From Our Roots

The People, Agriculture and Food of Gilliam, Morrow, Umatilla and Wheeler Counties, Oregon

Community Action Program of East Central Oregon
In cooperation with Oregon Food Bank and Resource Assistance for Rural Environments
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FOREWARD

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.

Two years ago the Oregon Food Bank in partnership with University of Oregon Resource Assistance for Rural Environments AmeriCorps 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 Resource Developer
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Beyond our main collaborators, we acknowledge the support of the many community members who committed time and energy to the research, outreach, organizing and reviews of community food expansion and this Assessment. In this abbreviated list we include local county governments, teachers, and staff from agencies and organizations that serve the communities we visited, to farmers, gardeners, farmers' market organizers, local food groups and individuals who care about the places they live in and the health and well-being of their friends and neighbors. The Gilliam-Morrow-Umatilla Wheeler Community Food Assessment is dedicated to the people of these Counties and the inspiration and hard work they've undertaken for local food security and local food systems development.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  FROM OUR ROOTS: THE PEOPLE, AGRICULTURE AND FOOD OF GILLIAM, MORROW, UMATILLA AND WHEELER COUNTIES

Covering four east-central Oregon counties, Gilliam, Morrow, Umatilla and Wheeler, this Community Food Assessment (CFA) From Our Roots, was ambitious and large-scale. It skimmed the surface of assets and opportunities in the region (including a look across the Columbia River to the northern part of this foodshed). The effort helps address ever-growing nutrition-related health problems, diminished rural agricultural economies and food insecurity across the region. It is driven, in part, by the fact that the Community Action Program of East Central Oregon (CAPECO), in partnership with the Oregon Food Bank, supplies emergency food to regional residents here - over one million pounds in 2009 - a quantity that is growing, unsustainable and almost unbelievable, considering the vast amounts of food grown here.

WHAT WE LOOKED FOR. This CFA rooted out opportunities to re-localize the food system, touching briefly on natural resources, economic prosperity and diversity, historical and cultural wealth, community health, market expansion, infrastructural supports, and resiliency. We used three criteria to explore food security and opportunities: food access (how and where people can obtain local food); food availability (is it grown, processed and distributed locally), and food affordability (given current economic realities, what would people be willing and able to buy). What we discovered is laid out in this report to revolve around the PEOPLE, the FARM economy, and the FOOD situation in each county.

OUR FINDINGS. Using surveys, facilitated workshops and conversations we discovered how diverse, and bounteous this region is, as well as under-resourced and in need of specific, community-based activity, and broad collaboration and vision around food system integration and development. Three of the four counties are classified as frontier counties, complete with "food deserts". People with resources and transportation are generally well-fed, but co-exist with pockets of under-nourished, hungry or potentially insecure individuals and communities disadvantaged by the current trend of procuring food from distant sources and loss of local opportunity. And while cash receipts to farmers are generally high, they are still earning less than they did in the 1970's, affecting every aspect of this predominantly rural agricultural region. The top three identified needs were for: 1) Expanded, more accessible and affordable year-round local food resources, including gardens, farm stands and markets, emergency resources and retail options; 2) Increased education and skills around growing, cooking, gardening, nutrition, shopping and hunting/harvesting (in that order) for all sectors of the community; and 3) Strengthened community and regional networking, marketing and infrastructural development.

OUTCOMES. From this initial exploration, two first-ever regional Food & Farm Guides were produced to market and stimulate purchases from local growers. The food assessment team helped facilitate shared purpose, and vision, and identify assets in each community, raising the capacity of individuals and groups to take direct action on their own behalf. Each county received five to seven recommendations or "Opportunities" that were similar but reflected specific needs, strengths and assets present their communities, and food and farming systems. Next steps include the support of local champions and food groups, local purchasing options, regional networks and action plans. All of which help to develop food awareness, appropriate alternative local and regional production and marketing opportunities, food system infrastructure and other synergistic local food projects. The hope is that this work will be reviewed, renewed and acted upon in regular intervals by the residents of each County, leading to increased funding, resource development and project implementation helping communities in this region move from surviving to thriving.

"Food is our common ground, a universal experience." - James Beard
INTRODUCTION

THE FOOD SYSTEM. The United States is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, yet accessing enough healthy, fresh food to meet basic nutritional needs is a critical issue faced by millions of Americans. There are a number of reasons for food insecurity in the United States, the primary causes being lack of employment opportunities, low wages and increases in the cost of living, energy and health care. But to truly understand food insecurity, one must recognize the vital role the structure of food system plays. Over the last 50 years our food system has become increasingly global in its extent, leading to the industrialization and consolidation of agriculture and all the components of our food delivery system, and the decline of small, embedded local farms, ranches, and the food facilities and infrastructure that brings food from the field to the table. This leaves Americans and their food supply vulnerable to forces beyond their control. The loss of vibrant, local food systems and the day-to-day reality of people’s inability to afford food have a significant impact on a secure, sustainable, safe food source - e.g. food security or insecurity - throughout the country.

Isolation and the lack of local food system infrastructure paired with persistent poverty and unemployment plague rural east-central Oregon and have made food insecurity a critical issue faced by many people throughout Gilliam, Morrow, Umatilla and Wheeler Counties.

COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY

Few people know where their food comes from, the conditions under which it is grown and raised or how it gets to the supermarket shelves. While the disconnect between producers and consumers continues to grow, many people across the country are working towards creative, localized solutions to the current problems with our food system. This community food security movement is working towards building strong and resilient food systems through innovative and diverse community partnerships.

Community food security is defined as “all citizens are able to obtain a safe, personally acceptable, nutritious diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes healthy choices, community self-reliance and equal access for everyone” (Hamm & Bellows, 2003). A food system can be broadly described as all of the processes involved with feeding people. It includes growing, harvesting, processing, distributing, obtaining, consuming and disposing of food. These processes, in addition to the social and cultural characteristics of a community and relevant government policies, define a food system.

Food security exists when all people have physical, social and economic access at all times to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life via non-emergency sources. It also means that food is produced, processed and distributed in ways that respect and protect the environment and workers who produce it. Food insecurity is a lack of sufficient food and proper nutrition, and covers a broad spectrum of hunger-related feelings and behaviors, including fear of going hungry, and the resulting, often compromised choices people make to meet basic food and health needs.

COMMUNITY FOOD ASSESSMENT

To overcome the narrow scope of conventional food security work, the Community Food Assessment (CFA) has emerged as a research method to provide a more holistic and comprehensive approach to understanding and improving food security at local and regional levels. A Community Food Assessment is...
defined as “a collaborative and participatory process that systematically examines a broad range of community food issues and assets, so as to inform change actions to make the community more food secure” (Pothukuchi, Joseph, Burton, & Fisher, 2002).

A CFA tells the story of what is happening with food in a community using varied and diverse methods. A CFA can help highlight the connections between the various sectors of a food system including production, processing, distribution, storage, consumption and disposal. It is a powerful tool to explore a range of food system issues, to provide opportunities for broad community involvement and to create positive, lasting change.

One way to define the success of a CFA is the degree to which it inspires the re-localization of the food and farming system, in a way that allows individuals and communities to participate and have more control over this basic need. With that comes several other tangible benefits: improved health, wealth, connection and community capacity, as described below.

**OUR ASSESSMENT**

This CFA, From Our Roots, focused on the food and farming situations in Gilliam, Morrow, Umatilla and Wheeler Counties in east central Oregon.

THE 3 A's. We explored three criteria: Availability (is food grown, processed and distributed locally); Access (how and where people can obtain local food); and Affordability (given current economic realities, what would people be willing and able to buy).

Very importantly, the term "local food" is used in two ways: food not from a specific geographically defined area, but that which travels the shortest distance possible from farmer's field to consumer's fork; and to identify the movement toward a more localized, locally-controlled and chosen food system.

Recommendations that emerged for each county relate to the expansion of the following four elements of health, wealth, connections and capacity-building.

> *In the long view, no nation is healthier than its children, or more prosperous than its farmers*.

Harry Truman

HEALTH. Our CFA revealed a great need to attend to health in all contexts. Nutritional data showed that, regardless of age and income levels, health trends are in declining, and in particular, more obese and/or malnourished seniors and children, higher rates of diabetes, and other weight-related diseases prevalent in the region. People here have expressed interest in improving the health of themselves, their families and communities, as well as the health of the farms and farm land they depend on.

Health in the context of local food and farm systems often leads to the question of "sustainability"- sustainable communities, agriculture, nature and the economy. We were unable to address the wealth of the natural systems on which farming is built, though many other organizations have. Water, soil, species diversity and energy are critical, variable and changing around the region - sunlight and aridity might be the main common denominators!.. Our bottom line is that, ultimately, sustainability is about health - the on-going long-term health of the people, their food and lifestyles, living in enriched and adaptable environments with vital living economies and communities. Sustainable food and farming can be built upon the "triple bottom-line" values of creating healthy people, planet and profits.
Economically speaking, cash receipts to farmers are generally high, but they are still earning less than they did in the 1970’s, affecting every aspect of this predominantly rural agricultural region. To overcome rural insecurities, job creation is a priority, and resuming greater control of the region's most on-going, basic need for food builds naturally on the strengths, traditions and renewed appreciation for eating home-grown food. We recognize, and heard a lot about, the value and wealth generated by large-scale production agriculture in the region. We also learned that, where feasible, "local food" presents an additional, very valuable option in terms of increased economic value, diversity and social benefits to rural agro-economies. "Agriculturalism" and "economic gardening" are recognized tools for diversifying the economy, and improving local wage and employment opportunities.

Our conclusions focused on the presence or possibilities of a more diversified, small-scale, food and farming economy to expand and compliment larger-scale, export-focused production. This CFA identified significant interest and participation in farm-direct production, marketing and purchasing in all four counties, which will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

CONNECTION. Connections make our world work, creatively, efficiently, adaptively.

"You have to look at connections. Our society runs on systems.”

Gilliam County resident

Our world is not built on a linear chain of interaction but networks and webs of interaction between entities of many sizes. To use a familiar model, our transportation system - comprised of many different sizes of feet and vehicles, roads and paths evolved to serve different needs, from the human scale of foot- and bicycles to the global scale sea and sky traffic. A diversified food system would optimally mimic that multi-scaled system, or an environmental system, based on organically evolving webs of interaction between many different kinds of organisms and their environment, adapting for need, through communication with each entity along the way.

The connections made during this Community Food Assessment are just the beginning of the redevelopment of a local communication network for many communities. With each gathering or introduction creative conversations and solutions developed as people shared their stories, dreams, memories and challenges of food and farming. We heard the conversation shift away from the top-down corporate-driven food chain which removes food from the farm, and control from producers and consumers, to toward a more self-directed, locally-controlled concept of a food web or network of interaction and connection. Before our very eyes, farmers and customers of all sizes created relationships, processes, partnerships and new products, meeting basic needs, generating ideas and sharing risks. The social system (if rich in connections and "social capital") provides the basis for financial capital development; increased connectivity promotes increased adaptability and creativity. Deeper, more diverse connections expand the capacity for growth, change, resilience and success.

In other words, CAPACITY-BUILDING - The ultimate goal of our community-based food assessment is to expand a community's ability to take care of itself. In this case, to grow not just the food supply, but new leaders, relationships, and resources. A community with healthy sense of itself, its diversity and commonalities, its limitations and strengths, has the ability to create opportunities to adapt and thrive, meeting the
human, economic and cultural needs of its residents over time. The ultimate blessing of developing and sustaining a healthy local food system is that we grow more than food - we also grow Community.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

HOW WE DID IT. From September 2009 to July 2010 interviews and community meetings were conducted throughout Gilliam, Morrow, Umatilla and Wheeler Counties. Numerous stakeholder meetings and five FEASTs were conducted in three of the four counties. A "FEAST" - shortened from the words Food-Education-Agriculture Solutions Together - is a structured meeting designed by organizers at the Oregon Food Bank to bring together local food stakeholders for discussion and solution creation. Additionally, four focus groups were conducted in the communities of Arlington, Fossil, Mitchell and Spray. Input was also gathered via a consumer and producer survey that was open to all residents in the four-county area.

FORMAT. Information for each county is organized and analyzed separately and divided into three general topic areas: People, Agriculture and Food. These broad headings addressed the issues uncovered by the Community Food Assessment, from historical perspectives to the present day. We tried to capture what was, what is, and what might be about food, food systems, farming, hunger, long and short-term challenges and opportunities. See Methodology, Chapter 7, for more information on the study design and implementation and report development.
CHAPTER 1—THE FOODSHED

ALL SYSTEMS GO. A "food system" is made up of all the cultural beliefs, technical elements and physical activities that serve to grow, deliver, sell, consume and dispose of food. It includes everyone from the farmers, to grocers, consumers, marketers, distributors, transporters, policy-makers and all who participates in getting food from the field to the fork. A "foodshed" is all that plus the physical region and natural resource base from which the food is produced. The American foodshed ("foodprint") is presently very large - global, in fact. Our food is produced in and shipped from every corner of the Earth. Food security or insecurity stems from the amount of control over quantity and quality of food that is available to people and communities. In the U.S., despite the appearance of plenty, we are subject to global, multinational, climactic, political and economic fluctuations, with very little control at the local level. Increased amounts of food produced and distributed in a more localized foodshed are seen as one way to increase food security.

NATURAL RESOURCE BASE. The four counties of east central Oregon - Gilliam, Morrow, Umatilla and Wheeler - encompass a large area south of the Columbia River and north and west of the Blue Mountains. It is a region rich in history; it is the homeland of the Cayuse, Northern Paiute, Umatilla, Walla Walla and Warm Springs tribes and original tracks from the overland migration along the Oregon Trail are still visible in many places. The Columbia Plateau is also rich in its agricultural activity. Farming and ranching were two of the original economic mainstays of white settlement. They continue to play a critical role in the region. The physical landmass for this CFA is depicted in the above map, and is comprised of the four counties in CAPECO's food-related service area.

The region has a varying climate, but is generally arid; except for increases in precipitation along the foothills of the Blue and Ochoco Mountains most of the region is affected by the rain shadow effect of the Cascade Mountains. As weather fronts move eastward across Oregon much of the precipitation occurs on the west slopes of the Cascades leaving little precipitation for the counties east of the mountains. This is particularly true for the uplands of Gilliam, Morrow and western Umatilla Counties. Areas that abut the Blue Mountains, or lie within the Umatilla and John Day River flood plains benefit from their captured moisture, lower temperatures, precipitation and surface water. These conditions feed the soil, waterways and crops, creating important diversity in climate, crop types and quantities.

The Columbia River is the largest river in the Northwest. It makes up the northern boundary of Gilliam County, Morrow County and part of Umatilla County. It plays a central role in the culture, economy and politics of the region. It is used for irrigation, power generation and a major transportation corridor. It is particularly important for transportation as the Columbia Plateau is the largest wheat producing region in the state and much of the wheat crop is shipped down the Columbia on barges.
CHAPTER 2—GILLIAM COUNTY

Introduction

Located in the heart of the Columbia Plateau region, Gilliam County was historically important as a transportation corridor for the region’s Native American tribes traveling to and from fishing, hunting, gathering and trading grounds. The first white settlers to the region came through on the Oregon Trail and, in the late 19th century, began to put down roots in Gilliam County.

Gilliam County is bounded by the Columbia River to the north, the John Day River to the west and the foothills of the Blue Mountains to the southeast. Much of the county sits high atop the Plateau; it ranges in elevation of over 3,000 feet near Condon down to 285 feet at Arlington on the Columbia River. There are three incorporated communities—Arlington, Condon and Lonerock. The most residents within the County live in Arlington or Condon.

The climate varies throughout the County, but it is generally an arid region. Precipitation varies from an average of 9 inches in Arlington to 14 inches a year in Condon (Taylor, 2000). Strong winds are common in the Columbia River Gorge, as evidenced by the wind mills blanketing large swaths of northern Gilliam County.

It is the second least populous county in Oregon, after Wheeler County to the south, with only 1,645 people living within its borders (Indicators Northwest, 2009). This low population density gives Gilliam County, and all the counties that
surround it, the designation of a frontier county (Frontier Education Center, 1998).

Gilliam County’s primary economic drivers are agriculture, construction, government services and waste management. Agriculture is the top employment sector with 16.2% of the workforce employed in agriculture. A close second is construction, employing 16% of the workforce (Indicators Northwest, 2008). This is an increase of over 5% from 2007, due to the recent large increase in wind energy development.

Gilliam County’s economy is diversified to a greater degree than many of its neighbors. By the numbers, it appears to be more stable and likely to have food secure individuals and communities. Conversations with people throughout the County revealed that that assumption is not necessarily completely accurate. With the wealth generated from the industries within its borders Gilliam County appears to be well situated and capable of having purposeful conversations about food and farm opportunities that benefit its residents, and increase food security at the individual and community level.

**People**

By the numbers, Gilliam County seems to have few of the issues that most counties east of the Cascades confront on a regular basis. While it has some of the lowest unemployment and poverty rates in the state, several themes arose in that are of concern; Gilliam County is losing population, the population is aging, has a lack of job opportunities, underemployment, lack of opportunities for youth and isolation.

For a snapshot of information and statistics please see *ADDRESSING HUNGER in Gilliam County*, 2009, page 13.

Since 2000 Gilliam County has lost -14.1% of its population, the second highest rate of loss in the state of Oregon. What is particularly concerning about the decreasing population is that nearly all of it (-12%) is attributed to out-migration; people moving out of the County (Indicators Northwest, 2009).

Out-migration is a serious issue in rural communities. There is much documentation on the ripple effects of out migration and the impact it can have on the economy and community. When rural communities lose critical services, residents have to drive to other service centers in the region and while there, often do all of their shopping, exporting much needed income and wealth to the urban areas and leaving our rural areas wondering what happened and where it went.

Traveling and talking with residents with people throughout the County uncovered stories of people struggling to make ends meet, and oftentimes going without meals or foregoing medical care just to make ends meet each month. Senior citizens, in particular, were identified as a vulnerable group. So, while on the surface it appears that Gilliam County does not have many issues, the reality of not knowing where the next meal is coming from exists for some residents.

> **“Seniors have the choice of eating or being warm.”** Condon resident

It is an aging population; there are lots of senior citizens. 23.4% of the County population is 65 years and older, the 4th highest rate in the state. There was concern about this trend by nearly every one interviewed. While many of these seniors are well taken care of, there were stories of shut-ins, widows and people living alone on fixed incomes and uncertainty of how they were living and feeding themselves.
Another consideration is the aging population is the importance of volunteers in the communities. Most volunteers are retired and/or senior citizens, leaving many services performed by volunteers to be manned by a aging and dwindling populations. Both Arlington and Condon echoed the importance of volunteers to sustain efforts and services, particularly for those in need. Yet, as volunteers age there is concern for the future sustainability of efforts that are critical to community functions and supports. In Condon, we were told that they “don’t have the volunteers to sustain services now needed.” And in Arlington food pantry volunteers believe that “this town would come to screeching halt without volunteerism.” These are important things to consider as the population continues to age.

“*I would love to go back to work.*”
Arlington focus group participant

Gilliam County also has one of the lowest rates of population under the age of 18 in the state. This was echoed by many people interviewed; one young mother described Condon as “a family town, there is history here.” Yet, there are fewer young families and children and many attribute this trend to the lack of job opportunities in the County. There was much conjecture about the unemployment rate being so low because there are no jobs, so people leave or do not move to Gilliam County, keeping the population rates low in a vicious cycle.

WEALTH. In June 2010 its unemployment rate of 7.0% was the lowest in the state (Worksource Oregon, 2010). Yet stories of a slowing economy and underemployment were common.

