

FOOD POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

PORTLAND-MULTNOMAH FOOD POLICY COUNCIL

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INTRODUCTION

This report provides the findings and recommendations of the Food Policy Council, a citizen advisory panel created in June 2002 by the City of Portland and Multnomah County. Established as a subcommittee of the Sustainable Development Commission, the Food Policy Council was asked to provide advice on promoting a well-functioning regional food system. Its mandate was to:

1. Provide ongoing advice and input to City and County staff on food-related issues as needed.
2. Develop a set of governing principles to guide future local government and community decision making related to food issues.
3. Identify and report back to City Council and the County Board on options for improving:
 - a) local land use policies and rules related to food production and distribution;
 - b) methods for building regional demand for locally produced foods and food products;
 - c) City and County food purchasing policies and practices;
 - d) the availability of healthy, affordable food to all residents; and
 - e) the capacity of local communities to promote and engage in healthy food practices.
4. Develop a workplan, proposed structure and potential sources of additional funding for the Food Policy Council in fiscal year 2003-04 and subsequent years.

FPC OUTREACH AND RESEARCH

The members of Food Policy Council represent a wide range of expertise on local food issues including hunger relief, nutrition, food business and industrial practices, local farming, community education and institutional food purchasing and practices. FPC used a variety of outreach and research activities to fulfill its charge.

Food Policy Inventory – FPC interviewed City and County staff to identify ways that local government policies and actions affect the production, distribution and disposal of food.

Community Interviews – FPC attended a variety of events to hear residents' ideas for improving food access in their neighborhoods and for expanding purchases of regionally-produced food. FPC also attended meetings with growers to gather their ideas on strategies to support regional agriculture.

Institutional Purchasing Survey – FPC partnered with Community Food Matters, a local non-profit project, to investigate regional and sustainable food purchasing by institutions. This project surveyed opinions of growers, distributors and purchasers such as hotels, jails, schools and corporate campuses.

Food Access Map – FPC initiated a project with Metro to create a geographical information system (GIS) map of grocery stores, farmers' markets, emergency food locations and community gardens in Multnomah County. This tool helps to identify areas with inadequate food access.

Subcommittees — For each area identified in its charge (3a-3e, above), FPC formed a subcommittee including other community members with relevant expertise. These subcommittees conducted research and developed a set of recommendations for consideration by the full Council. The recommendations presented in this report are high-priority items gleaned from the work of these five subcommittees.

Several Americorps members provided support for research and outreach activities. Additional staff support was provided by the Multnomah County Departments of Health and Business and Community Services and by the City of Portland Office of Sustainable Development.

REPORT ORGANIZATION

The first section of this report, Governing Principles, explains why food policy is important for local government and outlines the values of a sustainable food system. The subsequent chapters present six key strategies identified by FPC. For each, the report documents the local need and recommends specific actions for local government.

- ☐ Plan for food access
- ☐ Increase visibility of regional food
- ☐ Support food and nutrition programs
- ☐ Model purchasing practices
- ☐ Defend land use laws
- ☐ Implement awareness campaigns

In addition, more extensive findings and recommendations are presented in the complete reports of FPC's subcommittees. These are available from the Office of Sustainable Development www.sustainableportland.org.

RECOMMENDATIONS

FPC has outlined how local government can influence the food system, supporting existing community efforts and catalyzing further action.

Governing Principles - The Food Policy Council maintains that local government should begin by adopting governing principles that affirm its commitment to promote, support and strengthen a healthy regional food system.

High-Priority Actions - FPC recommends the following actions for immediate implementation by the City and County. Additional recommendations are provided in subsequent sections.

Pilot Project in Low-Income Areas: Focused effort is needed in low-income areas where food access problems are particularly acute.

City: Conduct a pilot planning process, conducting outreach to residents and working with community partners to develop solutions such as expanding retail options, developing farmers' markets, creating community gardens, or expanding access to federal or state food and nutrition programs.

County: Identify areas with food access barriers through GIS mapping, data collection and analysis.

Institutional Purchasing: Government can lead by example, using its purchasing power to support a healthy regional food system. The starting point is building connections with regional food suppliers.

County: Incorporate sustainability criteria into food purchases for correctional facilities.

