LANE COUNTY FOOD SECURITY ASSESSMENT

March 18, 2009

Lane County Food Policy Council

Executive Summary

In this period of economic uncertainty and food and fuel price volatility, there is good reason to address food security in Lane County. Agricultural practices in the region are currently based on petrochemical inputs and the promotion of grass seed monoculture. At the same time, food crop acreage and diversity is at an all-time low. Farm labor needs are met primarily through legal and illegal immigration from Mexico. Food banks are struggling to keep up with the rising number of impoverished people. There is no plan in place to provide food during any kind of extended regional emergency. We are almost entirely reliant on the global food system for our food, and infrastructure for our own local food system is barely existent. The core elements of a strategy to increase Lane County food security, listed below, are focused on the rebuilding of our regional food system:

- Transition Farmland Management to Promote Soil Fertility
- Increase Food Crop Acreage
- Increase Food Crop Diversity
- Protect Farmland
- Grow and Diversify Farm Labor Pool
- Rebuild Food Processing, Storage, and Distribution Infrastructure
- Promote Urban Food Production
- Increase citizen skills to garden and preserve family food
- Increase access to local farm products and healthy food markets

Context for Community Food Security Planning

The world currently faces unprecedented challenges due to long-term resource mismanagement and environmental degradation. This is particularly evident in the realm of agriculture, where monoculture and industrial farming techniques are proving to be unsustainable. Topsoil loss, water shortages, and petrochemical dependency are stressing global food production, producing increasingly less nutritious food, and raising the price of food worldwide. In the last five years, food security has progressed from an issue generally associated with developing nations to a concern for all nations, including the United States. Recent studies report that 2.5 percent of the U.S. population is undernourished. Oregon ranks among the ten worst states with 4 percent of its populace undernourished. Even closer to home, one in five families in Lane County relies on **FOOD for Lane County** for emergency food assistance, and almost a third of the

county's children ate from an emergency food box at least once during this last year. With increasing concerns for an extended economic recession, growing unemployment, peaking oil production, the uncertainties of climate change, and renewed awareness of toxin tainted food products, food security should become part of all immediate and future planning in Lane County.

Definitions

Food Security: Food security is more than meeting the caloric needs of the less fortunate. Food security also includes ensuring the safety and nutritional value of the food that is available, having adequate stores of food on hand during times of emergency, using sustainable agricultural practices for the production of food, and having some significant level of regional self-reliance in the production, processing, distribution, storage, and sales of the region's food.

Food System: A food system is the full array of farm operations and infrastructure involved in the production of food and getting that food to the populace. A food system begins with arable land, farmers, farm machinery, and the farm labor necessary to grow and harvest all types of food. The food that is not sold directly as fresh produce must then be freighted to processors, processed, packaged, distributed, stored, and sold. This involves processing plants, distribution warehouses, storage facilities, product transportation, and markets. The entire network of these pieces and parts is the food system.

Related Issues

Economic Conditions: The world economy is currently in radical contraction. A mismanaged financial system and unrealistic expectations from free market dynamics have caused a re-evaluation of business planning and financial philosophy. The outlook speaks to indefinite recessionary economic conditions, increasing unemployment, and large-scale government intervention in anticipation of further economic contration. The numbers of homeless and hungry will increase worldwide, in the United States, and most assuredly in Oregon and Lane County.

Peak Oil: Oil production has or will soon peak. This means the cost of all petroleum products are on the rise and will continue to rise in fits and starts for the foreseeable future. This will severely impact our fossil fuel-based agricultural sector and the global food system. Over the last fifty years our methods of growing and distributing food have become more and more dependent on hydrocarbon products. Soil nitrogen levels are maintained by fertilizers made from hydrocarbon gases. Pests are fought with petroleum-based pesticides. Weeds are eliminated by petroleum-based herbicides. Fields are cultivated and harvested by machinery powered by petroleum-based fuels. Food products are transported by trucks or trains or airplanes powered by fossil fuels or their derivatives. Foods are processed with machines run by electricity generated by fossil fuels. Foods are packages in plastics made from petrochemical products. We refrigerate with fossil fuels, and we cook with fossil fuels. From field to distributor to store to kitchen cabinet to stove, our entire food system flows upon a stream of petroleum and fossil fuel derivatives.

This system evolved and expanded through a period when petroleum and natural gas was irrationally cheap. This is no longer the case and petroleum price volatility has already significantly effected the agricultural industry with climbing prices for chemical fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, farm machinery fuel, food processing, product packaging, and transportation. The entire food system must be remodeled in a way that reduces petroleum inputs and dependency as much as possible.

Climate Change: The unknown potentials of climate change make all planning for the future extremely difficult. Extreme weather events, diminished snowpack, seasonal rainfall pattern changes, water shortages, and localized population increases or decreases due to large scale migration must be considered in any emergency food security strategies or in the transformation of regional agricultural practices.