Waste management services are an important sector of Gilliam County’s economy. The County levies a fee on the waste and uses it to support property tax payments for residents and funds county projects. Two waste disposal landfills on the northern end of the County receive large amounts of waste from throughout the Pacific Northwest. Yet as the national economy slowed, so did the waste coming into the landfills. People are buying less so they’re throwing away less. An increase in recycling has also affected the landfills, resulting in less activity and less money flowing into the County.

Hundreds of jobs have been created to build the wind farms, but many of the employees come from outside of the region. Furthermore, many of the jobs are short-term construction jobs. So outside of agriculture, waste management, wind development and government services there are very few jobs to be had in Gilliam County. Many residents piece together multiple jobs to make ends meet. One resident of Arlington expressed her frustration at the difficulty finding and retaining full time employment; “I kept a job because of my tenacity.”

Under-employment is a common occurrence in rural communities, but not nearly as visible or discussed as unemployment. Many people work temporary or part time service industry jobs. These are the jobs that rarely come with benefits such as health insurance and retirement, assuring the issues will only get more difficult over time.

CONDON CHILDCARE GARDEN - “GROWING MINDS”!

Another issue concerning many residents is the lack of opportunities and activities for youth. And specific to food, many people raised the concern that youth need to be educated on growing and raising food and the importance of
good nutrition. While Condon has an active FFA program that started a garden at the high school last year, Arlington does not. This is not surprising as many communities and schools have lost agriculture educational opportunities over time. It is an important outlet for youth though, and there is interest in bringing it back.

**“Our kids around here have nothing to do. If you don’t play sports you’re flat out of luck.”**

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Gilliam County employee

HEALTH. The Center for Disease Control (US Dept. of Health and Human Services) tracked Gilliam County residents’ increasing rates of diabetes and obesity between 2004 and 2007. The numbers rose, from 6.6% to 6.9%, and 23.4% to 26.1% respectively. Thankfully, education for everyone in the community was also identified as an important next step. The two most sought after education opportunities identified in the consumer survey were nutrition (36%) and gardening (32%). This was seconded by many people that were interviewed. Pantry volunteers in both Arlington and Condon stressed the need to educate their clients in meal planning and preparation. While the food pantry volunteers and clients would like to see more fresh products, they don’t necessarily have supplies to cook with and don’t know how to cook it.

Lastly, an issue that has already been touched on but is an important consideration in this work is the vulnerability of population groups, or entire communities, living in isolation in rural areas. Gilliam is a "frontier" county (fewer than 6 people per square mile), with food sources more than ten miles from many homes and towns. Many of locals shop at the local grocery stores because they don’t have the ability to drive to larger towns where groceries may be cheaper. Transportation is an issue throughout the region. Many folks shared that they may also forego visits to the food pantry, community meals and social activities that are beneficial for health. One rural resident told us that “I can do a lot of stretching” but the existing services don’t necessarily cover the entire month. This may mean going without critical services, such a medical attention, as well.

Many of these people are on SNAP, but their food supply often dwindles by the end of the month and they have to use the food pantry. This is a common and regular occurrence. As one social service worker explained “emergency food has become a regular, sustaining food source for many pantry clients.”

**“Not being able to provide for your family is a very personal thing.”**

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Condon resident

While this need is a source of embarrassment for many working families, it is also the reality of living in remote and isolated rural communities without ready access to fresh, healthy local food sources. It is difficult to get those in need tied into the service net and we were told that school employees “have to hound families to sign up for free- and reduced-price lunches for their children.” Echoing this sentiment, DHS employee told of families struggling to keep food in the fridge yet not utilizing SNAP.

**Agriculture**

From the beginning of white settlement, agriculture has been central to culture and the economy of Gilliam County. The earliest settlers brought cattle with them over the Oregon Trail and planted grains that were suited to the dry climate. There were also “many good fruit orchards” within the County (Fourth State of Oregon Biennial Report, 1911, p.130).

Grain and cattle remain the mainstays of agriculture in Gilliam County, while the orchards that once existed have all but vanished.
Wheat is the principal crop; there are over 97,000 acres planted. Barley and cattle are also important contributors to the agricultural economy. The sale of grains, oilseeds, dry beans and dry peas is valued at nearly $25 million and cattle and calf sales are valued at $6.4 million a year (Census of Agriculture, 2007).

Gilliam County has 164 farms with an average size of just over 4,200 acres; the second largest average in the state (Census of Agriculture, 2007). While there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that there is a trend of fewer people farming larger acreages, there are 10 more farms today than there were in 1987 and they are, on average, 800 acres smaller (Highlights of Agriculture, 1992 & 1987).

It is important to note though, that this data does not tell the complete story of the changing face of farming in Gilliam County. While the average size of farms has decreased over time, many farms have indeed grown in size. This does not equate to increased income for the farmer though. As one resident suggested; when farms get bigger, they “are not more lucrative, there are not greater margins by expanding; it takes more inputs and is more expensive.”

There was concern expressed by a number of people interviewed that the family structure of farms is changing as well; farmers continue to get older and the average age is now 59.5 years. Many residents also expressed concern that it is difficult for the next generation to stay on the farm. It is much more likely that these farms supported multiple generations in the past than they do today. Inheriting the farm or starting out as a beginning farmer is fraught with financial complexities and oftentimes insurmountable barriers.

“In the era of kids working on farms is a thing of the past.” Gilliam County employee

In 1984 the Conservation Reserve Program (which pays farmers to move sensitive and fragile lands from productive to protection status) was implemented. As one resident shared, it has had long lasting effects on the agricultural economy in Gilliam County. A great deal of land was taken out of production to be placed in the program. This resulted in the loss of agricultural infrastructure including feed, fuel, and maintenance businesses. Losing these businesses and the infrastructure, jobs and income that came with them, she shared, was damaging and had unmeasured impacts on the regional economy. As noted below, wind farming could have a similar effect.

Gilliam County and its farmers have not sat idly by as time and circumstances have changed around them though. There are several groups working within the county to change the system of how wheat is grown and marketed. One of the successes highlighted by many is the Gilliam County Grain Quality Laboratory. Located near Arlington, the Laboratory works to increase the viability and success of local growers by helping them value to their products.

A more recent means of income generation on farm land in Gilliam County is revenue from...
wind development. Many farmers receive lease payments from wind companies for the wind mills placed on their land. While these lease payments have helped some farmers, others shared that they have served more as a stopgap and didn’t necessarily increased the farm’s income. As one farmer explained, wind benefits help the land owner because it “puts stability under the farm”. This is not necessarily an increase in the expendable income, but it can keep the farm from going further into debt. Land lease revenues will also allow some farmers to retire, which might diminish the total amount of land under cultivation, or related agro-economic activities in the county.

Gilliam County grows an enormous amount of food, far more than the county or state consumes. While large scale, export-based conventional agriculture is a strength of Gilliam County and is critical to its economy, it doesn’t feed the people that live within its borders.

GILLIAM COUNTY WHEAT FIELDS

It is not easy to grow crops Gilliam County, especially produce. In this arid region, water scarcity is a serious limiting factor. In Condon wells have to be drilled hundreds of feet to reach water. And while Arlington was described as the “banana belt” of the county, watering when the wind is blowing, which is much of the time, was described as foolish. Not only is watering difficult because of these factors, but those on city water shared that it is too expensive to grow more than a few plants. It is more than just water scarcity that affects growing conditions though, the varying climate plays a large role as well. The longest growing seasons are in Arlington and along a few lower elevation creeks. Condon and much of the county are at a high elevation and therefore experience higher fluctuations in temperatures and are more likely to have a killing frost in late spring and early fall.

ALTERNATIVE AG. These limitations appear to be the main reasons that there are very few farmers growing for a local market. The U.S. Agriculture Census data (2007) counted seven Gilliam farms that grow fruits and vegetables on an unknown number of acres. We were not able to find them during our investigation. Just a few people were identified in the course of this project that grow or raise food to sell directly to consumers within the region - several ranchers sell live or on the hoof, a blueberry grower and a niche market wheat farmer direct-market to customers. Even the regular produce vendor at the Condon Community Farmers’ Market last year is not from Gilliam County, but came up every month from Wheeler County. Market supporters explain that it is “difficult getting local growers; sometimes we struggle to get just one vendor.”

This lack of a locally or regionally focused food system leaves Gilliam County vulnerable to forces beyond their control, but also presents an opportunity as consumers expressed interest in buying more locally produced food.

Food

The lack of locally-focused food and farm activities and resources in Gilliam County is concerning when viewed through the lens of food security. There is very little food locally grown available, yet there are several important pieces of the food system still functioning.
EMERGENCY FOOD. Nearly 70% of Gilliam County residents live in Arlington and Condon and thus have good access to a relatively stable food supply. Both towns have a food pantry and functioning grocery stores. Residents are fortunate to have this level of access to food; it is better than that of many of the surrounding communities in the region. The remaining 30% of residents are not as fortunate though, as they have to travel to access food supplies and other services.

The pantries in Arlington and Condon are open one day a month. Combined, they served 742 emergency food boxes last year to 3090 people, a 9% increase from 2008. There were stories of people missing the once-per-month distribution day because of time, travel and other conflicts and challenges. Perhaps the two food pantries might explore being open more than one day a month to make it easier for clients to access food.

GROCERY STORES. Rural grocery stores have received much coverage and recognition in recent years. Many communities have lost their grocery stores or have stores that are not responsive to community members. This is distressing because grocery stores are often the cornerstones of viable downtown or commercial districts and if they fail, many other businesses are at risk of failure as well. Vulnerable populations are put at more risk as well because they may not have a car, the time or money to travel to towns far away to buy groceries.

Arlington has Thrifty Foods and Condon has two grocery stores, B & C Grocery and Two Boys Meat and Grocery. All of these stores are independently owned and operated. Each plays an important role in their local economy, providing access to food, stability for the local business environment and providing jobs. Interestingly, we learned that Two Boys is the largest private employer in Condon.

Grocery stores in both towns accept SNAP and WIC benefits. The Condon Community Farmers’ Market has a vendor that accepts FDNP coupons and WIC vouchers. Outside of these sources, there are no other markets to access food in Gilliam County.

“Big stores out of town are the biggest threat.”

Gilliam County grocer

The issues faced by rural independent grocers need to be better understood and more thoughtfully considered by community members. There were many complaints about shopping in local stores including “when you shop in town you have to get the stuff that is cheap; the fruits and vegetables are too expensive.” Another consumer went so far as to say, “When we shop here it costs an arm and a leg.”

Higher price are typically the reality of shopping in rural grocery stores, and Gilliam County is no exception. These stores face barriers that chain stores in large towns and along transportation corridors do not. In all of the interviews, Two Boys was described as the exception; many people do the majority of their shopping there. There were even stories of people from Fossil coming to Condon to shop. The hard work and commitment to high quality products and competitive prices were cited as reasons for their success. As one resident voice, “as far as fruit and veggies go, you can’t beat them.”

There are opportunities for growth in the retail sector in Gilliam County. One store owner shared that “[residents] don’t realize that if another 25% of the population shopped here we’d build a bigger store. But they don’t think like that.” Most people are driving to The Dalles, Hermiston or Tri Cities for groceries.

When asked where residents get the majority of their food, after grocery stores, 56% of the
consumer survey respondents said “sit-down restaurant” and “grow it or raise it”. Although it was generally agreed that people don’t have money to eat out anymore, and restaurants are hurting because of it. Arlington is the exception as there has been a large influx of workers building Shepherds Flat Wind Farm, a project that will be the largest land-based wind farm in the world when it is completed.

Growing and raising food for personal consumption appears to be very important to the people in Gilliam County. Many people still grow their own food, but not without difficulty because of water scarcity, the price of water in the city and the climatic conditions. In Condon, another looming issue is the outdated city water system. It may need to be completely replaced in 10-15 years and could have untold effects on availability and cost of water for city residents.

Historically, animals were raised for personal consumption, but it is no longer a common practice. A policy issue that arose was the inability of residents to raise animals within Condon city limits. Gilliam County has always been indelibly linked to agriculture, yet several residents expressed their disappointment in not being able to raise animals for themselves.

Hunting and fishing are important food sources in Gilliam County. Fifty-six percent of survey respondents consider hunting, fishing or harvesting of wild food to be “somewhat” or “very” important to meeting their household food needs. Several people believe that there are policy and regulation changes that need to be implemented to increase the consumption of wild foods, but most survey respondents (48%) were interested in identifying, cooking and preserving educational opportunities.

So while there are good things happening around the local food economy, the number one reason (95%) why people in Gilliam County don’t buy local food is that it is not available. Exploring and supporting community-focused food and farm opportunities should be a next step for the communities. There was much interest in increasing the production of local food, and the survey revealed that the top two things that Gilliam County residents want are community gardens and farmers’ markets.

People want more fresh local food and it’s time for the County to come together and assure that there is more access to food for everyone within the county no matter where they live or how much money they have.

For a snap shot of food and hunger statistics please see "ADDRESSING HUNGER IN GILLIAM COUNTY (2009)", next page.
GILLIAM COUNTY Oregon

- In these hard economic times, many more people are hungry, especially children and seniors.
- Federal food programs can help feed people and provide economic stimulus for local economies.
- Gilliam County could bring in millions more federal dollars by reaching more eligible people.

**School Lunches, Breakfast, & Summer Meals**

In 2008 ~ **42.9%** of all students were eligible for free and reduced price meals in Gilliam County. Of those who ate lunch:
- **51%** received school breakfast.
- **None** ate meals through the Summer Food Program.

If all who were eligible for free or reduced price lunch were served, Gilliam County would have received an additional **$10,485** in federal dollars a year and fed an additional **24 eligible low-income children**.

**SNAP/ Food Stamps**

In 2008 ~
- **146 people** received SNAP/food stamps per month in Gilliam County.
- **$145,977** federal dollars were brought into the local economy.

If all eligible people were enrolled in SNAP, Gilliam County would have received an additional **$122,879 dollars each month** in federal money and **171 additional people** would have received help putting food on the table.

**HOW YOU CAN HELP**

- Support public policies that help low-income people meet their basic needs.
- Support efforts to reach more people through federal food assistance programs.
- Refer to the Act to End Hunger for more ideas to address hunger in your county.

For specific information visit [www.oregonhunger.org](http://www.oregonhunger.org)

**Women, Infants & Children Program (WIC*)**

In 2008, WIC served 7,072 pregnant or breastfeeding women, infants and children * under five, representing 45% of all pregnant women (compared to 40% statewide average).

**Emergency Food Assistance**

In 2008, **680 food boxes** provided emergency food to help families make ends meet.

**Farm Direct Nutrition Program**

Seniors and WIC families redeemed **$0** in the county to buy fresh produce in 2008. Coupons may have been redeemed in nearby counties.

**Afterschool Meals & Snacks**

During the 2007/08 school year, **0 suppers were served** in high need areas.

**Addressing Hunger in Gilliam County, 2009**

**GILLIAM COUNTY** Oregon

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CONCLUSION

When viewed through the lens of food security, Gilliam County faces some serious issues. Yet these issues are not unique to this county alone; many of the food availability, accessibility and affordability issues they face are common across eastern Oregon.

For well over a hundred years wheat has been central to culture and the economy of Gilliam County. An enormous amount of wheat is grown within the County, and it is indelibly linked to global export markets. Yet, while this is a great economic strength, very little food is grown within the County for local consumption. Most of the food consumed comes in on truck from places far away.

Gilliam County has the lowest unemployment rate in Oregon, a statistic of which many are proud. Yet stories shared with us revealed that the reality on the ground is much different than what the numbers tell. Gilliam County is in a steady population decline and the average age of residents, and farmers, continues to grow. This was a great concern of many of those we spoke with because they realize that having opportunities for youth to stay or return are critical for the future health and wealth of their communities.

“In Perseverance is something that we’ve really lost.” Gilliam County farmer

In order to increase self-sufficiency and food security for all residents and at the community level many solutions were identified by the residents of Gilliam County. Many are hopeful, yet recognize that to truly made headway that “people have to begin to think differently and long term.” This is beginning to happen around food.

The opportunities outlined next incorporate many of those ideas offered throughout our interviews, meetings and focus groups in Arlington, Condon and the County. The people that live within these communities are best prepared to know what solutions are most achievable and needed, which is why most of the action steps outlined here of from the community themselves. As it was so well put by one rural resident, “we have to do it ourselves; it has to come from here.”
OPPORTUNITIES IN GILLIAM COUNTY

Recommendation 1: Increase outreach and networking around local food and farm opportunities.

1. Establish a communication and support network to facilitate the sharing of ideas and resources.

2. Connect with regional and state networks to further community food and farm efforts.

3. Develop and implement a public education campaign on the benefits of healthy eating habits and a local food system.

Recommendation 2: Expand educational opportunities for community members.

1. Identify, and distribute cooking and meal planning materials at food pantries.

2. Identify, and coordinate with gardening and agricultural education resources to increase gardening and agricultural entrepreneurial skills.

3. Identify and coordinate with current nutrition educators and experts to implement projects to increase understanding and the practice of healthy eating habits.

4. Identify existing, or develop educational resources to build knowledge about hunting, fishing and harvesting wild foods; specific areas might include identification, cooking, preservation, rights and responsibilities.

Recommendation 3: Explore and support community-focused food and farm opportunities, ideas and resources.

1. Recognize community and economic development through local food as a legitimate strategy.

2. Encourage the development of community gardens, and the success and expansion of existing gardens.

3. Identify and consider small scale production strategies.

4. Encourage development of more local food and farm entrepreneurial opportunities, specifically CSAs, farm stands, meat slaughter and processing, U-pick and value-added enterprises.

Recommendation 4: Increase the number of venues featuring local or regionally produced food.

1. Establish, expand and support farmers’ markets as a way to provide regular access to fresh, local or regional food.

2. Explore interest in farm-to-school programs, and establish where feasible.

3. Identify institutional food purchasers and engage and educate them about purchasing locally or regionally produced food.
4. Increase the amount of local or regionally produced food available in grocery stores and restaurants.

**Recommendation 5:** Ensure regular access to a stable fresh food supply for all citizens year-round.

1. Increase the amount of fresh food available at food pantries.

2. Establish FDNP and WIC Fruit and Veggie Voucher retailers in every community.

3. Increase knowledge and understanding of the SNAP program.

4. Establish programs that feed children including summer lunch, fresh snacks, breakfast, dinner and weekend meals.

5. Ensure that food is considered in the County emergency management plans.

6. Establish appropriate gleaning options at all levels of the food system, when and wherever possible.
CHAPTER 3—MORROW COUNTY

Introduction

Land of sunshine, deep soils and minimal water, this county has provided rich hunting, gathering, grazing and farming opportunities for centuries. It comprises the southern-most edge of the Columbia Plateau, and the western-most portion of the Confederated Umatilla Tribes Ceded Lands, with treaty-protected rights of use to this day. It is now home to residents of all stripes and colors, employed largely in food and farming-based economic activities and lifestyles.

Like its neighbors to the south and south-west (Gilliam, Grant and Wheeler), "rugged county" is both the official and informal motto of this county, and it is well-earned. High rolling and wind-swept hills bisected with deep furrowed canyons create a sense of both expansiveness and seclusion. On its south flank rise the Blue Mountains, supplying up to 16 inches of precipitation per year to land and out-flowing streams. This is twice the amount of rainfall received in the central and north sections of the county - which receive approximately 8 inches annually.