Summer Food Program: Of children who use the school lunch program during the school year, less than 25% access summer food programs.

City: Implement Portland Parks & Recreation activities and facility improvements in order to increase the low-income kids participating in Summer Food Programs.

Farmers' Markets and Public Market: These venues will provide a foundation for building the regional food economy and raising public awareness.

City:

1. Create policies supporting the use of public sites for farmers' markets and the development of a network of permanent market sites.

2. Support current efforts to establish a public market in Portland.

County: Improve access to farmers' markets for food stamp users, and increase use of the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program by raising awareness of farmers' market dates and times, using promotional strategies that fit the culture of specific communities

Land Use Policy - The Food Policy Council maintains that the City of Portland and Multnomah County should play a leading role in defending and promoting agricultural interests at the Metro and state levels. The Food Policy Council is available to meet periodically with City Council and County Board members to discuss current issues of concern to regional farmers.

Continued Work of Food Policy Council - In order to make the improvements necessary to support the health of our citizens, the food sector of our economy and our environment, the City and County will need the support and expertise of the Food Policy Council. Therefore, the Council seeks to continue its work providing guidance for food policy initiatives.

GOVERNING PRINCIPLES

The Portland region's current food system is fraught with both challenge and opportunity.

- ❑ The Willamette Valley is one of two valleys that comprise the fifth most threatened agricultural region in the nation. (American Farmland Trust, 1997)
- ❑ Oregon loses 11,860 acres of farmland every year to development. (USDA 1997 National Resource Inventory)
- ❑ Even if we are able to protect our farmland we cannot guarantee that there will be people to farm the land. The average age of Oregon farmers is 55 and only 5% are under the age of 35.
- ❑ Our food supply is becoming increasingly globalized. Food in the United States now travels between 1,500 and 2,500 miles from farm to table, as much as 25 percent farther than two decades ago (Worldwatch Institute). This globalization is taking an enormous toll on the environment.
- ❑ The global food supply is dominated by large agribusinesses that use farming practices that deplete the soil and pollute our water and air. Excessive nonrenewable resources such as petroleum are used in transport and for chemical inputs.
- ❑ Portland, as the state's largest city, plays its role in according Oregon the dubious distinction of being #1 in hunger. One out of seven Oregon households (14.3%) were food insecure, and 6.2% of these households were food insecure with hunger (Brandeis University Center on Hunger and Poverty, 2002).
- ❑ Over half (54%) of Multnomah County adults are overweight or obese; leading to diabetes, heart disease and other preventable ailments. The lack of access to nutritious food is a key factor in causing obesity.

But opportunities for change abound.

- ❑ This region has 14 thriving farmers' markets where regional farmers supply fresh produce and other food products to urban residents. Portlanders are avid gardeners.
- ❑ The City's community garden program is widely subscribed and, in some parts of Portland, there are waiting lists of up to three years for garden spaces.
- ❑ Successful community-oriented retailers are bringing regional and often organic foods to citizens at affordable prices.
- ❑ The region's non-governmental sector provides services such as assisting low-income residents in growing their own food, creating access to urban agriculture and effectively distributing emergency food supplies throughout the region.
- ❑ Most importantly, citizens are increasingly engaged in this issue, in part perhaps because of their concerns about the safety of their food supply in the wake of genetic engineering, food-borne bacteria scares, and concerns that terrorism may interrupt a food delivery system based on long-distance transport.

Governing Principles - The City of Portland and the County of Multnomah will promote, support and strengthen a healthy regional food system, based upon the following principles:

1. Every City and County resident has the right to an adequate supply of nutritious, affordable and culturally appropriate food (food security).
2. Food security contributes to the health and well-being of residents while reducing the need for medical care and social services.
3. Food and agriculture are central to the economy of the City and County, and a strong commitment should be made to the protection, growth and development of these sectors.

4. A strong regional system of food production, distribution, access and reuse that protects our natural resources contributes significantly to the environmental and economic well-being of this region
5. A healthy regional food system further supports the sustainability goals of the City and County, creating economic, social and environmental benefits for this and future generations.
6. Food brings people together in celebrations of community and diversity and is an important part of the City and County's culture.