Environmental Degradation: Along with concerns for resource depletion and the effects of green house gases, the earth suffers from a variety of general and specific environmental insults. Excessive aquifer pumping, soil loss, toxins in the watershed and the living biota, accelerated species loss, air pollution, the continuing trade off of cropland and forests for urban expansion, plus a litany of other factors have cut into the vitality of life on the planet, the overall health of the land, and our ability to produce sustained and adequate quantities of food.

Globalization: Globalization, facilitated by cheap oil, has turned our food systems inside out. 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, particularly for local food systems. Regional agriculture has turned to monoculture for the targeting of specific global markets, diminishing diversity in what is grown for local markets, and lending to the deterioration of regional food system infrastructure. Communities are losing the ability to feed themselves from local sources by relying too heavily on distant markets to buy and sell their food. The situation in Lane County and the greater Willamette Valley is no different.

Food Safety: Food safety is a persistent issue. We have seen articles in the newspaper about E coli in spinach, salmonella in tomatoes, and melanine in products as diverse as pet foods, toothpaste, and baby formula. Knowing where food comes from, how it was grown, and what additives have been included during its processing is critical to food security. The closer food is grown and processed to the place it is eaten, the more the consumer knows about that food.

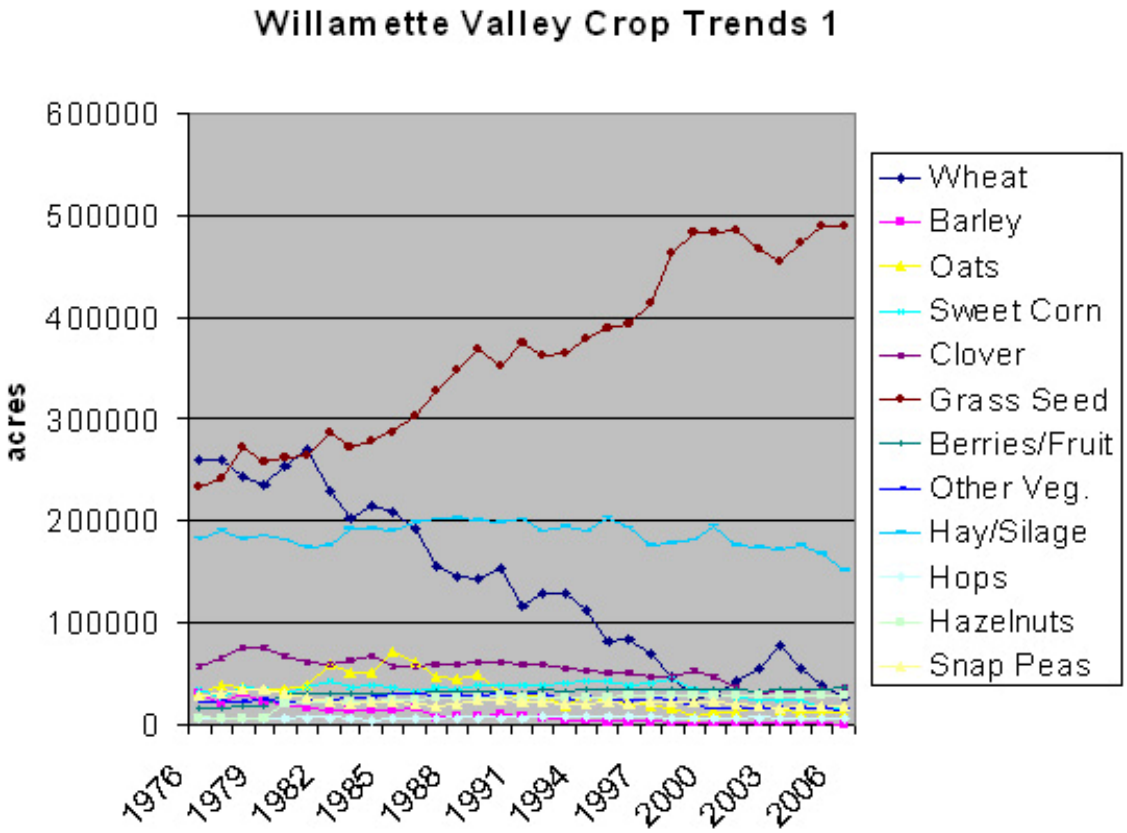
Willamette Valley Agriculture through the Lens of Food Security

It is more appropriate to discuss the bioregion under consideration rather than the county. In this instance, the bioregion will be defined as the Willamette Valley. Any mention of a regional food system would then apply to the bioregion defined by the Willamette Valley.