Morrow is the second largest in both population and land mass of the four counties in this study, and boasts five incorporated towns, seven unincorporated towns, and the ghost town of Hardman. Of the 11,553 county residents, just over 7,000 are counted as residents in the incorporated towns. This leaves another four thousand individuals living in very rural or unincorporated areas, perhaps far from food and community resources. The County population has fluctuated up and down by approximately 10% over the past decade. But overall, in contrast to the other counties, it has almost tripled in population the past 30 years.

Approximately half of the county's residents live in the two northern towns of Irrigon and Boardman. These towns are connected by three enormous transportation systems - the Columbia River, transcontinental rail lines and the Interstate highway. These arterials provide in-
and outflow of goods and people, an ebb and flow of money and opportunities that form the basis of a lucrative port and transport-based export economy. Perhaps because of these physical connections, the communities and individuals of the north relate more closely to their eastern Umatilla neighbors, with whom they share many similarities in climate, demographics and agricultural opportunities.

The dryer southern half of Morrow, in contrast, is defined by the canyons and moderate flows of Willow Creek and its tributaries, tying together several small towns (Heppner, Lexington, Ione) like beads on a string. Through distance and other geographic features these towns are relatively isolated - geographically, socially and economically - from the populous and diverse northern "micropolitan" areas along the I-84 corridor. The residents here resemble and relate to their historic wheat farming and ranching neighbors on the high Columbia Plateau. This cultural and geographic distance between north and south creates a complex picture for addressing farm and food opportunities and food security challenges in this county.

Principal industries in the county today include agriculture, lumber, livestock, and recreation, with agriculture employing upwards of 22% of the population. Morrow may also be unique in the representative energy facilities and the employment opportunities they bring - hydro-electric dams, a coal-fired generating plant in Boardman, two gas-fired plants at the Port, geothermal and even methane digesters. And as in other wind-swept high Plateau counties, you will now see giant windmills tilting at a new kind of energy.

**People**

The people of Morrow County have come from all walks of life and all parts of the world. Native cultures have variously lived with and/or clashed with newcomers, a pattern repeating and reversing itself through time and history with waves of new immigrants and ethnicities.

This section explores what our assessments identified as the important "people", or social capital elements: diversity, education, health and cultural identity. For a snap shot of demographic and hunger information and statistics, please see "ADDRESSING HUNGER in Morrow County, 2009", page 27.

South Morrow County residents have cultivated and preserved a lively, relatively European cultural and farming heritage (Irish, Basque, Welsh, Scottish, Swedish, to name a few that figure in the mix), with long, deep relationships within their communities and to the "rugged country" they live in. This appears to supports a strong sense of cohesion, self-sufficiency and care for each other. And perhaps, a sense of insularity.

Relative homogeneity makes it easier to identify and perhaps organize around specific needs and opportunities in the southern area, which we understand is the norm here. Yet this can also make it more difficult to identify and implement change if there are cultural barriers to bringing in new resources and ideas.

On the other end, the northern portion of the county has drawn significant numbers of new people from outside the region to work in the government, agricultural and manufacturing
sectors. Expanding Hispanic and other minority populations have found a niche in Morrow’s entry-level and subsistence work opportunities, riding a roller-coaster of needs and opportunities. Not only does this influence the socio-economic and ethnic mix, it has increased the number of young people enrolled in schools, in other programs for youth and families, and in the job market. The demand for services and food are more visible, and more visibly met in the north. Here diversity - of language, culture, experience and education - make it more difficult to identify, categorize and meet needs.

CONNECTIVITY. There did not appear to be strong connections between north and south, which hinders communication, awareness, trust and creative solution-building for the county as a whole. Capacity for growth and resilience at the county-level is limited when connectivity is limited.

HEALTH. A number of statistics provide a snapshot of the relative health and quality of life for individuals and families here. First, education plays an important part in employment and earnings, in health and well-being: in 2009, Morrow County registered the highest number of adults without high school diplomas (over 25%), and second highest unemployment rate of 8.7%. As a whole, Morrow County has a higher rate of children and elders in poverty - 20% and 10%, respectively - compared to the rest of the region and state. In some county school districts, over 94% of the children qualify for free and reduced price meals, while in other districts the numbers hover in the 30% range.

Of our four counties, Morrow has the highest rate of diabetes in the Counties studied (8.4% of adults), ranks second in obesity rates (over 27% of the adult population), and has the highest rate of infant mortality (NW Indicators, 2009).

A large number (82%) of respondents surveyed expressed concern with poor diet and nutrition in the county. It is encouraging to note that cooking, gardening, health and nutrition concerns also ranked relatively high: sixty-eight percent of the respondents requested increased education around gardening, nutrition, food cooking and preservation and

Also heartening are the number of good ways to meet the health, nutrition and education need that are very close to home.

When volunteering with the High School I met students who had never peeled a vegetable or sliced an onion. They loved the opportunity and wished something like home economics was available so that they could learn these basic skills.” - OSU Extension volunteer

In addition to school breakfasts and summer feeding programs, many schools around the region have long had gardens and greenhouses. Classroom activities of the Future Farmers of America and 4-H programs utilize them as part of their agricultural education. South Morrow County (Ione and Heppner) has two such programs in their schools that provide exceptional skill-building, entrepreneurial and opportunities for their students, and potentially for their school food and nutrition programs. They stand as good examples for others to learn from. Another educational resource is the OSU Extension Service which provides agricultural, food and nutrition training. The Master Gardeners program has a number of trained volunteers in this county; along with independent gardening clubs there is good support for both long-time and beginning garden efforts. Further, the Extension program has also staffed and trained volunteers to serve in the Family Nutrition Education Program and Master Food Preservers/Family Food Educators who
can be employed in our region in a variety of ways. In the mid- to longer-term OSU Extension Service should also be encouraged to find ways to serve more rural eastern communities with these programs.

Agriculture

Early sheep and cattlemen found an abundance of native rye along the creek bottoms of the region and drove their herds in to forage on these natural pastures. The towns of Lexington and Ione began as sheep stations and over two million pounds of wool were shorn and sold from this county in 1910. The 1911 Oregon Bureau of Labor Biennial Report also noted that the county was home to a butter factory, three flour mills, dairies, cool storage facilities, soap-makers, meat markets and numerous grocery stores that served the local communities.

WEALTH. More recently, north Morrow has experienced rapid growth with development of dairy, food processing, product distribution, tree farms (second highest production in the nation), and other activities. (Indicators Northwest, 2008). Economically, Morrow boasts a relatively high median income (over $45,000) and also a lower per capita income ($14,000) than the rest of Oregon, partly to due to the diversity of the population and type and variety of employment options available.

The county divides into three main agricultural occupational zones of irrigated crops, wheat and ranch lands in the central area and timberlands in the south east corner of the Blues. The advent of center pivot technology for irrigation has been a further stimulus to the local economy of the north, allowing for large-scale irrigated crops. A drive through the agri-business loop at the Port of Morrow reveals the advantage that comes from abundant water, as some of the nation's largest corporate food processors and exporters do business in the northern part of the county.

In regards to farming and agriculture, Morrow County looks very good "on paper": it ranks first in the state for the quantity and dollar value of the livestock raised; second in potato, wheat, and legume crops; and third in the state, close behind Umatilla county, in terms of the value of gross farm and ranch sales.

Further examination of the 2007 Agricultural Census numbers (USDA, box below) show that the average production expenses on Morrow farms as $275/ acre, with an average net income of $65 per acre. The gap between the costs and returns of typical farm production cause many to ponder the benefits and value of current, conventional agricultural activities.

Government payments (a mix of commodity, conservation and land-retirement programs) to farms in Morrow have increased by 44% between 2002 and 2007 (averaging $47,000 per farm).

FARMS IN MORROW COUNTY

421 farms on 1,104,250 acres.
Estimated value of land and building per farm is $1.9 million or $973 per acre.
Total production expenses in the county are $303 million; average production expenses per farm is $721,383 or $275 per acre.
Total net cash income in the county is $354 million; averaging $170,760 per farm and $65 per acre.
People were vocal about the vicious cycles and unintended consequences of subsidies, and what solutions might be created for more local self-reliance and sustenance.

Stories heard on visits to Morrow are that many farms are getting bigger and are very productive, but they are not necessarily more profitable, nor easily passed on to the next generation. The consideration and choice to farm or ranch is not simply an economical one - it is cultural and social, too. Residents value their agricultural heritage and identity and are concerned about the ability of their children to live here and participate in the activities that provide a wonderful quality of life and lifestyle. At least 42% of those surveyed here report that one of their top three concerns about the food they eat is that it provides a livable wage for those engaged in making and growing it. The average age of a Morrow County farmer is 58 years old and half of them report that their primary source of income is not from the farm. And the "sticker price" of a Morrow County farm is nearly two million dollars, leading to the obvious question of who will purchase and farm those acreages in the future.

FRUIT & VEGGIE FARMS. USDA Ag Census (2007) stated that over 50 farms grow fruit and vegetables on 21,000 acres in this County, ranking it second/third in the State for this production. These crops do not appear to be accessible to many local purchasers, though much is donated through a gleaning program, and through the Oregon Food Bank.

In 2007 twenty-six farmers in this county reported (to USDA) selling directly to customers - compared to one farmer in Gilliam, six in Wheeler and 217 in Umatilla County. Even so, their products were not easy to identify or locate. Current trends and statistics show this to be an underutilized economic opportunity for

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**Tin Willow Dairy - Lexington, OR**

Terry Felda, owner of Tin Willow sheep dairy, arrived in Lexington by serendipity four years ago, and stays put because of the just-right conditions for raising and marketing her high-quality specialty sheep's milk here.

Though sheep once roamed Morrow County in great numbers and served many functions, residents are now incredulous, asking, 'can you really milk a sheep?!' Felda says they also wonder about eating cheese and meat from sheep - until they sample it, succulent and straight from the grill! But she says, "I still don't know if my products would sell here, as people aren't used to eating lamb and sheep products anymore."

Now in its third year of operation, Tin Willow is successfully paying all bills and expenses associated with the operation, and Felda plans to double the herd from 125 to 250 head. Next she hopes to purchase land rather than leasing as she now does.

To their advantage, sheep's milk, unlike cow's, can be frozen without changing characteristics. Felda can freeze and ship milk anytime, anywhere, in any quantity, allowing great flexibility in marketing, storage and distribution. Tin Willow currently direct-markets milk to their main buyers, The Black Sheep cheese company in WA, who purchase and transport straight from the farm. Terry produces more milk than these buyers need and will soon be looking for new buyers and sellers in the future, typically in more urban areas.

Tin Willow is updating and reintroducing a once-familiar, rich element of its agri-culture, its Irish shepherding days.
agricultural growers. This CFA noted the increased demand for, and benefits and economic return to farmers who grow and sell farm-direct in local markets. Farm income diversification and localization could be the next generation's agricultural opportunity.

Local food equals local water. So the critical unanswered question - what about the water? - looms. With water constraints everywhere in the region, creativity and prioritized use of water must be employed when considering the value of and capacity for local food production.

One Morrow County CFA recommendation includes assessing and utilizing alternative water conservation and food production technologies and strategies appropriate for the more arid southern region, while optimizing the north county's ability to access water and grow food crops to the benefit of county customers. With greater access to water rights and a suitable plot of land, north-end growers could supply the fruit and vegetable needs of many north and south-end resident through farm-direct sales. We don't know what issues and answers lie ahead with regard to water, but this is a topic that will remain critical, and will likely need critical creativity and cooperation on the part of the county and its residents.

Food

Drive over the northern county line and you can literally smell the abundance of food being grown, created or stored in fields, dairies, granaries, food manufacturing and processing facilities of Morrow County. Our region's food system is set-up to produce and deliver millions of pounds of food to millions of people around the globe as efficiently as possible - especially in Morrow County. Food system elements such as ports, packing plants, storage and warehousing have been enlarged and centralized in Morrow and abroad for mass distribution and purchasing.

These businesses provide employment and jobs of varying pay scales, and much-needed donations to the gleaners and food pantries. But this segment of the food industry by itself does not directly enhance or stabilize long-term self-reliance or food security for residents. By this
we mean improving the accessibility, availability and affordability of locally produced food (influenced by the combination of wages, production, distribution and direct local sales).

Locally-produced and/or processed food is sent away for 'value-adding', and returned to the shelves of local grocers in many different forms for sale to residents and the producers who created them.

**GROCERY STORES.** When asked where their food comes from the answer here is the same as for most places across America - "the store". Residents of Heppner and Boardman patronize their grocery stores for nearly 100% their food needs. And where the store gets it might be anyone's guess. In Heppner, that food comes from a distributor out of Spokane (in other counties food comes from other distant directions across the state).

> "There is no shortage of food or trucks to Heppner—we have 7-9 trucks of food arriving weekly to service our grocery store."
> - Heppner grocer

Both of these successful full-service stores accept the Oregon Trail/SNAP cards, and WIC coupons. Both work hard to offer what customers want and need at affordable prices. In very rural areas this is not easy. In addition to supplying healthy food, healthy grocery stores are critical to sustaining a healthy local shopping environment and anchoring a commercial area, obvious to visitors in downtown Heppner and in the growing shopping district of Boardman.

Residents in the smaller towns of Irrigon, Ione, Lexington and other very small or unincorporated towns, are not so lucky. With no full-service grocery stores WIC and SNAP are accepted only at the deli and two convenience stores, which means the food availability and accessibility for all residents of these towns is very limited. They must travel 10-15 miles or more to purchase groceries of any sort, prompting the Rural Sociological Society to call them "food deserts" (areas in which residents must drive more than 10 miles to reach a grocery store). It can become a vicious cycle: population loss is one of the greatest challenges to keeping viable grocery stores and other enterprises in business, and the loss of a grocery store can cause a decline in families shopping in town and force other nearby retailers out of business.

Regarding local food, the majority of survey respondents in Morrow County indicated they would like more options to purchase local food at retail stores and restaurants, farmers-markets, farm stands and u-pick farms. Happily, as revealed in our first annual *Local Food & Farm Guide* (another product of this Community Food Assessment), this opportunity is being acted on by a number of individuals in Morrow County who buy, sell and grow their own meats and veggies to prepare and sell as part of their retail, restaurant and/or catering businesses. One Irrigon peach grower has a ready institutional customer - a local grocery store over the county line in Umatilla. Our inquiries suggest that education and training of growers and grocers would help overcome perceived barriers for more locally-produced food making its way onto local shelves.
Irrigon, with its abundant water resources, was once known as "fruit-stand alley"; it has seen a decrease in farm stands over the years, though a few new farm-direct enterprises have recently opened and in 2010 a small farmers' market was started here. With work it can succeed.

FARMERS' MARKETS. At their three-year old farmers' market, Heppner residents will find small, but increasing, quantities of produce grown in the Willow Creek watershed by local residents and from further afield, if procurable. Tales of individuals taking the entrepreneurial plunge into direct-customer sales at Heppner's Willow Creek farmers' market include a Heppner gelato maker, a local business owner and grower, and a high school student capitalizing on his FFA greenhouse experience.

Neither of the two Morrow County farmers' markets are able to accept food stamps (SNAP) or the nutrition coupon programs for seniors and WIC families at present. However, several of the fruit and vegetable stands along highway 730, the northern scenic route west along the Columbia River, do accept the Farm-Direct Nutrition Program (FDNP) coupons for fresh food; a fortuitous seasonal blessing, as the only store in Irrigon that takes SNAP has a very little in the way of healthy fresh, whole foods.

The purpose of food system re-localization is to make more healthy high quality food available to all residents, no matter where they live, at affordable rates. Short and longer-term goals include expanding the number of venues, retailers, restaurants, farmers' markets and farm stands alike that buy and sell local food, and that can also accept nutrition program purchase vouchers such as WIC and SNAP.

Expanding the number of alternative marketing and purchasing opportunities would allow more money to circulate into the hands of neighbors and family, creating more local wealth and depth in the economy. And no matter how one views Federal supplemental nutrition programs such as SNAP and the WIC Veggie Voucher program, these programs bring more money into the community and food to those who need it: In 2008, through the SNAP (food stamp) program, $1.7 million dollars entered the Morrow economy. If all the eligible people in Morrow were enrolled receive this basic right, an additional $593,942 dollars each month would exchange hands, and an additional 761 people would have help putting food on the table. (NW Indicators, 2008).

GLEANING. Of particular interest to folks in this region is the gleaning project (the only one we found), called the Columbia River Harvesters. This non-profit organization is a unique, membership-based food provider that sustains families in Boardman and far beyond. Through the diligence of a well-connected director and staff products are "gleaned" from storage facilities, grocery stores and warehouses, and directly from growers. These donated foods are brought to the Boardman gleaners' small facility to be sorted, frozen or cool-stored and distributed to the dues-paying participants to supplement meager take-home wages and meals.

This gleaning model seems to work, in part, because of the proximity to large-scale food and agricultural operations that provide large quantities of food already boxed and available for pick-up. This minimizes the liability of having volunteers pick or handle it and fit the style of the donating operations. Based on demand there seems to be reason to expand or replicate this organization; and also based on demand, there may be other more traditional models that would meet the needs and requests of those who have food - for human consumption and/or for animal or composting operations - thereby closing the loop of food production and waste. Other gleaning groups in
The Dalles and Walla Walla also serve people in need from our region.

Community gardens have also been started or expanded in several communities with varying levels of participation and success. A new community garden in Boardman, and one in a low-income housing complex in Irrigon are being developed in successful public-private partnerships, from which many opportunities and good food may be cultivated. Ione and Heppner have active and promising combined school greenhouses and community gardens that have encouraged entrepreneurial food and nursery production for students.

And last, but not least - at the very local level there is an encouraging amount of food production happening right in people's backyards - approximately 63% of the respondents state that they grow at least some of their own food. This is a good sign, as fresh, healthy food is the most direct link to maintaining individual health. This topic is addressed on the following page- "Addressing Hunger in MORROW COUNTY, 2009" (Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force).

EMERGENCY FOOD. At present, County emergency food needs appear to be met. This system includes two food pantries, a senior meal site and the only gleaning operation in the region, the Columbia River Harvesters in Boardman. The Morrow County food pantries in Heppner and Boardman serve very distinct populations, and together gave out a total of 780 household emergency food boxes serving 2129 individuals in 2009. Of that total, the Irrigon pantry's weekly distribution served 577 emergency food boxes to households in support of 1766 individuals.

The Heppner food pantry, located in their Community Center, is open four days per week and served many fewer customers. CAPECO's energy assistance program serves up to one hundred people from the southern towns, many of whom could receive food assistance to help ease financial burdens. According to the Oregon Food Bank, Heppner's is one of the few pantries in the state under-serving the number of potentially income-eligible people (counted as pounds per person, distributed through the pantry system. April, 2010). These figures raise more questions than answers, and remains to be explored more deeply. Anecdotal information received through interviews and informal feedback relayed that southern residents were taken care of by other means; while a few stated that they were occasionally denied food (for not being "really needy"); and other individuals went to Irrigon, Hermiston and Pendleton pantries to request emergency food support.

Other sources of free or affordable food are school meals, and community meal sites. The school lunch program has expanded over the years to include other meals, and other family members, at free and reduced rates. Over sixty-seven percent of Morrow County children were eligible for free and reduced meals. If all those eligible for those lunches had participated an additional $150,148 could have been received to serve nearly 340 eligible children. Roughly 45% of them received the breakfasts and summer food that they also qualified for.

In Heppner, the senior housing complex serves a noon meal mainly for community elders. Two new monthly meals, breakfasts and lunches has recently been organized by several churches.

"Across the street at the Methodist Church free breakfast was being offered each month. The Lutheran church decided that we could offer our support to expand and make this a stronger, more successful effort."