In order to play its role in creating a healthy regional food system, the City and County will:

1. support an economically viable and environmentally and socially sustainable local food system
2. enhance the viability of regional farms by ensuring the stability of the agricultural land base and infrastructure and strengthening economic and social linkages between urban consumers and rural producers
3. ensure ready access to quality grocery stores, food service operations and other food delivery systems
4. promote the availability of a variety of foods at a reasonable cost
5. promote and maintain legitimate confidence in the quality and safety of foods available
6. promote easy access to understandable and accurate information about food and nutrition

PLAN FOR FOOD ACCESS

GOAL: Develop community-based solutions for areas with inadequate food access.

Just as local government works with communities to improve access to high quality transportation and housing, it has a key role to play in planning for adequate access to food in Portland neighborhoods and Multnomah County communities. Some areas need a full-service grocery store. Others need space for community gardens. Still others could benefit from farmers' markets or community supported agriculture. Community level planning can bring private and public partners together to find solutions for these and other food needs.

The need for this type of planning is particularly acute in lower-income neighborhoods where residents face many barriers to securing an adequate supply of nutritious, affordable and culturally appropriate food. In these cases where the market fails to provide adequate food options, nutrition and quality of life suffer, and local government can play a leadership role to stimulate action.

Findings

Some areas of the Portland and Multnomah County lack sufficient access to fresh and healthy regionally grown food.

Outreach efforts with lower-income communities suggest several factors that prevent access to food: lack of retail options, limited access to transportation and lack of money.

Small convenience stores are concentrated in low-income areas and usually offer higher prices, a limited selection, and predominately less healthy food.

Fifty-four percent (54%) of Multnomah County residents are overweight or obese, leading to diabetes, heart disease and other preventable ailments. Paradoxically, obesity exists in low-income areas among those who often do not have an adequate supply of food available. Lack of access to healthy foods and the low cost of high-sugar, high-fat foods are among the many contributing factors. Obesity-related health problems cost the US over \$115 billion in 2000.

Case in Point

Getting people to food — The Food Policy Council of Austin, Texas worked with the Transit Authority to design a route circulating from public housing units and eastside neighborhoods

to supermarkets and other important community services.

Getting food to people — Residents of West Oakland, California persevered for five years to recruit a grocery store for their neighborhood, a low-income area where many people rely on public transportation. After being turned down by major chains, the neighbors finally succeeded in attracting a local grocery. The city provided an incentive by dedicating \$500,000 in redevelopment funds for renovation of a building.

Recommended Actions

- 1 Identify areas with food access barriers. In partnership with Metro, FPC has begun mapping food access using a geographic information system.
- 2 Conduct a pilot planning effort in a low-income neighborhood with inadequate food access. This would include:
 - a) Conducting outreach to residents to identify food needs and barriers
 - b) Working with community partners on food access strategies including recruiting stores, improving transportation, expanding community gardens, or increasing farm direct opportunities
- 3 Establish neighborhood standards for food access – akin to parks access standards – and incorporate into ongoing planning efforts.

INCREASE VISIBILITY OF REGIONAL FOOD

GOAL: Promote regional food products and producers through a combination of farm-direct sales, farmers' markets, the proposed public market and grocery stores.

In an increasingly global marketplace, supporting regional food is important for preserving the viability of Oregon agriculture. Venues such as farmers' markets and the envisioned public market in Portland provide a foundation for promoting regional agriculture. They also energize business districts and add vibrancy to urban culture. These efforts are already underway and generating widespread enthusiasm. To realize their potential, they need planning and infrastructure support from local government. Securing permanent sites is critical, and planning for these should be integrated with implementation of the region's 2040 plan and Portland Parks & Recreation's 2020 Vision. For instance, farmers' markets complement the regional vision for a network of town centers with urban plazas. Strong farmers' markets and the public market will catalyze regional food sales through a variety of other avenues.

Findings

Farmers' markets serve as business incubators which play an important role in securing Oregon family farms. Of the growers at farmers' markets:

- ☐ 43% indicate that they began their agricultural operation with sales from farmers markets.
- ☐ 44% are full-time growers.
- ☐ 54% have made business contacts through the markets.
- ☐ 32% have started to do additional processing to add value to their products.

