

Mud City Press
Productions

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Relocalizing Eden

Rebuilding Our Local Food System



The foundation of any community is its local food system. A region's capacity to produce, process, and distribute some significant portion of its own food has always been a measure of social and economic stability, but as we face the unknowns of peak oil and climate change, securing local food resources will be one of our highest priorities. Over the last twenty-five years, the globalization of the market place has expanded trade with a rich and diverse new array of products and product sources; however, it has been at the cost of regional economic balance, especially at the local level and especially for local food systems. Communities are actually losing the ability to feed themselves from local sources by relying too heavily on distance markets for their food. Oregon's Willamette Valley makes an interesting case-study both for detailing the problem and articulating the strategy of relocalization as a solution.

What does relocalization mean?

Relocalization is a community management strategy designed to alleviate the impact of peak oil and minimize our carbon footprint. It is based on the premise that condensing or localizing communities can help reduce fuel usage and thus cut carbon emissions.



Why buy locally grown food?

- Fresher Food
- Knowing your farmer
- Less freight expense
- Strengthens local economy
- Food security

What is food security?



- ✓ Healthy food
- ✓ Food for elderly, handicapped, and impoverished
- ✓ Difference between peace and violence during times of crisis
- ✓ Sustainable Production
- ✓ A stable and complete regional food system

What is our bio-region?



The Willamette Valley is a hundred mile long, two-million acre stretch of prime cropland bordered by a dense, eco-rich coniferous forest. The climate is mild; wet in the winter, dry in the summer. It is excellent for raising livestock and farming, with soil particularly suited for a wide variety of grasses, fruits, vegetables, and nuts. Home to many species of fish and other wildlife, the Willamette River basin is essentially a garden valley, Oregon's own little piece of Eden.

Salmon Habitat in Lower Columbia
and Willamette River basins

What can be grown in
the Willamette Valley?