The Willamette Valley is one of the most bountiful agricultural areas in the United States. The valley itself is a hundred mile long, two million-acre stretch of prime farmland bordered by 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 and legumes. There is tremendous flexibility in what can be grown and the way the various field crops can be rotated for the health of the land. With the potential to grow more than two hundred different food crops and being home to a variety of fish and other wildlife, the Willamette Valley is essentially a garden valley. This is a huge asset when it comes to the question of self-reliance and food security in Lane County.

Historical Perspective

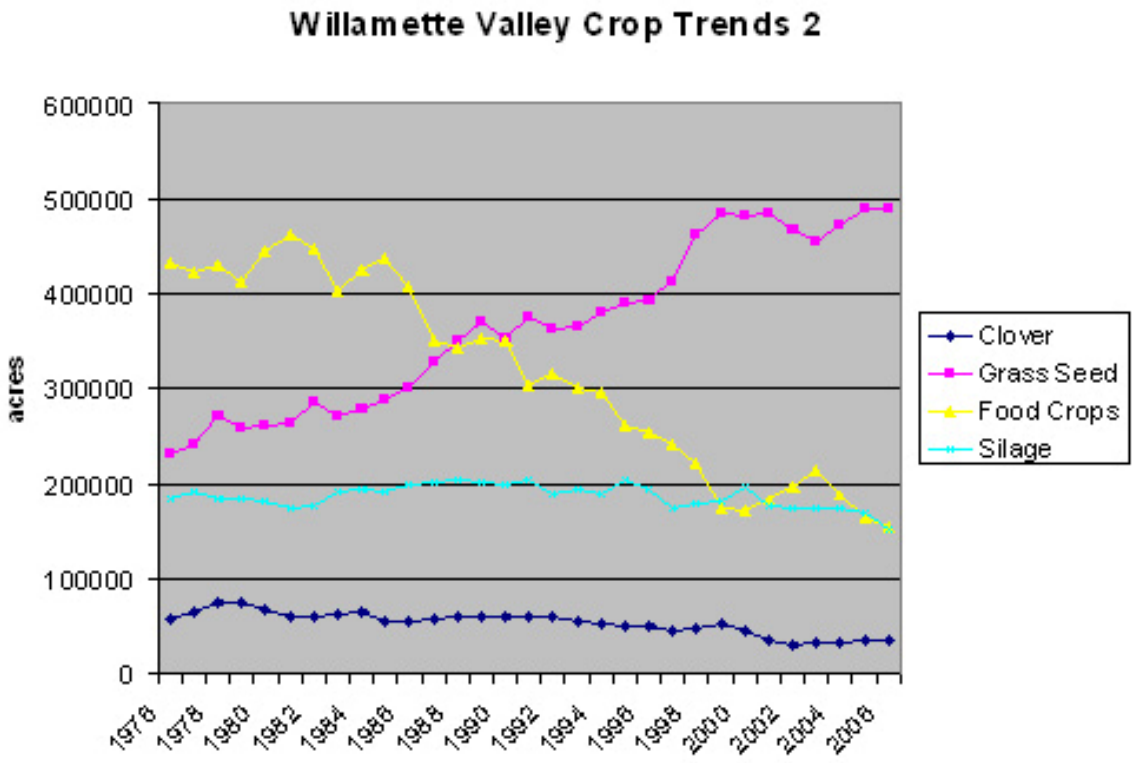
In the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, Willamette Valley agriculture produced a wide array of grains, fruits, and vegetables. At times wheat represented almost a third of what was harvested. Barley, oats, snap peas, and sweet corn were also significant crops. Tomatoes, broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, potatoes, onions, cucumbers, peaches, raspberries, strawberries, hazelnuts, and squash fill out the mix. Prior to 1980, Willamette Valley farmers were providing more than half of what the valley residents were eating. Though there were foods which did not grow in the valley and the population was about half of what it is today, the region did have the agricultural capacity and food system infrastructure to feed itself.



Current Situation

Over the last twenty-five years, the dynamics of the global market place have centralized food distribution into large storage, processing, and transport conglomerates while delocalizing regional food systems throughout the world, particularly in the United States, where the food travels an average of more than fifteen hundred miles to get from the production site to the dinner table. The Willamette Valley has not been immune to this dynamic.

The graph (above) labeled "Willamette Valley Crop Trends 1" tracks all significant crops grown in the Willamette Valley by acreage over the last thirty years. On one hand this graph shows the incredible diversity of crops that can be grown in the Willamette Valley and the quantities of each that there is capacity to grow. On the other hand, the graph also very clearly reveals the effect of the global market on Oregon agriculture. Beginning about 1983, as wheat prices eased off record highs, Willamette Valley farmers began a steady trade-off of wheat acreage for grass seed, that is grass grown to produce grass seed which is then shipped all over the world for seeding forage pastures or for lawns and golf courses. Grass seed is now the valley's most important cash crop. More than fifty percent of all the acreage that was harvested in the Willamette Valley in 2007 was for grass seed. That was over 400,000 acres.