Farmers' markets will be at risk until they secure permanent sites. Nearly all the Portland metropolitan area farmers' markets have been forced to relocate one or more times in the last ten years. In addition, some farmers' markets are subject to temporary displacement one or more times per season due to conflicting events that pre-empt use of their sites.

Farmers' markets complement Metro's 2040 plan and its town center concept, but plans do not currently include the farmers' markets in these areas.

Farmers' markets become a meeting place for neighborhoods, offering a venue for commu-

nity building and educational efforts.

A public market in Portland will serve many needs: an educational forum about the value of regional food; a link between urban and rural Oregon; a showplace that presents the best of Oregon agriculture to visitors and Portlanders; a year-round retail outlet for regional food producers (including fishermen, butchers, cheesemakers, and others that produce year-round); and a new public space that celebrates the cultural diversity of the city.

Case in Point When a new library was built in Beaverton, the City of Beaverton planned a multi-use space that could accommodate a farmers' market and support other public events. The market draws 12,000 weekend visitors who come to shop, play in a fountain and check out books. It is also open on Wednesday evenings, bringing life to the area mid-week.

Recommended Actions

- 1 Create policies supporting use of public space for farmers' markets. Review site requirements for farmers' markets (e.g. surfaces, utilities) when developing public spaces. Designate a city staff person to coordinate with farmers' markets.
- 2 Plan for a network of permanent market sites throughout Portland and Multnomah County. Explore creating multifunctional urban plazas in designated town centers.
- 3 Support current efforts to establish a public market in Portland.

SUPPORT FOOD & NUTRITION PROGRAMS

GOAL: Expand access to federal and state food and nutrition programs for low-income people

Widespread hunger in Portland and Multnomah County could be mitigated by improving access to federal and state food and nutrition programs for low-income residents. If local governments don't play their role assisting people to participate, local residents don't receive their share of federal benefits. The County serves as the point of intake and education for the Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC) and the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP), which provides coupons for fresh produce at farmers' markets. City Parks and Recreation provides programming that attracts kids to Summer Food Programs. Several elements of this local partnership have recently been eliminated or curtailed, and this lack of investment risks higher health care expenses in the future.

Findings Oregon's rate of hunger is nearly double the national average:

- One in 17 households is hungry.
- 14.3% are food insecure (have experienced the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe food).
- 40% of those receiving emergency food in are children age 17 and under.

Of kids who receive free and reduced price lunches at school, less than 25% participate in the Summer Food Program. Participation could be increased by providing activities such as those offered by Portland Parks & Recreation.

USDA's Food Stamp Program is the nation's largest food assistance program for low-income people, but less than 70% of eligible Oregonians receive this aid.

Improve access to farmers' markets for food stamp users, and increase use of the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program by raising awareness of farmers' market dates and times, using promotional strategies that fit the culture of specific communities.

Only 25% of Multnomah County WIC participants have access to Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) coupons.

Transportation and language barriers limit participation in FMNP.

WIC and the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program are crucial for the success of farmers' markets in low-income neighborhoods. These accounted for 75% of sales at the Lents Community Market in 2002.

Farmers' markets can't accept food stamps because they don't have the equipment to process electronic benefits cards.

Multnomah is the only county in Oregon that does not provide support for an OSU Extension office. Its programs leverage multiple funding sources and play a key role in providing community based education relating to nutrition and community based food production.

Case in Point Counties in Oregon support the WIC program by providing in-kind administrative support such as use of vehicles, office space or computers. This expands the number of clients the programs can serve.

Recommended Actions

- 1 Implement Portland Parks & Recreation activities and facility improvements in order to increase the low-income kids participating in Summer Food Programs.
- 2 Increase participation in WIC and food stamps by providing local funds.
- 3 Provide the support necessary to operate FMNP and OSU Extension Service Office programs.
- 4 Improve access to farmers' markets for food stamp users, and increase use of the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program. This could include:
 - a) Raising awareness of market dates and time, using promotional strategies that fit the culture of specific communities.
 - b) Improving transportation to the farmers' markets through free bus rides, walking maps, or other means.
- 5 Encourage city and county programs to provide food stamp applications to their clients.