- Church organizer
They serve any and all community members, families and children. These informal, open-to-all, donation-based and/or free meals can increase the sense of belonging and taking care of everyone in the community, not just the "needy". Such a move can reduce any underlying fear of judgment and embarrassment of needing food in tight-knit communities.
## MORROW COUNTY Oregon

- In these hard economic times, many more people are hungry, especially children and seniors.
- Federal food programs can help feed people and provide economic stimulus for local economies.
- Morrow County could bring in millions more federal dollars by reaching more eligible people.

### School Lunches, Breakfast, & Summer Meals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Student Enrollment</th>
<th>National School Lunch Program</th>
<th>Free or Reduced Meals</th>
<th>School Breakfast Program</th>
<th>Summer Food Service Program</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eligible</td>
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In 2008 ~ 67.6% of all students were eligible for free and reduced price meals in Morrow County. Of those who ate lunch:

- 46% of them received breakfast.
- 44% ate meals through the Summer Food Program.

If all who were eligible for free or reduced price lunch were served, Morrow County would have received an additional **$150,148** in federal dollars a year and fed an additional **338 eligible low-income children**.

### SNAP/ Food Stamps

- **1,567 people** received SNAP/food stamps per month in Morrow County.
- **$1.7 million federal dollars** were brought into the local economy.

If all eligible people were enrolled in SNAP, Morrow County would have received an additional **$593,942 dollars each month** in federal money and **761 additional people** would have received help putting food on the table.

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Support public policies that help low-income people meet their basic needs.
- Support efforts to reach more people through federal food assistance programs.
- Refer to the *Act to End Hunger* for more ideas to address hunger in your county.

For specific information visit [www.oregonhunger.org](http://www.oregonhunger.org)

### Women, Infants & Children Program (WIC)*

In 2008, WIC served **7,072 pregnant or breastfeeding women, infants and children*** representing **45% of all pregnant women** (compared to **40% statewide average**).

### Emergency Food Assistance

In 2008, **544 food boxes** provided emergency food to help families make ends meet.

### Farm Direct Nutrition Program

Seniors and WIC families redeemed **$228** in coupons to buy fresh produce in 2008, which supported local farmers.

### Afterschool Meals & Snacks

During the 2007/08 school year, **0 suppers were served** in high need areas.

### Morrow County Demographic Information

- **Total Population**: 12,485
- **Children 0-18 years**: 3,507
- **People in Poverty**: 1,885 (15.1%)
- **Children in Poverty**: 726 (20.7%)

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* WIC data for Morrow County cannot be extracted from Umatilla – Morrow Head Start data
CONCLUSION

To summarize, Morrow County is one of the largest food producers in the state and region. The entire "food pyramid" is grown here, from grains and legumes, root crops, orchards, row crops, cows, sheep, goats, pheasants, dairy products, chickens and eggs. In conventional terms, they look relatively well-off, economically and otherwise. However, by our criteria of local food availability, accessibility and affordability - there is room for improvement as very little food stays within the reach of county residents.

Morrow's most apparent challenge is the distance (geographic, economic and cultural) between its northern, more industrial, water-rich and populous region along the Columbia river and interstate freeway, and the southern, more isolated half, historically representing rural ranching and farming activities. Bridging this distance will improve the entire county's ability to optimize its resources and opportunities.

This north-south divide may have been one reason that Morrow was the only county to not conduct a FEAST (Food Education Agriculture Solutions Together), or organize a community food "stakeholders" group to participate directly in the CFA, or the development and review of this document and our findings. Various meetings were held, and those informants felt it premature to conduct a community or county-wide conversation about local food. We regret the lack of "ground-truthing" this represents and hope that the CFA will spur or dovetail with future county food and farming conversations.

In terms of food security, Heppner and Boardman residents' food choices and needs are largely being met through home-town grocery stores and emergency services in their town. Other communities' residents drive up to ten or more miles to reach full-service grocery stores, pantries, or meal sites. Those unable to drive or to pay the relatively higher prices at rural 'mom and pop' stores are dependent on limited local and personal resources and may be in jeopardy of food insecurity. Morrow residents at both ends of the age spectrum, young and old, are less food and health secure, living on limited or fixed incomes and experiencing higher levels of economic and nutrition-related challenges.

Two fledgling farmers' markets and possible new farm stands may provide greater local food access, availability and affordability over time. In our surveys residents recognized the need for greater education to improve health and nutrition, which may be conducted through farmers markets and other farm-direct venues, as well as schools and food pantries.

In Morrow, as elsewhere, emergency plans seem to overlook the need for a safe, sustainable, healthy food supply being produced as close to home as possible, for both emergency and non-emergent situations. Economic and community development plans are also void of detail for expanding local entrepreneurial activities based on food or farming activities.

With its enormous spectrum of economic and agricultural activities, social and cultural influences, energy resources, land and water, Morrow County is in an enviable place of possibility if these elements are optimized for their county's common good, food security and future.

Our broad recommendation is to act more intentionally to expand opportunities on behalf of the entire county to become more self-reliant, integrated and creative in developing a local food system. Resources of CAPECO and other agencies and organizations will likely be available for future activity in this arena. The recommendations that follow were developed as a starting point for more conversation, and brainstorming by the locals.
OPPORTUNITIES IN MORROW COUNTY

Recommendation 1: Explore and support community-appropriate, small-scale food production.

1. Recognize and use local food as a legitimate community and economic development strategy.
2. Assess interests and issues of Hispanic, beginning farmer, and minority communities.
3. Identify and consider new or alternative small-scale production models and strategies.
4. Encourage development of more local food and farm entrepreneurial opportunities, specifically more farm stands, U-pick options, and greenhouse operations.
5. Develop solutions that address water (availability, cost) issues.

Recommendation 2: Increase number of venues buying and selling local or regional food.

1. Increase the amount of local or regionally produced food available in grocery stores and restaurants.
2. Explore interest in school-based food programs - summer lunch, snack programs, Farm-to-school program, and gardens. Establish programs where feasible.
3. Identify large purchasers of food, engage and educate them about purchasing local or regional food - e.g. school districts, hospital, retailers.

Recommendation 3: Expand educational opportunities for community members.

1. Identify existing, or develop educational resources to build knowledge about hunting, fishing and harvesting wild foods; specific areas might include identification, cooking, preservation, rights and responsibilities.
2. Identify and coordinate with nutrition educators and experts to increase understanding and the practice of healthy eating habits.
3. Identify and increase use of food growing and gardening education resources, especially for children, community and home gardeners.
4. Expand and coordinate food preservation education and outreach activities.
5. Expand agricultural opportunities for youth, focusing on new and alternative crops, value-added ventures, and business education.

Recommendation 4: Increase outreach and networking around local food and farm opportunities.

1. Develop and implement a public education campaign on the benefits of healthy eating habits and a local food system.
2. Establish a communication and support network to facilitate the sharing of ideas and resources.
3. Connect with regional and state networks to further community food and farm efforts
4. Conduct or share local purchasing training and education for retail establishments

**Recommendation 5: Ensure regular access to a stable fresh food supply for all citizens year-round.**

1. Explore use and need for emergency food sources, e.g. pantries, congregate meal sites
2. Increase the amount of fresh food available at food pantries
3. Ensure that food is considered in Morrow County emergency management plans
4. Increase knowledge and understanding of the SNAP program
5. Establish programs that feed children including summer lunch, fresh snacks, breakfast, dinner and weekend meals
6. Establish retail venues with fresh healthy food that accept WIC Fruit and Veggie Vouchers, Farm-Direct Nutrition coupons and SNAP in every community.
7. Establish appropriate gleaning opportunities at various levels the food system (whether field, farmers' market, or food processing or retail facilities).
CHAPTER 4—UMATILLA COUNTY

Introduction

Blessed by an envious variety of soils, climates, water sources, farm types, sizes and communities, Umatilla County is one of the greatest agricultural producers in the state (second behind Marion County), and contains some of the only "prime" (Class 2) farmland east of the Willamette Valley (as defined in the NRCS National Soil Survey Handbook, 1996). It is large, diverse and relatively well-off, beyond just food and agriculture. Because of the complexity and diversity in this county, the scope of this chapter is very limited. A much deeper dialogue and exploration is needed to bring together the people, ideas, assets and opportunities that such a complex area, and food system deserve.

A SENSE OF PLACE. Umatilla County is bounded on its eastern edge by the Blue Mountain range, the diminished Reservation of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indians (CTUIR) and Union County. The Columbia River flows along its north edge, Morrow County lies west, and Grant is its south boundary.

The Blue Mountains span a wide arc from Washington in the north south across the county and state-line, into neighboring Grant County, and westward into Wheeler County, the fourth County of our Community Food Assessment. These mountains add much to the region, beyond recreation, including higher elevation, precipitation, soil depth, and greatly differing growing challenges and opportunities. Umatilla topography ranges in elevation from 4,193 feet at their summit down to 296 feet at the town of Umatilla. Proceeding west across the uplands from 'The Blues' are large dry land wheat and cattle operations, as well as many irrigated large and small-scale orchards, fruit and vegetable farms and vineyards.

The headwaters of the Umatilla River emanate from the Blue Mountains and flows approximately 85 miles west to the tiny town of Umatilla and into the Columbia River. This river now feeds crops and salmon, a fairly recently improved situation. Water rights, in-
stream flows and irrigation are augmented by waters from two reservoirs, Cold Springs and McKay, and the Columbia River, arrived at through serious negotiation between water-rights holders, the Tribes and natural resource agencies. These negotiations created strong relationships and a positive foundation for interaction and development in many arenas.

Umatilla precipitation ranges from an average of approximately 8 inches a year in low-lying Hermiston to just over 18” in Weston at the base of the Blue Mountains (Taylor, 2000). Umatilla County has more surface water than the other three counties, with access to the Columbia and Umatilla Rivers, and many year-round and ephemeral streams. Groundwater is used for irrigation in the west end - which is also designated as a "Critical Groundwater Area", with high rates of nitrate pollution and rapidly diminishing water tables. There is a small, but rising competition between agriculture, municipal and economic needs in this area.

The above attributes comprise the county's basic natural resources, the foundation of the quality of life and wealth of the area.

People

People -the main reason for having a CFA conversation! The catalysts for solving hunger and food security issues, and implementers of projects for thriving local food and farms, in this County, there are many people doing all of this and more.

A demographic profile shows Umatilla is the most diverse county of the four included in our Community Food Assessment, with significant number of Hispanic, Native Americans and other minorities among it ranks. Its 2007 population was 78,526, making it also the most densely populated county in eastern Oregon.

Umatilla is the fortunate home to over 20% Hispanic, Native American and other minorities. This diversity can be a tangible asset when, and if, integration and interaction of individuals, cultures and ideas are incorporated for new, adaptive ways of doing things. As an example of entrepreneurial exploitation, almost 50% of the Pendleton Farmers' Market growers are of other minority cultures, filling a gap in the farm-direct agricultural niche that conventional growers have not yet.

Three-quarters of the entire region's population lives in Umatilla County, and three-quarters of these live in the "micropolitan" areas of Pendleton Hermiston and Milton-Freewater. Roughly 40 miles from each other, these municipalities house, educate, feed and employ almost equal numbers of Umatilla Co. residents with varying degrees of success. Each has a unique social and physical climate, different physical and environmental assets, population compositions, economic drivers and capacity to raise, distribute and sell food.
WEALTH. Larger urban areas generally bring opportunities - larger markets, more economic activity and employment, greater diversity, and higher education levels to name a few. This seems to hold true especially for Hermiston and Pendleton, and Milton-Freewater to a lesser degree (it has a lower median income and more seasonal employment than the other two towns).

As mentioned earlier, the county's main economic drivers are not agricultural (even though Umatilla is the second largest producer in the state) but "other services" which, when combined with government and health care services, totals over 50% of the employment opportunities. Other strong sectors (>10% each) included retail/wholesale and undefined self-employment. The remaining 15% including agriculture, forestry, manufacturing, construction and transportation-related jobs all contributed to a median household income of $42,338 (a real wage of $34,107) in 2008 (NW Indicators).

Unpublished wages appear to have gone up in 2010, but the latest confirmed seasonally adjusted unemployment figures have reached 9.7% (OR state rate is 10.5%), placing 15% of County families under the federal poverty rate, including 8.7% of the elderly and 20.7% of the children. For more hunger and food statistics, please see "ADDRESSING HUNGER in Umatilla County, 2009", page 43.

And while "imported" employers and financial resources are important, as are far-flung customers, a lively, parallel scale-appropriate local economy is encouraged. The goal is to give individuals and communities more choice and control over basic needs (like food), and their quality of life and well-being.

"We should practice "economic gardening", cultivating local businesses and agricultural jobs that contribute back to the community."  
- Pilot Rock FEAST participant

for Disease Control, 2007). Individuals surveyed seem to be more aware of the dangers related to this situation; school districts, health providers, farmers' market surveys, and the CFA consumer surveys show high interest in gardening and food preservation, as well as wild food identification. Education levels are also usual implicated in individual health and nutrition statistics, which for this county are very poor.

EDUCATION. Academic education and matriculation rates in Umatilla County are similar to the other counties for high school, college and upper level graduates and reflect the level and type of employment/income that can be commanded or recruited.

Public schools work hard to provide up-to-date curricula and teachers. A few of the smaller independent Umatilla County academic institutions or districts are taking steps to expand or create curriculums and educational opportunities relating to gardening and healthy food production and consumption. These include Umatilla SD, and Umatilla-Morrow Headstart pre-K programs. In addition to agriculture classes (FFA) new options include garden-to-cafeteria type curricula that include greenhouse and garden box growing, wildlife gardening, cooking and nutrition education. This has begun to influence school meal programs, with innovative directors creating linkages between health, nutrition, and local food production.

PUBLIC EDUCATION. OSU programs such as Master Gardeners, 4-H, Master Food Preservers, Small Farms, and Family Nutrition Education Programs are all resources to be requested of the County and OSU. Funding for some of them has been cut in the rural areas but at present several programs provide important and accessible adult, family and child education. The OSU Master Gardener program has experienced a marked increase in the number of gardens and class participation across this county. New
faculty and volunteers have also been trained in the Master Food Preservers’ curriculum as well, making it available on a limited basis for the entire region. Blue Mountain Community College also serves food and farming educational needs which could expand with demand.

CONNECTIONS. During the course of this assessment, community conversations and exploration led to a deeper regard for the complexity of a food system and everyone’s role in it. Together, people saw new opportunities, created associations, developed relationships, and optimize mutual circumstances; they dream dreams, have vision and work to get things done.

Critical to this asset-development process (more simply known as brainstorming and collaboration), several "FEASTS" (Food Education Agriculture Solutions Together), community food systems meetings were organized. Three were held in Umatilla County communities-Hermiston, Mission and Pilot Rock. The Umatilla Indian Reservation held the county's first FEAST, and began new conversations, relationships and activities that launched local food organizing to expand CTUIR's local food system services. Since then, individuals and groups in these communities have continued to meet and move toward a positive vision of their local food system and future. We were not able to visit with or gain direct information from Hispanic individuals or communities to better understand their needs or opportunities, but recommend that this happens in the future.

With a growing understanding of the connections between individual and community health and well-being, the city of Pilot Rock is organizing many activities around local food and agricultural opportunities. This community held their own FEAST workshop, building on the community vision and plans which include a comprehensive "food center" providing a community gathering place of business development, education programs, meal-preparation and partaking, supported by local growers, gardens, and farmers’ market.

"The ultimate goal is to become as self-sustaining as possible." - Mayor of Pilot Rock

a group called the Columbia Plateau Food Links. This group is a multi-disciplinary, multi-agency group that stands as the county's first "local foods" group, modeled after those seen in western OR and elsewhere. (A Wheeler County group has also converged to become that county's first local food steering committee). The Columbia Plateau Food Links group provides a venue for communication, planning, project development and celebration. As might be expected, social networking tools - a web site and FaceBook page - have also been developed. Such resources provide the beginnings of a network of education and outreach, of resource sharing and relationship-building. This type of social network mimics the local food system and is one avenue for generating new social and financial capital.

County residents and decision-makers would do well to develop a stronger sense of county cohesion from border-to-border, mending fences and building bridges between the three big towns, and the many county-wide organizations, public and private institutions and individuals.

The above information paints a rough but discernible picture of economic and social opportunity for Umatilla County. People concerned and involved with the local farming and food economy, and their health and nutritional needs appear poised to take off in a food-positive direction with the appropriate encouragement and inputs.
Agriculture

Umatilla has been called the "Central Valley of Oregon" for its agricultural wealth and diversity. An overview of the agricultural system of today (2007) shows this county ranked first in the state in the production of grains, oilseed and legumes (peas!); first in vegetables, and in field and grass seed crops. Bees, barley and pheasants stand out as other significant crops. By most accounts Umatilla farms have the capacity to produce enough of all the basic food needs for everyone in the entire region (roughly 88,000) - and many more. Going "by the numbers", it's clear that the County contains significant large-scale conventional agricultural production. It is worth reiterating that the average expenses and net incomes achieved per acre - over $27,000 in production expenses, with what appears to be just $62 of net income earned after the thousands of dollars of collective inputs.

FARMS IN UMATILLA COUNTY

1,658 farms on 1,447,321 acres.

Estimated value of land and building per farm is approx. **$1.0 million**, or **$1,157** per acre.

Total production expenses in the county are **$270 million**; average production expenses per farm is **$162,674** or **$27,186** per acre.

Total net cash income in the county is **$90 million**; averaging **$54,477** per farm or **$62** per acre.

The U.S. Agriculture Census data (2007) also showed that in Umatilla County, 525 farms grow fruits, vegetables and nuts on 41,211 acres. And is this food locally available? Yes! Unlike other counties of our study there are growing numbers of healthy, large and small farms which sold directly to the public.

LOCAL MELONS AT LOCAL FARM STAND

These farms reported a 450% increase in the total value of their sales from 2002, up to $3,592,000 (2007 US Agriculture Census). They grow everything from grapes to grains (sometimes both), predominantly fresh produce crops, marketed through a variety of farm-direct means

ALTERNATIVE AG. It is the smaller-scale, farm-direct "agri-prenural" segment of the agricultural world that our Community Food Assessment concentrated on. These growers, processors and retailers are flexible and responsive to individual growers' needs, and are significant and promising players for improving both community and regional food consumption, and the redevelopment of the local food system.

"I switched to organic as both a personal food and farming choice, because of my values and beliefs. I earn more on my smallish plot without having to get more land, since organics fetch twice the price, and the inputs don't cost so much."
- Umatilla wheat farmer

And with expanding demand the possibilities for small production, micro-processing, distribution and sales are re-germinating.
To compare and contrast our early days...
A look at the sidebar opposite, an historic summary of the local food and farming system from the Oregon Bureau of Labor, shows that 100 years ago food was local, and most towns had farms and facilities to accomplish the business of feeding the community. Mid-twentieth-century maps (1950’s) show continued food system expansion with six poultry processing facilities, canneries, meat packing houses and other enterprises being developed in Umatilla County.

Today, there are only a handful of supporting food facilities, from 1-2 fresh-pack frozen foods facilities, a large flour mill, and a flour processing and manufacturing company, a few small to mid-sized local meat processors, and several small custom slaughter companies. Of these privately held meat packing and processing facilities, none supports the local food system as a whole.

All of the Umatilla growers (36) who responded to our surveys are aware of the economic opportunities in more direct-marketing and value-added activities: most of them sell in either the local and/or regional markets, using all manner of production (conventional, organic, transition, free range, grass-fed, sustainable...).

