

Community Food Assessment



Union & Baker Counties
2017

Assessment Team

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Foreword

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 teaming 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 now have the least access to food today.

Nine years ago Oregon Food Bank in partnership with University of Oregon RARE program began to conduct community food assessments in some of Oregon's rural counties. Very few community food assessment efforts have been undertaken in rural America with a county by county approach. The report you are about to read is a result of conversations with the people who make Oregon's rural communities and their food systems so very unique. These reports are also a gift from a small group of very dedicated young people who have spent the last year listening, learning and organizing. It is our sincere hope, that these reports and organizing efforts will help Oregonians renew their vision and promise of the bountiful food system that amazed those early settlers.

Sharon Thornberry
Rural Communities Liaison
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Preface

Participating in this Community Food Assessment (CFA) process has been a great opportunity. OSU Extension Service has played a part in community food system work since its inception in the early 1900s and this is another example of ways in which we can help improve the health and well-being of our community. The process began in spring 2016 when I began working with Oregon Food Bank to put together an application for an AmeriCorps RARE position in La Grande. We then held the Eastern Oregon Community Food Systems Gathering to identify individuals and organizations who were interested in improving our regional food system, as well as provide direction for food system work. Working with the University of Oregon RARE program we identified a great pool of candidates and found the best fit for the AmeriCorps position with Tess Krampien.

Tess started work in Union and Baker Counties in September and has roamed around the countryside since then meeting with farmers and ranchers, food bank managers, restaurant owners, and consumers of all types. Her conversations and responses to interviews and surveys, as well as group discussions at two FEAST events have provided a wealth of information about the food system in Union and Baker Counties. The process has engaged community partners and provided a voice for community food system concerns.

This CFA provides us with an overview of the current food system, as well as some history, and direction for future efforts. I am very excited about the energy and enthusiasm that is already visible within the community for working on a variety of projects that will improve the availability of local fresh foods in the community, and hopefully provide a more secure economic base and a more secure food supply for individuals and families within the two counties.

Robin Maille
Assistant Professor or Practice, Family & Community Health
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Union & Baker Counties

Methods

For this assessment, a mixed method approach was used that combined qualitative and quantitative data from a variety of primary and secondary sources. Secondary data sources include the Census of Agriculture from the National Agricultural Statistics Service, the American Community Survey from the Bureau of the Census, Economic Research Service, Oregon Employment Department, Oregon Department of Education, various articles and books, and a farmers' market focus group study.

Primary data was obtained through informal conversations and 53 interviews, group discussions, and community discussions at events. Those interviewed included farmers and ranchers, a butcher, a maltster, educators, public health workers, farmers' market managers, local merchants, an agritourism marketing professional, church leaders, food pantry and backpack program volunteers, a caterer, community members, and those in economic and community development. People were interviewed about activities in their sector of the food system, their businesses, passions, and connections to other sectors of food system. Group discussions and events included food pantry staff meetings, the FEASTs in Baker City and La Grande, and a "Free Food Friday to Smash Hunger in Union County" dinner in La Grande.

The La Grande Farmers' Market Focus Groups study was conducted by Jennifer Goodman and Camren Miller in collaboration with Northeast Oregon Network, Grande Ronde Hospital, La Grande Farmers' Market, and Greater Oregon Behavioral Health, Inc.

The study was designed to capture the experience of Union County residents who receive SNAP or WIC benefits related to food procurement, budgets, nutritional quality, shopping, cooking preferences, and farmers' market use. The study had two focus group sessions with a total of 19 participants.

In addition, a set of surveys was developed with assistance from an Eastern Oregon University faculty member to widen the data gathering process. Data collected covered topics related to consumer access to food, agricultural production and marketing, sourcing of locally-produced food by restaurants and grocery stores, operational barriers facing and services offered by rural grocery stores, food and health related activities available in public schools, and factors that affect food pantry operation. Independent restaurant and grocery store owners or managers, public school principals and superintendents, and food pantry managers were given paper or online surveys, or interviewed in person. The Restaurant Owner Survey, Rural Grocery Store Owner Survey, School Principal or Superintendent Survey, and Food Pantry Manager Survey were administered between March and May 2017. The Consumer Food Access Survey was distributed to a small sample of residents of Union and Baker Counties, including those attending the Free Food Friday dinner, FEAST events, and at a few meetings at churches. The Producer Survey for farmers, ranchers, and orchardists was conducted in person, sent by mail or e-mailed from contacts at the farmers' markets and from Oregon State University Extension Service. The Consumer Food Access Survey and Producer Survey were administered between March and April 2017.

FEAST stands for Food, Education, Agriculture, Solutions Together, and is a program developed by the Oregon Food Bank. Visit oregonfoodbank.org for more information.

Chapter 1: Introduction to Union and Baker Counties

Union and Baker Counties are located in Northeastern Oregon, situated in the beautiful Blue Mountains. The valleys where most people reside are geographically defined by the Blue Mountains and Wallowas to the north and west, and the Burnt and Snake Rivers to the south and east. The valleys' high elevation of 2700-3300 ft lends to a rather short growing season, with an average summer temperature of about 65°F, average winter temperature of 29°F, and average precipitation range of 12-20 inches in the valleys.¹ The climate type is considered warm-summer Mediterranean, with some cold semi-arid areas, and is one of the few places in the world that gets snow with the Mediterranean climate.

The populations of the two counties are highly concentrated in La Grande in Union County, and Baker City in Baker County. Of the 26,000 Union County residents, just over half live in La Grande, and 60% of Baker County's 16,000 residents live in Baker City.² There are eight incorporated towns in Union County and about a dozen unincorporated towns. Baker County also has eight incorporated and over two dozen unincorporated towns. Almost all of the incorporated towns in Union County are within the Grande Ronde Valley, making access to them relatively easy compared to those in Baker County. With the exception of Haines and Baker City, each town sits in its own valley with access limited to one or two winding roads. Union and Baker Counties both meet the definition of a Frontier and Remote Area, which is an area defined by a combination of low population size and high geographic remoteness from urban locations.³

While the mountains lend to fantastic 360° views, they also impose barriers to transportation. The main road through both

counties is I-84, with a handful of other U.S and state highways leading out to other population centers. I-84 is a critical corridor for travelers and goods through the state, but conditions can be hazardous in the winter months. Officials often temporarily close portions of the highway and other routes in one or both directions due to snow and ice. This can leave people and freight stranded on either side of the Blue Mountains. There is also a freight rail line that runs through the counties to link Salt Lake City with Portland, but no passenger service. A few other rail lines exist connecting towns in Northeast Oregon, mostly for freight purposes, and for scenic tourism.

Like many rural Oregon counties, Union and Baker Counties have a lot of agriculture and forest lands with a few small towns, and the communities are more natural resource-dependent with a less diverse economic base than metropolitan areas.⁴ Farms and ranches define the landscape of the counties, and continue to be important industries with crop sales of \$97 million and livestock sales of \$64 million in 2012⁵ (Table 1). Farmers and ranchers here have a strong sense of pride in their work, and other residents continue to have a tradition of growing their own food in home and community gardens, as well as hunting, fishing and foraging.

The top five industry employers are (1) education, health, and social assistance, (2) retail, (3) manufacturing, (4) agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting, and (5) arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food service.² The fact that the retail industry is the second largest employer in Union and Baker Counties raises another issue: many jobs that have returned to rural Oregon communities after the Great Recession are low- and mid-wage

jobs, while higher-wage jobs have been slower to return, if at all.⁴ Median household income is \$43,822 in Union County and \$41,098 in Baker County, well below Oregon’s median income of \$51,243.²

The purpose of this Community Food Assessment is to explore the community food system of Union and Baker Counties from the perspective of those who live and work here. A food system is the path that food follows from field to fork, including the production, processing, distribution, marketing, and consumption of food. A community food system is a collaborative network that integrates these processes to enhance the economy, environment, and community health of a particular place.⁶ Presented in this Community

Food Assessment are the activities, barriers, and assets of the food system of Union and Baker Counties, as well as recommendations on how to strengthen the community food system. Hopefully farmers, ranchers, processors, consumers, grocers, retailers, educators and others can gain a better understanding and appreciation of each other’s work and passions as well.

A history of community food system efforts in Union and Baker Counties is found in Appendix A. Additional materials, including maps and links to programs and organizations mentioned in this assessment, are found in Appendix B. Example questions from the surveys and interviews are found in Appendix C.

Table 1. Value of all crop sales and all livestock and livestock products sales in Oregon, Baker County, and Union County. Values reported for every third census year since 1940,⁵ adjusted for inflation to the 2012 dollar.⁷

Year		1940	1954	1969	1982	1997	2012
Value of all crop sales, in \$1,000,000	Oregon	1,085	1,668	1,644	2,244	3,035	3,247
	Baker County	19.7	18.8	11.4	12.7	19.5	46.1
	Union County	24.6	444	34.7	45.6	48.4	51.3
Value of all livestock and their products sales, in \$1,000,000	Oregon	883	1,171	1,668	1,692	1,227	1,636
	Baker County	47.6	47	63.1	68.4	57.9	47.2
	Union County	23	23.9	38.5	31.7	20.1	17.1



Chapter 2: Production and Processing

Changes in production over time

Native Americans used the lands of Union and Baker Counties for about 10,000 years before the first fur traders appeared.⁸ The Grande Ronde Valley was not settled by Native Americans, but was known as a peaceful gathering place,⁹ while the valleys of Baker County were settled starting around 2000-5000 years ago.⁸ The Walla Walla, Nez Perce, Cayuse, Umatilla, and Paiute tribes have all made seasonal use of the valleys and mountains, primarily for foraging, hunting, fishing, resting, and healing.^{8,9}

The first American settlers in Union and Baker Counties appeared with the discovery of gold in 1861. A large migration of men and mining materials into the region followed,¹⁰ and small mining timber towns popped up in most of the valleys. Before the 1880s cattle production was primarily for the mining camps and local towns.¹⁰ With development of the first railroads in the region in the 1880s, the timber and mining industries rapidly grew, and agriculture in the region also developed to support these industries. The primary crops grown were wheat and hay, which supported the thriving production of cattle and sheep. By the end of the 19th century, cattle and sheep production expanded to service west coast markets, then later markets in Idaho, Montana, and even Chicago and Omaha due to railroad access.¹⁰ Prior to the 1930s, production and processing was very much a local endeavor, with several businesses and cooperatives running flour mills to process wheat from nearby farms, creameries to make butter and cheese from the many local dairies, and a cannery to can fruits produced in the orchards.¹¹

Since the 1930s there have been major changes

in production, processing, and consumption that have drastically altered how food systems work in the United States, with many of these changes reflected in Union and Baker Counties. Increased on-farm mechanization and inputs (fertilizers, amendments, and pesticides) have led to increased production and efficiency.¹² Subsidies and price supports have led to low prices for commodities, which now constitute many of the value-added foods available.¹³ As consumers became more affluent, food consumption shifted toward convenience, especially with the advent of frozen foods.¹² To meet demands, producers consolidated land and production practices to increase efficiency and profit, while supply chains developed that linked distributors, processors, and retailers together. These chains helped ensure a stable food supply from producers to consumers, and fostered many food manufacturing businesses.¹²

As a consequence of these changes, the percentage of the workforce employed in agriculture dropped nationwide. Between 1900 and 1930, the percentage of the workforce employed in agriculture was cut in half from 41% to 21.5%.¹² This decline continued throughout the 20th century- just 1.9% worked in agriculture in 2000. The number of farms has also decreased, while farm size has increased. There were about 7 million farms in the late 1930s, which dropped through the 1970s to about 2.1 million.¹⁴ Total land area in farms reached a peak in the 1950s and has leveled off; the result is that the average farm size grew from a couple hundred to over 400 acres per farm.¹⁴ There has also been an increase in operators making off-farm income, and agricultural exports from the U.S. have increased dramatically since the 1950s.¹² Processing has become more consolidated and many facilities have moved out of smaller towns and rural

communities.¹² Smaller farms and ranches have transitioned to direct-to-consumer sales, or they sell to specialty retailers and food service companies.¹³

Union and Baker Counties have followed some of these trends; the number of farms overall has dropped since the 1930s, but has remained roughly stable in the last 20 years⁵ (Table 2). Average farm size has also increased since the 1930s, but in the last 20 years has trended downward⁵ (Figure 1). Farmland cost per acre has varied over the years, but overall has increased⁵ (Figure 2). Currently, about three quarters of Oregon's agricultural products leave the state, with about half staying in U.S. markets.¹⁵