MODEL PURCHASING PRACTICES

GOAL: Apply sustainability criteria to food purchases of local government.

Large institutions can play an instrumental role in creating market opportunities for new products, local producers and emerging businesses. Government agencies in particular can lead by example because their purchasing decisions receive public attention. Local government can influence food purchasing practices in direct and indirect ways. In limited cases, such as the jail system, local government is a direct purchaser of food. In other cases, local government sponsors events or meetings where food is served. Local government may indirectly influence food purchases in instances where restaurants or concessions are operated on publicly-owned buildings and park facilities. In all of these settings, local government should seek ways to support the values of a sustainable food system (as outlined in the Governing Principles for Food). The starting point is building connections with regional food suppliers.

Findings Multnomah County Corrections serves approximately 1,960,000 meals annually at a cost of more than \$2.6 million.

Formal purchasing preferences for regional products may face legal barriers or generate reprisals from other locales.

Local government can pass resolutions encouraging regional food purchases, and purchasers can establish product preferences in terms of freshness or production practices (e.g. Food Alliance certified).

Seasonal produce from within the region often costs less, even when purchasing at an institutional scale. Purchasers can plan menus to take advantage of seasonal products.

Most institutional purchasers have contracts with large distributors who supply their food products. Most distributors don't typically inform their customers where products come from, but some carry regional products or can source them when asked. Many products, such as dairy, are routinely sourced regionally.

Institutions can expand their options for buying regionally when contracts permit the institution to occasionally buy directly from farmers.

A number of private and non-profit sector efforts support sustainable food purchasing:

- The Food Alliance, a certifier of sustainable growers, promotes its growers to institutional purchasers. For some institutions, this is easier than dealing directly with many individual growers.
- The state of Washington actively promotes purchasing from Washington growers.
- A number of state and non-profit groups are working to develop databases and web tools that match regional growers and purchases.

Portland Public Schools Nutrition Services will draft a template for environmentally sustainable food purchasing and will pilot "Best Value" procurement to increase purchases of regionally produced foods.

A shift to regional or sustainable foods can be driven by strong customer demand at any level — end consumers, institutional purchasers, food service companies or distributors.

Case in Point Students at Portland State University organized a campus café that features regional and sustainably-produced foods. Their efforts paved the way for an agreement between the campus food service vendor and the Food Alliance. Under this agreement the Food Alliance identifies regional, sustainably produced foods that the food service vendor can purchase.

Recommended Actions

- 1 Incorporate sustainability criteria into food purchasing contracts issued by City and County agencies. Focus on criteria that will help build connections with regional food suppliers.
- 2 Create sustainability guidelines that the City and County can use for catered events, meetings, and conferences.
- 3 Develop sustainability criteria for restaurants or concessions that use property owned by the City or County.
- 4 Encourage relevant City and County staff to take advantage of web resources and events that build relationships between regional food suppliers and purchasers.

DEFEND LAND USE LAWS

GOAL: Maintain and strengthen existing land use regulations.

Agriculture is not confined to rural Oregon. Five of the top six agricultural producing Oregon counties are located within an hour's drive of Portland or Eugene. Clackamas County is ranked #2 and Washington County is #3. Multnomah County, the county with the state's smallest land area and the largest and most densely settled population, ranks #15. This is possible because suitable land remains available for farming, the infrastructure needed to farm is available, and farmers are still able to farm with limited conflicts.

Oregon maintains the agricultural land base through the use of urban growth boundaries (UGBs), exclusive farm use (EFU) zoning, and tax policy that assesses EFU zones at farm value, not speculative value. These protections have prevented many farm areas from becoming large-lot rural subdivisions and estates, but farms are still threatened, and the land use system faces continual challenges.

Findings

Agriculture remains an important **industry** in the metro area. Like other industries, agriculture needs to be able to not only maintain its level of production, but also to grow as an industry.

Most commercial agriculture depends on large parcels for efficient farm operations.

Micro agriculture is a small part of Oregon agriculture but it is growing in importance in the metro area. Areas that in the past were deemed to not be agricultural land (thus not zoned as such) now support intensive high-value agriculture.

Urban zoning that prevents or discourages greater housing density in town centers promotes sprawling urban development which threatens farm land and discourages the viability of town centers and viable farmers' markets.