The graph (above) labeled "Willamette Valley Crop Trends 2" clarifies this by mapping all food crop acreage, not including silage for livestock feed, against grass seed acreage. The divergence is hard to miss. Globalization has enabled specialized and long distant markets while at the same time diminishing food crop diversity at home. The net effect is that the Willamette Valley populace is now eating less than five percent locally grown food. When it comes to food security, this is a glaring imbalance.

Farming Practices

Above and beyond declining oil reserves and climbing petroleum product costs, the use of petrochemicals to enhance the productivity of all variety of food and grass seed crops in the Willamette Valley is not sustainable. It has been thoroughly documented that the long term use of petrochemical fertilizers in any situation wears out the soil. After a while, the soil is essentially dead, devoid of bacteria and microorganisms. The soil becomes little more than a medium to temporarily store chemical fertilizers. Even in a region as fertile as the Willamette Valley, this kind of agriculture can not endure and is essentially a dead end.

In addition to petrochemical fertilizers, other petrochemicals are used as pesticides and herbicides to protect crops from pests and weeds. Farming with these kinds of chemical inputs can be successful in the short-term, but what is produced is tainted by chemical residue and may not have the same nutritional value as foods that derive their nutrients from complex, natural soils. Also, excess chemicals are washed away by rain or irrigation and enter the groundwater and eventually all waters downstream. High levels of agricultural toxins have been found in Willamette Valley ground water and must be consider a health issue—again pointing to a dead end.

Farm Labor

Labor costs play a critical role in the economic gradient that made the globalized food system possible. Farm labor wages are radically lower in many foreign countries than they are in the United States. This labor differential offsets freight costs and creates the situation where food products grown many thousands of miles away are cheaper than products grown at home. As fuel prices rise, freight costs are likely to minimize or overcome the economic advantage of distant labor; however, at this point in time, the Willamette Valley is not in position to take advantage of this potential market change. Almost all of the farm labor in Oregon (as in the rest of the United States) comes from Mexico, legally or otherwise. On top of this, the average age of a farm owner in the Willamette Valley is over fifty-five years and rising. There are simply too few young Oregonians (or Americans in general) interested in going into farming as a career. Oregon's future farmers are Hispanic immigrants, again legal or otherwise. All told, farm labor demographics are as great a problem for sustainable agricultural production in Oregon as is diesel fuel.

Other Food Security Factors

Because the Willamette Valley receives approximately ninety-five percent of its food from outside the bioregion and because much of it is already packaged, food processors, storage capacity, and local farm produce distribution hubs have all but disappeared from the region. This means the valley not only doesn't grow its own food, but it doesn't have the capacity to process, store, or distribute more than a small portion of what is consumed—whether it is grown locally or not.

A related problem is that local farmers markets exist only in proportion to local food sales. Even including purchases made by restaurants, institutional cafeterias, and grocery stores, the bioregion buys no more than five percent of its food from local growers. About two percent of that comes from community supported agricultural

ventures, direct farm sales, or local farmers markets. Even should regional farmers increase food production, there are not enough markets currently available for increased product sales.

Our food system is essentially Interstate Five and the trucks that deliver food from outside of the valley. This system is as fragile as our "just in time" inventory of diesel, the turn of the weather, or any other macro-event that prevents through traffic on the interstate.

Lane County Food Security Summary

The current status of food security in Lane County is poor. Agricultural practices in the Willamette Valley are heavily based on petrochemical inputs and are not sustainable. Monoculture dominates the business model and provides little balance and only a hint of the diversity that is possible in the Willamette Valley. Farm labor needs are met primarily through immigration from Mexico during a period when national immigration laws are in a state of flux and turmoil. Food banks are struggling to keep up with the rising number of impoverished people. There is no plan in place to provide food during any kind of extended regional emergency, be it an earthquake, massive flooding, or a man-made disaster. We are almost entirely reliant on the global food system for our food. We import approximately ninety-five percent of what we now eat and have less than optimum capacity for local food processing, distribution, or storage. **Right now, today,** we can not feed ourselves without the global system, and this system is based on the availability of cheap oil and easy credit at a time when oil production is peaking and our financial system is crumbling. Essentially all the factors that lead to food security are owned and maintained by forces outside our control and are afloat on a global system deep amid economic recession. At bottom, food security calls for some measure of self-reliance, of which we currently have little to none.