Table 2. Number of farms in Oregon, Baker County, and Union County reported for every third census year since 1910.⁵

Year	1910	1925	1940	1954	1969	1982	1997	2012
Oregon	45,502	55,911	61,829	54,441	29,063	34,087	34,030	35,439
Baker County	1304	1464	1259	998	626	678	704	645
Union County	1309	1218	1255	986	678	781	832	829

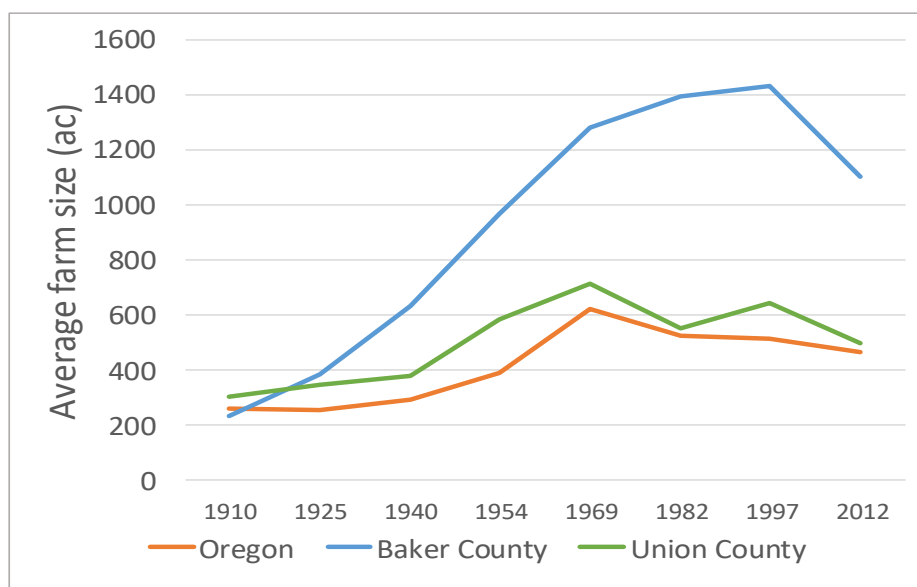


Figure 1. Average farm size, in acres, of farms in Oregon, Baker County, and Union County reported for every third census year since 1910.⁵

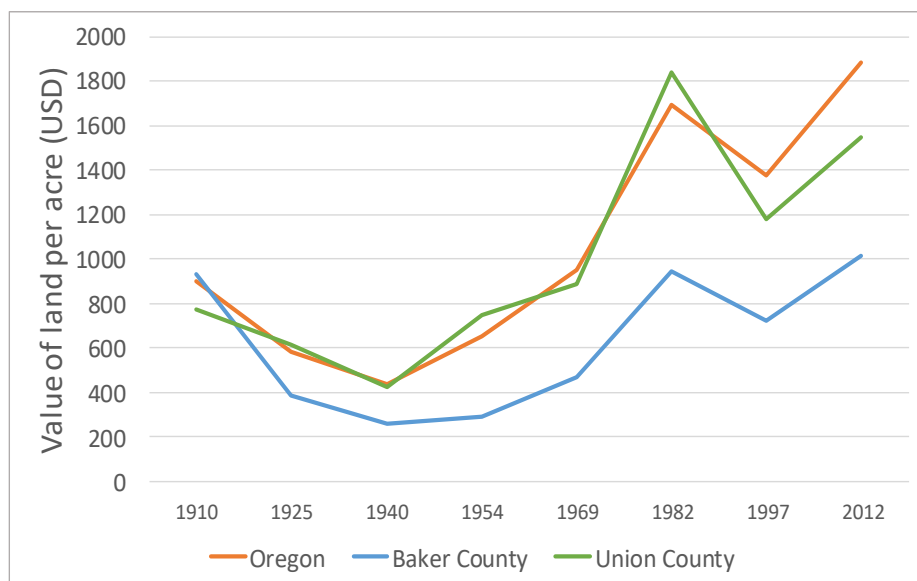


Figure 2. Value per acre of farmland in Oregon, Baker County, and Union County reported for every third census year since 1910.⁵ Values adjusted for inflation to the 2012 dollar.⁷

Production in Union and Baker Counties

Cattle, wheat, barley, hay, potatoes, grass seed, and peppermint consist of the main agricultural commodities (by value of sales) in Union and Baker Counties.⁵ Despite the short growing season and occasional cold snaps, there is still quite a bit of crop variety and many producers experiment with crop selection. Other crops grown include sunflower, chickpea, triticale, teff, sugar beets, various beans, as well as many vegetables, stone fruits, apples, and pears. Some producers use hoop houses for vegetables that require warmer temperatures or that require a longer growing season to harvest, such as tomatoes and peppers. Availability of crop and vegetable varieties that survive in the short growing season of Northeast Oregon's warm-summer Mediterranean climate is incredibly important.

Cattle and calves production made up about half of Baker County's farm sales, and a quarter of Union County's sales in 2012, with a combined 706 farms producing in the two counties⁵ (Tables 1 and 3). Grass-finished beef has become an increasingly common practice for adding value to beef production, but more so for small-

scale producers who access local and regional markets through custom-exempt slaughter, farmers' markets, grocery stores, and restaurants. There are also producers who raise hogs, lamb, goats, chickens, and laying hens, but they number far fewer than the cattle producers.⁵

In conversations with producers, some common sentiments arose: that there is a division between large-scale and small-scale farms in Union and Baker Counties, and that consumers are so far removed from production that there is a general lack of knowledge about where food comes from and the intricacies of production. Some producers feel like they are pitted against each other in a large- versus small-scale agriculture narrative, which sometimes comes from producers themselves but also from consumers. The USDA defines farm size by using Gross Cash Farm Income,¹⁶ but in Union and Baker Counties producers seemed to define themselves as large or small based on how they sold their products: large-scale producers typically sold to brokers or processors, most of whom are outside of the counties, while small-scale producers typically sold direct-to-consumer or wholesale to local groceries and restaurants. Large- and small-scale farms have

Table 3. Number of farms in Oregon, Baker County, and Union County that grow selected crops, livestock, or have land in orchard reported for every third census year since 1940.⁵ Unavailable data is indicated by “-”.

Year		1940	1954	1969	1982	1997	2012
Cattle and calves	Oregon	48,459	42,418	17,294	21,811	17,122	14,351
	Baker County	1,098	905	501	562	536	352
	Union County	1,070	807	424	504	474	354
Dairy cows	Oregon	48,203	33,170	5,185	3,289	1,052	6,86
	Baker County	1053	748	193	121	48	9
	Union County	1046	640	126	67	21	7
Hogs	Oregon	22,625	11,798	2,246	2,500	1,383	1,124
	Baker County	819	448	62	30	23	26
	Union County	744	374	76	37	22	24
Sheep and lamb	Oregon	8,392	7,968	4,294	4,877	3,070	2,753
	Baker County	270	256	139	110	69	40
	Union County	152	114	83	89	52	50
Milk goats	Oregon	4,343	2,921	-	1,061	452	842
	Baker County	24	17	-	-	9	13
	Union County	15	8	-	-	4	9
Wheat for grain	Oregon	10,261	6,824	5,426	4,763	2,531	1,968
	Baker County	36	126	95	79	42	47
	Union County	525	421	172	237	155	103
Barley for grain	Oregon	7,562	9,924	-	2,366	750	335
	Baker County	312	388	-	108	44	15
	Union County	308	386	-	204	97	47
Vegetables, excluding potatoes	Oregon	3,905	2,926	1,752	1,554	1,432	1,889
	Baker County	43	16	5	1	6	31
	Union County	38	7	49	5	12	16
Irish potatoes	Oregon	14,911	9,461	827	520	342	616
	Baker County	145	171	5	3	15	30
	Union County	317	212	3	6	3	4
Land in orchard	Oregon	21,311	12,980	4,808	4,709	3,869	3,594
	Baker County	337	57	11	13	16	20
	Union County	611	181	83	73	49	21

both faced negative stereotypes, such as being environmentally irresponsible with water or fertilizer for large-scale producers, or inefficient for small-scale producers. The practices these producers use and how they access markets can be very different, but that does not make one scale of agriculture superior to another. They fulfill different roles and needs in the economy and food system. As a local producer put it, “we should support each other, not tear each other down for market share.”

Large-scale producers are less likely to need off-farm income, and often employ more full time and seasonal workers than small-scale producers. Most of the large-scale producers follow conventional farming and

ranching practices, grow several crop varieties at the same time, and they typically access regional, national and international markets, bringing in money from other states and countries. Some of the main expenses include fertilizer, labor, pesticides or herbicides, and

land rent. Small-scale producers incorporate an assortment of practices into their farms and ranches, including organic, not-certified organic, free-range, holistic management, and grass-finished, and tend to access local and regional markets through direct sales. Variety is

key for these producers, and many try several different crops, vegetables, and livestock at the same time. Part of this strategy is to diversify farm income, but also to adapt to the changing local markets. Some of the main expenses

The USDA defines small-farms as those making less than \$350,000, midsize between \$350,000 and \$999,999, and large-scale more than \$1,000,000.¹⁶

Rovey Farms

Stephanie and Byron Rovey have a large family farm in Union and Cove. Over the years they have grown various crops including alfalfa, beets, triticale, wheat, sunflower, teff, and potatoes. They also raise grass-fed beef, and have a goat dairy with 250 milking does. Milk from the dairy is sent to Sonoma California and made into Laura Chenel’s Pure Goat Milk Cheese, which can be found in Safeway and BELLA Mercantile in La Grande. The Rovey’s plan on expanding their farm and dairy in the future, and passing it on to any of their children that are interested in continuing the tradition.

Stephanie has a strong interest in agriculture education and communication. She wants to share her story as a large producer, about how and why her farm is the size that it is and the benefits of large-scale production. Stephanie has been concerned with the dialogue around agriculture in recent years, and says that social media has helped spread a lot of misinformation and mistrust in American agriculture due to a lack of farmer presence. In the last few years she has been putting her voice out there, and now there are several online groups that advocate for all kinds of agriculture. Stephanie thinks that the story “should not be small- versus large- scale, or conventional versus organic, but each type of agriculture supporting the other as it takes all sorts of production to meet our needs.”



Rovey’s goat dairy.

include labor, seed, equipment and infrastructure, and certifications.

Many producers, large- and small-scale, also expressed their passion for the lifestyle that farming and ranching brings; growing food, raising animals, caring for the environment, and raising children in the tradition of agriculture. Production itself can be a statement on values for some, as one rancher said she wants to show “how properly managed livestock can help mitigate climate change and increase ecological diversity.” Other farmers and ranchers care about the educational aspects they can offer to their community, through agritourism opportunities or working with schools. Many are involved in school boards, community committees, granges, advisory councils, 4-H programs and Future Farmers of America (FFA). Some simply enjoy working outdoors.

Challenges to the future of agriculture in Oregon

The average age of producers in the two counties is about 60,⁵ which means in the next 10 to 20 years a large amount of farmland is going to be changing hands. Transition planning for the next generation of producers and tenure considerations will be very important for farmland preservation efforts (Table 4). Agriculture and natural resource organizations such as Oregon State University Extension

Service, Blue Mountain Conservancy, Union and Baker Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board should be ready to assist in the process. Over the last decade there have been succession workshops hosted by various partners including those listed above, as well as OSU Austin Family Business Center, Rogue Farm Corps, Livestock Associations, and Blue Mountain Community College. In fact, the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program, hopefully starting in 2017, will provide incentives to producers towards preserving both agricultural and conservation uses of agricultural lands.¹⁷

With rising farmland costs and consolidation of farmland, opportunities for new producers to get into agriculture have been shrinking. Programs such as Future Farmers of America and 4-H can promote agriculture literacy and appreciation in youth.¹⁸ Training programs like Rogue Farm Corps, loans and microloans offered through the Farm Service Agency, and loan reduction programs like Beginning and Expanding Farmer Loan Program (Aggie Bond Program) are some opportunities that support new producers in Oregon. Oregon Farm Bureau and OSU Small Farms program also offer training resources. Individuals and community groups should support policies that create opportunities for new farmers, for agriculture education, and for farming and ranching skills development to ensure the future of farming in Oregon.