Of the three-quarters of growers responding to our surveys, half farm on less than 40 acres and the other half on over 1000 acres; the remaining

**UMATILLA COUNTY, 1910**

**Food & Farming Industries**

Athena - 2 harness shops, 4 groceries, 1 bakery, 4 blacksmiths, 1 flour and 2 feed mills, and 2 warehouses.

Echo - creamery, grocery store, grist mill, a wool scouring plant, 2 alfalfa meal mills, a chop mill, 7 warehouses.

Freewater - shipped 39,000 crates of strawberries, dewberries and cherries, thirty carloads of pears, 50 of peaches, 100 of prunes and 200 carloads of apples.

Hermiston - principal agriculture industries were dairying and horticulture; food and farm industries included 2 general merchandise stores, 3 groceries, 2 restaurants, 2 meat markets, 1 blacksmith shop, and 3 confectionery stores.

Pendleton - principal industries were diversified farming, horticulture, and stock-raising, with 2 flouring mills, a woolen mill, ice and cold storage plant, 2 cigar factories, a brewery, 2 creameries, 10 grocery stores, 2 candy stores, a bakery, 3 farming implement stores, 3 chop mills, and a meat packing plant.

According to the field inspector of the day, "throughout the County there are good openings for investment in more creameries, canneries, paper mill, packing plant, processing plant, soap factory and a tannery."

**Oregon Bureau of Labor Biennial Report, 1911**
one-quarter of them farm acreages between 41 acres and 1000. Two-thirds of all the responding farmers plan to increase both acreage and diversity of crops, with 1/3 planning to stay at the same level. This is good news, especially in combination with the fact that no one proposes to sell their farm.

There are a number of producer-recognized constraints, including the cost of labor, lack of consumer awareness and education about the availability, value and cost of producing local food (labor, time, lack of processing and distribution facilities), and challenges in being one's own "broker" establishing contracts and communications with retail/institutional buyers.

Food and farm industry supports such as greenhouses, warehouses, distribution and processing choices would add to the productivity, viability, value and availability of local food production.

POLICY and PLANNING. There is other research examining the possibilities - a recent OSU study corroborates the fact that smalls farms (between 10 and 40 acres) can be highly productive and economically viable in this region. (Sorte, et al, 2009). Umatilla County residents are exploring options to reduce allowable farm size from 80 acres (established through Oregon land use planning in 1993) to 10, 20, and 40-acre parcels. This would make access to land easier for more beginning and disadvantaged farmers, and though not without its challenges, this team feels such changes could provide new important agricultural options for the sons and daughters of our country, and the eating public.

With the continued growth in diverse agriculture practices in this county comes the need for planning that expands the availability of food resources, allowing infrastructure, entrepreneurial advancement and venues for obtaining local food production to be explored, developed and grown.

MIXED BLESSINGS - WHEAT, WINE, WATER & WIND

Other access-related local food and farm policy issues came to light in our investigation: purported denial of farm stand permits if selling another’s’ produce on personal property within the Exclusive Farm Unit (EFU); "urban livestock" (poultry, waterfowl or rabbit keeping) being illegal within rural residential areas; lack of acceptance for community and school gardens in "green space" designations; fruit tree industry protections that could negatively impact backyard fruit tree owners; and of course, competition for water rights between municipalities and agricultural operations.
These are complicated issues and opportunities in our region that may affect the availability, access and affordability of fresh food in areas with food needs and food assets.

These examples also point to a need for concerted food policy development, perhaps a food policy council, in the County. Neither urban or community development plans, economic development plans, nor emergency management plans have included sustainable access to fresh healthy local food as a part of their work. With only three days' of food supply in any grocery store, this basic need and right is just as important to plan for as water, energy, employment and housing.

Assuming the opportunities outweigh the risks and constraints, farm-direct food production may be driven by increasing consumer demand. Our surveys (in this and all three other counties) show a strong tendency to care about and buy local foods where available. Now boasting four farmers' markets of varying sizes and shapes, Umatilla Co. consumers (25%) say more are needed. However, of even greater interest or demand are local foods in restaurants (55%), in consumer cooperatives and/or independent grocery stores (40%), and with farm-to-school programs (41%).

'BUY LOCAL', the motto of a national marketing is a trend that might be well-delivered and received here, especially if county-wide. With the expanding line of local products and venues for market/purchase, what's needed, according to producers surveyed, is to expand consumer demand for and education about local agricultural products. County decision-makers, local organizations, Chambers, businesses and associations have a potentially rewarding, self-serving opportunity to create a public education, "buy local" promotion and marketing campaign teaching residents the value of shopping locally, of buying from regionally-based businesses, of eating locally-produced healthy foods.

Happily, some these very things are beginning to happen in Umatilla County.

Food

This section deals with Umatilla county's access to local food - where people get it and how.

Of the four counties studied, this is the only county that is not classified as a "food desert" (where residents must drive more than 10 miles to a grocery store; Rural Sociological Society, 2007). And yet, hunger was identified as a somewhat serious (55.9%) or extremely serious (15.7%) problem in Umatilla communities. And, a majority (90%) of those surveyed think poor quality diets is a "somewhat" or "extremely" serious issue here. Why is that so? Most resident here are quite fortunate in their food choices. This is a generalized situation, however, for several small outlying communities have no healthy retail food options, and live in very localized 'food deserts, depending on convenience store and gas station food, and/or transportation to stores elsewhere.

GROCERY STORES. One long-time resident of Pendleton stated that through the late 1970's, there were roughly seventeen small full-service neighborhood grocery stores in this town selling many local products. This town now hosts three major regional or national grocery chains, plus a number of independent grocery retailers, with Hermiston and Milton-Freewater close behind, numbers-wise. Gone however, are the healthy neighborhood corner stores, and most residents must get in their cars to drive to the stores serving food that also travelled great distances.

Pilot Rock and Umatilla, two sizable towns, have adequate grocery stores that struggle to maintain their customer base and fair prices.
Residents of Adams, Athena, Dale, Echo, Stanfield, Ukiah and Weston have no access to good grocery food at any price.

The presence of corporate mega-store Wal-Mart has created serious competition with other grocery chains and independents, and draws customers from great distances. Even communities outside Umatilla County are impacted by the presence of Wal-Mart in Hermiston, Pendleton, Walla Walla and the Tri-Cities.

"I feel sad when people tell me they only come to shop because they 'forgot an onion and happened to be in town' - my store is used as a convenience store, people do most of their shopping where they work."

- Pilot Rock Grocer

The unfortunate reality is that people often believe that chains and larger food stores are less expensive, which isn't necessarily so, especially if we consider the valuable time and energy spent driving long distances adding to the costs and hurting the own local economy. As one local grocer reported (and we've seen elsewhere), "'market basket pricing' at my store show my prices are actually slightly lower than Safeway, and just slightly higher than Wal-Mart for similar products."

The paradox is that while big-box stores often provide residents from near and far with so-called affordable (if not the most local or nutritious) foods, they also threaten local food supplies over the longer-term if local competitors are driven out of business. Loss of support for rural grocery stores is an increasingly serious problem here and around the nation.

To close the discussion of retail grocers on a positive note, consumers survey respondents' in this county state their greatest concerns about the food they eat are price, locally grown, and pesticide free/safe food, in that order. Both Hermiston and Pendleton have fledgling health food stores that now purchase directly from the farm. Hopefully, those stores and will prosper and market themselves to the 45% of consumers who say want more local independent and/or cooperative stores in the region.

Our research and that of the Oregon Downtown Development Association (ODDA) shows that even with these new and existing grocery stores, the largest identified retail food gap/economic opportunity in the county continues to be local, "natural", or health food availability. In their assessment of economic opportunities, ODDA identified an annual "leakage" (dollars moving out of the target market area) of over $47 million for purchases of local, natural foods and/or specialty food products (ODDA, 2007). This equates to potential profit for enterprising local food retailers.

FARM-DIRECT. Farm stands are traditional sources of farm-direct, safe and affordable local food. Though their numbers are dwindling, over a dozen farmers/ farm stands carrying local fruits and veggies, and several u-pick options provide Umatilla consumers a broad array of affordable local produce, and alternative purchasing options with WIC and FDNP.

Farmers’ markets are becoming another source of similar foods. Hermiston, Pendleton and Pilot Rock Farmers' Markets offer fresh produced with local farmers, students and backyard gardeners selling directly to their customers. The latest market in Umatilla provides new farm-direct options for the north-end consumers and growers. Of these four markets, only Pendleton is approved for SNAP, WIC and the farm-Direct Nutrition Program coupons (FDNP).

Market shoppers surveyed in Pendleton are now requesting more diversity - grains, legumes,
poultry and cheese. Even with its relatively visible presence, according to our survey, nearly 23% of potential customers didn't know where or when to find local produce.

PENDLETON FARMERS’ MARKET VENDOR

Another obvious obstacle to purchasing local food in Umatilla County is not availability, but the cost - and/or the perception of cost associated with local foods. Just as we believe larger chain stores offer the best deals, so do residents believe that local food is more expensive. Again this is a relative figure, with many factors to weigh beyond, but including, one's pocketbook. And this is where more conversation, exploration and education are necessary.

There are other farm-direct options for getting your chops around local product - restaurants, schools and...hospitals! That's right, farm-to-institution purchasing means that even hospital food has taken a turn for the better. Hermiston's Good Shepherd is home to a nationally recognized hospital food program providing both patient and in-house café customers with healthy, cost-effective, local made-to-order meals. Several independent schools have long purchased from local growers. Umatilla School District has recently joined hands with local organizers to expand their school garden and begin a formal farm-to-school purchasing program. Farmers and customers alike are benefitting from these nascent efforts. And not least, of course, this county has a number of restaurants featuring local farm products. All of these local purchasers note that they would like much more locally-grown food and have had difficulty finding and contracting farmers who can meet their needs.

GROW YOUR OWN. Residents here are no strangers to growing their own groceries - our consumer questionnaire showed that more than 60% of the 100-plus respondents raise some of their own food in a home garden or get it from a community garden. Home and community gardens are present in many forms and fashions - ranging from the educational gardens of OSU Master Gardens in Pendleton and Hermiston, to church, school and community/market gardens in nearly every town on the map.

One example, the Pilot Rock Community Gardens, are part and parcel of enhancing food security, but the bigger mission reaches far beyond into community, youth and local economic development. Organizers worked closely with the school, the farmers' market and new food pantry to teach, grow, share and sell the produce. In the process they're growing much more than food.

"The vision is for full-circle gardening - from kitchen to compost to garden and round again; from scraps to soil to soup." ~
Pilot Rock local foods organizer

Over the past several years the Umatilla Indian Reservation garden (the 'Garden of Eatin') has seen increased use and acceptance of their community garden, which serves mainly children. They now have plans for gardens in each community, and have instituted a new 4-H program to grow a new generation of children with connections to the land.

Several additional gardens around the region are in early growth stages, supported in part by a
2010 CAPECO grant funding for infrastructural developments. We found that most of the community gardens donate a portion of their harvest to a local food pantry, needy families, or other community food or meal programs (senior centers, summer meals, church soup kitchens). It appears that gardens are important food sources and will continue to grow and thrive with more exposure, resources, and possibly formal organization.

EMERGENCY FOOD. In addition to stores and farmers markets, hunting, gathering and growing food, the county contains ten emergency food pantries and congregate meal sites, as well as senior emergency boxes and the Tribal Commodities program, all supported by the regional food bank network and generous community members. CAPECO delivers nearly a million pounds of food to these County entities annually who, in turn, serve hundreds of individuals and families over 18,000 food boxes (2009)..."because no one should be hungry". It appears many still are.

"Six months ago I thought Pilot Rock didn't have that huge a need - now we know there are a lot of families just eking by"

Pantry volunteer

Many Umatilla people currently living in poverty (17% kids, 8.7% seniors) could be ensured additional hunger and nutrition support through federal feeding programs. As seen in the Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force fact sheet (p. 43), sixty percent of the county's children are eligible for free and reduced price lunches; if all participated, nearly 3,000 more children would eat better and save family money, and bring an additional $1.3 million to school district meal programs. The same can be said for SNAP (food stamp) usage - in 2008 nearly 12,000 Umatilla County people received this assistance. If all who were eligible enrolled, the county would have received over five million more dollars that year, much of which would have provided additional food as well as leveraging cash flow to the local economy.

"I know this sounds strange coming from someone who is disabled, but sometimes the working class resentment seems so great that I think it would be better for the sick among us to be left to die. But since the economy has slumped, even working people need help"

Pantry interviewee

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY. Beyond food security and hunger, there is another growing food movement here and around the nation and globe is known as "food sovereignty". It is associated with protecting and maintaining access to traditional and indigenous food sources, protecting "heritage", heirloom, and other culturally important foods, wild-harvested, hand-crafted, or genetically unadulterated.

Perhaps aligning with this is the fact that approximately 44% of the consumers surveyed in this county are "somewhat" or "very" dependent on hunting, fishing and wild-harvesting. Sixty-percent stated various ways that would facilitate them eating more wild foods, including education, identification, cooking and policy changes. And what do they do with local fresh foods? More than 70% of respondents preserve, dry, can or freeze food, and approximately 45% want more education on how to do those things.

On the Umatilla Indian Reservation food sovereignty is part of a First Foods movement. Promoting a comprehensive system of education, land use planning and cultural enhancement by protecting (and eating) indigenous roots, shoots and berries, deer, elk and salmon, they also guard treaty rights, their culture, native species and the Earth.
UMATILLA COUNTY Oregon

- In these hard economic times, many more people are hungry, especially children and seniors.
- Federal food programs can help feed people and provide economic stimulus for local economies.
- Umatilla County could bring in millions more federal dollars by reaching more eligible people.

**School Lunches, Breakfast, & Summer Meals**

In 2008 ~59% of all students were eligible for free and reduced price meals in Umatilla County. Of those who ate lunch:

- 58% of them received breakfast.
- 23% ate meals through the Summer Food Program.

If all who were eligible for free or reduced price lunch were served, Umatilla County would have received an additional $1.3 million in federal dollars a year and fed an additional 2,978 eligible low-income children.

**SNAP/ Food Stamps**

In 2008 ~

- 11,958 people received SNAP/food stamps per month in Umatilla County.
- $12.9 million federal dollars were brought into the local economy.

If all eligible people were enrolled in SNAP, Umatilla County would have received an additional $419,390 dollars each month in federal money and 537 additional people would have received help putting food on the table.

**HOW YOU CAN HELP**

- Support public policies that help low-income people meet their basic needs.
- Support efforts to reach more people through federal food assistance programs.
- Refer to the Act to End Hunger for more ideas to address hunger in your county.

For specific information visit www.oregonhunger.org

**Women, Infants & Children Program (WIC)**

In 2008, WIC served 6,836 pregnant or breastfeeding women, infants and children * under five, representing 45% of all pregnant women (compared to 40% statewide average).

**Emergency Food Assistance**

In 2008, 17,714 food boxes and 2 congregate meal sites provided emergency food to help families make ends meet.

**Farm Direct Nutrition Program**

Seniors and WIC families redeemed $75,518 in coupons to buy fresh produce in 2008, which supported local farmers.

**Afterschool Meals & Snacks**

During the 2007/08 school year, 30,311 suppers were served in high need areas that brought $79,320 federal dollars into county school districts.

* WIC data for Umatilla County cannot be extracted from Umatilla – Morrow Head Start data

**Umatilla County Demographic Information**

- Total Population: 72,380
- Children 0-18 years: 18,673
- People in Poverty: 10,785 (14.9%)
- Children in Poverty: 3,193 (17.1%)
- People living at or below 185% of Poverty: 26,491 (36.6%)
CONCLUSION

To its great fortune, Umatilla County is rich in many, many ways. Community food security, self-sufficiency even, is well within reach with continued, prioritized work on the local food system.

Generally, production agriculture is alive and well but is not designed to reverse the exported flow of goods to meet local or regional demand. Nor are we suggesting it should. That said, agricultural opportunities here are varied and diversifying, and the capacity for all-scales of growth is large. Local growers face challenges of labor and input costs, water, climate and customer demand. But the small-and-growing cadre of farm-direct and alternative producers is filling a local demand, creating a new niche and taking charge of their profit margins by marketing, pricing and selling according to their costs, straight to their customers. Essential to this is a parallel growth in food/farm system supports such as season-extending technologies, warehousing, distribution, and processing facilities for small-scale producers. With appropriate-scale infrastructure they could almost certainly meet demand in the 4-county service-area, and potentially, a broader regional demand. Additional institutional sales could spur a year-round supply of fruits and vegetables, and greater affordability and stability in markets and prices.

Umatilla consumers are also more aware and in pursuit of local food choices than in other counties. Socio-economic factors that influence buying habits, such as wages and education, could be further improved through local efforts over time. Opportunities for making local foods more accessible and affordable include more purchasing options (new locations, alternative purchasing "currency" e.g. SNAP, FDNP and WIC Veggie Vouchers), more knowledge about what to do with fresh whole foods, and increased awareness of the value of choosing this type of food.

Increased availability, accessibility and affordability is also occurring with home, school and community gardens. These gardens provide egalitarian access to education, food, camaraderie, beauty, practical farming skills and a sense of community. Resources for supporting and expanding these efforts are available from many sources, and with continued networking may be put to work. Composting of food and agricultural wastes would help close the loop and create a more sustainable food system.

With every advancement in local food, those most in need and least able to access it must be considered. Emergency food provision is optimally expanded and connected to local food resources through appropriate gleaning, processing, improved distribution, and food reclamation.

Which brings us to a final point regarding connectivity, networking and collaboration. The towns of Hermiston, Pendleton and Milton-Freewater are unique in character and have much to offer the county as a whole, in terms of growth in population, food consumption and production, agricultural infrastructure and development. Development opportunities may depend on deeper sharing of information, wealth, ideas and resources: county-level measures could be taken to strengthen relationships and project development among various entities. Groups like the Columbia Plateau Food Links provide "non-sectarian" local foods network and open forums for people of differing backgrounds and agendas to come together to learn, share and grow new ideas.

The following Opportunities, derived from direct input, anecdote and analysis, are just the spring-board for future action plans built by informed residents, advocates and stakeholders.
OPPORTUNITIES IN UMATILLA COUNTY

**Recommendation 1:** Recognize the community and economic value of a diversified local food system as a legitimate county-wide development strategy.

1. Explore and encourage scale-appropriate funding, resource development, and policy and zoning mechanisms for expanding and locating local food production, facilities, and marketing and purchasing options.

2. Ensure that a safe, adequate, sustainable and nutritional food supply is considered in community development and emergency management plans.

**Recommendation 2:** Increase production and availability of local or regionally produced food.

1. Explore funding, training and technical supports for season-extending technologies and year-round produce growing and marketing.

2. Increase local food system infrastructure including produce and grain storage and processing; meat slaughter and processing units, including poultry, local distribution options.

3. Identify and encourage more farm-direct growers of diverse and alternative crops, especially chicken, grains, legumes and other differentiated food crops.

**Recommendation 3:** Expand farm-direct marketing opportunities.

1. Increase farm-direct purchasing and marketing venues and contracts in a) retail grocery stores, b) restaurants, c) local institutions; d) CSAs, e) U-pick and f) value-added enterprises.

2. Identify large purchasers of food and engage them in local or regional food purchasing dialogue.

3. Develop and conduct producer-purchaser work groups and workshops.

4. Explore and develop producer cooperatives (delivery, purchasing, marketing) where feasible.

5. Sustain and expand farm-direct marketing venues such as farmers' markets, farm stands.

**Recommendation 4:** Expand education opportunities around local food and farming.

1. Increase both school-based and community-based education and awareness programs that emphasize the interconnected nature of individual, community, economic and natural resource health.