Field Crops

Beans

Wheat

Wild Rice

Fruits, Nuts, Berries

Apples

Apricots

Blackberries

Marionberries

Cherries

Cranberries

Currants

Grapes

Hazelnuts

Logan Berries

Peaches

Pears

Plum

Prunes

Figs

Raspberries

Strawberries

Walnuts

Vegetables

Artichokes

Asparagus

Lima Beans

Snap Beans

Beets

Broccoli

Brussel Sprouts

Cabbage

Cantaloupes

Melons

Carrots

Cauliflower

Celery

Sweet Corn

Cucumbers

Eggplant

Endive

Turnips

Garlic

Horse Radish

Lettuce

Mustard

Onions

Parsley

Parsnips

Peas

Peppers

Radishes

Rhubarb

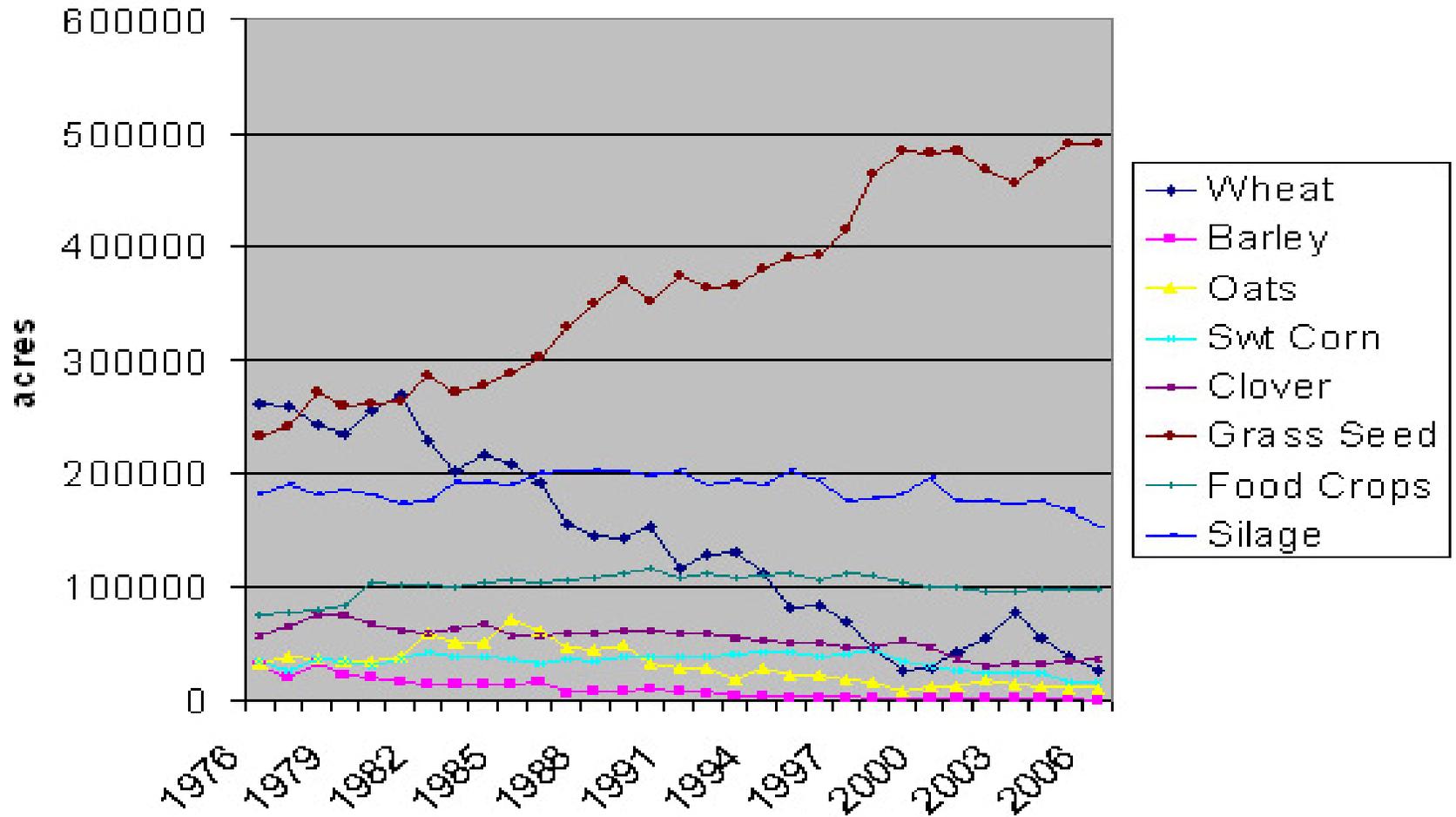
Spinach

Squash

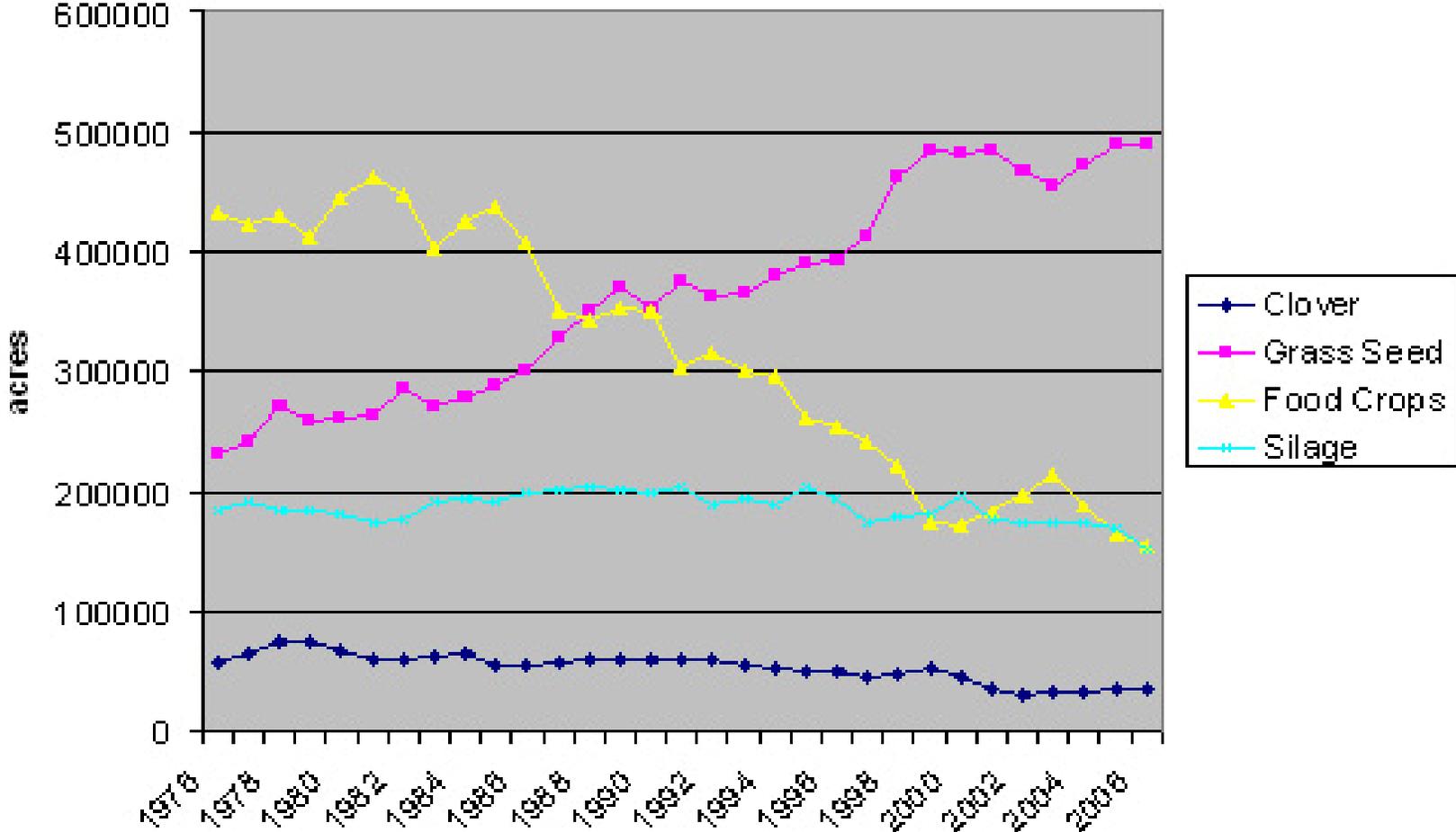
Tomatoes

In the 1950s and 1960s
more than 75% of what we
ate was grown in the
Willamette Valley.

Willamette Valley Crop Trends 1



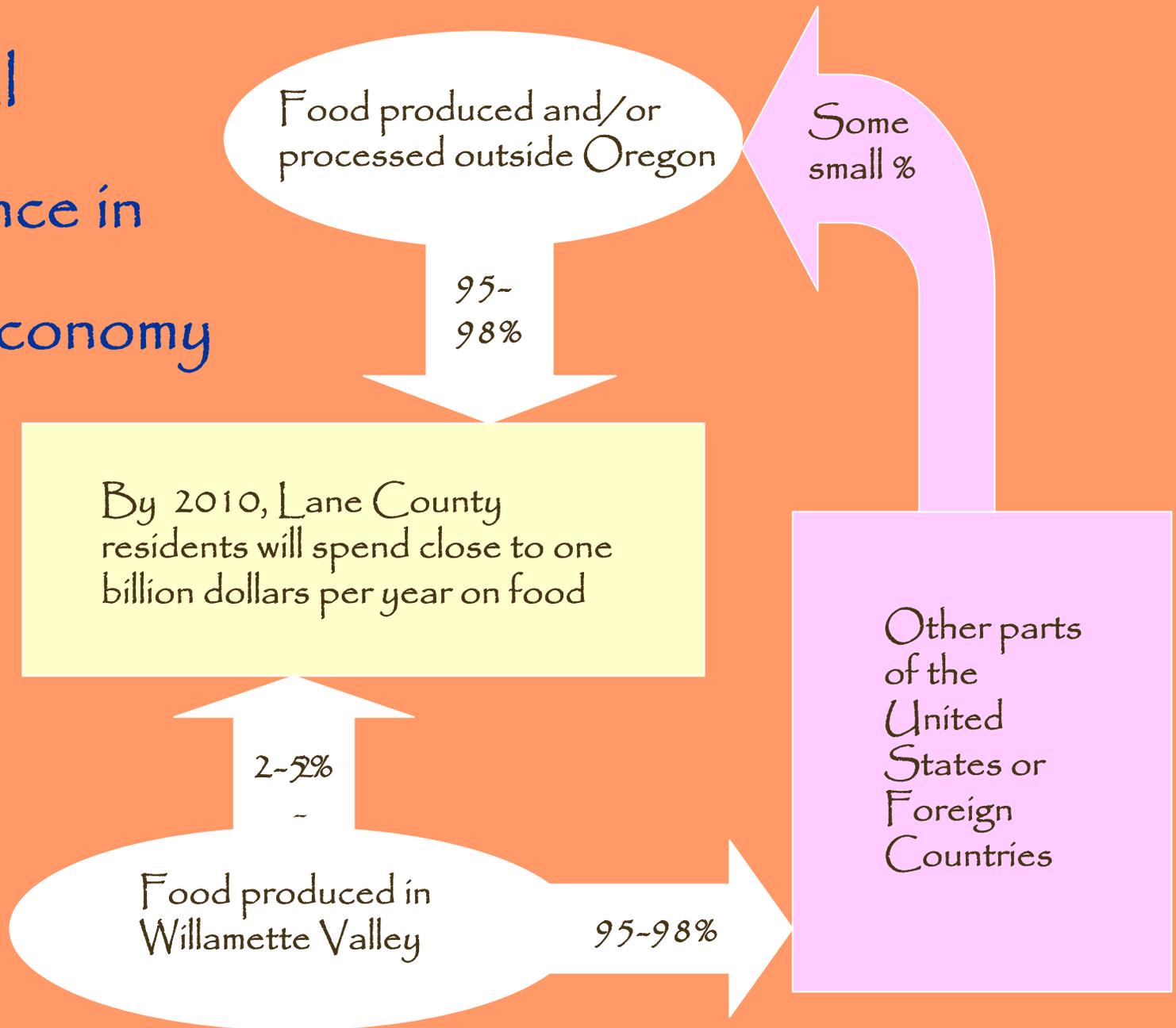
Willamette Valley Crop Trends 2



Today we eat between
2% and 5% locally
grown food in the
Willamette Valley!