Table 4. Number of farms in Oregon, Baker County, and Union County that have select agricultural practices in 2012.^{5,19}

		Rotational or	Land under	No-till	Conservation	Conventional
		management intensive	conservation easement		tillage	tillage
Number of farms	Oregon	6,705	787	1,935	1,102	4,922
	Baker County	183	26	17	14	110
	Union County	163	24	42	37	169

Val's Veggies

Val's Veggies of Baker City has been a fixture in Baker's community for years. Valerie and Rodney Tachenko have a booth at the Baker City and La Grande Farmers' Markets and a farm stand on Campbell St. in Baker City. They have worked with local schools on field trips to their pumpkin patch, and host the corn maze and scavenger hunt in the fall. Valerie has been growing vegetables and selling them since she was 16; now Val and her family grow all sorts of vegetables, and raise cattle and laying hens. Valerie really enjoys growing anything, and enjoys working outside; "it's a good job, I love it." She is also passionate about people eating healthy, and is happy to see that people are paying attention to what they eat and where it comes from. Valerie also makes jellies and dried tomatoes and garlic.



Valerie was interested in community supported agriculture (CSA), and decided to start one for Northeast Oregon in 2008. For a CSA share, consumers pay at the beginning of the growing season for a share of a producer's harvest, which is delivered typically weekly to local pick-up locations. Val's Veggies' CSA is a box of the season's vegetable share, and fruit, eggs, and salad shares can be added on; Val's Veggies' CSA is also one of only a handful that exist in Northeast Oregon. Val's



Val's Veggies Farm. Photo from valsveggies.com.

Veggies works with Eagle Creek Orchards in Richland, Nella Mae's Farm in Cove, and growers in Walla Walla and Yakima for the farm stand in Baker City. Valerie sells the extra produce, roasted peppers, and processed goods at the farmers' markets and farm stand. In the past she has sold to restaurants and a food buying clubs in Portland, but now she only sells to some restaurants in Union and Baker Counties including the Lone Pine Café, Geiser Grand Hotel, and Zephyr in Baker City. Custom orders can also be placed on Val's Veggies website through Val's Garden without signing up for the CSA. Visit valsveggies.com for more information.

Val has a thriving business and is excellent at marketing and outreach. However, she would like to see more cooperative transportation with other local producers, as so much of her and Rodney's time goes into moving their product around. Valerie feels like she was driving too much and not farming enough. Valerie is working with other producers in Northeast Oregon to collaborate on the *Food4All* website, which gives producers another avenue to sell their goods directly to consumers.

Nella Mae's Farm



Nella Mae's Farm booth at La Grande Farmers' Market.
Photo by Nella Parks.

Nella Mae Parks has a small family farm in Cove, and is relatively new to running her own farm business. She started it about 3 years ago, but has been farming and raising animals since she was a child. Her parents and friends have been very supportive of her endeavor, and some have lent her their land or greenhouses to help her get started.

As a new producer, Nella is still figuring several things out, including the life-balance between family and farming. She is still purchasing equipment and infrastructure for her farm, and is learning how to plan production and sell her goods. Increasing her income has been a challenge due to the cost of labor and land, and she would like to sell to more restaurants and grocery stores. Since she has limited business experience, she is still experimenting on her farm, and

admits that "some experiments are expensive and unsuccessful."

Nella's passion is local, and her business has had success in local foods sales in Union and Baker Counties. Nella grows vegetables, salad greens, and grass-finished beef, and makes jams, chili powder, dried herbs, salsa, and sauerkraut. All her goods are sold locally at farmers' markets, her own farm stand, Dollars Corner Market in Cove, and a few restaurants and grocery stores. Nella has also recently started a Salad Share as an optional part of the CSA available through Val's Veggies. Visit nellamaesfarm.com for more information.

Nella Mae's Farm.



Processing

In the 1870s wheat production had increased so much in the two counties that many towns had their own flour mill,¹⁰ and between the 1900s and 1960s there were several creameries, a cannery, and even a sugar beet factory.^{10,11} Now however, most processing operations have moved elsewhere with the consolidation of food supply chains or have gone out of business. Most agricultural products have to be shipped to another county or state to be processed. The nearest flour mills now are in Pendleton and Boise, and the nearest vegetable and fruit processors are in Hermiston, Fruitland, or Boise. There is still some fruit and vegetable processing that occurs on a few farms, such as cleaning, sorting or packaging raw products, as well as limited processing of some meat birds like chickens or ducks.

The exception to this trend are meat processing facilities, as Union and Baker County ranchers still have many local options. Stafford's Custom Meats is a USDA certified facility in Elgin; other facilities include Pig Tail Pork in Cove, Little Susie's Meat Market and Baker County Custom Meats in Baker City, and Hines Meat Company in La Grande. Except for Stafford's, these meat processors have focused on wild game and custom-exempt processing for local producers. In conversation with local producers, several brought up the over-regulation of processing as a major barrier to their operations. For small-scale meat producers, one of their top expenses was processing fees. In order to be able to sell at farmers' markets, or to groceries and restaurants, meat has to be processed in a USDA certified facility. The USDA oversees processing of meat for public consumption for food safety reasons, but unfortunately the process has

In 2012, 761 farms in Oregon had on-farm packing, with 6 in Baker County and 8 in Union County.⁵

become expensive and burdensome for small-scale producers. The processing fee usually needs to be paid up front, and USDA certified facilities often have minimum requirements on the number of animals they will process at one time. Many producers will forego this route because of the cost, and instead opt for custom-exempt slaughter and processing.

In recent years there have been some significant changes in food safety laws. The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) is the most recent upgrade to federal food safety standards in the U.S., which directs businesses and regulating bodies to take a more preventive approach in reducing food-borne illness.¹⁵

According to the Oregon State Board of Agriculture, the FSMA Produce Safety Rule "will impact approximately 4,000 fruit, nut, and vegetable growers,... and 3,350 food businesses, including food processors, dairies, and bakeries" will have to comply with at least one of the rules.¹⁵ Some food processors and businesses are already in compliance with the new rules, but many will still have to make changes to their facilities and get training for employees, adding expenses for these companies over the next few years. Several small-scale Union and Baker County producers indicated that they follow the food safety recommendations of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP), but they are not certified due to time or financial reasons. For producers, it is important to note that while certification programs like GAP and GHP are optional, FSMA compliance is law.

The Preventive Controls rule of the FSMA came into effect January 2016, and applies to facilities that hold, process, or manufacture food in some way.²⁰ There are some exemptions for small businesses, and establishments such as farm

Hines Meat Company

Jake and Paige Hines opened Hines Meat Company in La Grande in June, 2016. They started with custom meat processing for livestock and wild game, and they also offer steak, hamburger, pork chops, and make pepperoni, jerky, summer sausage, and bratwurst. June 2016 through early January 2017 they were very busy, highlighting the need for meat processors in Northeast Oregon. They are still trying to expand their wholesale side to even out business during the year so they are not just busy during the hunting season. In September 2016 they added a meat counter and sell USDA cuts for the public, which helped their business after the hunting season ended. Currently they do not have a minimum quantity for processing, which has been an asset for small-scale producers who may only have a few pigs or lambs every year. They are trying to get USDA certified processing started in summer of 2017, and are hoping to be able to offer the same services without minimum requirements, and continue custom and wild game processing.



Hines Meat Co. has done meat catering at Hog Wild Days, and they had a booth at the Union County Fair in 2016. They would like to open a kitchen at the facility in the near future to offer comfort and some fresh foods for lunch, and beer of course. The Hines feel it is important to be relevant to the incomes in the community, so they try to keep prices at the meat counter comparable to those of grocery stores. The Hines think it would be helpful for people to frequent places like Hines Meat Co. to help local businesses keep their prices competitive. They believe that their business is there to serve the community, and want people to know that “we do value life, and we want to be resourceful and responsible for where our food comes from.” Visit facebook.com/hinesmeatco/ for more information.

stands and farmers’ markets are not subject to the rule. The Produce Safety rule came into effect January 2017, and applies to farms that produce, pack, or hold produce that is typically consumed raw. There is an exemption for farms with sales under \$25,000, and modified requirements for farms with sales under \$500,000 if more than 50% of their sales are direct-to-consumer, or to retail food businesses that are in the same state or within 275 miles of the farm.²¹ OSU’s Western Regional Center to Enhance Food Safety was established in 2016 to “develop trainers to deliver FSMA training workshops targeted towards small- and medium-sized farms, beginning farmers, socially disadvantaged farmers, small processors, and small fresh fruit and vegetable merchant

wholesalers affected by the FSMA guidelines”²² in the western U.S. There have already been a few Produce Safety Alliance train-the-trainer courses, Food Safety Preventive Controls Alliance trainings, and other food safety workshops and information sessions in Oregon. Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) will also work with producers to share information and provide technical assistance.

At the state level, there have been some regulatory improvements in the last five years that have made it easier for producers to sell their goods. Oregon’s Farm Direct Bill (or Pickle Bill) allows growers to sell fresh produce and to make low-risk, value-added goods for direct-to-consumer sale (ORS 616.683). Direct-to-consumer sales are sales that are made to

individual consumers by producers. The bill clarifies what foods are and are not exempt from ODA food licensing, and exempts farmers' markets, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), and food buying clubs from food licensing with some restrictions. Other ODA food license exemptions include one for poultry slaughtering and sales up to 1000 birds, and one for egg producers that sell direct, but labeling is required (ORS 603.038 and 603.683).²³ Dairy production and sales remain incredibly restrictive, as a producer can only have three cows, nine sheep, or nine goats and can only sell milk at the premise where produced (ORS 621.012). Value-added products such as jellies, jams, fermented and pickled vegetables, acidified fruits, salsa and sauces can be sold direct-to-consumer under the Farm Direct Bill. Sales are limited to \$20,000 a year, and labeling is required. Much of what can be made under the bill is covered in OSU Extension Service Master Food Preserver program.

Oregon's Home Baking Bill allows people to make baked and confectionary goods for direct sale by providing an exemption to ODA food

In 2012, 3,292 farms in Oregon produced and sold value-added products, with 51 in Baker County and 50 in Union County.⁵

licensing requirements. The exemption applies to small home businesses, also known as cottage food operations, which make non-potentially hazardous foods and have sales up to \$20,000 a year. An Oregon Food Handler Card is still required. Foods such as

cakes, pies, doughnuts, bread, cookies, caramels, and hard candy are allowed, and the foods must not contain meat or require refrigeration. The sales must be direct-to-consumer at farmers' markets, farm stands, events, and residences. All packaged and processed products require labeling which lists ingredients, allergens, weight, address of the producer, and the statement "This product is homemade and is not prepared in an inspected food establishment."

The intent of these regulatory changes is to improve economic opportunities for small-scale producers and processors, as well as improve access to fresh baked goods in rural areas.²⁴ Producers in Union and Baker Counties have taken advantage, and produce jams and jellies, salsa, sauerkraut, roasted peppers, garlic and chili powders, various baked goods, and dried goods including herbs, tomatoes, and garlic.

Nella at La Grande Farmers' Market. Photo by Nella Parks.



Young Roots Farm



Amy Young and her hogs. Photo by Amy Young.

Amy Young has a small family farm outside of Baker City. After finishing college, Amy wanted to get back into the farming lifestyle, and started Young Roots Farm five years ago with her family. They started with carrots and other vegetables, then added meat chickens, and now primarily raise hogs, laying hens, and vegetables for the family. The hogs pasture graze all year except in the winter, and also are fed fruit, vegetables, and grains from the farm, local orchards and culls from the local food co-operative. All sales are direct, with the hogs sold as whole or half cuts through Baker County Custom Meats. The Youngs also sell eggs by the dozen. Amy gives each of the hogs a name and knows they have different personalities, and the family manages the land with the same respect and care they give to their animals.

Like many small-scale producers, Amy and her husband have other off-farm jobs. In the next 3-5 years though Amy would like income from the farm to be her only income. She wants to increase the size of the farm, and may try dairy cows, but she doesn't want to have a huge farm; "I want to be sustainable for my work load and for the land." The biggest barrier has been processing cost and restrictions. In order for Young Roots to be able to provide pork to grocery stores or restaurants, they need to have the hogs USDA processed, and the nearest processor has a 10 head minimum and is an hour and a half drive away. Amy says that if Hines Meat Company is able to do USDA processing without minimums, then she would like to sell to BELLA Mercantile and The Lone Pine Café in Baker City. Visit youngrootsfarm.com for more information.

Photo by Amy Young.





Full Pint barley. Photo by Darrin Walenta.