2. Identify and coordinate with existing nutrition educators and experts to increase understanding and the practice of healthy eating habits.

3. Explore certification, education and internship opportunities for local farm-direct producers.
4. Identify existing, or develop new educational resources to build knowledge about hunting, fishing and harvesting wild foods; specific areas might include identification, cooking, preservation, rights and responsibilities.

5. Identify current and new gardening and agricultural education resources for youth and home gardeners, and increase use of those resources.

6. Identify, distribute and/or implement cooking and meal planning materials and curricula at food pantries, farmers’ markets and other public venues

**Recommendation 5:** Increase outreach and networking about the benefits and value of a strong local food system.

1. Develop and implement public education campaigns, workshops and conferences on the benefits of healthy eating habits, local purchasing ("buy local"), and local food systems.

2. Establish, or strengthen existing county-wide development strategies and communications between public and private organizations that are involved in food system activities.

3. Support expansion and viability of the local foods network, the Columbia Plateau Food Links to facilitate sharing of local food and farming ideas and resources.

4. Connect with other regional and state networks to further community food and farm efforts.

**Recommendation 6:** Ensure regular access to a stable fresh food supply for low-income citizens year-round.

1. Increase understanding and use of nutrition access programs including SNAP, WIC and FDNP.

2. Establish programs that feed children including summer lunch, fresh snacks, breakfast, dinner and weekend meals where feasible.

3. Increase the amount of fresh food available at food pantries.

4. Establish WIC Fruit and Veggie Voucher retailers in every community.

5. Explore "Healthy Corner Stores" or equivalent program to support underserved neighborhoods and communities.

6. Implement farm-to-school programs where feasible.

7. Establish appropriate gleaning options at all levels of the food system, when and wherever possible.
CHAPTER 5—WHEELER COUNTY

CATTLE, HORSES AND SHEEP GRAZING A HILLSIDE IN WHEELER COUNTY

Introduction

The Northern Paiute and Warm Springs tribes originally inhabited the rugged country that now includes Wheeler County. It is an ever changing landscape, ranging from high elevation juniper, sagebrush and pine plateaus down to the lush river and creek bottoms. This diversity of natural resources is what brought the first white settlers to the region in the mid 19th century.

Wheeler County is perhaps most well known for the extraordinary deposits of prehistoric fossils contained within its borders. It is home to the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument and the Painted Hills, a strikingly beautiful landscape. The Blue Mountains encompass the northeast corner of the county and the Ochoco Mountains rise up along the southern flank. The John Day River makes several large loops through the middle of the County, and also makes up part of the eastern and western border. To the north is Gilliam County and the southern reach of Columbia Plateau wheat country.

Like most of Oregon east of the Cascades, Wheeler County is arid. In the southern end of the County, Mitchell averages 11 inches of precipitation a year and Fossil gets a little over 15 inches. The temperature range has high fluctuations, both seasonally and daily. It is characterized by hot summers and cold winters, yet because of its high elevation much of the County cools down on summer nights (Taylor, 2000).

Wheeler County is the least populous county in the state of Oregon with only 1,363 people (Indicators Northwest, 2008). There are fewer people living within its borders now than there were in the early and mid 20th century. Isolation is a way of life for many here. Only 49% of residents live Fossil, Mitchell and Spray, the three incorporated towns. The other half are scattered throughout the County, oftentimes far from community services.

Many of the industries that brought people to the region are now gone or have been reduced in
importance, resulting in out migration and a depopulation of the county. Ranching, mining, timber and stage roads were all reasons people came, stayed and permanently settled this region. Agriculture was, and still is, the primary economic driver in Wheeler County. Today over a third of the workforce is employed in farming, primarily cattle ranching (Indicators Northwest, 2007).

It is not only the terrain that is rugged; the people that call Wheeler County home are a tough, proud and independent lot. It is a unique place both within the state and the region. Hard times have been the norm for years, but Wheeler County appears to be better positioned to take control of its destiny than any of the other counties in the region.

People

Socioeconomic indicators show Wheeler County as one of the most struggling counties in Oregon. However, being on the ground and talking to the people that choose to make it their home uncovered a story than is much more nuanced than what the numbers tell us.

WEALTH. The numbers reveal that Wheeler County has an overall poverty rate of 16.8% and childhood poverty rate of 31.7%, very high percentages and in the case of childhood poverty, the highest in the state. Median household income is $32,231, the lowest in Oregon (Indicators Northwest, 2009). Common themes that arose were the lack of jobs, an aging population, concern for individuals and families scattered throughout the county struggling to make ends meet and the need to network and educate themselves so they can to move towards being more self-sufficient and food secure.

In June 2010 Wheeler County had an unemployment rate of 10.8%, slightly higher than the state average (Worksource Oregon, 2010). What was heard repeated again and again was, “there’s not any work.” In Spray, one interviewee was able to quickly recount every job in town, and whether they are year-round or seasonal. The year-round jobs were counted on two hands.

Admittedly, this is a complex issue, but the historical reliance on resource extraction plays a role, just as it does throughout much of the region. The economy is not well diversified, with some sectors not having a role at all. Wheeler County has the highest percentage of the workforce self-employed (54.8%) and employed in farming (26.8%) in the state. Government and other services round out the major employment sectors in the County (Indicators Northwest, 2008).

Many of those interviewed see tourism as an important growth sector. Wheeler County recently worked with Gilliam and Sherman Counties to launch the “John Day River Territory” to reinvent the region’s tourism presence. Tourism already plays an important role and brings a lot of money in and employs many people. A restaurant owner shared that the “trickle down is huge.” Many businesses see a big income increase in the summer, but in the winter times are hard.

While unemployment is a critical issue in Wheeler County, underemployment was also identified as an issue. Many people work temporary or part time service industry jobs, many of which are tied to tourism and only seasonal. These are the jobs that rarely come with benefits such as health insurance and retirement, assuring the issues will only get more difficult over time.

“There’s no money here. This is where you come to retire.” Rural resident
The lack of jobs is one of the factors contributing to the aging population. There are more people over the age of 65 living in Wheeler County than there are children under the age of 18. While many of these seniors are well taken care of, there were stories of shut-ins, widows and people living fixed incomes. One couple shared, “we only have our retirement; social security really isn’t enough.”

There were many stories of kids leaving right after high school and never looking back. “Kids can’t wait to get out of here. My husband was raised here and he couldn’t wait to get out of here. But when we retired we came back. He didn’t really want to come back, but now that we’re here we like it.”

Yet a few have bucked that trend. We did talk with several young parents and they shared that to make it work they are piecing together several part time jobs, and in the case of one young family near Spray, attempting to make a small diversified farm work. Wheeler County is a place where what may seem like a small success in a more populated area is a large success. A resident in Spray was thrilled about the return of several young families; “we are getting younger people. We just had two families move in, so that’s positive. We have four pregnant women right now. That’s pretty remarkable, because you have to go to Bend to see the doctor.”

Traveling and talking with residents with people throughout the County uncovered stories of people struggling to make ends meet, and oftentimes going without meals or other foregoing medical care just to make end meet each month. Senior citizens, in particular, were identified as a vulnerable group. And while several people interviewed were adamant about children being well cared for and well fed, not everyone agrees with that assertion. One resident in Spray shared “our children are not hurting here. They’re not going hungry. Everybody looks out for everybody else, especially the children.” Yet anecdotal evidence, high childhood poverty rates and poor access to fresh healthy food leads us to believe that children are a vulnerable group as well.

CAPACITY. Our first stakeholder meeting in Wheeler County was in January and over 15 people showed up. It was interesting to learn that some of the people sitting around the table didn’t know there was a community garden at the high school and others weren’t aware that there is a food pantry in town. The group concluded that there is a great need to communicate and network better.

In February over 35 people came together in Fossil for a FEAST workshop. This was a large turnout in Wheeler County. As we were told by a Spray resident, “a successful community meeting would have 20 people in attendance.” The theme of better communication and networking was again repeated, as was the critical need to educate everyone who lives in Wheeler County.

HEALTH. Wheeler County residents identified the need for education in many areas including cooking, gardening, meal preparation, nutrition and agricultural training to increase production and for youth. Some of these efforts are already underway including 4-H, FFA, the natural resource curriculum in Fossil and education for
food pantry clients. In addition, the town of Fossil entered and won a national "Biggest Loser" contest by eating and exercising together. It brought the town together around the issues, while creating comradely and a 'can-do' attitude. Much more, however, can and should be done to make sure the entire County is served through increased educational opportunities.

Our study gathered minimal health data, primarily from the U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC); this information combined with anecdotal evidence, provides an improving picture in Wheeler County. The CDC diabetes and obesity trends (2004-2007) show Wheeler alone of our 4 counties, improving their nutritional-health. And while nutrition was not identified as an educational need, 86.9% of respondents believe that poor quality diets are a somewhat or extremely serious issue. This number is much larger than the percentage of respondents that believe hunger is a somewhat or extremely serious issue (43.4%). This great difference leads us to believe that nutrition education is important, and perhaps due to the recent success of the Greatest Loser contest in Fossil, an achievable and potential high-impact opportunity that people in Wheeler are aware of and feel empowered to address.

For more information on food and hunger statistics please see "ADDRESSING HUNGER in Wheler County, 200"", page p.56.

Agriculture

There are numerous environmental factors that make crop production difficult in Wheeler County. It is an arid region, and the scarcity of water is the greatest limiting factor. Water for irrigation is more available along the John Day River and creeks throughout the County, but terrain and quality of soil are also pose barriers. There is very little low elevation flat land suitable for cultivation and the soil is very rocky throughout much of the County. Thus, it is not surprising that ranching emerged to be the primary agricultural activity.

There are over 757,000 acres of farm land in Wheeler County, of which 93% is rangeland. Cattle and calf operations are the most valuable agricultural sector in Wheeler County; worth $8.9 million a year. A far second in value is grains, oilseeds, dry beans and dry peas, worth $244,000 a year. There are only 56,261 acres of cropland, of which only 25% is irrigated (Census of Agriculture, 2007).

FARMS IN WHEELER COUNTY

<table>
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<tr>
<th>By the Numbers</th>
<th>164 farms on 757,780 acres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estimated value of land and building per farm is $2.1 million and $464 per acre.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total production expenses in the county are $8.9 million; average production expenses per farm is $54,049 and $12 per acre.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total net cash income in the county is $2.3 million; average of $13,754 per farm and $3 per acre.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Wheeler County has 164 farms at an average size of just over 4,600 acres; the largest average in the state (USDA Agriculture Census, 2007). Interviews with residents and ranchers revealed that most of these ranches are family owned and managed. A number worth noting is that Wheeler County farmers, at an average age of 61.9 years, are older than any other in the state. The average estimated value of the land and buildings is $2.1 million per farm. While the value of farms in Wheeler County is the highest in the state, the average net cash income is only $13,754 per farm. As farmers age, these
numbers raise questions about succession and the ability of subsequent generations to stay or return to the farm. In the past, it is much more likely that farms supported multiple generations than they do today. Inheriting the farm or starting out as a new farmer is fraught with financial barriers and complexities.

Access to meat slaughter and processing facilities is important in a ranching community, yet Wheeler County does not have one custom-exempt or USDA-inspected facility within its borders. There is a custom-exempt mobile slaughter out of Redmond that makes trips to ranches in the County. While it is more fortunate than most of central and eastern Oregon because of its proximity to a USDA-inspected facility in Prineville, it is still a serious issue frequently raised by many people throughout the region.

ALTERNATIVE AG. There are several ranches that have expanded operations, employing value added strategies to increase the viability of their farm. One local success story is Painted Hills Natural Beef. In the mid-90s, seven Wheeler County ranching families came together to discuss issues within the beef industry and how they might add more value to their beef. They formed a successful corporation and their products can be found all over the Northwest. Another success is Wilson Ranches; they diversified their operation with a foray into agritourism ten years ago, by opening up their home and ranch to visitors. The Wilson Ranch Retreat Bed & Breakfast is now an important component of their operation, and a big County asset. They (as well as another local B&B) buy vegetables, meat and personal care products for their guest house from small-scale growers and artisans in the County.

Cost of feed for animals was raised as an issue as well. The Hands run a small diversified farm near Spray. They grow a variety of produce, keep a milk cow and raise chickens, goats and pigs. “Cost of pig feed was high and it almost put us out of business.” They were able to find cheap feed, but now make monthly trips to Arlington, 190 miles round trip. While this may be an issue unique to the Hands, it leads to another larger issue in Wheeler County—distribution.

The movement of goods in to, out of and within Wheeler County is inefficient. At a meeting connecting growers with potential institutional buyers, the issue of distribution was raised by both sellers and buyers. Within the County there is no distribution network to move produce from local farms to buyers or communities. The lack of cold storage facilities was also discussed. OMSI’s Hancock Field Station in Clarno hopes to source as much food locally as possible, yet they can’t go to the farmers and farmers can’t easily or efficiently move produce to them. Developing a cold storage facility somewhere central was suggested to ease the distribution and lessen the possibility of spoilage. While the market for locally produced food continues to grow, solutions to these issues will only become more important. A grower in nearby Grant County recently bought a 20’ refrigerated truck, but it is too early to tell what role this will play in alleviating distribution issues in the region.

“You have to be able to adapt; take what you’ve got and use it!” Sally Potter
There are two small farms that are seeing success as well. Potter’s Starts & Nursery in Fossil and Davis Farms in Service Creek sell most of their produce within Wheeler County. Sally Potter grows flower and vegetables starts and a myriad of vegetables in her wood-heated greenhouses. She is in the second season of running a small Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operation and is one of the founders of the new Farmers’ Market in Fossil. Sheldon Davis grows a variety of produce on a bench above the John Day River. He has a farm stand and is also one of the founders of the Farmers’ Market. These farmers are currently the foundation of the nascent local food movement in Wheeler County and have taken on roles beyond growing food to assure the success of the movement. On July 14th the first market took place with five vendors selling to over 60 shoppers, quite a feat in a town of just over 400 people.

Davis and Potter, and the many backyard growers throughout the County are evidence that the potential to grow food for local consumption is possible. When asked what the greatest asset of Wheeler County is, nearly every answer was either the people or the John Day River. These small growers are evidence that tenacity and ingenuity will produce food. Fossil has a 90-day growing season, water is scarce and expensive and the town struggles with a feral deer population that decimates gardens, yet Potter successful grows enough vegetables to supply farmers’ markets, CSA customers and occasionally the Fossil Mercantile. Davis is also an example of the other asset, the river. His season is longer than many other parts of the county because of the affect of the river.

Along the John Day irrigation is possible and the growing season is extended; it can be anywhere between 2-4 months longer than most other places in the county. The Clarno Valley, Spray and Twickenham, all on the river, were repeatedly mentioned as playing important roles, both historically and currently, in crop production. Much of the grains grown in the county are grown along the river, and the Clarno Valley grows renowned vegetables. In Clarno “peaches have grown 9 out of 10 years, apricots and apples grow well also.” These assets are important considerations as the demand for locally produced food increases.

Food

The Sysco truck was making deliveries in Fossil during our first trip to Wheeler County last fall. As we made our way through town, so did the Sysco truck driver. In the short time we were there the truck made stops at the school, a retirement center, the Mercantile and a restaurant. These stops accounted for nearly every retail market in town.

This story is shared here not as a judgment, but to illustrate that Wheeler County, like many other small rural counties, is heavily reliant on food that comes from far away sources.

With nearly half of Wheeler County residents living outside the towns of Fossil, Spray and Mitchell in remote rural areas, access to food is a serious issue. Yet it is not just rural residents that face food access issues, even those living in town do not have regular access to high-quality, fresh and/or affordable food. Many people grow their own food, but not without difficulty in this tough environment.

“That is our greatest asset, the river.”
Carolyn Adams, Spray resident
GROCERY STORES. Viability and sustainability of the rural grocery stores is a big concern for many residents in Wheeler County. Groceries in the three towns are more expensive than those at stores located outside of the County. This explained why, when asked where they shop, nearly every resident responded that they usually make monthly trips to cities up to 100 miles away, including Bend, Condon, John Day, Prineville, Hermiston, The Dalles and Tri Cites, WA.

Both the quality and price of food were cited as reasons for shopping out of town. A Mitchell resident explained that “no one shops at the Mercantile because there are no fresh items; folks have given up on it.”

While food grown outside of the County that travels long distances presents some issues, there is increasing interest in and awareness around opportunities to access locally grown food. Spray has a small market entering its second season and the farmers’ market in Fossil is in the midst of its first season. Both are actively recruiting more produce vendors, indicating that there is a market for locally produced products.

EMERGENCY FOOD. For people using food assistance programs, Fossil, Mitchell and Spray each have a grocery store and/or vendor that accept SNAP and WIC benefits. There is only one emergency food pantry in the County, located in Fossil. There are a handful of small farmers that sell directly to the public; only a few of them accept FDNP or WIC Fruit and Veggie Vouchers. Sharing of excess vegetables out of backyard gardens and bartering are alive and popular. See "Addressing Hunger in Wheeler County, 2009" fact sheet (p.56) from the Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force.

Both emergency food boxes and the SNAP program are important in feeding many people throughout the County as well. Last year 699 emergency food boxes were distributed from the Fossil Community Food Pantry to 1229 people. This is an important service to many, but there are people that live outside of Fossil that sometimes miss the once a month distribution day. Another strategy to increase availability of these services voiced by residents is to establish food pantries in Mitchell and Spray, and to offer more distribution days from the pantry in Fossil.
In 2008 147 people used SNAP benefits in Wheeler County. It was echoed by many that SNAP benefits are how many people survive. And while every town has a SNAP retailer, benefits cannot be stretched very far because of the higher cost of food. It was shared that many people using SNAP can’t shop locally because it’s not cost effective. “I couldn’t afford to shop in Spray. Even bread is twice or three times what you pay [in John Day or elsewhere].”

School meal programs play an important role in feeding children in Wheeler County. Nearly 60% of students were eligible to receive free- or reduced-price meals through the National School Lunch Program. Many of these students also eat breakfast at school. There are no Summer Lunch Programs in the County, which have become more widespread in recent years, and provide free lunches to all children under the age of 18. This program is a good way to increase access to regular meals for children living in Fossil, Mitchell and Spray, but still doesn’t help those living in rural areas (see "ADDRESSING HUNGER in Wheeler County, 2009", page 56)

GROWING OUR OWN. Gardening was identified by 47.8% of survey respondents as the educational opportunity they are most interested in. Current gardeners and those wanting to learn gardening skills expressed interest in Oregon State University’s Master Gardener program, but the nearest program is in Hermiston, a 220 mile roundtrip. For many residents, the time commitment and cost of gas make it impracticable. This is an issue that is not unique to Wheeler County; most of the communities and individuals in eastern Oregon are underserved by these services.

Back yard gardens are a critical piece of the food system for many, yet as previously explained growing produce for personal consumption is fraught with difficulty for many residents. These gardeners face a short growing season, water issues and feral deer populations! There are season-extending strategies employed by residents, as evidenced by the greenhouses dotting many backyards. Residents in each town echoed the sentiment that city water is expensive and oftentimes restricted in the long summer months. In particular, residents in Spray were anxious about the City shifting to metered water. This is the first summer that residents will be charged for water; they used to pay $28 a month.

“There are hundreds of deer in town that are aggressive and destroy gardens. A simple solution is deer fencing, but it needs to be 8 feet tall which is an expenditure out of reach for many residents.”

