As the average age of farmers is steadily increasing, there will be a need for future farmers to take over and begin their new enterprises. Allowing young farmers access to farmland, and providing proper trainings to those young farmers can create a better sense of security felt for the future of agriculture in Coos County.

- **Greater access to storage and processing facilities.** Commercial kitchens exist, but are rarely used and hardly advertised. By utilizing the existing assets, farmers might find that value-adding their products can be a profitable venture. Also by researching the feasibility of a food hub for large-scale storage and processing of local agriculture products, the value of those products could be much greater and more beneficial to the area community at large.

- **Creation and maintenance of a local food guide.** A local food guide is beneficial not only for the current population of a community, but also for those who are traveling through. Spread along the famous highway 101, Coos County could benefit from producing a local food guide that encourages tourists to stop and explore the agriculture of Coos County.

- **Feasibility studies on cranberries in order to find alternative markets for an Oregon branded cranberry product.** A comparative study on cranberries grown on the South Coast of Oregon versus cranberries grown elsewhere could verify whether Oregon cranberries could develop its own niche market independent of Ocean Spray and other national commodity brokers. If that were the case, then the berries have the potential to be marketed to a broader consumer base, possibly even to pharmaceutical companies as a powder.

- **Cooperation between local meat purchasers and butcheries to form “satellite” cut and wrap operations.** With many of the animals traveling long distances to USDA slaughtering facilities along the I-5 corridor, local meat is rarely being purchased from area grocers. A collaborative effort, as outlined by Lauren Gwin at OSU, would open up the market to bring local meat back into the region through purchasing halves or quarters direct from the slaughterhouse and having local butchers cut and wrap them for retail sale.
The seafood industry, along with timber products, is what makes Coos County what it is. Charleston is home to the landing docks where commercial and independent fisherman unload their catches to the numerous processors who’ve made their home there. Bandon Pacific, Hallmark Fisheries, Chuck’s Seafood, Oregon Seafood, and Pacific Seafood are some of the main processors purchasing boats’ catches and getting them ready for local, regional, national and international markets. With millions of pounds of seafood coming in routinely, processors are working hard and fast to get all the product out, ready to be consumed, so the fishermen can turn around and head back out and work the waters for another round.  

The fishing industry is complicated and robust; involving markets on a global scale and a multitude of government regulations on every species of fish that is caught. Charleston, being one of Oregon’s top fishing ports, looks to secure those global markets by churning out product as fast as it arrives from the boats, as well as to keep the local businesses afloat. This section will look at challenges affecting local fishermen, processors, and consumers.  

As products like Oregon Dungeness crab, Oregon pink shrimp, and different varieties of salmon are being marketed to a broader audience, the international market has been steadily increasing its demand for these products. As well, larger urban populations around the country are willing to pay nearly three times as much for fresh seafood caught on the Oregon coast than local, coastal populations will. Much of this market pricing relates to the fact that it’s hard to find locally caught seafood in large chain retailers like Safeway and Fred Meyer.
Hugh Link, executive director of the Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission (ODCC) and longtime seafood industry steward, works to promote, educate, and research Oregon Dungeness crab throughout the world. As well, the ODCC is the only Dungeness crab commission in the world with a Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification, which labels the practices of harvesting and processing of Dungeness crab in the region as sustainable, and brings in higher profitability for the product worldwide.

Getting a certification from a group like the MSC doesn’t come easily, and requires stringent adherence to regulations set by groups like ODFW and NOAA. But the ocean resource that we once thought to be bountiful and endless is certainly taking a toll from overfishing and pollution. Access to legal open fishing waters is becoming harder to come by. Marine preservation sites are reserving large portions of ocean for scientific research, and areas for developing wind and wave energy from the ocean. However, Link describes the whole process as a “necessary evil”, because it’s understood by all in the seafood industry that the ocean should be maintained and preserved for the livelihood of everyone.

“Nobody wants to catch the last fish.” - Hugh Link

Cold Storage
Coos Bay, as noted, is the deepest seaport between Seattle and San Francisco. Yet, still, the town boasts no large-scale public cold storage facility. Most seafood requiring cold storage travels nearly three hours away to Albany, Oregon where a public cold storage facility exists, or down to Brookings where storage is pricey, or overbooked. The goal concerning the massive number of fish landings piling into the warehouses of seafood processors is that the fish need to be quickly processed, packaged, and sold to the top buyers first before it can be distributed to smaller retail outfits that would cater to local communities.

Steve Adams of Hallmark Fisheries in Charleston, a long-standing processing facility for a variety of seafood products, had used the cold storage in Brookings to store crab. However he was soon nickeled-and-dimed into paying more for the space and services. He felt compelled to abandon the facility and move inland 140 miles to the nearest public cold storage in Albany.

“There’s all this seafood, but no seafood.” - Steve Adams on providing seafood for local consumption
**Consuming Local**

Even though the industry is a global one, independent fishermen are still bringing local catches into town in more ways than one. For four years now, Robert Taylor and his wife Denise have been bringing in their catches to their floating Fishermen’s Seafood Market in Coos Bay. Accepting SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formally called Food Stamps) at their market is another way to bring in traffic of people who wouldn’t normally find it economical to purchase fresh seafood. Also operating a small restaurant, each fish is hand cut on site, and served up fresh for customers daily.