Land speculation, especially in the metropolitan fringe areas, continues to be a very real problem for farmers because it drives land prices up too high for farmers to compete. This thwarts prospective farmers from getting started.

The siting of non-farm dwellings in farming areas remains contentious due to conflicts between rural residences and farm operations. In addition, non-farm dwellings take land out of agricultural production.

Cities (urban areas) continue to look to agricultural lands to provide for urban needs (e.g., utility siting, parks, transportation).

Case In Point

In 1998, the Shelton, Conn. Conservation Commission adopted a plan to provide for the purchase of agricultural easements by the city. The city pays the farmer to relinquish the right to sell or develop the land for non-agricultural or non-forestry uses. Farmers continue to own and work the land, and may sell it to other farmers, but the city holds an easement, or deed, to all future development.

Recommended Actions

- 1 Participate at the local, regional and state levels to support and defend existing laws that protect agriculture from conflicting uses. Examples include:
 - ☐ Support and encourage Metro's efforts to recognize agriculture as an industrial use of land.
 - ☐ Advocate at the state level to change the current standard that requires Metro to review the urban growth boundary every five (5) years to every ten (10) years.
 - ☐ Monitor and respond to legislative efforts to undermine the land use system.
- 2 Continue to encourage and promote the development of town centers and the more efficient use of land over the expansion of urban growth boundaries.
- 3 Investigate an agricultural conservation easement program for small farms in the fringe areas along the existing UGB by identifying specific properties and exploring various funding sources.
- 4 Plan for the siting of urban facilities/utilities within the urban growth boundary.

IMPLEMENT AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

GOAL: Support public campaigns that promote healthy eating and regionally produced food.

Large-scale public campaigns have succeeded in persuading residents not to smoke and to recycle their trash. These efforts have raised awareness and understanding of the issues involved, and they have included strategies specifically designed to support people in switching to new behaviors. Similar efforts are needed to target consumer food choices, promoting both healthier eating and patronage of regional producers.

Such campaigns can involve many public and private partners, but government plays a key role in coordinating efforts and in securing a funding stream as in the case of tobacco (taxes on tobacco products) and recycling (fees charged to garbage haulers). A food choices campaign would yield both economic and health benefits for the region.

Findings

Only 24% of Oregonians consume the recommended five daily servings of fruits and vegetables. Raising this percentage is one target of *Oregon's Statewide Public Health Nutrition Plan*.

Eating more fruits and vegetables is associated with a lower risk for many cancers and other chronic diseases.

Type 2 diabetes, elevated cholesterol, and high blood pressure occur with increased frequency in overweight children and adolescents. In 2001, 28% of Oregon eighth graders and 21% of eleventh graders were overweight. **The percentage of eighth graders who are overweight has increased nearly 50% within the last two years.**

The food industry spent \$25 billion on advertising and promotions in 2000. The federal government's Five-a-Day campaign spends only \$3.6 million each year.

Several community organizations such as the African American Health Coalition and OSU Extension Service have programs to promote healthier diets.

Case In Point

Oregon's comprehensive tobacco prevention and education campaign has succeeded in changing habits and improving public health. Results include:

- a 28 percent drop in smoking among pregnant women between 1996 and 2001 — a decline almost three times the national rate.
- 2,600 fewer 11th grade males chewing tobacco in 2003 than in 1997. The rate dropped from almost 28 percent in 1997 to just 12.5 percent in 2002 — a 45 percent decline compared to the national reduction of 20 percent.

Recommended Actions

- 1 Develop campaign funding sources and partnerships with community-based programs working in this area.
- 2 Use the Businesses for an Environmentally Sustainable Tomorrow (BEST) awards to recognize businesses that promote healthier options or that purchase or produce regional, sustainable food.
- 3 Develop educational programs for students. These could include apprenticeship programs in agriculture or home economics classes.
- 4 Convene a healthy schools summit focused on creating a healthy school nutrition environment for students in the local school districts. This would build upon several existing state-level initiatives¹ and would foster partnerships among school administration, teachers, students, parents and the community.

¹ The Oregon's Statewide Public Health Nutrition Plan and the Healthy Kids Learn Better Coordinated School Health Approach

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