Radical Imbalance in Ag Economy



Why is the food economy so unbalanced?

- Effects of globalization
- Cheaper farm labor in other countries
- The low cost of global freight

How does this affect our food system?

- Loss of food system infrastructure
- Monoculture/unsustainable practices
- Diminishes variety in economy

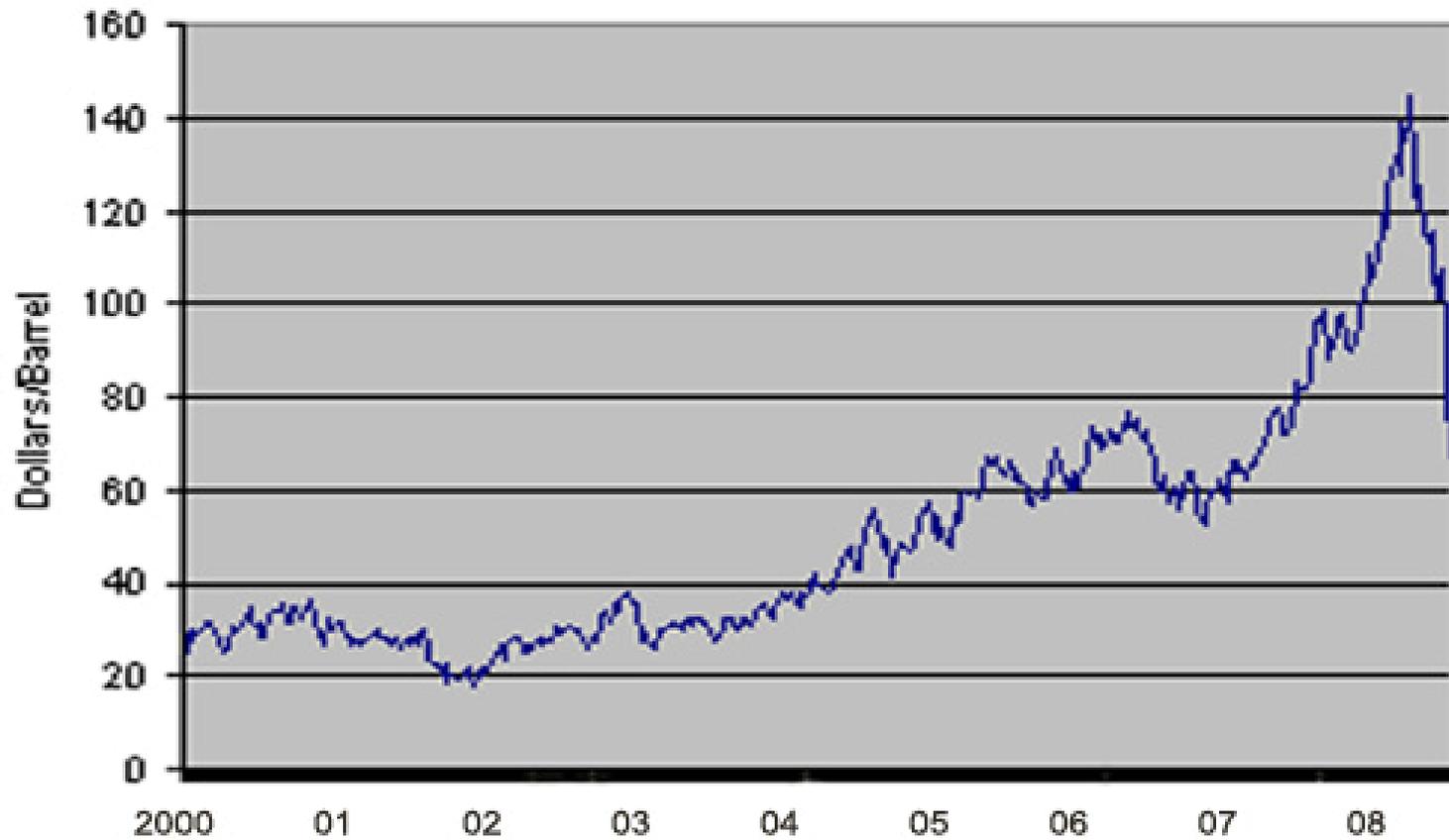
Changing Global Dynamics



- Unstable financial markets
- Peak oil—freight and labor

- Growing Asian middleclass
- Climate change and population migrations
- War