Backyard Garden in Fossil

There were stories of not planting gardens because the water costs are an unknown. Feral deer are also a considerable deterrent to gardening. For example, in Fossil there are hundreds of deer in town that are aggressive and destroy gardens. A simple solution is deer fencing, but it needs to be 8 feet tall which is an expenditure out of reach for many residents.

“There’s a big concern about deer destroying gardens.”

Mitchell resident

“I love to work in the garden; I love that part of my life!”

Wheeler County resident
Fossil Community School became a charter school three years ago, with a focus on a natural resource curriculum. So far, this has manifested itself in gardening education and opportunities for students in Fossil. There is a large fenced garden, greenhouse, worm composting that is tended by elementary students and the beginnings of an orchard. Last year, garden food, primarily lettuce, went to the lunch program, students and community members in need. This year there are plots available to community members and several students were hired to manage the garden through the summer. This is a positive shift as one of the greatest needs identified in Wheeler County was the need for increased educational opportunities around food, particularly for youth.

“I told my husband to till up the hillside ‘cause I’m growing my own this year.”

Wheeler County restaurant owner
In these hard economic times, many more people are hungry, especially children and seniors. Federal food programs can help feed people and provide economic stimulus for local economies. Wheeler County could bring in thousands more federal dollars by reaching more eligible people.

In 2008, 467 food boxes provided emergency food to help families make ends meet.

In 2008 ~ 58.6% of all students were eligible for free and reduced price meals in Wheeler County. Of those who ate lunch:

- 73% of them received breakfast.
- None ate meals through the Summer Food Program.

If all who were eligible for free or reduced price lunch were served, Wheeler County would have received an additional $9,164 in federal dollars a year and fed an additional 20 eligible low-income children.

Women, Infants & Children Program (WIC)*

In 2008, WIC served 7,072 pregnant or breastfeeding women, infants and children* under five, representing 45% of all pregnant women (compared to 40% statewide average).

Emergency Food Assistance

In 2008, 467 food boxes provided emergency food to help families make ends meet.

Farm Direct Nutrition Program

Seniors and WIC families redeemed in $0 in coupons in the county, though these coupons may have been redeemed in nearby counties.

Afterschool Meals & Snacks

During the 2007/08 school year, 0 suppers were served in high need areas.

* WIC data for Wheeler County cannot be extracted from Umatilla – Morrow Head Start data

SNAP / Food Stamps

In 2008 ~

- 147 people received SNAP/food stamps per month in Wheeler County.
- $167,656 federal dollars were brought into the local economy.

If all eligible people were enrolled in SNAP, Wheeler County would have received an additional $227,304 dollars each month in federal money and 277 additional people would have received help putting food on the table.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Support public policies that help low-income people meet their basic needs.
- Support efforts to reach more people through federal food assistance programs.
- Refer to the Act to End Hunger for more ideas to address hunger in your county.

For specific information visit www.oregonhunger.org

Addressing Hunger in Wheeler County, 2009

School Lunches, Breakfast, & Summer Meals

NOTES

Wheeler County Demographic Information

Total Population: 1,575
- People in Poverty: 272 (17.3%)

Children 0-18 years: 316
- Children in Poverty: 92 (29.1%)

From Our Roots: The People, Agriculture & Food of Wheeler County, OR
CONCLUSION

When viewed through the lens of food security, Wheeler County faces some serious issues. These issues are not unique to this county alone; many of the food availability, accessibility and affordability are common across eastern Oregon. Yet the people of this rugged region appear to be better positioned to, and indeed are already taking control of their destiny.

Ranching has been central to culture and the economy of Wheeler County since 19th century. The varied landscape and scarcity of water make crop production difficult in this region therefore it is not surprising that ranching continues to be important. The John Day River traverses the County providing irrigation waters and a longer, sometimes up to 6 months, growing season. There are several small farms and many gardens that take advantage of these conditions and grow amazing fruits and vegetables.

Socioeconomic indicators show Wheeler County as one of the most struggling counties in Oregon—it has the highest rate of childhood poverty, lowest median household income and an economy concentrated in only a few sectors. This, coupled with its isolation, is very concerning. Yet the residents of Wheeler County are a tough, proud and independent, and have a deep understanding of their assets and a propensity for innovative solutions to the difficulties they face.

To increase self-sufficiency and food security for all residents and their communities as a whole, many solutions were identified by the residents of Wheeler County. These opportunities are outlined next, and incorporate many ideas offered throughout our interviews, meetings and focus groups in Fossil, Mitchell and Spray. The people that live in this County are best prepared to know what solutions are most needed and achievable; most of the action steps outlined below have come directly from community members themselves.

POST-STUDY NOTE: Between the beginning and end of our assessment period, the grocery store in Mitchell was sold and closed. Citizens have begun exploring options for acquiring it or creating another retail grocery option in their town. Standing out as empowered and proactive amongst the four counties assessed, Wheeler County residents have also created a Community Food Security group to spear-head citizen-led initiatives and projects, and oversee longer-term policy and planning efforts. A Wheeler County Action Plan has also been developed to address their needs and implement opportunities they think will meet the needs described in the Recommendations following.
OPPORTUNITIES IN WHEELER COUNTY

**Recommendation 1: Increase outreach and networking around local food and farm opportunities.**

1. Continue to build and expand community dialogue around local food and farming.
2. Utilize the County website as a central networking location to facilitate connections within the County and region.
3. Develop and implement a public education campaign on the benefits of healthy eating habits and a local food system.
4. Explore organizational models for the Local Foods Committee.

**Recommendation 2: Expand educational opportunities for community members.**

1. Identify and distribute cooking and meal planning educational materials.
2. Identify, and coordinate with gardening and agricultural education resources to increase production skills.
3. Identify, and coordinate with nutrition educators and experts to increase understanding and the practice of healthy eating habits.
4. Expand agricultural opportunities for youth.

**Recommendation 3: Increase the production of food for local consumption.**

1. Create a gardening network to share ideas and resources for community gardens, communal gardening, yard-sharing and distribution of excess produce.
2. Explore and implement season extending strategies.
3. Develop solutions that address deer and water issues such as fencing, water conservation and education.

**Recommendation 4: Increase the number of venues featuring locally or regionally produced food.**

1. Identify institutional food purchasers and engage and educate them about purchasing locally or regionally produced food.
2. Establish, expand and support farmers’ markets region-wide.
3. Increase the amount of local or regionally produced food available in grocery stores and restaurants.
4. Explore interest in farm-to-school programs, and establish where feasible.
**Recommendation 5:** Ensure access to a stable fresh food supply for all citizens year-round.

1. Increase the amount of fresh food available to and at food pantries.

2. Establish more programs that feed children including summer lunch, fresh snacks, breakfast, dinner and weekend meals.

3. Establish Farm Direct Nutrition Program Coupon and WIC Fruit and Veggie Voucher retailers in every community.

4. Establish food pantries in every community.

5. Support and expand viability of grocery stores that are responsive to community needs in every community.

**Recommendation 6:** Develop a stronger local food system infrastructure.

1. Equip and staff school kitchens to enable preparation of meals from scratch.

2. Ensure that food is considered in the County emergency management plan.

3. Identify or build a cold storage facility.

4. Establish a distribution network for transportation of locally-produced food to markets within the County and into the larger region.
CHAPTER 6—REGIONAL ASSESSMENT

"No community should rely exclusively on 'local food' - outside trading partnerships and relationships protect against adverse weather, local calamity or production shortfalls, and provide diverse and unique foods and marketing opportunities." Wendell Berry

Where you live often has the biggest impact on your access to opportunity. The task for all of us is to focus on the work of improving the entire region without losing sight of the particular challenges facing low-income individuals and communities. This final chapter takes a brief look at the broader-scale food system strengths and assets, focusing on the economic opportunities that arise in a slightly larger more diverse, better integrated foodshed.

Again, we must note that generally the term "local food" is used to signify food that is grown

the shortest distance possible from its consumers; and also to depict the trend of re-localizing food systems for more community control and choice. Community and regional food are synonymous with "local food".

REGIONAL FOODSHELD. The "Big River" runs through it. Though this CFA focused exclusively on the four counties of CAPECO's emergency food service area (which includes portions of the Blue Mountains and the southern portion of the Columbia River Plateau), there are many reasons to plan for and build a "local foodshed" that is larger, spanning both sides of the Big River. And though the stakeholders of From Our Roots will be implementing actions in only the four Oregon Counties, the entire Columbia Plateau, crossing two states (and three nations, including the original Native Americans), numerous counties and jurisdictions, is possibly a more appropriate
scale for a discussion of food system opportunities for reasons we'll describe below.

A simple depiction of this enlarged "foodprint", in seen in Figure 1 below, (from Pendleton Farmers' Market, 2005). This "crop circle" foodshed contains significant crop diversity, soil, precipitation and climactic variation. It encompasses hundreds of small towns, many 'food deserts', large urban centers and institutional purchasers, and many transportation, storage, processing and distribution facilities. For these and other reasons, it serves a variety of farming styles and scales and makes for a viable agricultural marketing and production area.

**Figure 1**

COLUMBIA-BLUE MOUNTAIN FOODPRINT (PFM, '05)

**PEOPLE**

The previous chapters presented a limited look at the demographic make-up of people in the four counties - e.g. education, health, welfare. As noted, there are challenges as well as resources and assets in these social arenas. We cannot comment on the socio-demographics for the expanded foodshed, but a one thing the region could build upon is its cultural/social diversity.

**DIVERSE CULTURE.** Not only is there is strong regional sense of place and history, it is complimented by an increasingly diverse set of people and cultures, employment opportunities and wealth.

The double-sided coin of culture is a valuable one and, if spent judiciously, could pay good dividends over time - in tangible economic, marketing opportunities for "branded", differentiated agricultural products and local specialties, as well as those less-tangible but very real benefits associated with community values, visions and quality of life issues.

Communities that express or share a deep sense of culture and place are often blessed with strong community cohesion and care-taking. Where there was a sense of shared hardship, a shared purpose also emerged, to take action on behalf of the whole community, as in the case of Wheeler County. Facilitating a common purpose, vision and direction was a main goal of all our organizing and community workshops, especially with the FEASTs ©. These first efforts met with varying levels of response and success, but open the door for more.

Strong local culture and community cohesion, on the other hand, can become a weakness if taken to the extreme if instead of promoting a common good, it cultivates social boundaries or geographic isolation between groups within the community. As discovered in interviews and focus groups, negative cultural norms and biases were occasionally felt by community newcomers, pantry participants, and migrants. In some cases at the local and regional levels, we saw limited conversation and/or collaboration across community and jurisdictional lines, with people operating within "silos" of traditional, familiar comfort zones.

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*From Our Roots: The People, Agriculture & Food of the Columbia Plateau*
Generally speaking and to its detriment, inter-organizational, inter-community and cross-county linkages outside of time-honored or habitual activities appeared weak in the southern Plateau (OR) region. It is likely that Washington state stands in a similar situation.

The blessing of newcomers is that they bring different knowledge, commitment, skills and traditions, adding vitality and energy to potentially static communities. In this case, perhaps bringing new work force skills, different food interests, or agricultural practices. Communities that can build on what's new and different add value to their community by encouraging creative outside-the-box thinking, breaking business-as-usual cycles, and possibly bridging 'us and them' kinds of divisions or impasses.

Another way to add value to the food system is to increase the amount of education available - individuals and agencies on both sides of the Columbia River recognize this, and have begun to take action.

EDUCATION. In accordance with our producer survey responses, increased sales are dependent on two things: raising their own skill level with full-season crop production, and raising consumer awareness and knowledge about how and what to buy, when, why and where, and what to do with it at home! Agencies, organizations and funding that can support this need now abound!

Consumers (teachers, health practitioners, pantry clients and students among them) corroborated the need for their own education, suggesting cooking and nutrition classes and other integrated outreach and marketing efforts to increase people's ability and inclination to grow, eat and purchase healthy, local whole foods. Enacting 'buy local' campaigns at county, regional and state levels could help to raise customer awareness and incentives to support the growers and markets.

AGRICULTURE

DIVERSE AGRICULTURE. Variety within the "agro-economy" of the Columbia Plateau is substantial. As seen in Figure 2, farm sizes in east-central OR range from enormous to petite; there are economic opportunities at every scale. Figure 2 depicts farm size, with Umatilla Co. leading the four CAPECO counties in diversity, hosting almost three times the number of small farms (under 50 acres) as large ones (over 500 acres). Contiguous counties on the Washington side of the Columbia River (Walla Walla, Dayton, Franklin and Benton) have similar farm statistics and assets as Umatilla County. Together, these well-irrigated and moderately populous Oregon and Washington counties have strong "local food" growth opportunities.

Figure 2

LOCAL AG. As stated in previous chapters, the smaller, less-conventional niche-based agricultural sector appeared to us most nimble and able to adapt to, and expand rural food and farm economies. A regional agricultural economic market analysis has yet to be undertaken, but it is recommended.
analysis has been conducted across the state and nation, with eye-opening information about the flow of food into and out of a foodshed, and at what cost or benefit to those who grow, eat and market the food.

Other research shows significant agricultural economic benefits to re-localizing fresh food production and consumption. For example, an Iowan study (Leopold Center, Iowa State University, 2009) concluded that if Iowans were to purchase seven servings of fruits and vegetables locally for just three months of the year, the direct and indirect economic benefits would amount to the creation of almost 6,000 jobs both on and off the farm. Oregon and Iowa share similar demographics and population size - might we see similar benefits here?

This same study also provides a formula for estimating the amount of land that might be needed to grow the requisite number of vegetables that Iowans typically eat during the year (http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/research/calculator/home.htm).

Using that formula and US Dept. of Agriculture census data (2007) for the study area counties of east-central OR, Table 1 approximates what growth in acreage might be needed in Gilliam, Morrow, Umatilla and Wheeler Counties to meet their residents' demands for 17 basic and popular food crops (excluding commodity crops like grain, dairy). According to the formula calculation, these Counties together have surplus acreage in ten crops beyond residents' demands, and a very small deficit of acreage to meet the demand for seven other crops. It would take very little to meet consumer demand for these crops. And following this, the next determinant (and opportunity) would be to ensure that customers have access to what's being grown, through adequate infrastructure, or food and farming facilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>Demand</th>
<th>Actual</th>
<th>Surplus/Deficit</th>
<th>Surplus/Deficit</th>
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<td>Carrots</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>973</td>
<td>948</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cucumbers</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>(21)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry onions</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>6,481</td>
<td>6,446</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peppers</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>(17)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>21,652</td>
<td>21,471</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pumpkins</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet corn</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>2,107</td>
<td>2,034</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>(33)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Watermelons</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>842</td>
<td>795</td>
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<td>68</td>
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<td>2,868</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Apricots</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet cherries</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>892</td>
<td>880</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nectarines</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>(14)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peaches</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Blueberries</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>95</td>
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<tr>
<td>Raspberries</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strawberries</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>29,346</td>
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<td>(106)</td>
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</table>

**Table 1**

Regional (east-central OR) Fruit & Veggie Demand vs. Actual Production (# acres)

Demand acreage is calculated from the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture Produce Potential Market Calculator

Actual acreage from 2007 Census of Agriculture

INFRASTRUCTURE. Technical, infrastructural food system components (storage, transport, processing, etc.) has evolved to meet conventional production-ag needs. A corresponding loss of infrastructural support for smaller-scale more traditional (though now called "alternative") food production has also occurred. According to our surveys, those farmers expressed need for more networks of grower associations, niche marketing groups,
more retail outlets and institutional sales, and processing, storage and transportation options.

A promising food system development for this niche could also be community kitchens or processing facilities accessible to growers. One example of this is the Blue Mountain Station, an eco-food processing center in Dayton WA. (Port of Columbia) which is dedicated to artisan food processors, primarily in the natural and organic sectors - the only one in our area.

FARM-DIRECT SALES. When considering farm viability, growers able to sell regionally could have access to many lucrative markets and diverse customer groups on both sides of the River. On the Washington side there are a number of farmers' markets in larger urban centers, adding to the 6-8 small markets' in the four Oregon counties (similar numbers exist further east across the Blue Mountains toward Idaho.

In the local arena, farmers' markets are microcosms of this supply and demand cycle. They must attract and retain a minimum number of growers and products to attract customers, and enough customers to support and encourage the producers. This is a persistent, solvable problem. Market development, whether for an individual farm-stand, farmers' market, or local grocery store depends on scale-appropriate expectations and correlated growth in both demand. This see-saw of supply and demand drives affordability, accessibility and availability. The formula for success in tiny communities is in nurturing the seedlings and start-up entrepreneur which, if selling a basic need called "food", could form the backbone of local employment options.

Some growers are beginning to test the "Community Supported Agriculture" (CSA) models that prove so successful in other areas. Additionally, and more lucrative still, are the many regional institutions such as hospitals, prisons, universities, care facilities and public school districts, all of whom are gearing up for local farm purchases. Small farms studies show that having diverse marketing options is essential for the stability and success of this size grower. Over time the goal is to enable greater supply and more accessible markets to shorten the distance between the farm and more localized clientele.

Increasing the number of local growers could also increase the amount of farm-related sales in local communities (farmers tend to purchase close to home). This would be another boon to the local economy, potentially countering some of the lost business occurring because of farm consolidations, and decreases land in under production, through the Conservation Reserve Program, for instance, as mentioned in Gilliam County.

As always, supply and demand must be sufficiently linked to influence each other. This is the grail for local food system development, most likely to occur when interaction, infrastructure, interest and investment are interconnected and talking to each other. One recognized shift in our food system is to think about it as a "web" rather than the "food chain" that has been popularized since the advent of industrial food production. Expanding the nascent Columbia Plateau Food Links group efforts to both sides of the River, or to launch new groups, such as a regional food policy group, could do much to integrate and build linkages across food system stakeholder groups.

OPPORTUNITIES. Large-scale production is generally the norm in the region, and though we focus on small producers, we heard from several sources that even these bigger conventional growers could benefit with new, alternative options for storing, processing, distributing, and marketing conventionally grown crops.

From Our Roots: The People, Agriculture & Food of the Columbia Plateau
One case in point is Hardwick, Vermont, a scrappy town of 3,000 people which, according to the NY Times (Oct. 08, 2008) saved its future through food, recently adding 75-100 new jobs through local cooperative and collaborative growth of their small-scale food and farming enterprises. Sharing everything from facilities to farms, capital to cheese caves, seeds to stories, these "agri-preneurs" have built small successful businesses and attracted newcomers, such the Vermont Food Venture Center, and the Center for Agricultural Economy who moved in to share in the energy and vitality that is also being raised here. And create more jobs.

The truism that 'necessity is the mother of invention' has a follow-up adage: where there is need there is a market - as there always will be for food, water, air and shelter. There are lucrative opportunities with more local control and choices for the Columbia Plateau. We fully expect to see local activity arising to meet that need.

Another very in-depth focusing on a combined Oregon and Washington food system, is called "Planting Prosperity and Harvesting Health: Trade-offs and Sustainability in the Oregon-Washington Regional Food System"(2008). This collaborative report from the Institute of Portland Metropolitan Studies, College of Urban and Public Affairs and Kaiser Permanente and the Institute explores a regional food system with goals in resource stewardship, economic prosperity and diversity, food access and choice, market expansion and infrastructural support, land-base maintenance, justice and resiliency. And though

FOOD

"Because no one should be hungry..." and yet, people are. Given the preceding information we know there is no food shortage per se here. As typical elsewhere in the world, it is generally a shortage of storage, processing, distribution and marketing mechanisms for fresh, whole foods that drives availability, accessibility, affordability.