Local craft malts and craft beers

When you hear about the complexities of beer, hop and yeast varieties often come up in conversation, but what about the barley? In 2014-15 a value-added processing project was started that organized around the barley malting and brewing processes, and involved several people in economic and community development, a maltster, and other community members. The idea was to bring together barley producers, the local malting facility in Baker City, and breweries in the region to market Northeast Oregon beer made with Northeast Oregon-grown barley. Similar to wine, a place-based connection would exist with the ingredients and processes of brewing. Currently Tom Hutchinson, the owner and maltster of Gold Rush Malt, is making headway in this local craft malts movement. Darrin Walenta, Associate Professor and Crops Agent at OSU Extension Service, and Pat Hayes, Professor at OSU and barley breeder, are working on barley variety and economic development.



Gold Rush Malt in Baker City.

Gold Rush Malt in Baker City has been in operation since 2016. Tom buys barley from local growers, and has sold his malts to some of eastern Oregon's breweries including Barley Browns Brew Pub (Baker City), Prodigal Son Brewery (Pendleton), Steen's Mountain Brewing Company (Burns), and 1188 Brewing Company (John Day). Promoting the use of locally grown ingredients like barley benefits local producers and supports the local economy. More work is needed, including continued collaboration with OSU to develop new malt barley

varieties that grow in Northeast Oregon, help with marketing and branding, and help connecting local breweries, producers, and consumers. Established in 2014, the Eastern Oregon Beer Festival that takes place in August could be a great place to promote local malts and beer to the consumers of eastern Oregon and visitors. Visit facebook.com/goldrushmalt for more information.

Chapter 3: Direct and Wholesale Opportunities

Distribution

A well-developed distribution system is key to accessing local and regional markets. However, it is a difficult system to develop because distribution requires a lot of time and coordination between producers, processors, wholesalers, and retailers. One thing Union and Baker Counties have that many other rural Oregon counties do not is I-84. The highway provides an efficient freight corridor through both counties and provides access to larger population centers and processing facilities in Hermiston, Portland, Nampa, Boise, and the tri-cities area (Richland, Pasco, and Kennewick, WA). There is also a rail line that runs from La Grande to Alicel to transport grain from the United Grain Alicel facility to other regional facilities.²⁵

Local grocery stores typically use large wholesale distributors like Associated Food Stores and UNFI, or shop at discount grocery stores in larger cities such as Wal-Mart or Costco Wholesale to stock their own stores.

Restaurants also use large food service companies such as Sysco, Food Service of America, and Cash & Carry, but also utilize some local growers and local grocers for ingredients. At Eastern Oregon University (EOU), Sodexo supplies the school's dining facility and runs Mac's Grill on campus. The food provided by these suppliers largely comes from outside the two counties and from outside Oregon. Some suppliers like Sodexo buy food from processors in the region who get some of their base products from Union and Baker Counties, thus indirectly supporting the agriculture economy.

Distribution can be very time consuming for producers who sell direct-to-consumer or to local retail establishments. The burden of

moving goods is often on the individual producers themselves. Getting animals to butchers, loading and transporting goods to the farmers' markets, and making deliveries to local grocery stores and restaurants means lots of time is spent driving, and less time farming. On top of that, producers need to have coolers or freezers, pay for gas, and they might need to rent a trailer if they don't own one or cannot borrow one. Even before producers can take their goods to a farmers' market or restaurant, they need to have spent time building those relationships with consumers and managers. Many producers use a multitude of marketing strategies to develop their customer base and attract buyers: business websites, postings on other producers' websites, Facebook pages, blogs, and most importantly, word of mouth. All of this takes time of course, and there is a finesse that goes into making attractive advertisements and putting them in the right places at the right time. As one rancher put it, "marketing is a skill and it's hard; some people have it and some don't."



Photo by David Melville.

A few online resources exist that offer opportunities for direct-to-consumer and wholesale sales. The Portland-based Ecotrust's *FoodHub* venture links producers with wholesale food buyers regionally.²⁶ A few producers in Union and Baker Counties have tried this platform, but have not had much success with it. The producers need to be fairly proactive about maintaining their information and contacts, as well as pursue the buyers and cover transportation costs and delivery. Since most of the buyers are in the west side of the state, the site is more useful for making connections in the Portland metro area for larger sales. Another website, *Food4all*, allows producers to sell directly to consumers, but in a style that is more like a market; consumers can peruse the offerings from local producers or sign up for a CSA share.²⁷ A few producers in Northeast Oregon counties are now trying to organize and get more producers on the site, as well as develop a delivery system for the goods. One of the benefits of a site like this is that the sales are more dependable than the farmers' market, where a rainy day can scare the customers away. Valerie Tachenko, of Val's Veggies in Baker City, said "this is going to be a huge asset to our counties by bringing fresh local products in a more accessible way and also providing more opportunities for young farmers to make a living wage."

Direct-to-consumer sales opportunities

In recent years there has been an undeniable trend across the country in agriculture and food-related sectors, variously dubbed the "Agriculture Renaissance," "Local Food Movement," and "Good Food Movement".^{13, 28} This movement is actually an amalgam of several different interests and movements, including increased consumer interest in where food comes from, environmental sustainability, support for local economies, improved nutrition in school lunches, and food justice and equity.¹³ These interests are reflected in the increasing number of farmers' markets, farm stands, CSAs, food hubs, specialty retail food stores and co-ops, school and community gardens, and restaurant menus featuring local products. A strong market for locally produced and processed foods leads to healthier and more resilient rural economies for growers, processors, grocery stores, restaurants, and other businesses.

Direct-to-consumer sales are sales that are made to individual consumers by producers through channels such as farmers' markets, farm stands, CSAs, and U-picks. These sales are important to producers as well as local economies, as sales support producers' income,

Table 5. Farms with direct sales and value of sales in Oregon, Baker County, and Union County. Values reported for every census year since 1992,⁵ adjusted for inflation to the 2012 dollar.⁷ Unavailable data is indicated by a "-".

Year		1992	1997	2002	2007	2012
Farms with sales directly to individuals	Oregon	4,263	5,461	6,383	6,274	6,680
	Baker County	-	50	70	74	82
	Union County	-	91	106	106	119
Value of products sold directly to individuals, in \$1,000	Oregon	16,982	8,176	27,367	62,289	44,177
	Baker County	-	101	153	244	298
	Union County	-	169	212	243	265

other farm workers that they hire, and agriculture services that they use. In Oregon direct-to-consumer sales amounted to \$53 million from 4,252 operations in 2012.²⁹ The value of direct sales of agricultural products has increased in both Union and Baker Counties between 1997 and 2012⁵ (Table 5).

One of the most important and visible direct-to-consumer sales opportunities in Union and Baker Counties are the farmers' markets. The two principal and stable markets are the La Grande Farmers' Market and the Baker City Farmers' Market. Aside from direct sales for producers, these markets create valuable spaces for their community members to connect to each other, provide a family-friendly environment, and allow access to fresh, healthy foods.³⁰ A list of some of the local producers is in the Eastern Oregon Local Farm and Food Guide, produced by Oregon Rural Action (ORA), with support provided by Meyer Memorial Trust and ODA. Since the guide was published in 2013 it is a little out of date, but it covers Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, Baker, and Malheur Counties, and includes a few farm loops in each of the counties. ORA has recently renewed interest in publishing an updated version of the guide in the near future.

Direct-to-consumer sales of meat are usually somewhat limited at farmers' markets since processing is expensive, which raises the price per pound. In lower-income areas like Union and Baker Counties, people often don't have the means to purchase direct sale meats because of the higher price. Producers instead do custom-exempt slaughter and butcher by selling the animals as full, half, or quarter shares to customers, who then pay the processing fee. A few producers, like Sexton Ranches, have made

USDA processing work in order to sell at the farmers' markets, restaurants, and online. If the recently established Hines Meat Co. is still able to do single animal slaughter with USDA inspection, there may be more locally-sourced meats showing up at the farmers' markets and restaurants.

In 2012, 391 farms marketed through CSAs in Oregon, with 4 in Baker County and none in Union County.⁵

Other direct-to-consumer sales opportunities include farm stands like Val's Veggies Farm Stand in Baker City, Eagle Creek Orchard Fruit Stand in Richland, and Platz Family Farm in Union. U-picks, events, and festivals like the North Powder Huckleberry Festival and

Cove Cherry Fair also offer intermittent sales opportunities for value-added goods, and allow producers to connect with consumers. Consumers can get weekly boxes of fresh produce through a CSA, which helps support producers by providing reliable revenue at the beginning of the planting season when costs and inputs are high. Produce or egg CSAs, like that offered through Val's Veggies', are the most common.



Photo by Nella Parks.

La Grande Farmers' Market

The La Grande Farmers' Market was started around 1980, and has grown quite a lot since then. About 13 years ago the market was moved to Max Square in downtown La Grande, and 4th Street between Adams and Jefferson is closed to traffic during the market. The market is open mid-May to mid-October on Tuesdays 3-6 pm and Saturdays 9 am -12 pm. The La Grande Farmers' Market has also been able to take advantage of the Double Up Food Bucks program; participating markets will match, up to \$10, every dollar of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits spent at the market. This program encourages low income families to spend money in the local economy and encourages healthy eating by promoting the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables. 2016 was the first year for the program at the market, which will continue through 2017. The La Grande Farmers' Market intends to continue applying for the grant as long as funds are available.

Beth Wasley has been the market manager for the last 8 years, and she says the market provides a great community space and believes the community is proud of the market as it is now. Producers come back to sell at the market year after year, and it provides one of the few consistent direct sales opportunities available in the county. Many other vendors use the market as well and sell crafts such as jewelry, soaps, perfumes, knitted goods, and there is usually music too. The market has benefited from its proximity to producers in Pendleton, Hermiston, Milton-Freewater, and Wallowa, some of whom sell at the La Grande market and other regional markets. The market has a website, a Facebook page, and offers text message reminders.

Beth says the market is doing well with the location and hours it has now. Events like the Annual Kid's Day and Farm to Fork Brunch attract many people from the community. The Farmers' Market has partnered with Moda Health, Cook Memorial Library, and Oregon Rural Action in the past for various events and campaigns, and have Food Hero and Master Gardeners tables now through OSU Extension Service. Beth is considering adding a Latin American day that would have salsa music, dancing, and tasting. The La Grande Farmers' Market has not encountered significant barriers, but it does have the regular struggles of organization, timing, and planning for events. Visit lagrandefarmersmarket.org for more information.

La Grande Farmers' Market.



Baker City Farmers' Market

For more than 20 years, the Baker City Farmers' Market has been providing producers and consumers a place to connect. The market currently sits just south of Leo Adler Field in Baker City, at the Baker County Fairgrounds. There are about 15 vendors who use the market now, and the market runs Wednesdays 3:30-6:30 June through October. The market does accept SNAP, but did not get the grant for the Double Up Food Bucks program. The Farmers' Market Board will apply for it again in the future.



Baker City Farmers' Market.

In addition to the local producers, there are vendors with baked items and balsamic vinegars, as well as jewelry and other non-food craft items. The Chef's Table has been a big hit at the market; a local chef prepares food with ingredients currently available from other vendors at the market, so shoppers can try the food and go buy the items. Derek Randell, the market manager for the last few years, would like to make the market more family centered by bringing in additional activities for kids, like face painting, games, and treasure hunts. He would also like to get a hot meal-to-go vendor and more craft vendors. The market has a community

table, which can be rented by an individual or organization for \$5. This provides first time vendors an opportunity to experience the market without committing to paying for a booth for the whole season. The market collaborates with The Lone Pine Cafe for "Turnip the Beet", the annual music fund raiser for the market, and BELLA Main Street Market, who awarded the market a grant for the Chef's Table for 2017.

The biggest barriers for the Baker City Farmers' Market are the location and hours. Since the market is located half a block from one of the main streets, it does not have as much of a visible presence as it used to when it was in Geiser Pollman Park. Derek and the Board use sandwich boards and feather signs on the main street to help attract people to the market. However, since all of the main streets in town (Campbell St., Main St., Broadway St., and 10th St.) are either part of U.S. Highway 30 or Oregon Highway 7, getting approval for larger street signage is more difficult since the market would have to get approval from Oregon Department of Transportation instead of Baker City. Getting people to remember to come to the market after work on a weekday has also been difficult, but the Baker City Farmers' Market is scheduled for Wednesdays since the farmers' markets in nearby towns are on the other days of the week, and vendors often sell at more than one market. Visit facebook.com/Baker-City-Farmers-Market for more information.

Grocery stores and restaurants

Grocery stores are cornerstones to rural economies. They supply food to communities that might otherwise only have convenience stores, they provide employment in areas with ever decreasing opportunities, and they are a source of local taxes that support their communities.³¹ There has been a general trend in the U.S. of rural grocery stores closing, leaving many without access to fresh and affordable food.¹³ The good news is that most of the incorporated towns in Union and Baker Counties have at least one grocery or corner store. La Grande, Island City, Baker City, and Halfway each have more than one store, and some of the larger outlying towns like Elgin and Union also have a few corner and convenience stores.