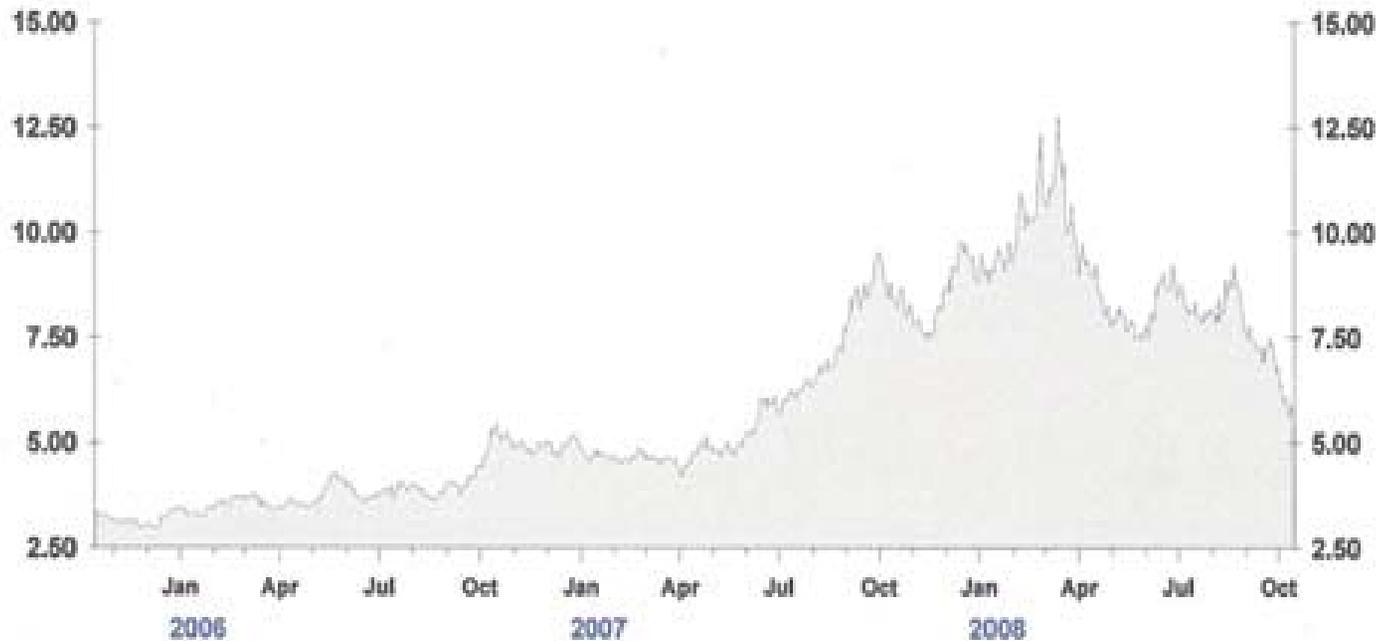
Petroleum Prices 2000-2008



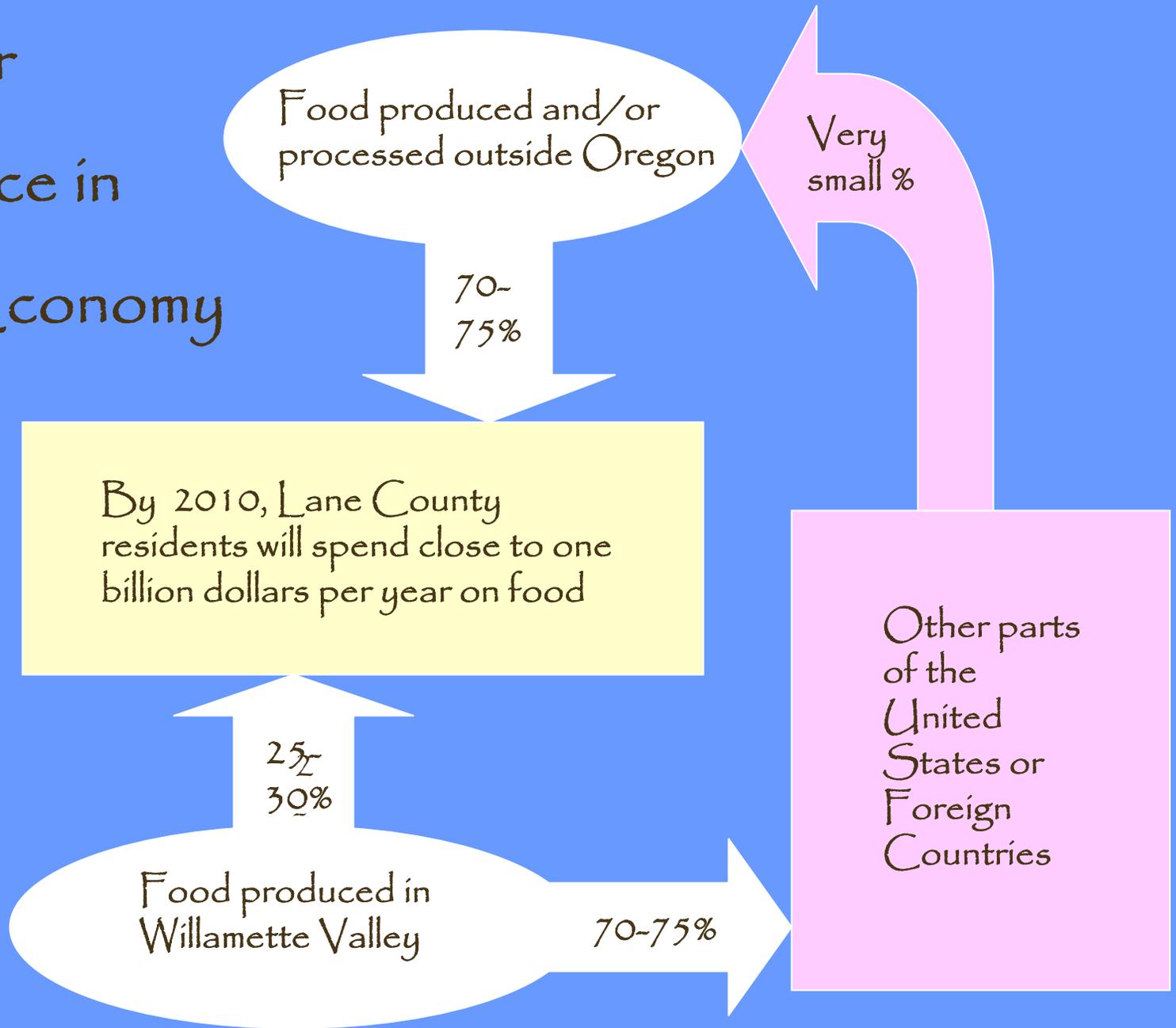
Dow Jones Average 2006-2008



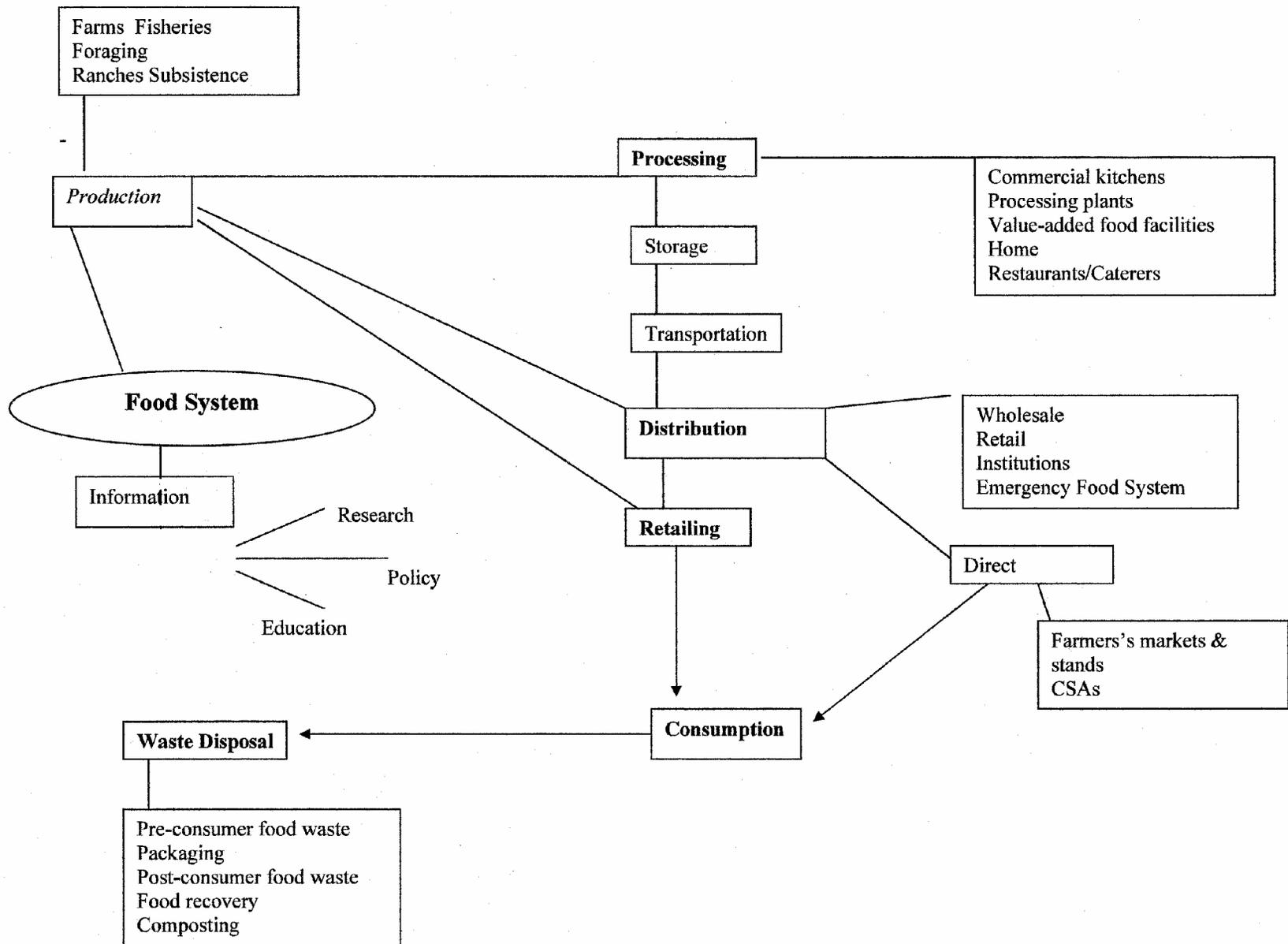
Wheat Prices Oct/2005-Oct/2008



Better
Balance in
Ag Economy



What is a food system?