If not at a marketplace, then customers have the option of buying seafood directly from the fishermen themselves, right off the boats. John Blanchard, captain of the Bess Chet in Charleston, sells fresh albacore tuna from his boat. He says that he finds it hardly economical to sell his catches to the large processing facilities, which will buy tuna for a mere $1.15/lb at the beginning of the season. And the decision to sell tuna came about because the price of salmon began to drop dramatically. His challenges are not only economical; when working with a resource like the ocean, inconsistencies of volume and dock time cut into his opportunities to sell. Yet he says he gets by, and enjoys seeing returning customers who come to his boat for the whole tuna sold at $2.75/lb.

Another entrepreneurial venture is Oregon Seafood, a custom processing and packaging facility, and its custom brand of seafood products, Sea Fare Pacific. Owned and operated by Mike Babcock, the mission of Oregon Seafoods is to partner with local fishermen to provide “quality, healthy, nutritious, natural fish products at a reasonable price”. The Sea Fare Pacific brand came about after spending time with fishermen looking for better marketing opportunities, and the idea of providing once-cooked albacore tuna products to retail shelves was born. Now customers can locate the Sea Fare Pacific brand on many grocery store shelves. In addition, he plans to add a tourism and education component to the business in hopes of encouraging more people to stop off in Coos Bay in order to learn more about local fishing operations.
The LeDoux family has a mission: to get as much locally caught seafood into the local marketplace, and making sure that those residing within Coos County have access to as much fresh, local, sustainable seafood possible. By doing this, they are encouraging consumers’ dollars to stay within the local marketplace.

Family owned since 2007, Fishermen’s Wharf Seafood Market, located on “D” Dock in Charleston, has a “hands on” approach to selecting, purchasing, and selling locally caught seafood products. The process involves Matt LeDoux browsing the various catches right off the docks of Charleston. Each fish purchased is inspected and handled by Mike himself, who then gets much of his product processed just down the street at various processing facilities in Charleston. “It’s all about quality”, says Matt, “go to your local fishmonger; you got to trust your local fishmonger.” Packages of his fish even include which fishing vessel he purchased the seafood from.

In addition to selling local seafood products, the LeDouxs purchase quality specialty products from around the world; freeze-dried organic fruits from China, olives and anchovies from Italy, and other seafood products not found on the Oregon coast yet still caught in American waters. By adding an online presence, his market has expanded to customers across the nation, and allows those customers who were just passing through, to continue to shop from his store. “The online orders make up about 10% of our business”, Matt says, but he is happy that people are continuing to shop from the store remotely. Customers can also find Fishermen’s Wharf seafood products in various restaurants throughout Coos Bay, including The Mill Casino’s Fish to Fork campaign, which promotes local seafood in its dining services.
In 1981 the Oregon Legislature established the Salmon and Trout Enhancement Program (STEP) as a program of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW). Seeking to “achieve the recovery and sustainability of the state’s native salmon and trout through the education of Oregon’s citizens and their involvement with fish management efforts”, STEP utilizes thousands of volunteers a year and helps to educate and engage community members across the state about their local native fish populations.

The STEP district for the South Coast is the Coos-Coquille District, and is the birthplace of the STEP program in Oregon. Current STEP biologist, Tom Rumreich, oversees many of the activities and projects within the district. There are four basic components to the outreach with STEP: education and program development, which informs the public about local salmon and trout resources and their habitats; inventory and monitoring, which characterize fish populations and their habitats; habitat improvement, which enhance, restore and protect habitat for native fish stocks; and fish culture, which produce fish to supplement natural fish production.

Last year, the Coos-Coquille STEP district topped all other STEP districts by collecting 10,994 brood stock from local watersheds and releasing 2,674,269 fish (57% of all fish released in Oregon STEP programs) back into their natural habitats through controlled incubation and rearing practices. These populations allow for local sport fishermen and families to enjoy fishing for the Pacific Northwest’s iconic fish species.

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Having been involved in the seafood business for over 40 years, Rick Goche has a passion for sustainability, quality, and education of the fish that feed us. As chairman of the Oregon Albacore Commission, Rick takes pride in helping to promote Oregon Albacore among the fleet of fishing vessels and the processors that support them. “My dream is to one day see most of the Albacore Tuna we land in Oregon be consumed in Oregon.”

Rick runs Sacred Sea Tuna, a local Albacore tuna product that is caught in the Pacific Ocean, and processed at various locations (Chuck’s Seafood in Charleston, Oregon Seafood in Coos Bay, and some others). One great advantage, he said, to owning a private label, is stability. Meaning he has a product that can always be sold at a value-added price that competes with the price given to fish from various ports.

The canned product is marketed throughout the Portland metropolitan to area restaurants and grocery stores, as well as grocery stores in Eugene and other cities. He says that selling the product to retailers on the south coast might not be beneficial; there other locally processed seafood products on store shelves already (meaning: competition). There just isn’t a strong market for locally canned tuna, as people are either already doing it themselves, or don’t want to pay those extra couple of dollars. However, he notes that “localizing food is smart economics.” The key problem with selling more directly in Coos County is a lack of infrastructure. “The single most important thing to happen to [Coos] County, or all of Oregon, would be providing [public] cold storage on the coast.”
- Lack of public cold storage units on the south coast have made it difficult for processors to keep more product on hand, forcing some businesses to travel further to store their products. Generating a pool of businesses who are in need of more storage space, over all the aspects of food production, could lead to an economic development program which would bring in a cold storage developer and operator leading to more jobs and enhancing food infrastructure. What needs to happen is to have those desiring more storage needs to come forward with their specifications, such as amount of storage, at what temperatures, and for what times of the year.