Food Security Solutions

All of the deficiencies in our current state of food security or lack thereof can be addressed through the rebuilding of our regional food system. A complete regional food system increases a region's food self-reliance and strengthens the local economy. It shortens the distances that food must travel, reducing the amount of fossil fuel needed to transport it, while at the same time diminishing related carbon emissions that contribute to climate change. A complete regional food system insures that in times of emergency adequate food stores are close by and immediately available. It also means that regional farm surpluses can be managed locally for the feeding of the needy or homeless, instead of their being reliant on federal food programs. Additionally, a regional food system makes it possible to know the farm where the food was produced and know the way that the food was grown and/or processed, meaning some level of food safety can be gained for individual buyers—because they know where the food came from.

Thus the central focus for increased food security in Lane County and the Willamette Valley should be the steady rebuilding of the regional food system. At the moment, we have at best a skeletal food system here in the Willamette Valley; however, we do have the most critical ingredients for fleshing it out: plenty of fertile farmland, a

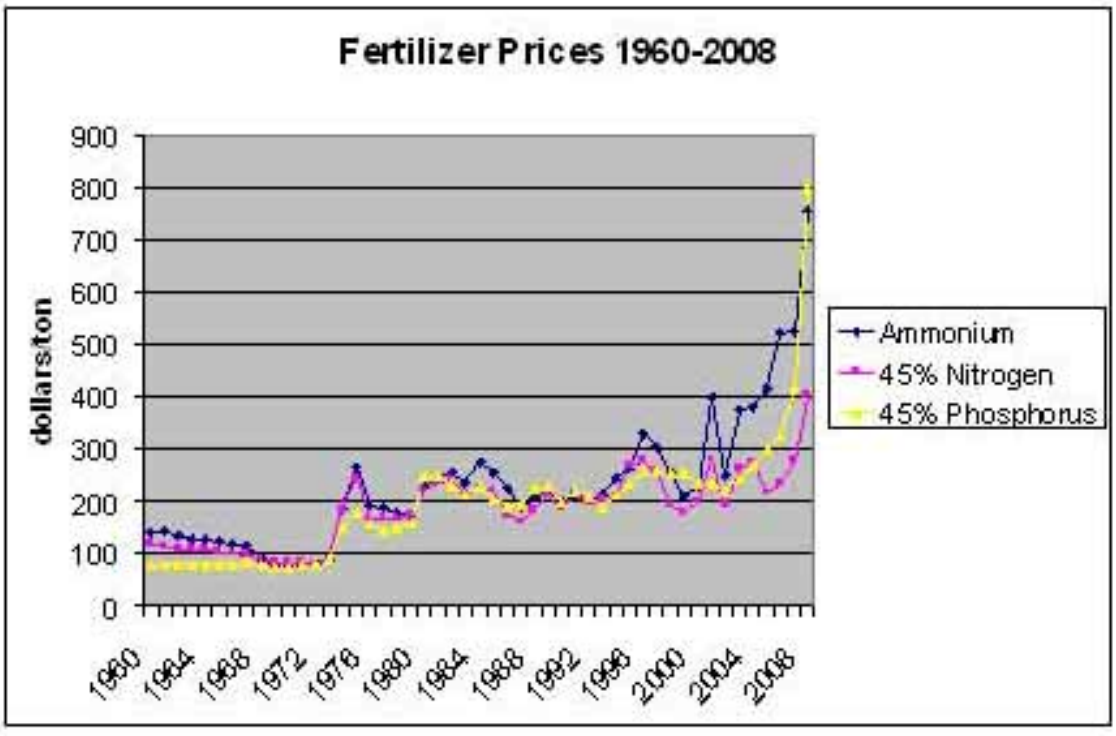
reasonably mild maritime climate, and an agricultural history that includes a complete and working food system.

The core elements of a strategy to increase Lane County food security are a transition to sustainable farming practices and the reconstruction of regional food system infrastructure. Many of the recommendations that follow apply to the greater Willamette River bioregion as well as to Lane County. Some of the recommendations enumerate programs, activities, and necessary policy changes. Some of the recommendations simply serve to elucidate "big picture" dynamics that state, county, or city policy makers can not directly influence, but should still be aware of for the sake of creating a consistent food security philosophy.

Ongoing activities that currently exist and are already aimed at increasing Lane County food security are listed and bulleted below each recommendation.

Transition Farmland Management to Promote Soil Fertility

Farmland should be cultivated in such a way that topsoil and soil health/biology are maintained or increased with each succeeding season**.** A significant part of this strategy involves substituting organic inputs for chemical inputs whenever possible. Minimizing chemical inputs adds to overall sustainability by cutting production costs over the long-term, by increasing soil vitality, and by limiting toxins that enter the groundwater and the food shed.