Recommendations throughout this study focus on expanding local food choices. Grocery stores, farmers' markets and food pantries, schools and care facilities are the main sources or suppliers of food that come to mind - all challenged by location and scale. The challenge, across the board, is to re-set the stage so that local enterprise is built on scale-appropriate expectations with correlated growth in both demand and supply (always cognizant of external drivers and forces, and working to adapt to those for continued local benefit).

At farmers' markets, for instance, in order to qualify as a SNAP or WIC-approved market there must be an adequate number of food producers and products available to serve the eligible customers which, in turn, serves customers of all income-levels. The more successful regional markets have made that transition in size (of supply and demand) are able to offer the choice of alternative purchasing options. In some cases, there are state and federal supports for doing so. We expect to see strong movement in this direction of making more local food available and affordable through local farmers' market development.

GROCERY STORES. Food retailers in isolated rural communities and "food deserts" are caught in a similar cycle of low supply and demand.

Recent research suggests a population of at least 3,500 is needed for a traditional, independently owned and operated rural grocery store to succeed. (Jon Bailey, Center for Rural Assistance, 2010). Our CFA found several communities of less than 1,500 that had successful (though sometimes "pinched" for profit) grocery stores in town. Undoubtedly there are reasons for store success and failure in
the smallest communities: having a "captive" customer base with no other choices; having a local commitment to support local enterprises; having the "luxury" of choosing to pay potentially higher local prices, for high value local production, and so forth. In the event of losing a traditional grocery retailer, the Center for Rural Assistance reports on several other workable models (in articles "Rural Grocery Stores: Importance and Challenges," and "Rural Grocery Stores: Ownership Models that Work," available at www.cfra.org.). These food retail alternatives include community-owned stores, cooperatives, and school-based stores. Towns like Mitchell, OR, which has just seen the closure of its last grocery store now has an opportunity that requires the entire community to talk, think, plan and act together for its own long-term benefit and common good.

EMERGENCY FOOD. All told, on both sides of the Columbia River there are many food supports for people in need, but not in adequate amounts, nor are they being accessed or implemented equally. CAPECO’S regional Needs Assessment noted a negative perception (even self-imposed stigma) for being "poor", which influences how readily people offer or accept assistance, or the opportunities and creativity that arise from bona fide need.

Some food system networks do exist, and can help us pull together: The Oregon Food Bank works closely with a NW regional coordinating agencies (First Harvest) and the national level Feeding America to cull, glean and gather food donated and purchased from farmers, food processors, retailers and manufacturers for the emergency food system. Other organizations, like Ample Harvest (.org) work to connect individual pantries in communities across the nation to local farmers and gardeners for their donated surplus. From the top down, there are food resources that can be rescued, prevented from going to waste with increased connectivity and communication.

Along those lines are other local gleaning programs - these are remarkably few but most certainly be strengthened and expanded upon. Whether from a farmers' field or orchard, to urban gleaning from backyard fruit trees, community gardens, and farmers' markets are all options being implemented around the nation and have something for this region to learn from.

CONCLUSION

Viewed through the lens of food security, Gilliam, Morrow, Umatilla and Wheeler Counties face some serious issues. They are not alone in this. Taken as a whole, and networked with the surrounding foodshed, the east-central counties on both sides of the Big River could mobilize resources to alleviate hunger, and to positively impact the root causes of hunger through new employment options and access and availability improvements.

The on-going and expanding efforts mentioned here have the power to create greater food security, and regional resiliency. Many of them, however, are operating alone, under-recognized, or with little coordination and integration with economic and community development. Many others have yet to be discovered, or created, and strengthened. Working with groups like the Columbia Plateau Food Links the efforts of many could be integrated and coordinated for greatest effect.

THE HIGHEST NEEDS. The top three needs and recommendations for the counties of Gilliam, Morrow, Umatilla and Wheeler, are as follow:

1) Expand accessible and affordable year-round local food resources, including gardens, farm stands and markets, emergency resources and retail options;
2) Increase education and skills around cooking, gardening, nutrition, shopping and hunting/harvesting (in that order) for all sectors of the community;

3) Strengthen and expand community and regional networking to develop awareness, appropriate production, infrastructure, and synergistic local food projects.

And while *From Our Roots* focused on each county’s ability to grow and eat food within its borders, the smart, safe thing to do is to work across boundaries and borders, creating new relationships and connecting stakeholders throughout the regional foodshed.

The opportunities or Recommendations following synthesize or are built upon the many ideas offered throughout our report, but are developed for grander-scale development and implementation than for a single county. They have also been derived without input from the organizations or individuals who serve the region as a whole. In fact, there are few regional entities that do focus on multi-county or multi-state issues at this time (which wasn’t always the case). Creating more direct connections between farmers and consumers, encouraging the growth of direct marketing, including food as an element of planning and management, will all contribute to the sustainability of our food system. Rather than buying food with no understanding of where it came from, how or by whom it was grown, we can learn to appreciate the importance of a local, community or regional food system. Helping our system operate in a way that creates profits for all the stakeholders, farmers, processors, retailers and consumers, is critical. Strengthening the knowledge of and connections among the region’s growers, processors, chefs, institutional buyers and consumers may improve our ability to derive profits from our local markets, pleasure from delicious healthy food, economic, environmental and cultural benefits of a healthy regional food system.

Taken as a whole there are options and assets enough to make this region self-reliant, resilient and sustainable.
OPPORTUNITIES IN THE REGIONAL FOODSHED

Recommendation 1: Recognize the value of an expanding, diversified local food system as a region-wide development strategy.

1. Expand and deepen regional conversations and collaboration between agencies, municipalities, and organizations involved and invested in regional health and well-being.

2. Explore and encourage scale-appropriate funding, resource development, and policy and zoning mechanisms (optimizing equitable land use, labor, water rights, hunting and gathering options, cultural values, for instance) to expand local/regional food production, processing facilities, agro-tourism, farm-direct marketing and production.

3. Conduct a regional agricultural market analysis.

4. Ensure that a safe, adequate, sustainable and nutritional food supply is considered in community development and emergency management plans.

5. Reinvigorate and "update" for the 21st century the traditional rural/local food, farming and cultural values that support self-sufficiency and sustainability.

6. Create bridges between rural and urban centers for increased diversity and capacity in marketing, and common ways of thinking.

7. Facilitate the development of geographic "local food" definitions, and the marketing, branding, differentiation and appreciation of regional food and agricultural products.

8. Advocate for local/ regional small-scale food & farming values and interests at the state level.

Recommendation 2: Increase production and availability of local or regionally produced food.

1. Explore funding, training and technical supports for climate/region-specific season-extending and water and energy conservation technologies for year-round produce growing and marketing.

2. Increase regional food system infrastructure including transportation options, distribution, produce and grain storage and processing facilities; meat slaughter and processing units for all animals, including poultry and pork.

3. Identify and encourage more farm-direct production and processing options for diverse, alternative and value-added crops and food products, that meet the region's food needs.

Recommendation 3: Expand farm-direct marketing opportunities.

1. Develop regional "branding" and farm product differentiation and marketing schemes/tools.

2. Increase farm-direct purchasing and marketing venues and contracts in a) retail grocery stores,
b) restaurants, c) local institutions; d) CSAs, e) U-pick and f) value-added enterprises.

3. Identify large purchasers of food and engage them in local or regional food purchasing dialogue; and work with state agencies involved in these issues (ODA, ODE, OSU, OR legislature).

4. Explore and develop producer cooperatives (delivery, purchasing, marketing) where feasible.

5. Sustain and expand farm-direct marketing venues such as farmers' markets, farm stands, .

**Recommendation 4: Expand awareness and education opportunities around local food and farming.**

1. Increase both school-based and community-based education and awareness programs that emphasize the interconnected nature of individual, community, economic and environmental health.

2. Identify and coordinate with educational institutions and school districts to expand local food and farming curriculum and employment opportunities for students and community members.

6. Explore, develop and conduct producer-purchaser work groups and workshops, certification, education and internship opportunities for local farm-direct producers.

3. Identify existing, or develop new educational resources to build knowledge about hunting, fishing and harvesting wild foods; specific areas might include identification, cooking, preservation, rights and responsibilities.

4. Identify current and new nutrition, gardening and agricultural education resources for youth and home gardeners, and increase use of those resources.

5. Identify and create collaborative health-promoting activities with local, regional and state-wide partners - local hospitals, city and county planners, state-wide health advocates.

6. Community kitchens/processing facility...see Cynthia's recommendations

7. **Recommendation 5: Increase outreach and networking about the benefits and value of a strong local food system.**

1. Develop and implement public education campaigns, workshops and conferences on the benefits of healthy eating habits, local purchasing/marketing ("buy local") campaigns, and local food and farming opportunities.

2. Establish, or strengthen existing county-wide development strategies and communications between public and private organizations that are involved in food system activities.

3. Support expansion and viability of the local foods network, the Columbia Plateau Food Links to facilitate sharing of local food and farming ideas and resources.

4. Coordinate with other regional and state networks to further community food and farm efforts.
Recommendation 6: Ensure regular access to a stable fresh food supply for low-income citizens year-round.

1. Expand the awareness and participation rates of lower income residents in addressing food security issues and solutions across the region.

2. Increase understanding and use of nutrition access programs including SNAP, WIC and FDNP at agency and individual levels.

3. Establish WIC Fruit and Veggie Voucher retailers in every community.

4. Work with regional and state-wide food security and advocacy groups (CAPECO, OR Food Bank, Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force, etc.).

5. Establish programs that feed children including summer lunch, fresh snacks, breakfast, dinner and weekend meals where feasible.

6. Increase the amount of fresh food available at food pantries.

7. Explore "Healthy Corner Stores" or equivalent program to support underserved neighborhoods and communities.

8. Implement farm-to-school programs where feasible

9. Work collectively to overcome stigma and bias against people in poverty and
CHAPTER 7—DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDY

This chapter describes the research design and methodology. The data sources are outlined followed by the methodology by which the project was designed and implemented. Finally, the limitations and value of the project are summarized.

DATA SOURCE

Data for this study was collected from multiple sources. The economic and demographic data came from the Indicators Northwest website, Oregon Hunger Task Force and Worksource Oregon. Agriculture data came from the United States Department of Agriculture Census of Agriculture.

Empirical data was collected from a series of informal conversations, key informant interviews, stakeholder meetings, FEAST workshops and focus groups in communities throughout Gilliam, Morrow, Umatilla and Wheeler Counties.

METHODOLOGY

The CFA used a mixed methods approach that combined the use of quantitative and qualitative data. Qualitative data (conversations, interviews, meetings and focus groups) and quantitative data (agricultural and socioeconomic data) were collected simultaneously to create an integrated analysis that explored a wide range of food system issues. This approach provided a broad regional analysis of the existing food system and used interview, focus group and meeting discussions as empirical evidence to identify assets and needs in Gilliam, Morrow, Umatilla and Wheeler Counties. The simultaneous collection and analysis of different data types provided a comprehensive examination of food-related issues. This method proved effective in involving diverse stakeholders across the food system and leading to the creation of county-specific recommendations to build a more food secure region.

LIMITATIONS AND VALUE OF THE STUDY

This CFA was used to gain better understanding of the existing structure and identify potential solutions to create a more food secure region. Due to the limited understanding of the food system in the region there was very little data or research to draw upon to inform this work. The CFA is the first project in the region to take a broad, community-based approach to examining the food system in its entirety.

What we have gathered is limited in its depth and scope, but serves as good foundational layer, somewhat experiential and anecdotal but nonetheless, valid. Specifically, this process identified issues and needs unique to each county because of the effort to involve all community members. The intent of this report is to continue to increase awareness and understanding of these issues, engage diverse stakeholders in the process and collectively begin working on potential solutions outlined for each county. This work is important because everyone should have access to healthy food regardless of their location or socioeconomic status.

The newly developed awareness and knowledge regarding the many assets and needs in these counties provides the building blocks for further efforts and activities. The CFA is meant to be a working document as many perspectives and questions remain unexplored and unanswered.
GLOSSARY

Food System Terms

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a cost-share and rental payment program under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and is administered by the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA). Technical assistance for CRP is provided by the USDA Forest Service and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Custom-exempt slaughter and processing—meat that is slaughtered and processed for the exclusive use of the owner, the owner’s family and non-paying guests. These facilities are expected to meet the same requirements that USDA-inspected plants must meet.

Farm-direct—sales made directly from a farmer to a customer.

Farm Direct Nutrition Program (FDNP) — a dual-agency program (OR Dept of Human Services and Dept. of Agriculture) that distributes coupons (as available) to income eligible senior citizens and families enrolled in WIC programs. These coupons are used to purchase fresh fruit and vegetables directly from authorized farmers at farm stands and farmers markets June-October.

Food Security—when all citizens are able to obtain a safe, personally acceptable, nutritious diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes healthy choices, community self-reliance and equal access for everyone.

Local [food] - defined simply as the closest distance from which a food product is grown and must travel to reach the consumer.

Organic—label used under the authority of the Organic Foods Production Act that established national standards for the production and handling of foods labeled as organic.

SNAP—Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as the Food Stamp Program

USDA inspected meat processing—meat that is slaughtered and processed in a USDA inspected facility for sale to the general public. The two closest USDA plants are Pasco, WA and Prineville, OR.

WIC - Women, Infants & Children; (WIC) Fruit and Veggies Voucher Program—distributes vouchers to families enrolled in WIC. These vouchers are used to purchase fresh fruit and vegetables directly from authorized farmers and grocery stores year-round.
WORKS CITED


## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1. Columbia Plateau Producer Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question - percentage response - # of responses</th>
<th>Question - percentage response - # of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The land you farm or ranch is:</strong></td>
<td><strong>What are your plans for your farm in the future?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>owned by you 63.9% 23</td>
<td>Increase land under cultivation 33.3% 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leased 13.9% 5</td>
<td>Stay the same 33.3% 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>both 22.2% 8</td>
<td>Diversify current operation 33.3% 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How many acres do you have in cultivation or have in use for grazing this year?</strong></td>
<td>Decrease land under cultivation 0.0% 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>under 1 5.6% 2</td>
<td>Sell the farm 0.0% 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5 16.7% 6</td>
<td>Retire 0.0% 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-20 13.9% 5</td>
<td><strong>Where are your products sold?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-40 8.3% 3</td>
<td>Locally, within 100 miles 64.7% 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-160 5.6% 2</td>
<td>Regionally (Pacific Northwest) 41.2% 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>161-500 8.3% 3</td>
<td>Nationally 11.8% 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501-1000 8.3% 3</td>
<td>Internationally 5.9% 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 1000 33.3% 12</td>
<td><strong>If you direct market, how do you sell your products?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Which of the following do you grow or raise:</strong></td>
<td>Farmers' market 70.0% 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goats 8.3% 3</td>
<td>Farm stand 23.3% 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy cows 2.8% 1</td>
<td>CSA 26.7% 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berries 13.9% 5</td>
<td>U-Pick 13.3% 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit 16.7% 6</td>
<td>Institution (schools, hospitals) 16.7% 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables 63.9% 23</td>
<td>Restaurant 26.7% 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herbs 16.7% 6</td>
<td>Producers' cooperative 3.3% 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grains 27.8% 10</td>
<td>Grocery store 46.7% 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef 44.4% 16</td>
<td>Internet 36.7% 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pork 5.6% 2</td>
<td><strong>To what extent do the following factors limit direct-sales opportunities?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poultry/eggs 19.4% 7</td>
<td><strong>Answer Options</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamb 16.7% 6</td>
<td>Not at all 8 15 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legumes 13.9% 5</td>
<td>Insufficient access to labor 19 14 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (specify) 19.4% 7</td>
<td>Government regulations &amp; policies 9 18 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do you create value-added products with what you produce?</strong></td>
<td>Communication &amp; marketing with retailers &amp; consumers 8 17 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No 33.3% 12</td>
<td>Lack of demand for local products 13 14 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, but I'd like to Yes (please specify) 47.2% 17</td>
<td>Insufficient supply to meet demand 14 17 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Check all of the following production practices you use:</strong></td>
<td>Lack of distribution system 11 16 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventional 50.0% 18</td>
<td>Lack of processing facilities 14 16 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certified organic 13.9% 5</td>
<td>Lack of skills and experience 23 9 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-certified organic 30.6% 11</td>
<td>Too time intensive 6 25 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitioning to organic 2.8% 1</td>
<td>Not profitable enough 13 15 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biodynamic 0.0% 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Production Practices you use:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Count</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grass-finished</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free-range</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permaculture</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### What is your gender?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>60.6%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What is your age?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56-65</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66 and over</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### How often do you use the following for gathering information?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Source</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometime</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazines</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word of mouth</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Print newsletters</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### How important is off-farm income to your family?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Do you participate or are you interested in participating in any of the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program/Activity</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No, but like info</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farm Direct Nutrition Program (senior and WIC vouchers)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNAP/EBT (formerly Food Stamp Program)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-income Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donations to food pantries</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donations to meal sites</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gleaning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 2. Columbia Plateau Consumer Survey

### Question - percentage response - # responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where do you buy the majority of your food?</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th># responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grocery store</td>
<td>96.1%</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast food restaurant</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where else do you get the food you eat? Check all that apply.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th># responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meals with friends or family</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers' market</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery store</td>
<td>46.9%</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm stand</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grow or raise it myself</td>
<td>55.9%</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community supported agriculture (CSA)</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meal site</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunt harvest</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food pantry</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commodities</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gleaning</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience store</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast food restaurant</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sit-down restaurant</td>
<td>65.4%</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much of the food you buy is fresh fruits and veggies?</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th># responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some (25%)</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most (75%)</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often do you buy locally grown or raised food?</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th># responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>57.0%</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you don’t buy food that is grown or raised locally, what is the main reason?</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th># responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Pick three of the following that we need more of in this region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th># responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmers' markets</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm stands</td>
<td>33.0%</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSAs</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community kitchens</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U-Pick opportunities</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local food in restaurants or grocery stores</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coops/independent grocery stores</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community gardens</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm to school programs</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food pantries</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meal sites</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Pick the three greatest concerns you have about the food you eat.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th># responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culturally appropriate</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation time</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grown or raised sustainably</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genetically modified</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grown locally</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>65.4%</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livable wage for farmer &amp; workers</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pesticide free</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### In your opinion, how serious is hunger in your community?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th># responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It's not an issue</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor issue</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat serious issue</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely serious</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### In your opinion, how serious are poor quality diets in your community?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th># responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It's not an issue</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor issue</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consumers who are concerned about the cost of food</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>54.4%</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too expensive</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know where to get it</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn't matter to me</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the last year, how often did you shop for the cheapest food available?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education Opportunities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNAP</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIC</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDNP</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food pantry</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free meal site</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery coupons</td>
<td>87.9%</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free- and reduced-price lunch program</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commodities</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In a normal week, how many of your household's meals are prepared at home?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some (1-7)</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About half</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most (14-20)</td>
<td>68.7%</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preservation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know how to cook</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It takes too much time</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is no stove or fridge</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer to eat out</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't plan ahead</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat serious issue</td>
<td>50.8%</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely serious issue</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do you preserve food by freezing, drying, canning or smoking it?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, but I'd like to learn how</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>71.5%</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How important is hunting, fishing or wild harvesting of food to meet your household food needs?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>55.3%</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What would help you increase wild foods in your diet?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ed rights&amp; responsibility</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ed opportunity/identification</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ed cooking/preserving</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not interested</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A change in policy or regulations</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do you grow your own fruits &amp; vegetables?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, but I'd like to</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, a few plants</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, a small garden</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, a large garden</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, at a community garden</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In which of the following educational opportunities would you be most interested?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardening</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preservation</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>