The five respondents to the Rural Grocery Store Owner Survey indicated that the general barriers to their operation include taxes, minimum buying requirements from vendors, low turnover or high inventory costs, narrow profit margins, and debt or other payments. For low-income shoppers, nearly all of the stores accept SNAP or WIC benefits. The owners also indicated that they do collaborate with other stores to meet minimum buying requirements, for distribution purposes, and for advertising. One store that does not

In 2012, 1,898 farms in Oregon marketed direct to retail establishments, with 15 in Baker County and 16 in Union County.⁵



Old Pine Market in Halfway.



CJ's Country Store in North Powder.

currently collaborate commented that doing so would give them the “potential to have access to different suppliers who may have minimum buying requirements.” Pricing, customer service, and quality of food were indicated as the most important qualities for their stores.

Some of the barriers the owners expressed in obtaining local food products included getting deliveries to their locations, difficulties in filling their minimum orders, government regulations,

difficulty finding and interacting with producers, and inconsistent fulfillment of orders. One owner

described a passive relationship with a local producer; the owner would buy produce if the supplier came to the store on their way through town. Interestingly, all of the stores currently or in the past have sourced locally-grown produce such as vegetables, fruit, honey, and herbs, and two of the stores sourced local meats. This represents the willingness of store owners to support local and regional producers, which results in more money cycling within the local economy.

Most of the incorporated towns in Union and Baker Counties have at least one restaurant, while La Grande, Island City, and Baker City have dozens. Respondents to the Restaurant Owner Survey indicated that narrow profit margins and

taxes have been the most common challenges for their restaurants, with high operation costs, shortage of working capital, and high minimum wages also presenting a challenge. The fact that many of the towns have restaurants means a large potential market for local producers to sell wholesale exists.

There has been a trend in restaurants to source local foods due to a growing consumer interest in food sourcing and supporting local economies. Of the seven restaurant owners that responded to the survey, all source some local goods, usually produce items. Most of the owners said that producers initiated the relationship by approaching them about buying goods, but one owner was rather proactive about sourcing local, using contacts at the farmers' market to do so. The two main factors that limited the owners' ability to source local were low profit margins and lack of customer interest. However, the owners believe the lack of customer interest was due to pricing concerns, not a lack of interest in local products. One owner said "many people are let down when I say I don't use local beef, but they are totally unaware of the expense of doing this and are not willing to pay higher prices." Indeed, the two restaurants that focused on sourcing local are located in La Grande, where customers may have the means to pay more. Other complications in sourcing local included difficulties in finding and interacting with producers, and inconsistent fulfillment of orders. One of the owners acknowledged that "it takes a considerable amount of time and energy to contact and set up a local supply line, and we must always have a backup supplier." Restaurants and grocery stores have specific demands for the type and quantity of produce they will accept, which, from the

producers' perspective, can be difficult to meet when weather or pests delay or ruin a crop. Despite these difficulties, many of the producers interviewed do want to expand, diversify, or increase production, which means they feel there is room for sales growth in Union and Baker Counties.

Institutional sourcing of locally produced goods to support the local economy is definitely not a



Annie's Café in Richland.

new idea. Union and Baker Counties have several institutions that serve food to large populations that use their facilities, including public schools, Eastern Oregon University, and the hospitals. Recently there has been some interest in getting more local foods into the public school cafeterias and at EOU, but this has yet to gain widespread community support. Issues include the higher price of local foods, the added time and labor cafeteria staff would need to find local suppliers or prepare raw produce, existing contracts with food service

"I would like to be able to offer local food competitively with shipped in food." – Merlyn Baker of Merlyn's Catering, La Grande

companies, and the need for liability insurance and adherence to food safety standards. Since there is no certified commercial kitchen or food hub that can serve local producers and processors, they do not have the option of collaborating to pool produce and process it to make it more usable by cafeteria staff. There is the potential though to source locally grown or processed meat, since there are plenty of ranchers and at least one USDA processing facility already. Seeking community interest and support should be the first step in starting a conversation on institutional sourcing.



Eastern Oregon University in La Grande.

Community Merchants



Opened in 2012, Community Merchants is a unique consignment-style shop in La Grande that offers foods and crafts from local producers and artists. Jenny Bartell owns and manages the shop herself, and also raises hogs and lamb from her family's ranch in Imbler. Community Merchants sells grass-fed beef and lamb, pork, chicken, and goat, all from Grande Ronde Valley producers. Salsa, cheese, pesto, honey, and greens come from local or regional producers. On the crafts side, the store has jewelry, knives, pot holders, soaps, antlers, decorations, books, and much more. Community Merchants does not yet accept SNAP or WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) benefits since it does not meet the food group eligibility requirements, namely that a store must offer three varieties of food in each of four staple food groups (meats, cereals, vegetables or fruit, and dairy). Jenny is working to change this so she can accept SNAP, but thinks that it is "unfortunate that you can use SNAP at a dollar store but not here."

Jenny saw the need for an in-between outlet for local producers and artists to sell their goods, and she likes that her store "connects consumers with our talent." She recognizes that some regulations have made it difficult for small-scale growers to get the certifications they need in order to be able to sell to grocery stores and restaurants. Jenny takes pride in being supportive of local producers particularly because they face these barriers so that consumers have access to local goods. Visit facebook.com/CommunityMerchants for more information.

Chapter 4: Consumer Access

Consumer food access

The dynamics of income, employment, housing, transportation, culture, family relationships, commodity prices, food distribution systems, and even the seasons can affect a person's ability to find and purchase food. Accessibility of healthy and sufficient food is an important aspect of what makes a community food system healthy, along with a strong local economy that supports producers and food businesses, and sustainable agricultural practices. A community food system contributes to community health by providing a variety of foods that are grown, processed and distributed locally and available year around. Producers must work hand in hand with processors, distributors, retailers and consumers to build a reliable market system. Healthy diets include 3-5 fruits and vegetables a day. Encouraging community and school programs that help increase the availability of fruits and vegetables is one way to improve community health. From an economic standpoint, encouraging strong markets for locally grown produce and other food items (meat, dairy, grains, and oils) will lead to a healthier economy for growers, processors, restaurant owners, and other businesses as goods are bought and sold locally to the community and to travelers within Eastern Oregon.

Consumers utilize a variety of sources to get food: grocery stores, farmers' markets, food pantries, farm stands, restaurants, convenience stores, buying clubs, community meals, gardens, hunting, foraging, and bartering. Ninety-three percent (37 of 40 total) of respondents to the Consumer Food Access Survey said a major chain grocery store was where they get the majority of their food, with some of the most frequently



Farm-to-Table Summer Brunch at La Grande Farmers' Market.

utilized secondary sources being the farmers' market, growing their own, independent grocery stores, restaurants, and foraging. In Northeast Oregon, people forage huckleberries, Oregon grape, thimbleberry, pine nuts, mushrooms, kinnikinnick, arrowleaf balsamroot, biscuitroot, camas, and much more.

Although there are grocery stores in almost every incorporated town in Union and Baker Counties, some areas are considered food deserts. A food desert is defined by the USDA as low-income census tracts where a substantial number of residents have low access to a grocery store.³² The food deserts in Union and Baker Counties include the Summerville area, Elgin and everywhere to the north, the south part of Grande Ronde Valley including Union, North Powder, and all of eastern Baker County including the towns of Huntington, Richland, and

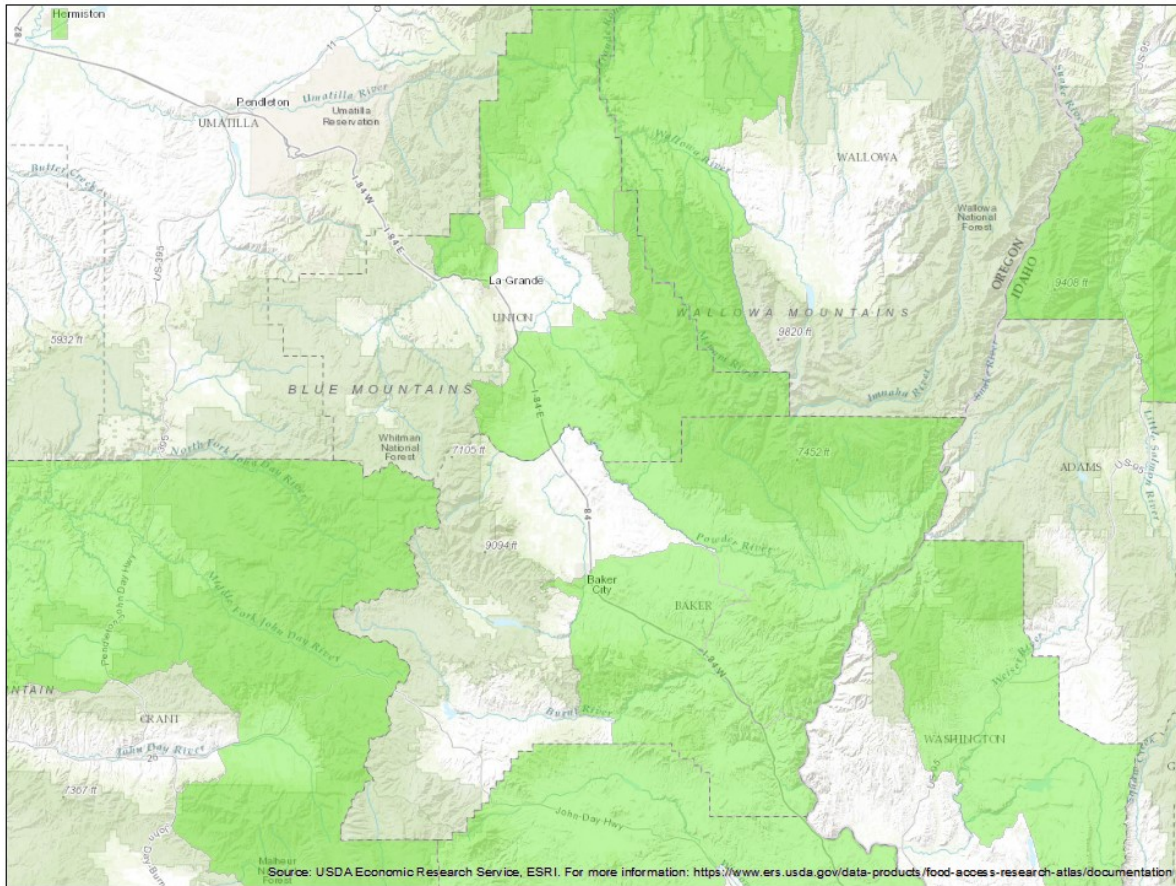


Figure 3. Food Access Research Atlas with view of Northeast Oregon. Green indicates census tracts that are both low income and have low access to food in 2015.³² Low income tracts had a poverty rate of 20% or higher, or had a median family income less than 80% of median family income for the state or metropolitan area. Low access tracts had at least 500 people or 33% of population that lived farther than 1 mile (urban) or 10 miles (rural) from the nearest supermarket.

Halfway (Figure 3). Aside from the grocery stores, there is also a food distributor that delivers to Union and Baker Counties. Azure Standard is a natural and organic foods distributor based in Dufur,³³ and has drop points in La Grande and Baker City. Non-perishable food can also be mailed to individual addresses, and products are offered for both retail and wholesale.

Several factors limit consumers' ability to get the food they need. From the Consumer Food Access Survey, some of the factors that affected respondents most severely were the rising cost of household expenses such as rent and utilities, low income, high cost of food, lack of transport,

and the availability and variety of quality food. When making food purchases, the most important factors were price, taste, and healthfulness. Locally-produced food purchases were also common; 80% of respondents bought vegetables, 75% bought fruit, 53% bought eggs, 50% bought honey, 35% bought processed foods, and 35% bought beef. Other items bought include dairy items, baked goods, pork, poultry, and lamb. Many respondents also used the farmers' market, with 30% shopping there 1 to 2 times a week, and 33% shopping 2 or 3 times a month. However, 23% said they do not shop at the farmers' market, with the main reason indicated as being too expensive or not being able to get to the market while it is open.