Chemical inputs—fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides—can be replaced with whole system farm management that includes the integration of livestock and crop production. Whole system farms are generally smaller farms (less than 100 acres) and are more efficient ways of managing the land than are large monoculture plantations. Conservation

tillage, organic practices, and permaculture techniques need to become part of our farmland management philosophy. In conjunction with this, accent should be placed on the creation of bio-fuels on the farms themselves. Partial or total independence from the global fuel market for the operation of farm machinery is an important step to long-term sustainable food production.

These kinds of changes will be difficult to implement through any kind of government actions. Aside from market forces related to safer food, healthier eating habits, and chemical input costs, changes in the way we tend the land are best achieved through education and outreach to regional farmers. State and/or county incentive programs for soil conservation are very feasible. They already exist or have existed at the national level. Current resistance to incentives to minimize chemical inputs or to grow organically is changing, especially with increasing awareness for food safety and health issues. It is also possible that rising input costs can act as an impetus for farmers to seek education in alternative practices.

- The Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB), under the guidance of Karl Morgenstern, is doing many thing to promote the reduction of chemical inputs in Willamette Valley agriculture. "EWEB's **Healthy Farms Clean Water Program** seeks ways to facilitate a healthy regional agro-economy while also protecting the source of drinking water for over 260,000 people." Currently EWEB offers free soil sampling to allow for better management of fertilizer applications and free organic certification to farmers transitioning to Oregon Tilth certified practices. "In 2007/08, EWEB also assisted growers in removing and disposing of more than 44 tons of obsolete agricultural chemical from the McKenzie and Middle Fork Willamette watersheds."

Increase Food Crop Acreage

Every effort must be made to grow more food in the Willamette Valley. Currently grass seed production is the monolith of monoculture in the valley. With more than four hundred thousand acres devoted to grass seed production in the Willamette Valley, it would be advisable to convert some significant portion of that acreage to food production.

Because the Willamette Valley has growing conditions especially conducive to seed production, grass seed and other seed production will always be a part of Willamette Valley agriculture. While it is likely the production of grass seed for turf, lawns or golf courses, may lose its market share as petroleum prices rise, grass seed for livestock foraging or other types of seed production will still serve an important purpose. Similarly, the economics gradients that favor grass seed production over food production are likely to change with rising fuel prices. Government policies to proactively promote Willamette Valley food production and stimulate the purchase of locally grown foods would also be important.

Increase Food Crop Diversity

Every effort must be made to increase the diversity of food crops that are grown in the Willamette Valley. More than 200 different food crops can be grown in the Willamette Valley. Along with the increased production of current food crops—fruits,

nuts, and vegetables, it is also important to stimulate the local cultivation of staples, such as beans, grains, and edible seeds.

There are a multitude of crop combinations and rotations that can be used to increase soil quality, diminish pests and weeds, and stimulate new facets of the agricultural economy. Some of these rotations are directly applicable to the production of grass seed. The introduction of beans and grains to the regular rotation of grass seed acreage can build soil fecundity, increase food production and diversity overall, and increase farmland revenues.

- The work currently being done by Harry MacCormack and a few other farmers in the valley has shown that there are many varieties of high protein beans, grains, and edible seeds that are not generally grown here that can be. Introducing these staples to Willamette Valley agriculture could be a huge boon to the agricultural economy. **The Southern Willamette Bean and Grain Project** (http://www.mudcitypress.com/beanandgrain.html) is currently facilitating this kind of research and promoting the production of staple crops in the Willamette Valley for the express purpose of rebuilding the local food system and building knowledge about regional growing methods and crop selection.

Protect Remaining High Value Willamette Valley Farmland

The overriding economic incentive to sell farmland to developers is detrimental to our overall food security. The steady pressure to use land development as a means of growing our local economy is out of balance with the real economic strength of this region; food production is a more reasonable long-term plan for regional economic stability than new homes, imported businesses, big box stores, or road building. The protection of farmland from development and incursion of the Urban Growth Boundary needs to be a top city and county priority.

- The Willamette Farm and Food Coalition's **Lane County Farmland Preservation Committee**, in partnership with the Lane County Food Policy Council and Helios Resource Network, is currently preparing a GIS survey of soils in the lower Willamette River basin. This soil map can become an important tool for state, county, or city planners in assessing urban boundary growth and other development plans. It is particularly important to protect class one and two soil types when considering any future development in the regional. This project could benefit greatly from state, county, or city support.
- **The Eugene Water and Electric Board** (EWEB) "is working with several partners to acquire farmland that is threatened by development and turn it into demonstration farms. These farms will show how the conversion from pasture or conventional farming to organic crop production can help supply local food markets, protect habitats and riparian areas, and make use of renewable energy and efficient irrigation."