- The fishing industry is concerned with preserving access to fishing grounds. Competing pressures on those grounds include renewable energy developments, research areas, and marine reserves. Fishermen have invested time participating in stakeholder groups discussing how competing pressures can minimize impacts to Oregon’s fishing industry.

- Waste management of crab and shrimp shells could be an avenue for a value-added product of the south coast: bone meal. This soil amendment could be marketed to farmers and ranchers locally and regionally, turning an extra profit while benefitting the ecosystem all the same.

- Local fishing vessels that sell direct to consumers from the docks can be inconsistent, overlooked, yet still valuable to the local food economy. Better advertising methods for when fishing vessels are docked and selling would allow consumers to be certain of when fresh fish will be available to them.
Coos County is hardly a metropolitan community with a population around 60,000 living in just under 2,000 square miles of land. The area relies greatly on products produced outside of the region (as well as markets around the globe for their agricultural and ocean harvested products). However, community ties are visible within each small town, and a notion of networking and sharing is definitely prevalent. Small farmers markets are up and running to serve local communities in towns like Coos Bay, Bandon, Coquille, and Myrtle Point, local food groups have regular meetings to discuss sustainability, gardening, and educating people on food choices. Many of the schools within the county have gardens or garden spaces available, but there is some limited curriculum involvement, and none of them produce enough to serve students in cafeterias. One large missing link on the South Coast is a regional food group to serve the population’s food concerns. Because of the absence of such a group, there is no dedicated outlet to express concerns, network with agriculture workers and the community, and advocate publicly for food programs and education.

**Local Food Demand**

An overwhelming number of survey respondents noted that they would purchase more local food if it were easier to find, namely, if the products were on grocery store shelves. Getting locally produced food from a small-scale farm on a grocery store shelf can be costly and time consuming, and survey respondents listed transportation as the third most common reason that affects their ability to get the food they need, which could be a difficult factor in setting up farm stands in out-of-the-way places. However the Internet already serves as an online marketplace for locally produced foods through online food hubs. Individuals and businesses can browse an area’s production marketplace and make orders directly to farmers. Furthermore, most respondents who have been purchasing local foods still find it to be too expensive for their budget, but tend to enjoy the idea of purchasing more local foods.
Farmers Markets

Having a local marketplace for area farmers to sell their products is not a new trick. Farmers markets have existed, practically as long as there have been farmers, but the trend in America has been exponentially increasing. In 1994, the USDA began publishing its National Directory of Farmers Markets that lists known operating marketplaces in the U.S. The first number, in 1994, was 1,755 markets in the country. Last year, the directory listed 8,144 markets.

The idea behind a farmers market is relatively simple. A public space is sectioned off for vendors to set up a stand where they will display and sell their products, whether fresh produce, local meat products, eggs, and baked goods. Often times, farmers markets will also allow a craft component to be added to the mix, and local artisans are given a chance to pedal their wares. Food courts are also a common fixture at farmers markets, allowing local restaurants and food producers to sell their foods.

Coos County is home to farmers markets in Coos Bay, Bandon, Coquille, and Myrtle Point. The largest of these is in Coos Bay at the Wednesday market, which attracts growers from as far away as Medford, Oregon. As all the markets are staggered on different days throughout the week, farmers have the chance to participate in each one.
SNAP at Markets

Formerly known as food stamps, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is helping more than 800,000 Oregonians put food on the table, that’s 1 in every 5 that qualify and receive the benefits. According to the 2012 SNAP Participation Report from hunger relief organization Partners For a Hunger Free Oregon, Coos County had 15,875 SNAP participants. Also noted was that 88% of the total population in Coos County were eligible for SNAP. These SNAP dollars amounted to over $25 million of federal money coming back into the community annually.

As most grocery stores already accept SNAP, there still lies barriers for accessing healthy foods. SNAP dollars can be used to buy almost any food items which are not already prepared such as sugary energy drinks, candy, and fatty snack foods. Offering SNAP at farmers markets allows participants to use their dollars wisely and purchase locally grown, fresh, healthful produce. The Wednesday market in Coos Bay is the only farmers market in Coos County that currently accepts SNAP dollars. A volunteer-run table is set up with a card-swiping device, and SNAP users can purchase $1 and $5 tokens to use at the market. The 2014 market year is the first year that SNAP has been offered, and already has seen great success. By the 6th week of offering SNAP, the Coos Bay Farmers Market has swiped $3,787 from SNAP users, paying out a total of $2,212 to the 25 vendors that accept EBT transactions. And with some transactions reaching nearly $100, it is clear that people are willing to use their SNAP dollars on locally produced, fresh produce. “That’s what makes me happiest,” says Sarah Crawford, market manager for Coos Bay, “that people are buying and bringing home fresh produce to eat.” Furthermore, if the season goes well, and many SNAP dollars have been spent at the market, there might be room for a SNAP match program to bring greater incentives for people to use their SNAP benefits at the market.