How does a community go about rebuilding its regional food system?

- Willamette Farm and Food Coalition
- Helios Resource Network
- Food for Lane County
- OSU Extension Service
- Lane County Food Policy Council
- Inspired Community Action



Community Food System Assessment

The Lane County Food Policy Council, under the leadership of Deb Johnson, is currently in the process of preparing a community food system assessment for Lane County. This would include the following:

- GIS soil and crop mapping
- Inventory and capacity of growers, CSAs, grocery markets, farmers markets, distributors, processors, and storage facilities
- List of Federal Food Assistance Programs
- Breakdown of food dollar—for buyer and producer
- Community garden map
- Environmental factors
- Appraisal of food waste systems
- Evaluation of food accessibility, availability, and affordability
- Neighborhood readiness
- Local assistance to the needy

Creation of a Blueprint for a Sustainable South Willamette Valley



The PROUT Institute at Dharmalaya on River Road is current using Progressive Utilization Theory to create a design for a sustainable Willamette Valley. An agriculture model is a key part of this.

- Decentralization
- Diversity of crops
- Economic balance
- Neo-humanist values
- Cooperative business models
- Farmland housing codes
- Organic/permaculture practices
- Labor concerns

The Southern Willamette Valley Bean and Grain Project



Corvallis organic farmer Harry MacCormack is the vision and motivation behind the Southern Willamette Valley Bean and Grain Project, an on the ground effort to rebuild the regional food system.

- Increasing the quantity and diversity of food grown in the valley, specifically prompting the cultivation of organic beans and grains
- Building buyer/seller relationships for locally grown food
- Evaluating deficiencies in the local food system infrastructure
- Creating a body of knowledge for organic and sustainable agriculture specific to the Willamette Valley
- Inspiring community and neighborhood involvement in food security action



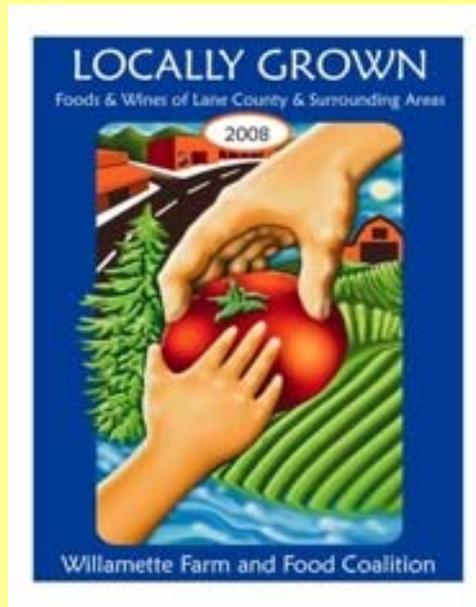
2008

**BEANS, GRAINS
& EDIBLE SEEDS
PROJECT**

**Uniting Communities
in the Southern Willamette Valley**



Building Relationships within the Food System



The Willamette Farm and Food Coalition is a non-profit organization focused on connecting local farmers to local buyers and increasing the amount of locally grown food that stays here in the valley. The WFFC publishes “Locally Grown,” a directory of local food producers, processors, and restaurants, all interested in building relationships with local buyers.