Grow and Diversify Farm Labor Pool in the Willamette Valley

It will be necessary to confront the farm labor situation in creative ways. Mexican farm workers should be allowed to naturalize if they like. We will need them. But more than that, we must find ways to get more young Oregonians interested in farming. At the same time, the family farm model of agriculture must be expanded. Labor concerns may necessitate the creation of cooperative farms, cooperative farming operations, or farming-based ecovillages. Current farmland zoning codes do not permit multiple family dwellings or multiple residential dwellings. These land use codes need to be revised to enable different kinds of farmland and labor management models.

- **The ECOS Urban to Farm Connection Project** run by Aleta Miller is a valuable model for creative cooperative food production. The Urban to Farm Connection builds teams of Eugene residents to cultivate and harvest multi-acre garden plots inside or outside the city. The teams work as cooperatives, sharing work, produce, and produce sales profits. This is an ongoing project deserving of city and/or county support.
- **Huerto de la Familia** has established a **Small Farmers Lane County Project** designed to help economically challenged Latino families develop organic farming skills, so that they may eventually become independent small farmers.

Rebuild the Food Processing, Storage, and Distribution Infrastructure

Hand in hand with the increased production and diversity of food crops in the Willamette Valley, there must be a steady rebuilding of the food system infrastructure. As revealed this last summer when there was a market-driven increase of winter wheat production in the Willamette Valley, there is little or no grain storage available in the valley at this time. The same is true of food processors, food distributors, and farmers markets.

We are currently buying less than five percent locally grown food. If that figure could reach 25 or 30 percent, it would be enough to enable the creation of a complete regional food system and the related infrastructure, while at the same time providing strength and stability to the local economy. Lane County residents will spend close to a billion dollars on food in the year 2010. Could a third or even a quarter of that be spent on locally produced or processed food, it would be a huge boon for the local economy and enable a modest decoupling from the vagaries of the global market. To do this, the rebuilding of food system infrastructure must be a high priority in all policy decisions.

- **The Fairgrounds Repair Project** is currently working on a plan to renovate the Lane County Fairgrounds so that it can become an integral piece of infrastructure in a rebuilt regional food system. This site would act as a south valley food hub that would include a year-round farmers market, long-term food storage, and a distribution warehouse. The Repaired Fairgrounds would also serve as an education center for classes on how to grow, prepare, and preserve food. It would include community garden space, a fruit tree nursery, a source of plant starts, compost generated soil, horticulture classes, alternative energy production demonstrations, and young farmer mentoring.

The creation of such a site at the Fairgrounds can only happen through a partnership with the county, the city, like-minded businesses, and private contributors/investors.

- The Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB) "sponsors the annual **Local Food Connection**, a networking event designed to support local food production by bringing farms and buyers together in a matchmaking environment."
- **EWEB is working with Ecotrust (in Portland) and the Willamette Farm and Food Coalition** "to fund and coordinate efforts to set up an online business to business marketplace in Eugene that catalyzes wholesale-direct buying and selling of locally produced food and to provide farmers access to an efficient local food distribution network." As part of this, the Willamette Farm and Food Coalition has created an online directory of local farmers and food buyers.
- **EWEB, Ecotrust, the Willamette Farm and Food Coalitions, and the Governor's Oregon Solutions Team** are working "to bring a cross-section of experts together to solve transportation, processing, and food storage issues relating to getting local food to institutional buyers like school districts, hospitals, universities, and community colleges."
- **EWEB and Good Company** (of Eugene) have begun a market assessment of buyers, distributors, and wholesalers in an effort to prompt and facilitate the local food market.
- **The Lotus Project** is currently amid talks with Lane County to build a prototype mobile commercial kitchen from a retro-fitted mobile home. This could be a creative way to reconfigure the mobile home building business in Lane County and open new opportunities to a business that is sure to suffer as the price of petroleum climbs. At the same time, these mobile kitchens could increase county food production capacity and serve as a small food business incubators.
- **The Willamette Farm and Food Coalition** has organized a task force to facilitate and promote the building of a year-round market in Eugene. This has long been a popular idea in Eugene and could be an integral part of stimulating increased local food production and the rebuilding of food system infrastructure. Like the Fairgrounds Repair Project, this endeavor begs for partnerships between the county, the city, and private investors.

Promote Urban Food Production

Urban food production must be recognized as an integral part of the food system. As recessive economic conditions lead to more homeless or poverty stricken, the incorporation of neighborhood community gardens, neighborhood composting sites, produce trading stations, cooperative food stores, incubator/commercial kitchens, CSA distribution stations, and neighborhood storage facilities will help in creating community food security awareness, stronger community in general, and accommodating the needy.

- **Victory Gardens for You** is a year-long project run and managed by Charlotte Anthony. She has enabled the creation of more than 300 residential

vegetable gardens in Eugene. This program is ongoing through the winter and merits consideration for city support.