SNAP Match Program

The SNAP match program is simple in theory. Basically, SNAP dollars are equally matched through a fund, allowing customers to take their benefits further. For example, if a SNAP user purchases $10 worth of tokens at the market, an additional $10 will be given to the user for purchases. This fund can be supported through donations and fundraising, or like the Newport Farmers Market, a lemonade stand where all proceeds go directly into the SNAP-matching fund. With a minimal start-up fee, the lemonade stand began to pay for itself in a matter of weeks, and the money raised has increased SNAP transactions at their market by 68% between 2011 and 2012.
Community Food Efforts

Bandon Feeds the Hungry

Bandon Feeds the Hungry is a network of five non-profit organizations that are working to alleviate the hunger present in and around the city of Bandon. Each of the five organizations works independently, yet sometimes resources will be shared in order to help one another out. With a population of over 5,000 people, the greater Bandon area is home to many low-income families and homeless. Several organizations, as a part of the Feeding Bandon network, hold an annual fundraiser to educate and pool resources for all.

Enjoying a free meal at EAT Bandon.

Everyone At the Table (EAT)

Heading into their 10th year, founders of E.A.T., a free meal service, initially wanted to start a homeless shelter. During the beginning stages of setting up a shelter founding member Allison Hundley realized that it wasn’t shelter that the people needed, it was food. Every Tuesday free, hot meals are dished up to an average of 55 people. In addition to donated foods, the group spends approximately $200 a month on ingredients with volunteers doing the cooking, serving, and cleaning.

Coastal Harvest Gleaners

Traditionally, “gleaning” referred to farms opening up their fields after a harvest for those in need to pick whatever had been left behind. These days, Coastal Harvest Gleaners still do traditional gleaning, but not as much. Grocery stores and markets now donate foods that have either been mislabeled, damaged, or are nearing their expiration dates so that those in need can consume them. To be a member of Coastal Harvest, however, you have to contribute volunteer hours, keeping in mind that a little work can go a long way for a family.

Good Neighbors Food Pantry

Sponsored by the Seventh Day Adventists Church, Good Neighbor’s has been running for over 30 years. Receiving funds from the church and private investments, and food from the Oregon Food Bank network, the pantry offers emergency food distributions on the first Tuesday of each month. Approximately 300 individuals show up for each distribution, representing roughly 150-200 families around the area.
Community Gardens

Gardening is an easy, affordable, and educational way to provide families and neighbors with nutritious produce all year round. When done properly, it also helps the soil quality, provides recreation for all ages, beautifies neighborhoods, and fosters communities nearby. Typically, a community garden is split into individual planting areas, each of which an individual, family, or group of people can lease for a season, and provides those without space to garden at home, a place to grow their own food at a low cost.

In Coos County, a non-profit called the South Coast Community Garden Association works to provide community education about gardening and preserving foods, and assists start-up gardens with initial funds and materials. With a network of five cities hosting registered community gardens (Bandon, Coos Bay, Coquille, Lakeside, and Myrtle Point), the outreach spreads to plenty of people, and the word is catching on. Each garden has reported consecutive years where all garden beds have been booked, and partnerships with OSU Extension’s Master Gardeners and Master Preservers ensure that the education never stops.

School Gardens

Schools are getting in on the gardening game as well. According to the 2014 USDA Farm to School Census, Oregon school districts rank in the 51%-75% range of participating in farm to school activities; additionally, 24% of local school budgets are spent buying local foods, while 41% are participating in edible school garden activities; that’s 82 total school districts covering 714 schools and over 360,000 students benefitting from local food consumption and education. Unfortunately, none of Coos County’s school districts reported into the survey, so there is no positive number as to how many schools are putting their food budgets towards locally produced food products.

North Bend School District food service director, Rhonda Hoffine, does what she can to purchase local blueberries, and gets them onto school lunch trays on a seasonal basis.
Her challenges with buying more are plenty; from lack of infrastructure to purchase, transportation and storage, personnel able to make deliveries, to simply not having room in the budget to purchase more. Some school districts, like Powers, don’t have the ability to provide a school lunch throughout the year, let alone participate in the summer lunch program. The distance from Powers to any other school district becomes a challenge when getting food into cafeterias, and the budgets aren’t always accommodating.

As far as classroom dedication to food education goes, there simply isn’t enough time in the school day anymore. With a national push to increase reading and math programs in schools, teachers find it hard to squeeze in special lessons with the little extra time they have. At Ocean Crest Elementary in Bandon, Darcy Grahek uses the limited space available to her to manage several small garden beds. With a Master Gardener’s grant, the gardens were started as a science class aid, but still have been underutilized by much of the teaching staff. However, she said when students who are awarded special time for good behavior and grades, many of the students choose to spend that time in the garden.

At Madison Elementary School in Empire, 3rd grade teacher Ann Marineau and former teacher Cody Carlson have been working hard to keep their school garden active not only throughout the school year, but through the summer as well. Started in 2007, and initially completely donation based; the school garden at Madison Elementary has become a neighborhood focal point. A space that used to be an unattractive grassy plot, now boasts a multitude of colorful flowers, picnic tables, worm compost bins, lots of raised beds, and now, a large fence with a gate that locks. The two teachers had said that deer used to be an issue, but then it became people (mainly teens) who would break in and terrorize the garden, often digging up crops and smashing them. Carlson has been working hard on various grants he’s received and managed to put in a drip irrigation system that supplies every garden bed with a steady stream of water. They are planning construction on a 20x20 green house classroom to ensure that the garden gets used during the rainy winter months. In the future, they would like to see more education coming out of the garden such as cooking classes, and of course, gardening lessons. Marineau says that grant money and donations from community groups have been keeping the garden alive, except they need more human resources: “It’s great to have money, but it’s the support [of volunteers] we need most.”
OSU Extension

Oregon State University’s extension services spread throughout the entire state, and utilize research-based knowledge in a way that is useful for people to improve their lives and communities. OSU Extension faculty works with a variety of community members; from business people and community leaders, to growers and youth, with the goal of improving access to high-quality learning services.