Half of participants in the La Grande Farmers' Market Focus Group said they had well developed routines for shopping and cost effectiveness.³⁰ Participants also indicated that limited hours and the perception of food being more expensive were some of the barriers to accessing the market. Fortunately both the La Grande and Baker City Farmers' Market accept SNAP benefits, and the La Grande market participates in the Double Up Food Bucks program. For SNAP users, every SNAP dollar spent at the market can be matched up to \$10, making any food items bought essentially half-price. Since many participants' budget and plan meals in advance, not knowing the availability of goods and prices prevented some from accessing the market. Uncertainty around how payment methods for SNAP and WIC users work, and challenges for those with mobility issues were also discussed as barriers to market use.

The federal poverty threshold for a family of four, with two children, was \$24,036 in 2015. Twenty-nine percent of the 6,432 families in Union County and the 4,453 in Baker County were below 185% of the threshold.² The 185% threshold is important because it is the limit at which an individual or family can qualify for food assistance programs such as SNAP, WIC, free and reduced school meals and some backpack programs. SNAP participation rates for all people eligible for the program are usually well below 100%, and a report for 2012 put statewide participation at 73%, with Union County only achieving 64% and Baker 71%.³⁴ This also meant lots of federal money was not coming into the counties, totaling \$6.6 million at the time. Overall though, Oregon has had higher participation rates than the national average, and had the second highest rate of all states for 2012.³⁵ In the same year, WIC participation for

Oregon was at 66%, and the national average at 63%.³⁶

In informal conversations with community members and interviews with public health workers, stigma is often cited as one of the barriers to using SNAP, WIC, food pantries, and even school Friday backpack programs. Other barriers include how to access SNAP and WIC, figuring out paper work, getting to appointments to stay enrolled in WIC, and the specific food requirements that WIC vouchers can be used on. Several public health workers indicated that many of the families they serve

are still food insecure, especially towards the end of the month after food benefits have been used and in between paychecks. Food insecure households are uncertain of having, at some time during the year, enough food to meet the needs of all their members because they had insufficient money or other resources for food.³⁸

In 2015, the food insecurity rate was 14.2% for Oregon, 16.0% for Union County, and 15.5% for Baker County.³⁷

Half of the respondents to the Consumer Food Access Survey responded "no" to the question, "for you personally, do you believe food is available and affordable in your community?" A few respondents indicated that they felt there was an insufficient variety of foods available, one had a medical condition that impacted food availability, and one said that "Food is accessible because I have SNAP and food pantries." Only 33% indicated they were currently eligible for food assistance, with 35% participating in SNAP, and 20% accessing food pantries in the last 12 months. Only a few people indicated they faced difficulties in accessing emergency food pantries, including no transportation (4 respondents), not comfortable receiving assistance (3), not being able to make it to a pantry during open hours (2) and the pantry not having the food they like (2).

Food pantries, meal sites, and churches

Food pantries are organized and supported by a variety of organizations, including cities, counties, civic groups, and churches. Many of the pantries adhere to federal guidelines in order to receive commodity food allotments from The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). Oregon Food Bank is the statewide operator that works with TEFAP to distribute supplemental food to a network of partner agencies,³⁹ including Community Connection of Northeast Oregon (CCNO).⁴⁰ CCNO connects all the food pantries in Northeast Oregon, and is the regional food bank that distributes food to agencies in Union, Baker, Wallowa, and Grant Counties. CCNO acts as the hub, assisting and coordinating the pantries' allotments from Oregon Food Bank, and helping with specific food purchases and grants. As a Community Action Partnership organization, CCNO also helps senior citizens, children, and low-income people access various programs related to health, housing, utilities, and food.⁴⁰ CCNO also runs the Meals on Wheels program through local senior centers, and offers a senior lunch every week day in both La Grande and Baker City at the senior centers.

The staff and volunteers that run the food pantries in Union and Baker Counties feel they are meeting the needs of those they serve. Some perennial challenges do exist, such as finding ongoing funding sources and a lack of refrigerator and freezer space. Pantries usually run on a shoestring budget from grants and donations, so changes in shipping costs of food or a broken freezer can have a big impact on

"Prices are high. We eat a lot of top ramen, eggs, potatoes."—Anonymous, Consumer Food Access Survey

"Everyone contributes, and occasionally everyone is in need- it is important."—Anonymous, Consumer Food Access Survey

their finances. They have been doing amazing work despite these challenges: most of the pantries have enough volunteers and do not run out of food. A few pantries acknowledged that most of the volunteers they have are older, and that it would be nice to find some younger people to help out. On a similar note, many of the people running the pantries said they don't use email, don't have a computer, or have a really old computer; calling seems to be the best way to contact a representative of the pantries. Contact information for the pantries is available on the CCNO website, but many people find the pantries through contacts with churches and public health workers.

Some of the pantries are part of the Fresh Alliance program, which allows grocery stores to donate leftover perishable items like meat, dairy products and produce to food pantries.

However, for food safety purposes, food pantries are limited to picking up at stores that are within a 30 minutes' drive unless they have a refrigerated vehicle. This program has been working well for Union County, but in Baker County only the food pantries in Baker City could take advantage due to the distance of the outlying towns from the major grocery stores. At least four of the pantries have transitioned from using set boxes of food to the shopping style, where clients can pick out the food items they use, with quantities based on family size. Oregon Food Bank has been encouraging this change as it can help reduce waste of food items families do not want use, and provides a more dignified experience for clients.

Typical foods available at pantries include boxed meals and mixes, peanut butter, cereal, rice, beans, pasta, canned and frozen fruits and

vegetables, canned and frozen meats, and perishables such as bread, milk, eggs and produce. Food pantries also lack large storage space for perishable items, and many pantries in Union and Baker County are only open 2-4 days a month. This means that perishable items that are donated need to be given to the pantries just a few days or hours before opening the pantry doors or the food will spoil. Donations from local producers have the potential to increase the amount of produce offered at food pantries, and the most common items donated from farms in Union and Baker Counties are fruits and vegetables. The most significant limitations expressed by producers were the time needed to make donations, the hours pantries are open, and a lack of on-farm storage space to hold products to donate. One producer said it would be helpful if they could donate to pantries after the farmers' markets, when they have leftover fresh produce that they don't want to take back to their farms. Even if food pantries are unable to offer fresh fruits and vegetables, many can still offer canned or frozen items. The WIC Dietician for Baker County Health Department, Mandy Peterson, says that a common belief is that fresh fruits and vegetables have a better nutrient quality than frozen or canned items, which is not always true; "the important thing is that people are consuming fruits and vegetables in a variety of forms."



Faith Center Friday Backpack pantry.

Indeed, decades of research has demonstrated that frozen and canned produce have nutrient values (calories, vitamins, minerals) that are similar to fresh produce, and in some cases are actually higher.⁴¹⁻⁴³ Utilizing canned, frozen, and fresh items also allows for flexibility in meal preparation and food budgets.⁴³

USDA's National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference can be found at ndb.nal.usda.gov/ndb/. The database can be searched by food item, food group, or manufacturer's name to find nutrient information for food.

Another great resource in Union and Baker Counties has been churches that offer community meals, support backpack programs and food pantries, and offer other assistance. They often fill in the food and financial gaps when government agencies cannot. The United Methodist Church in La Grande and Baker City, First Presbyterian Church and Calvary Baptist Church in Baker City, and K-House and Youth for Christ in La Grande all offer regular or periodic meals for various community groups. Most of the information on locations and times of these meals flows only by word of mouth, and many community members are not fully aware of what is available. Summer lunch programs are available at the Riveria Activity Center in La Grande, Geiser Pollman Park and North Baker Elementary in Baker City, and at the Haines Library in Haines.

The Faith Center in Island City and the First Presbyterian Church in La Grande support the Friday backpack programs for elementary and middle schoolers in Union County, and the First Presbyterian Church in Baker City supports the Friday backpack program for the Baker School

Open Door and Friday Backpack Program

The First Presbyterian Church in Baker City has a program called Open Door which serves breakfast to Baker Middle School students during the school year. Started in 2011, the breakfast is prepared and served in the church's basement, and there are also some games and books available. The adult volunteers arrive at 6:15 am to start cooking, breakfast is served at 7 am, and then the kids are escorted to the Middle School at 7:45. The program typically serves 40-60 kids in the morning, with 3-4 adults cooking and a couple more interacting with the kids as mentors. The Open Door is open to all Baker Middle School students, and many of the kids that come are not part of the church.



Volunteers packing bags. Photo by 1st Presbyterian Church in Baker City.

The Open Door program ensures the kids get a breakfast, which helps their academic performance by allowing them to concentrate in class. The kids can also be sent to school with snacks if they want or need them. This program goes beyond food though, and gives kids a safe space with adults that care and are willing to listen. Karen Kolb-Schoeninger, the Committee Chair, says they try to “make a warm and nurturing place” for the kids, and that the “energy in the morning is just amazing.”

The First Presbyterian Church also runs a Friday backpack program that runs from the third week of school to the last full Thursday of the school year; since Baker School District does not have school on Fridays, the program distributes bags on Thursdays instead. Volunteers come to the church every week to divide the food needed for each class into containers and make the bags for each student. They include food that is easy to make and kid-appelling, like tiny containers of macaroni-and-cheese or tuna packs, fruit snacks and fresh fruit. School District and Head Start Program staff at each school identify children who they think might be in need. The program can supply an average of about 150 bags a week, and in the 2016-17 school year, about a third of the bags went to kids in Head Start Program, and the rest went to the elementary school, middle school, and the high school.

Funding will be an issue for both programs in the next school year (2017-18), and the backpack program needs more volunteers who can take on leadership roles. These programs are run by committees assisted by the First Presbyterian Church, but they have many volunteers in both programs that do not belong to the church. The programs are supported by First Presbyterian Church funds, grants, and donations from local churches, business, and organizations. The programs have really become about community engagement and outreach, and are amazing examples of what can happen when a community comes together to support itself. Visit firstpresbaker.blogspot.com for more information.

District as well as running the Open Door program for middle schoolers in Baker City. Several churches support CCNO food pantries; Baker City Christian Church supports the Bread for Life food pantry, and Valley Fellowship and Zion Lutheran support Neighbors Together food pantry through donations, space, fund raising, and volunteers. Other churches or faith-based organizations, such as the Northeast Oregon Compassion Center and St. Francis de Sales, support non-CCNO contracted food pantries. A few churches also offer limited financial assistance through benevolence funds, which can be used to pay a gas bill, buy firewood, or pay for a hotel room. These funds are extremely limited though, and are usually only sporadically used.

School foods

There have been recent gains in making school foods healthier, with new guidelines for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program from the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act.⁴⁴ In the last few months from the date of writing this assessment, some of the rules of the Act have been suspended or relaxed, and more changes are probably on the way. The Oregon Farm-to-School program has been helping schools procure local foods and provide educational opportunities since 2011. The purpose of Farm-to-School programs is to provide students access to and education on fresh, healthy food, and to work with local producers to source local foods for school cafeterias.⁴⁵ As of the summer of 2017, the Oregon Farm-to-School and

School Garden funding will be offered for the next two school years for Oregon schools. There are two grants available through this program; the first reimburses schools for purchases of Oregon grown or processed food and is non-competitive, and the second is for educational opportunities related to garden, agriculture, or food and is competitive.⁴⁶ In the 2013-14 school year, five of Union and Baker Counties' ten

school districts participated in Farm-to-School activities, which included procurement of local foods for use in breakfast and lunch programs, tastings, field trips and school gardens.⁴⁷

From the School Principal or Superintendent Survey, all but one respondent did not have concerns about the types or

quality of the food offered to their students. One even commented that the "cafeteria does a great job preparing meals that are healthy." Three of the eleven schools represented in the survey participate in the Free Breakfast program, and nine participate in the National School Lunch Program, and seven have students that use backpack programs. All but one school supplies fresh fruit and vegetables to their students at the cafeteria. Six schools have also received donations from local producers; two received produce from farmers, and four received beef, either from a local rancher or from the Cattlewomen's or Cattlemen's Association.

The Oregon Department of Education estimates that were 190 homeless youth enrolled in school at the beginning of the 2015-16 school year in Union County, and 129 in Baker County.⁴⁸ The majority of those students were in the La Grande

55% of Oregon school districts participated in farm to school activities in the 2013-14 school year, with \$13,404,200 invested in local food.⁴⁷

See reports on number of students eligible for free and reduced lunch by school district at:
ode.state.or.us/sfda/reports/r0061Select2.asp

(180) and Baker (128) School Districts. Homeless youth are children that lack a regular and adequate nighttime residence, which can include campgrounds, motels, sharing with friends or other family members, emergency shelters, or trailer parks.⁴⁸ Homelessness can impact school performance, and cause stress and chronic hunger. Fortunately, the La Grande and Baker School Districts offer programs that support homeless youth. These programs can offer shoes, clothes, hygiene supplies, referrals for housing and other assistance, and support with backpack and summer lunch programs.^{48, 49} The La Grande High School also operates a food pantry for students, which is open during the school year and summer months.