- **The OSU Extension Service** in Eugene offers education within schools and urban and rural communities designed to assist gardening knowledge and practices. This includes the **Master Gardener Program** and instruction on food preservation for home-grown, community grown, and gleaned rural and urban foods.
- **FOOD for Lane County** plays a big part in the promotion of urban farming. They support and manage three large community gardens (**The Youth Farm, Grass Roots,** and **Churchill Garden**) as a way to strengthen their ongoing food assistance programs.
- **The School Garden Project of Lane County (SGP)** helps local schools create gardens where students learn to grow and harvest healthy produce. In the current school year, SGP has established relationships with more than 30 schools in Lane County.
- **Catholic Community Services**, which works in conjunction with FOOD for Lane County distributing food to the needy, has a garden in Springfield.

Policy Changes Needed

While market forces will have to provide the primary impetus to increase food production and rebuild the regional food system, state, county, and city government policy can play a significant part by supporting all of the recommendations above. Proactive policies and incentives stimulating our agricultural economy will repay us in the long-term by recycling more of our food dollars into the local economy and providing some insulation from the volatility of the global market. A few specific suggestions follow:

1. Support a complete Lane County food system assessment and other related food system research.
2. Make low interest loans or grants available to entrepreneurs wanting to build food processing plants or storage facilities.
3. Facilitate partnerships between the state, county, city, and/or private investors for the creation of indoor and/or year-round farmers markets, processing facilities, or storage facilities.
4. Enable City and County institutional cafeterias to purchase locally grown foods as a way to stimulate local food production. (Particularly in the schools, it is important to move away from institutional style meals and into working commercial kitchens that prepare food right there at the school.)
5. Promote education about food security and hands-on gardening in the schools. (School districts can add home gardening, food preservation, food preparation, and nutrition classes to the curriculum. In conjunction with this, schools can use these classes to maintain gardens and fruit trees at the schools. These gardens would be used for teaching and, if they are large enough, could also contribute fresh produce, particularly year-round greens, to the cafeteria menus.)
6. Reassess farmland zoning laws, both to protect class one and class two soils and to address farm labor concerns.

7. Create neighborhood green teams as a way to promote community food security. (Teams of youths supervised by master gardener/recyclers and assigned to each neighborhood could assist neighborhoods year-round in the maintenance of community gardens, home gardens for the elderly or incapacitated, composting sites, recycling of all variety of materials, fruit tree gleaning, and general neighborhood cohesion.)
8. Make grants available for the purpose of creating neighborhood food cooperatives, community gardens, or other neighborhood food projects.
9. Provide continued support to FOOD for Lane County and Catholic Community Services for their work feeding the less fortunate—community food collection, food delivery, fruit tree gleaning, and food reclamation.

Ongoing policy-related activities include the following:

- **The Lane County Food Policy Council** is currently in the process of creating a food system assessment for Lane County. This is a well-advised first step toward the rebuilding of the regional food system. A detailed survey of our current food system infrastructure is the best way to understand what capacities exist now and what shortcomings need to be addressed in order to build a complete and working food system in the future. Providing funds for this kind of food system assessment in Lane County is highly recommended.

Existing educational food programs in Lane County are listed below:

- **School Garden Project** is run by Jared Pruch**.**
- **Farm to School Project** is run by Megan Kemple and supported by the Willamette Farm and Food Coalition.
- **Community and Schools Together Program (CAST)** in the Bethel area of Eugene is managed by and supported by grants written by Deb Johnson, Chairperson of the Lane County Food Policy Council.
- **The Lane Coalition for Healthy Youth** focuses on the prevention of childhood obesity and related diseases, through community education and convening partnerships to bring about policy and environmental change.
- **Nutritional Education Program** is a set of classes run by the OSU Extension Service.
- **The Institute for Sustainability Education and Ecology,** a program for creating green teams in the schools, was begun and is now managed by Mel Bankoff.

All of these programs, and many more not identified here, could be expanded or given additional support.

Conclusion

We are currently living in rapidly changing times. Humans all over the world must reassess the way they live and the way they treat the land and other living things. Central to this is food production and distribution. While many of the problems that we will face in the coming years are difficult for a county or even a region to impact, food security is different. It can be confronted at a local level. The rebuilding of the regional food systems is a difficult but very feasible response. Increased food sustainability and security can be achieved in Lane County through policies and community action directed at rebuilding our regional food system and supporting sustainable management of our farmland.

Next Steps

The lists of ongoing food security actions and activities that are part of this document are not complete. The Lane County Food Policy Council document library currently has a food mapping document that lists and describes all the organizations in Lane County that work with food issues. That document was complied in 2003. Updating this important document is one of the projects that the Lane County Food Policy Council would like to see completed in 2009 so that it can be added to this document as an appendix.

Acknowledgements

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