In Coos County, two popular programs are the Master Gardeners and Master Preservers, volunteer based groups which provide outreach to the community through classes ranging from growing and caring for plants, cooking education, and nutrition and food storage. An annual education seminar called Fertilize Your Mind focuses on a wide range of topics taught in the field like raising bees, raising chickens, succession planting and many more. There are also two youth camps in the summer for kids aged 8 to 12 called Growing Your Grub which is a day camp where kids will learn how to garden, harvest, and cook their own foods. Along with all the education, OSU Extension works to fund community and school projects, primarily raised by their Tomato-Rama annual plant sale, where all plants sold are raised and cared for by local Master Gardeners.

Susan Sandperl, SNAP-Ed Education Program Assistant at the Coos County extension office, cites the very nature of Coos County’s geography as a challenge to getting the outreach to the communities. “It’s a big area, spread out over very diverse and distinctive micro-climates and neighborhoods. Our [office] is located in Myrtle Point, a fact which some Coos County residents to learn about Extension and the services offered, more will learn to take advantage. Susan also notes that the opportunities for these programs to grow seem immeasurable. As the Master Gardeners and Master Preservers carry a “great deal of integrity” in the community, she foresees the community-based events growing dramatically. “By focusing on our own unique community, we are expanding, and that means more opportunities to that that live here.”

Crossroads Café

It’s hard to imagine a business model where benevolence comes before profits, but that’s how it works over at Crossroads Café.

Founded in 2010 by Ethel German and Susan Fox, Crossroads Café opened its doors to cater to a crowd not typically targeted by the restaurant world; low-income individuals and families, those on disability or social security, or simply those lacking enough to buy and cook their own meals. They can come to the café for a cheap ($1.50) meal, friendly service, and a slice of comfortable, social atmosphere.

As a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit, Crossroads Café relies heavily on donations both monetarily and with food. Some area farmers and family gardens have been donating their extra produce to the café. Money given over the price of the meal will go directly towards the food-purchasing budget. Coupons are also available for purchase, which can be given out or donated back to the café. And even though the clientele is typically low-income, the door is always open for anyone to come in and have a cheap, home-cooked meal.
COMMUNITY FOOD EFFORTS

Commercial Kitchens

Commercial kitchen spaces are a valuable asset for food producers in rural areas. By having regular inspections from health departments and supplying equipment that is federally certified, people can rent out the space and add value to their food products. Many times, people will make good at home to sell at farmers markets or to retail stores, and this requires a domestic kitchen license from the state of Oregon. A domestic kitchen license will cover foods such as jams, jellies, baked goods, salad dressings, and candies, and will not include canning, dairy processing, or meat cutting for retail sales.

In Coos County, there is only one commercial kitchen space for rent to those who wish to add value to their products or create products for market sale. Located in the Bandon Community Center, the space is a state-of-the-art commercial kitchen with sinks, cold storage, dry storage, lots of counter space, two ovens, and eight gas burners. Currently being regularly used by the Bandon senior meals service, and the E.A.T. Bandon program, the kitchen sees little activity from other renters, but Jeff Norris, director of the Bandon Community Center, says it’s “running at a pretty good pace for the time being.” The kitchen is a steal for price, however, at just five dollars an hour to rent. Jeff also notes that “people have to be flexible” when renting out the space, as many events will be booked and need to use the kitchen for preparing meals, and he makes sure that renters have liability insurance in order to use the facilities. “This kitchen is the focal point of our community center,” says Jeff, “but people aren’t calling me to use it.”

Coquille Valley Seed Library

Beginning in the summer of 2012, a group of local gardeners started meeting with the idea of forming an educational, member-based, nonprofit. The idea behind the Coquille Valley Seed Library was to encourage people not only to grow their own food, but also to promote the saving and sharing of seed in the hope to preserve a more diverse, regionally adapted, open-pollinated seed gene pool. With meetings on the second Thursday of every month and an ever-growing membership pool, CVSL is becoming a popular gathering place for like-minded people to learn and share with each other about self-sustainability.

The premise of the group is that members get to “check out” ten different seed varieties to grow at their home gardens. In return, the borrower must commit to growing out some of those crops in order to donate some of the seeds back into the lending pool. Members receive education on maintaining their plants and how to properly harvest and preserve seeds.

With meetings once a month in Coquille, attendance is growing, with upwards to 50 members per meeting from all around the county.

Local artisan breads at Seth’s Bread in Bandon
**Oregon Coast Community Action**

Oregon Coast Community Action (ORCCA) is a nonprofit network of programs that feed, house, warm, and educate low-income people throughout Coos, Curry, and Western Douglas counties. With the mission of alleviating the effects of poverty, ORCCA provides a number of services and activities that benefit not only those individuals in need, but also the surrounding communities. According to the US census, 17.3% of residents in Coos County live under the poverty level, making ORCCA and its services (which include the Head Start program and South Coast Food Share) vital to the lives of those affected by poverty.