Community gardens

Thirty-eight percent of respondents to the Consumer Food Access Survey indicated that they grow their own food. Growing food can take a variety of forms, including farmers and ranchers who eat their own products, home gardens, fruit trees in front yards, or even potted patio plants. One important community resource is a community garden. For those who don't have sunlight in their yards or don't have yards at all, community gardens provide the opportunity to grow some food, socialize, and provide access to fresh and nutritious food, particularly for low-income people. The La Grande Community Garden is sponsored by Oregon Rural Action and Eastern Oregon



La Grande Community Garden.

University, and is located across from Candy Cane Park on property owned by EOU.⁵⁰ The Community Garden group of ORA runs the garden, but use of the garden is open to anyone; plots are about 6' x 16', and cost \$30 for the season plus four volunteer hours. There are scholarships available for those who cannot afford the fee, and for ORA members and students, faculty, and staff at EOU, the fee is \$10. It is surrounded by a beautiful fence and has a small shed for shared tools and hoses. In the summer of 2017 the garden is doing a "Grow-a-Row" project, where food grown in a communal bed will be donated to a local food pantry.



Baker City Community Garden.

The Baker City Community Garden is located next to the Baker County fairgrounds, and the property is owned by the Baker County Fairgrounds. While there is ample space, with eight plots measuring 15' x 50' each, the garden still lacks a fence to protect it from deer, and this last winter the roof and side collapsed on the shed. There is a \$25 fee to use the plots for the season for water. The garden group is currently working on funding to make repairs and buy fencing. Both of the cities' garden groups have been very successful in the past raising funds, getting donations of seeds, starts, materials, and labor.



Gleaning

Food gleaning refers to several types of activities that reduce food waste. Collecting unharvested crops from fields, fruit from trees in yards, off-grade produce, and perishable items from grocery stores are all forms of gleaning. Fresh Alliance has been operating in Union County since 2010, where food from Safeway and Wal-Mart are collected and brought to the Senior Center in La Grande and food pantries in Union County. While the food is near its expiration, it is

USDA Supplemental Food Programs:

SNAP

WIC

Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

USDA Food Distribution Programs:

The Emergency Food Assistance Program

Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations

Commodity Supplemental Food Program

USDA Child Nutrition Programs:

National School Lunch Program

School Breakfast Program

Child and Adult Care Food Program

Summer Food Service Program

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

Special Milk Program

Visit fns.usda.gov/programs-and-services for more information.

still perfectly safe to consume. Baker County does not have this program, but there is community interest in gleaning. A new, informal gleaning group has been taking shape in the spring of 2017, and they are hoping by the fall to be able to glean from fruit trees on peoples' properties. Their next step is figuring out how to pair gleaning activities with preservation classes, and may partner with One Transition at a Time, a local non-profit providing safe and sober transitional housing and life skills classes. The purpose is to increase access to nutritious foods for low-income community members in the winter, when fresh produce is unavailable or unaffordable.

Chapter 5: Education and Community Health

Educational opportunities

Youth Education

Many of the schools in Union and Baker Counties are involved in various agriculture and health related activities. These activities are provided as part of school curriculum or as other extra-curricular activities, and can act as a way to connect children to agricultural production, and for some higher grade levels, experiential and vocational training. From the School Principal or Superintendent Survey, ten schools offer classes related to food, nutrition, health and agriculture. These include health, culinary arts, plant science, animal science, agriculture classes, nutrition education curriculum offered through SNAP Ed, a Nutrition Detectives Program, and a Healthy Snack Program. These classes and programs are taught by school faculty, FFA, and OSU Extension Service staff or volunteer leaders. Seven schools offer farm and ranch field trips, with the purpose

to “expose students to resources and products in our community.” Burnt River School District runs the Burnt River Integrated Agriculture Science Research Ranch (BRIARR) that allows students to participate in a natural resource and agriculture-based curriculum.⁵¹ Some of the activities allow kids to grow their own food, take care of farm animals, participate in FFA or 4-H



Baker Technical Institute and Aquaponics

The Baker Technical Institute in Baker City offers an alternative learning environment to high school students and graduates in Baker School District. Students can get technical training in welding, engineering, nursing, construction, agriculture, and environmental science. Baker Technical Institute helps students learn the skills and get certifications needed for employment through their Pathways Program. Six courses of study are offered in agriculture, construction, metal technology, engineering, health services, and natural resources.

An interesting course offered at Baker Technical Institute is the yearlong STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) course on aquaponics taught by Burke Smejkal. In August, students start with fingerling tilapia, whose waste is used to supply hydroponically grown spinach and other greens with nutrients. The plants help purify the water, which is then circulated back to the fish. At the end of the school year the fish are about 1lb and are eaten at the school’s open house. The course incorporates aspects of plant and animal biology, technology, and engineering. The students get to learn about germination, plant growth, water quality, nitrogen cycles, food security, and agriculture innovation, all in one hands-on course. Burke encourages students to develop their own systems and think critically about the world around them. Of course, “kids love taking care of living things too.” Visit bakerti.org for more information.

projects, practice apiculture, or participate in water quality monitoring projects.

School gardens can provide excellent teaching opportunities for growing food, taking responsibility, and practicing healthy eating habits. The produce can be used in school cafeterias, shared with students, or sold in local grocery stores. Kids are more likely to try new foods if they have had a hand in growing them or preparing them for eating. Baker and La Grande High Schools, North Powder, Burnt River, Cove Charter, and Elgin schools all have either gardens or greenhouses, or both. From the School Principal or Superintendent Survey, four schools already have a garden or greenhouse or are in process of getting one, and four more schools are interested in starting a garden. Some of the barriers mentioned include not having garden space on school property, or sufficient interest or ability of school staff to lead the project.

School gardens do require quite a bit of care and time commitment, especially as much of the growing season occurs while kids are out of

school. In addition, once plants or produce are harvested there needs to be a plan for using the fresh produce or preserving it for later use. This can require kitchen space for cleaning and processing foods, a refrigerator or freezer for storage space, as well as a group of people willing to help with the garden or food processing. In recent years there has been the formation of school garden hubs, and in Oregon there are now nine hubs in western and central Oregon.⁵² These hubs provide outlets for local school garden coordinators and supporters to meet, share ideas, discuss strategies, best practices, and funding opportunities. A Northeast Oregon school garden hub could be a valuable asset to support existing gardens and help new ones get started through the shared experiences and knowledge of Union and Baker County school garden coordinators.

A few interesting projects have been operating in Union County that link the messaging from health, nutrition, and gardening classes in schools to the kids' outside world: SNACZ 4-H clubs, Community Leadership Teams, and Garden-to-Store.

SNACZ club at Union Market. Photo by David Melville.



SNACZ, Community Leadership Team, and Garden-to-Store Programs

SNACZ 4-H clubs [Students Now Advocating to Create (Healthy Snacking) Zones]: Groceries and corner stores in rural communities often have difficulties stocking fresh products, especially produce, due to minimum buying requirements and low turnover rate of produce. These grocery stores focus more on stocking shelf-stable products that tend to be calorie dense, convenient, and inexpensive. This means when kids leave school at the end of the day, they might not find any healthy options if they go to the store for a snack. The SNACZ 4-H clubs, which consist of children and club volunteer leaders, have been working in Elgin, Imbler, Cove, Union, and North Powder to expand access to healthy snacking options in their local groceries. The Imbler and Union SNACZ 4-H Clubs began winding down during the 2016-17 school years, and the Elgin SNACZ 4-H Club will be the only SNACZ Club continuing after the funding has completely ended in the summer of 2017. As part of the SNACZ 4-H Project, six small community stores installed SNACZ Zones around Union County. These included CJs Country store in North Powder, Union Market in Union, Dollars Corner in Cove, Summerville Store in Summerville, and Foodtown and Elgin Corner Market in Elgin. In Island City, Wal-Mart also now has a SNACZs Zone that meets USDA Smart Snack guidelines for healthy snacks.



SNACZ Zone at Dollars Corner Store in Cove.
Photo by David Melville.

Community Leadership Teams (CLTs), which consist of adult community members, have been working with stores in Elgin, Cove, and North Powder on marketing and expanding produce stands so they can carry more produce. This produce will be coming from the school gardens and greenhouses that have been started by the Garden-to-School project, as well as from local food producers. The Cove CLT partnered with the Cove High School art class to paint a mural on the side of the Dollars Corner building in effort to promote these local goods.

Garden-to-Store (G2S) is an OSU Extension Service project in Union County that assisted small school gardens in building greenhouses and installing heating and lighting sources to extend the growing season. The three schools (Elgin, Cove, and North Powder) that participated will be able to sell produce to their local stores so that the communities will have access to healthy and fresh produce grown by their own community members. This will help increase access to fresh

produce in areas, such as Elgin and North Powder, which have been described as food deserts.

The work on healthy snacks and school gardens started with the SNACZ 4-H project, with funding secured from the National Institutes of Health by Nancy Findholt of OHSU School of Nursing and Carole Smith of OSU Extension Service. David Melville of OSU Extension Service obtained additional funding from the OHSU Knight Cancer Institute for the G2S project, and has coordinated the three projects. While funding for these programs will be ending the summer of 2017, the efforts of community members and students will continue.

North Powder Farm-to-School



Photo by David Melville.

Started in 2010 through a collaboration of North Powder Charter School, ORA, and Union County Fit Kids, North Powder School District's Farm-to-School program has included a school garden, education, and local food procurement activities. The purpose of Farm-to-School programs is to provide students access to and education on fresh, healthy food, and to work with local producers to source local foods for school cafeterias. The program has a unique way of connecting schools to local economies to build healthier communities. The North Powder Farm-to-School has a 1,000 square foot garden, raised beds, hoop house, and a chicken coop.

They have grown pumpkins, squash, lettuce, herbs, peppers, cucumber, celery, leeks, sunflower, green beans, strawberries, tomatoes, carrots, radish, peppers, a few fruit trees, flowers, raspberries, 15 chickens, and cover crops. One of the barriers to production has been the relatively short growing season of about 100 days; the hoop houses have been a great help though as they can extend the season and buffer against late frosts and cold snaps.

Produce from the school's garden has been used in the school's cafeteria, in tastings in classrooms, donated to the local food bank, sold at the Baker City Farmers' Market, and has been sold to CJ's Country Store. CJ's Country Store is the only grocery store in North Powder, so the produce sold there is often the only produce available in town. For the 2015-16 school year, 842.5 lbs of produce was harvested, with 192.5 lbs used in the school cafeteria, and 181 lbs was donated. The program has also worked with local farmers to get local produce in the school and to take farm field trips. North Powder Charter School has gotten donations of beef from the Beef-to-School program in Baker County, as well as potatoes and sweet corn. The students have taken field trips to the pumpkin patch at Val's Veggies and learned a new pumpkin-based recipe.

Erin Thompson, the Farm-to-School Coordinator the last two years, was intending to coordinate the school garden to produce some of the school cafeteria's needs, and to work more with local producers to procure more local foods. However, funding for the program will end the summer of 2017. The question now is how the school district will manage and maintain the garden in the years to come.



Erin Thompson and the chicken coop.



North Powder Charter school garden.

North Powder Food Corps

FoodCorps service members first joined the Farm-to-School program in 2012. Fortunately, the funding for a FoodCorps member will continue for the next school year. The FoodCorps assists low-income communities by supporting a volunteer who works with school staff to incorporate nutrition education, tastings, and gardening into school curricula. In the 2016-17 school year Desi McGinn worked with North Powder School District and Farm-to-School to incorporate more healthy foods into the cafeteria menu, encouraged kids to try healthy or new foods with tastings, taught



School garden produce at CJ's. Photo by David Melville.



Photo by David Melville.

nutrition and cooking activities, and helped with gardening classes. Desi has seen some parents getting more involved in the program, and has gotten them to try new foods too. The activities are very hands-on, and Desi enjoys getting the kids into the garden to actually grow what they talk about in class. She says the "kids really like to weed and water and they're just so happy to be out there; their favorite thing to do is pick and eat lettuce and carrots straight from the garden beds."