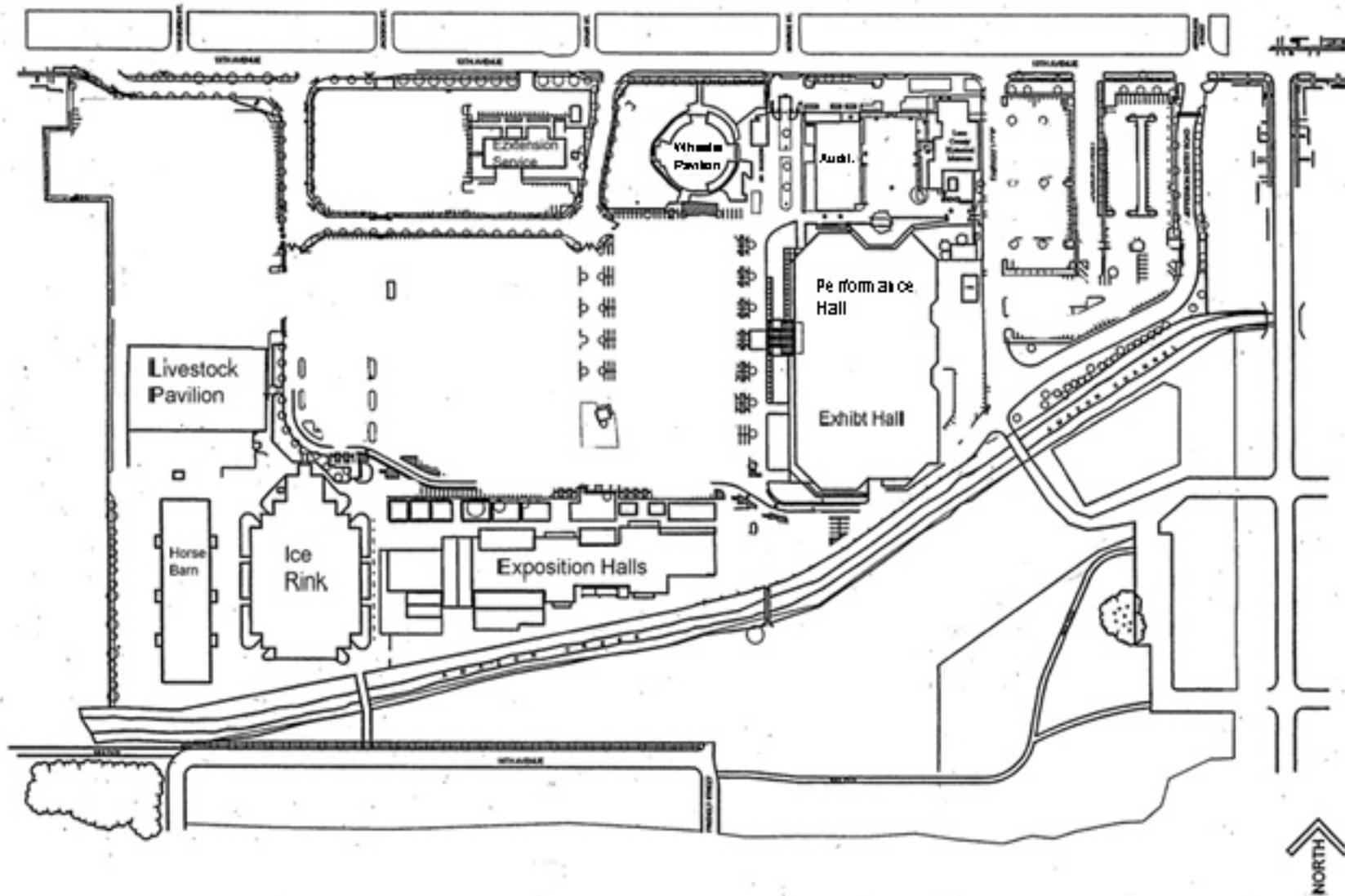
WFFC is also hosting a Year-round Farmers Market Task Force. If we intend to rebuild the local food system, one thing we will need more of is farmers markets. Currently we are seeing small markets emerge throughout the area—Crescent Village, The Tango Center, Whiteaker Station, and also a Springfield Market.

Making the Lane County Fairgrounds a Model of Sustainability

One Eugene group, working with WFFC's task force and the PROUT Institute, is pushing for a complete make-over of the Lane County Fairgrounds, hoping to create an operating demonstration of sustainable whole systems in the center of Eugene.

- Zero net waste
- Water catchment
- Photovoltaic panels
- Community gardens
- Local enterprise
- Composting sites and classes
- Bio-energy creation
- Zero net energy
- Permaculture design models
- Integration of micro livestock
- Eco-renovation
- Partnership with the Extension Service
- Local food hub—distribution and storage

Lane County Fairgrounds Repair



Victory Gardens for All!

Part of rebuilding the local food system is stimulating urban food production and taking advantage of small parcels of arable land within the city. Charlotte Anthony of Eugene has spearheaded a wonderful community action group called “Victory Gardens for All.”

- Over 300 gardens built
- Creating neighborhood solidarity
- Food security discussions
- Expansion to larger sites for field crops

Urban to Farm Connection

As a slightly smaller version of the Bean and Grain Project, Aleta Miller of Environmental Center of Sustainability (ECOS) has taken the cultivation of beans, grains, vegetables, and fruits to a level beyond home gardens.

- Urban teams on large plots of rural land
- Field crop production
- Cooperative crop sharing
- Cooperative crop marketing and profit sharing



Neighborhood Food Systems

The overriding principle of food security and the task of rebuilding our local food system is to create diversity and balance in our food network. Concerns about financial turmoil, climate change, and fuel shortages are all alleviated if we bring the food system closer to home. Neighborhood solidarity is a key ingredient—and it can be more than simply home gardens...

- Community gardens
- Composting stations
- Cooperative food storage
- Cooperative buying groups
- Produce trading stations
- Tool libraries
- Incubator kitchens
- Gleaning teams



The Ultimate Good Humor Man