Some achievements to date include the launching of a mobile dental unit for Coos County, the initiation of the Snack Pack program, purchase and renovation of Jane’s House, a domestic violence shelter for families, and the construction of South Coast Food Share’s food storage warehouse where 2 million pounds of food is moved yearly.

In addition to the emergency food program which fuels the regions food pantries, SCFS also provides weekend Snack Packs to school kids who are registered with the program. Snack Pack was launched by ORCCA in 2007 and was Oregon’s first snack pack program. Snack Pack is an anonymous delivery program where students are provided with snacks and treats to take home for the weekend. Teachers are given a list of names of participating students, and place the packs of food into backpacks while students are at recess. The idea behind the anonymity is to reduce the social stigma of needing extra food over the weekend.

Snack Packs typically include a juice box, fruit bar, single serving of cereal, fruit, canned food, and sometimes candy.

**South Coast Food Share**

South Coast Food Share is the regional partner of The Oregon Food Bank for Southwestern Oregon and is headquartered at Oregon Coast Community Action in Coos Bay. Their enormous warehouse located not only collects food from the Oregon Food Bank, but also holds donated foods from local area grocers as a part of the national Fresh Alliance program; food which is mislabeled, or nearing their expiration date, cannot be sold in retail stores, so the SCFS keeps them and distributes them accordingly to the public. Without the South Coast Food Share, all of the region’s local food pantries would have a very hard time supplying their community with emergency food boxes.
Rural Grocery Stores

Coos County’s communities rely heavily on the large retailers located in the cities of Coos Bay and North Bend. Because of these large, national chain stores, many smaller neighborhood grocers are having a hard time competing. Even in the small, isolated city of Powers, which has its own locally owned grocery, residents still find it more convenient to travel the fifty miles it takes to reach stores like Wal-Mart and Grocery Outlet. Some in Powers have said they don’t like the produce available at their market, yet the biggest complaint is because the prices are much higher; they would rather make the trip to get the most out of their food budgets.

For some grocers the competition was just too much to handle, forcing closures of several neighborhood markets. Allegany, an unincorporated community east of Coos Bay once had a market but has been defunct for several years now. Some residents say it was because of poor management, or that they would mainly stock beer, and cheap, boxed foods. The previous owners could not be reached for this report. Another market, located on southbound highway 101, thrived for a while as a local landmark with its quirky name and signage, Confusion Hill Market. The store was opened in the early 70’s and served the Green Acres community, just south of Coos Bay. The last owner of the market, Done Dennison said she had a hard time stocking fresh produce, and learned that most of her customers would rather buy beer and cigarettes. “We never even expected to have fresh produce [in the beginning],” Done says, “You have to make a decision. Beer is where I made my money, so I have to sell beer.” After three years of owning the store, she was struggling to keep the store afloat and was forced to close.

The now closed Confusion Hill Market in Coos Bay.
**Opportunities For Community Food Efforts**

- *Creation of a local food action committee.* With the lack of a local food action committee, food projects are often talked about but never properly managed and achieved. Not having a place to go to discuss food issues on a local level will continue to keep future food projects at a stand still. By gathering like-minded businesses, individuals, and community groups, a proper forum could be created for those project ideas to come to fruition.

- *Encouraging SNAP acceptance at all farmers markets with a match program.* SNAP at farmers markets is a great way to increase the diversity of shoppers of fresh, local produce. It also brings in federal dollars to the local community. The process is simple and quick, and would require someone to run the card reader, and keeping records. In Coos Bay, the Department of Human Services was a big help in generating volunteers, and record keeping has shown that including SNAP at the market has brought thousands of SNAP dollars back to farmers.

- *Education/Food Literacy programs.* Some emergency food sites have mentioned that people sometimes refuse certain kinds of fresh produce, or specialty items like tofu or soy milk, not because of taste and preference, but because people don’t know how to use the ingredients. By providing cooking classes at food pantries, community gardens, and school gardens, people will begin to understand the ease and importance of eating healthfully.

- *Incorporating school gardens into classroom curriculum.* With a mandatory increase in math and English lessons in public schools, time is being cut for science and art lessons, not to mention the almost complete disappearance of home economic curriculum. School gardens can be used to teach a multitude of lessons while also providing youth education on healthy eating choices. Encouraging teachers to utilize school gardens and incorporate them into their math and English lessons will expose youth to gardening and inspire a new generation of healthy habits.
The Coos County Community Food Assessment was compiled using both qualitative and quantitative measures of information gathering. The author relied heavily on informal conversations, farm visits, group discussions, and routine engagement of community members on their local food systems. Qualitative data was received by administering two surveys: The Coos County Consumer Survey, and The Rural Grocery Store Survey. All those who were asked to participate, unfortunately, dismissed the Rural Grocery Store survey. Information was instead gathered through conversations.

The Coos County Consumer Survey was administered by the author at the Coos Bay Farmers Market for three weeks. Other surveys were distributed through South Coast Food Share throughout the county to its food pantry partners, and returned.

Additional data and information was retrieved from various online sources and library texts. Agriculture data was provided by the USDA 2012 Census of Agriculture.

This community food assessment is to be treated as a working document, and a stepping stone into the future of a more sustainable food system in Coos County. It proposes suggestions on what can be done, both immediately and long-term, for communities, local stakeholders, individuals, and organizations. With cooperation and focus regarding the issues outlined in this report, the possibilities of a food secure Coos County can surely be realized.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Crawford, Sarah. Record keeping of SNAP dollars spent at Coos Bay Farmers market. Spreadsheet. 2014.
Appendix A

Coos County Consumer Survey

Community that you live in:____________________________________________

☐ Male  ☐ Female  Age: ☐ Under 25 ☐ 25-54 ☐ 55+

Is food readily available in your community?: ☐ Yes  ☐ No  Comments:

Is food affordable in your community?: ☐ Yes  ☐ No  Comments:

Where do you primarily get your food from?

☐ Grocery Store  ☐ Farmers Market  ☐ Convenience Store/Gas Station
☐ Food Pantry/Emergency Food Box  ☐ Natural/Specialty Store  ☐ Grow own
☐ Outside of Coos County  ☐ Restaurants  ☐ Other:_____________________________

How often do you get groceries?

☐ Daily  ☐ At least once/week  ☐ At least twice/week  ☐ Twice/month  ☐ Once/month

How far do you go to get your main source of food?

☐ 0-5 miles  ☐ 6-10 miles  ☐ 11-25 miles  ☐ 26+ miles

What factors affect your ability to get the food you need? (check all that apply)

☐ High fuel/heating costs  ☐ Cost of food  ☐ Transportation  ☐ Lack of time
☐ High rent  ☐ Availability of quality/variety of food  ☐ Childcare costs  ☐ Medical costs  ☐ Other:__________

Are you eligible for government food assistance?

☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ I don’t know

If you are eligible, which government food assistance program do you use?

☐ SNAP (food stamps)  ☐ WIC  ☐ Meals on Wheels
☐ Free or reduced school lunches  ☐ Other:__________________  ☐ None

Do you buy foods that are produced within Coos County? (check all that apply)

☐ Fruit  ☐ Vegetables  ☐ Dairy products  ☐ Meat  ☐ Poultry  ☐ Eggs  ☐ Seafood  ☐ Bread
☐ Other:_____________________________

If not, what is the main reason you don’t purchase local food?

☐ Not available  ☐ Too expensive  ☐ Don’t know where to get it  ☐ Don’t like it

Would you like to learn more about how to cook and shop on a low budget?

☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Maybe

Do you participate in a community garden in your area? If yes, where?

☐ Yes Where?______________________________________  ☐ No

Please answer YES or NO for each question:

Would you buy more locally produced food if it was easier to find?  ☐ YES ☐ NO

Do you base your food purchases on price?  ☐ YES ☐ NO

Does it matter to you where your food comes from?  ☐ YES ☐ NO

Do you have access to a garden/garden space?  ☐ YES ☐ NO

Would you like to have access to a garden/garden space?  ☐ YES ☐ NO

Do you cook meals from scratch?  ☐ YES ☐ NO

Do you include fresh vegetables with your meals?  ☐ YES ☐ NO
Appendix B

Coos County Consumer Survey Results:

Communities: Powers, Coquille, Myrtle Point, Charleston, Coos Bay, Bandon, North Bend, Lakeside

Is food readily available in your community? Yes: 95 No: 19
Is food affordable in your community? Yes: 57 No: 52

Where do you primarily get your groceries from?
Grocery Store: 110 Farmers Market: 21 Convenience Store: 9 Food Pantry: 56 Natural/Specialty Store: 12
Grow your own: 19 Outside Coos County: 0 Restaurants: 11 Other: 8

How often do you get groceries?
Daily: 4 Once/week: 44 Twice/week: 26 Twice/month: 26 Once/month: 17

How far do you go to get your main source of food?
0-5 miles: 64 6-10 miles: 31 11-25 miles: 16 26+ miles: 7

What factors affect your ability to get the food you need?
High Fuel/heating costs: 49 Cost of Food: 77 Transportation: 42 Lack of Time: 11 High Rent: 19
Availability of quality of food: 20 Childcare Costs: 3 Medical Bills: 21 Other: 6

Are you eligible for government food assistance?
Yes: 74 No: 31 I Don’t Know: 15
If you are eligible, which program do you use?
SNAP: 75 WIC: 8 Meals on Wheels: 2 Free/Reduced School Lunch: 8 Other: 3

Do you buy foods that are produced within Coos County?
Other: 9
What is the main reason you don’t purchase local food?
Not Available: 17 Too Expensive: 41 Don’t know where to get it: 18
Would you like to learn more about how to cook and shop on a low budget?
Yes: 30 No: 54 Maybe: 27
Do you participate in a community garden in your area? Yes: 6 No: 103

Please answer YES or NO for each question:
Would you buy more locally produced food if it was easier to find? Yes: 91 No: 11
Do you base your food purchases on price? Yes: 93 No: 14
Does it matter to you where your food comes from? Yes: 71 No: 40
Do you have access to a garden/garden space? Yes: 50 No: 60
Would you like to have access to a garden/garden space? Yes: 48 No: 50
Do you cook meals from scratch? Yes: 90 No: 16
Do you include fresh vegetables with your meals? Yes: 83 No: 10
Appendix C

Rural Grocery Store Owner Survey
Oregon Food Bank
Rural Community Food Systems Assessment Project

Name of store: __________________________________________
Address: ______________________________________________
Phone number: __________________________________________
Contact person for store: _________________________________
Email address: __________________________________________

Would you like to be added to a listserve for rural grocery store owners and advocates?
    ____ yes    ____ no

1. What major products and services does your store offer? Check all that apply:

    ____ ATM Bank
    ____ SNAP / Food Stamps*
    ____ Books/cards/gifts
    ____ Café/restaurant
    ____ Catering
    ____ Delicatessan
    ____ Fuel
    ____ Groceries
    ____ Other (specify)
    ____ Hunting/fishing/camping supplies
    ____ WIC**
    ____ Institutional supply (school, hospital)
    ____ Pharmacy
    ____ Photo development
    ____ Pre-packaged meals
    ____ Self-serve snacks/drinks
    ____ Video rental

* Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
** Women, Infants and Children Program

2. Who is/are your primary grocery supplier(s)?
   _____________________________________________________

3. What products do your secondary suppliers supply?
   _____________________________________________________

4. Do minimum (purchasing/ordering) buying requirements create a problem for your grocery store?
    ____ yes    ____ no

   If yes, how?

5. If minimum buying requirements are a problem, what solutions might you suggest?
Appendix C

Rural Grocery Store Owner Survey – Oregon Food Bank Rural Community Food Systems Assessment Project

6. As an independent grocer, do you feel you are getting fair pricing from your suppliers compared to chain stores?
   _____ yes        _____ no
   Comments:

7. Have you had problems getting products delivered because of your location?
   _____ yes        _____ no
   Comments:

8. Do you sell locally-produced food in your store?
   _____ yes        _____ no
   If yes, what products?

9. Which of the following are major challenges for your store? Check all that apply.

   _____ Availability of satisfactory labor
   _____ Competition with large chain grocery stores
   _____ Debt and/or high payments
   _____ Government regulations
   _____ High inventory costs/low turnover
   _____ Shortage of working capital
   _____ High operations costs (utilities, building lease, repairs/maintenance, etc.)
   _____ Lack of community support
   _____ Low sales volume
   _____ Narrow profit margin
   _____ Required minimum buying requirements
   _____ from vendors
   _____ Shoplifting/bad checks/internal theft/unpaid accounts
   _____ Taxes
   _____ Other (specify) ____________________________

10. Do you collaborate with other small independently owned stores?
    _____ yes        _____ no

    If yes, for which purposes? Check all that apply.

    _____ Cooperative advertising/marketing
    _____ Grocery distribution purposes
    _____ Sharing concerns and/or ideas
    _____ To achieve minimum buying requirements
    _____ Other ____________________________

    If no, would you be interested in doing this?
    _____ yes        _____ no
Appendix C

Rural Grocery Store Owner Survey – Oregon Food Bank Rural Community Food Systems Assessment Project

Why or why not?

11. Do you feel that a statewide alliance of small, independently owned grocery store owners may be valuable?
   ____ yes  ____ no

   If yes, how could it help?

12. What marketing strategies have you used in your grocery stores that have been effective in attracting customers?

   Advertising:
   - Newspapers
   - Radio
   - TV
   - Flyers/inserts
   - Facebook
   - Internet/WWW

   Promotions
   - Word of mouth
   - OTHER: Please identify: __________________________________________

   Advertising:
   - Newspapers
   - Radio
   - TV
   - Flyers/inserts
   - Facebook
   - Internet/WWW

   Promotions
   - Word of mouth
   - OTHER: Please identify: __________________________________________

   Promotion:
   - Word of mouth
   - OTHER: Please identify: __________________________________________
### Rural Grocery Store Owner Survey – Oregon Food Bank Rural Community Food Systems Assessment Project

When running a grocery store, how important is it to you to offer each of the following? Rate the importance of each by circling the number that best fits your response.

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Which of the above do you feel is the most significant for you and your store?
## Appendix C

### Rural Grocery Store Owner Survey – Oregon Food Bank Rural Community Food Systems Assessment Project

How does your store do at providing the following to customers? Rate your store by circling the number that best fits your response.

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Which of the above do you feel is the most significant for you and your store?

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How do you assess the buying needs of your customers?

Is your stocking of products responsive to customer requests?

What other concerns or comments do you have?
Appendix C

Rural Grocery Store Owner Survey – Oregon Food Bank Rural Community Food Systems Assessment Project

Tell us about your store:

How long have you been in the grocery business as an owner? __________

How long has there been a grocery store at your current location? __________

Do you have more than one location? _____ How many? _____

What are your hours of operation?

  Mon _____ to _____
  Tues _____ to _____
  Wed _____ to _____
  Thurs _____ to _____
  Fri _____ to _____
  Sat _____ to _____
  Sun _____ to _____

Are you open on the major holidays (Christmas, New Years, Thanksgiving, etc.)? _____

Are there other grocery outlets in your community?

  _____ a ‘quick shop’
  _____ another full service grocery

How far is it to the nearest discount grocery (Wal Mart, etc.)? _____

How many employees do you have, not counting yourself?

  _____ full-time (90 hrs/week minimum)
  _____ part-time (less than 40hrs/week)

What are your average weekly gross sales?

  _____ Less than $5,000
  _____ Between $5,000 and $10,000
  _____ Between $10,000 and $20,000
  _____ Greater than $20,000

This survey was developed by Kansas State University Center for Civic Engagement and is being used with their permission. We thank them for their support of this project. For more information, please contact Sharon Thornberry, Community Resource Developer, Oregon Food Bank at 800-777-7427 ext. 228, or sthornberry@oregonfoodbank.org.
THANK YOU