Community Education

Agriculture, gardening, nutrition, and cooking education programs are all available in Union and Baker Counties. As well as providing information on particular topics, education outside of classrooms offer people a chance to socialize, engage in their community, and support local economies. Gardening, nutrition, and cooking education can also have impacts on individual and family health, as adults' cooking and eating habits can influence those of their children and other relations. Many educational programs are hosted by one or more government or non-governmental organizations; collaboration can help build inter-agency partnerships leading to improved communication and responsiveness to the populations they serve.



Master Gardener project at Riveria Activity Center in La Grande.

OSU Extension Service Master Gardener Program in Union and Baker Counties provides education on growing and caring for plants, and trains a corps of volunteers that can educate others on good gardening practices.⁵⁴ OSU Extension Service in Union County co-hosts the Annual Union County Crops and Conservation Tour in June with a committee of community members. The tour provides an opportunity to

learn about local production, agricultural research, and conservation practices in Union County first-hand from local farmers and ranchers, scientists, and others in agriculture services.

**Check out the
Cove-Union farm
loop at:
[coveoregon.org/
cove-union-farm-
loop](http://coveoregon.org/cove-union-farm-loop)**

Along with the growing consumer interest in food and agriculture is the growing agritourism industry. Agritourism is essentially tourism of agriculture. This includes activities that seek to attract visitors to farms or ranches for educational or economic purposes. All sorts of agritourism businesses exist, from simple farm tours to extremely interactive farm

stays. Many producers who get involved in agritourism do so because they enjoy the opportunity to educate the public on farm and ranch production, and because it can help diversify their income through selling products or offering accommodation. For larger producers, agritourism can be a means of public outreach. Agritourism has become such an important industry (more so in the Willamette Valley) recently that Travel Oregon, the Oregon Tourism Commission's business agency, created the Oregon Agritourism Network. This network will work to develop the agritourism industry by addressing policy, marketing, standards, and educational needs.

To date, the agritourism industry in Union and Baker Counties includes a several farm loops where tourists can drive around and stop by various farms and ranches. There are also corn mazes and pumpkin patches at both the Pick'N Patch farm in Cove and Val's Veggies in Baker City, which open every October. Some producers will allow a tour, while others offer farm stands or host meals. A couple producers offer farm stays. For the smaller producers, this is often an important way to sell their products and supplement their income, but most of the producers interviewed that offered some

agritourism activity were more interested in the social engagement and educational aspect of having visitors. Janet Dodson of Sunnyslope Marketing LLC, a tourism marketing professional, described some of the barriers for Union and Baker Counties: for Union County, there are several other natural resource based attractions nearby in other counties, so tourists tend to pass through Union County rather than discovering what it has to offer. Baker County has several of those attractions, but the population hubs are so spread out that farm loops are harder to map and develop.

Ultimately the end goal is to attract more people to Northeast Oregon, so “the community needs to be interested in agritourism too, and have it recognized as part of the economy” Janet said. If the community supports and engages in agritourism opportunities, they could be developed to include more options like farm stays and bed-and-breakfasts, which will be able to attract more people that stay longer. Both Union and Baker County have tourism websites, which could provide information and links for the farm loops, pumpkin patches, and farm stays.

Some of the other education opportunities include shopping, cooking, nutrition, and budgeting classes that are often targeted for particular audiences, such as families in the Head Start Program, SNAP recipients, and those in self-sufficiency programs. There is also a Chef’s Table at the Baker City Farmers’ Market, and OSU Extension Service offers a Food Hero tasting at the La Grande Farmers’ Market. The Food Hero campaign promotes consumption of a variety of fruits and vegetables, and Chef’s Table allows shoppers to taste a recipe made with ingredients that are currently available at the market.



From the Consumer Food Access Survey, respondents showed strong interest in classes on growing fruits and vegetables, food preservation, cooking healthy food, nutrition, and shopping on a budget. Many producers, public health workers, and community members have expressed their opinion that many consumers do not know the realities of agricultural production or how to cook with fresh and healthy foods. It would seem that there is common interest and need for education on these topics, but when classes are offered, sometimes “attendance is dismal,” according one public health worker. This sentiment was echoed from a few other organizations that offer the classes. Evaluating community interest or need for classes might be a good next step, as well as considering strategies that boost attendance like offering childcare or a meal as part of the program.

Alternate formats, such as online classes or applications, should be investigated. OSU Extension Service has been collaborating with University of Idaho Extension Service to offer the six week online Preserve-at-Home food preservation training that would include one hands-on laboratory day.

**Check out the
Preserve-at-home
class at:**
[extension.oregonstat
e.edu/deschutes/
preserve-at-home](https://extension.oregonstate.edu/deschutes/preserve-at-home)

SNAP Ed in Union & Baker Counties

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program- Education (SNAP Ed) is an evidence-based program that helps people make healthy food choices and lead active life styles.⁵³ OSU Extension Service develops and implements SNAP Ed educational resources and activities in communities across Oregon. SNAP Ed is available to schools where 50% or more of the students are eligible for free or reduced meals, or other sites that serve SNAP eligible audiences.



Food Hero tasting. Photo by Miriam Farnam.

In Union and Baker Counties SNAP Ed Educators have worked with students from Head Start age to high school age, teaching a variety of classes based on USDA My Plate, and using both garden-based and kitchen-based curriculum. They also work with adult groups focusing on building skills for planning healthy meals and shopping on a budget, as well as practicing safe and simple cooking habits. Food Hero recipes are often used for tasting new foods and different combinations of foods. Educators provide reinforcements for healthy eating including items such as recipes, Food Hero calendars and monthly magazines, cookbooks, cutting boards, or grocery list pads.

The SNAP Ed program sites have varied over the years depending on funding streams, availability of other nutrition-related programs, and guidance from funders at Department of Human Services (DHS) and the USDA Food & Nutrition Service. Educators have worked with seven schools in Union County and four schools in Baker County. In addition they work with summer programs for youth, food banks, farmers' markets, parent groups, and programs that encourage self-sufficiency to teach youth and adults skills for making healthier food and activity choices. The educators are also involved in community groups that can help shape policy and provide funding for projects or activities that encourage healthier lifestyles. Visit foodhero.org for some great recipes in both English and Spanish.

Union County Crops and Conservation Tour.



Other factors affecting food access and community health

There are many factors that affect an individuals' ability to access food, and those factors are the same as those that affect community health. Housing, transportation, employment, and health services came up multiple times in interviews, surveys and group discussions. Each factor and some related issues are outlined below. Agencies that provide housing and food assistance, and transportation, homeless, and health services can be found in the Quad-County Resource Guide. The guide is produced through CCNO for Union, Baker, Grant, and Wallowa Counties, and can be found at Community Connection offices, other public health agencies, and online at [CCNO Resources](#).

Housing

Rising housing costs and a shortage of affordable housing has been an important issue for residents of the two counties. From the Consumer Food Access Survey, of 40 respondents, 20 rent and 14 own their housing, while 5 selected "other." Two of those respondents indicated they were homeless. In response to the question "Do you believe housing is affordable in your community?" 25 selected "no," and almost half of respondents indicated they have had to forego buying food in order to pay other expenses such as rent, mortgage, or utilities in the last 12 months. Getting approved and into subsidized housing takes quite a bit of time, and some families end up moving away and abandoning the process as they look for jobs, or have to live in sub-standard housing instead. This means holes in walls, broken windows, inconsistent heat and electricity, and inadequate areas to prepare meals. Some people have been living in motels in La Grande and Baker City, which only have tiny sinks, fridges, and microwaves, limiting the people's ability to prepare healthy meals. There

are also no homeless shelters or soup kitchens in Union and Baker Counties except for victims of domestic abuse at Shelter from the Storm in La Grande and MayDay Inc. in Baker City. Hotel vouchers can be obtained from the sheriff or a few churches, but those only last one or two nights. The Housing Issues Collaborative, which consists of over a dozen organizations and agencies in Union County, formed as a response to some of these issues. Through a strategic planning process, they are working on identifying assets and gaps in access to safe, affordable housing, and identifying creative solutions.

Transportation

La Grande and Baker City each have a fixed trolley route as well as ADA paratransit on request through Northeast Oregon Public Transit. The La Grande trolley covers the areas where most of the businesses and public services are located.⁵⁵ There are stops near EOU, DHS, Safeway, City Hall, Riveria Activity Center, Center for Human Development, and Wal-Mart, but the trolley does not go any further in Island City. The trolley runs hourly Monday through Saturday, and the fare is \$1, or free to EOU students. The Baker City trolley also covers many businesses and public services, but also has stops in primarily residential areas.⁵⁶ There are stops near Albertsons, Safeway, on Main Street in South Baker, at City Hall, Salvation Army, DHS, Baker Public Health, and St. Alphonsus Medical Center. The trolley runs hourly Monday through Friday, but not on weekends. The fare is \$1, and family day- and month-passes are offered for \$5 and \$50.

The Baker-La Grande Connector links Baker City, Haines, North Powder and La Grande Monday through Friday. There are also two shuttles that connect Baker City with Richland and Halfway (Wednesdays), and New Bridge (Thursdays).⁵⁶ There are also a few other regional public transit

options that run to Joseph, Pendleton, and John Day, and three cab companies.

A few difficulties families have had with transportation include not having a car or not having a reliable car, difficulties accessing Baker City's public transit, and the missing or incomplete sidewalks in La Grande and Baker City. This has led to missed medical and other appointments, including those needed to qualify for WIC vouchers. The Baker City Trolley route and schedule has recently been revised to include more residential areas, so hopefully this will help people trying to access Baker County Health Department. The winter of 2016-17 was particularly brutal, with extremely cold temperatures and massive snow drifts that accumulated from strong winds. City and county crews did their best with what equipment they had, but many roads were snowed or iced over for days or weeks. This left many residents isolated, which creates risks in case of medical emergencies, as well as impacting regular medical or social service visits.



Employment and recession recovery

Rural areas in Oregon lag behind metro areas in employment, and are still on average 3% below pre-recession employment peaks; Union and Baker Counties are 2.5% and 3.6% below, respectively.⁴ Also, with more resource

dependent communities, unemployment rates peak higher in the winter months than in metro areas.^{2,4} In 2016 and 2017, unemployment varied between 5.5% and 6.9% in the two counties, depending on the time of year.⁵⁷

Many jobs that have come back to rural Oregon after the Great Recession are low- and mid-wage jobs, while higher-wage jobs have been slower to return, if at all.⁴ The number of low- and mid-wage jobs added from 2009 to 2016 has already surpassed the number lost during the Recession, but the number of higher-wage jobs has not recovered. Industries with lower- and mid-wage jobs like food and retail services, have made full recoveries.⁴ Median household income is at \$43,822 in Union County and \$41,098 in Baker County, while for the state it is \$51,243.²

Most job openings in Northeast Oregon will be due to replacement rather than growth, but some high wage jobs are in demand, particularly health care, education, production and transportation.⁴ At the state level, food processing is the third largest manufacturing sector employer, and food manufacturing employment (food processors, packers, transportation, and storage) grew 7.8% from 2007 to 2012, even while Oregon's total employment declined 5.3%.⁵⁸ Food manufacturing is a very resilient industry that continues to grow. With investment in food processing, distribution, and marketing, Northeast Oregon could offer more employment opportunities.

Health services

Many health related services exist in Union and Baker Counties, including the Public Health Departments (Center for Human Development in La Grande), Department of Human Services, GOBHI (Greater Oregon Behavioral Health Inc.), Grande Ronde Recovery, Compassion Center, New Directions Northwest Inc., as well as the hospitals and doctors' offices.

Mental health and related addiction or depression issues have been brought up as one of the challenges to community health in Union and Baker Counties. One public health worker described the situation as a bit of a catch-22: if you are in crisis mode, planning (for counseling, appointments, paying bills, etc.) would help relieve stress to get out of crisis, but if you are in crisis mode you can't plan very well; and to access mental health services, you need to be

able to plan for it (filling out insurance forms, or arranging for transport or childcare). The worker added that services that help families as a whole with depression or addiction issues with a continuing health component are needed. There are a growing number of Community Health Workers in both counties, often hired by hospitals, clinics, and health departments, to help provide this type of service.



Chapter 6: Opportunities for the Future

Organizations

While there are several programs related to agriculture, food, and health (Farm-to-School, Farmers' markets, FFA, 4-H, etc.), they have specified goals or activities that limit their scope of work. There are a few organizations in Union and Baker Counties that have some flexibility to take on new community food system work as it relates to their missions and programs, specifically Oregon Rural Action (ORA), Oregon State University Extension Service (OSUES), and Northeast Oregon Economic Development District (NEOEDD).

- ORA is nonprofit membership-based community organization based out of La Grande, with chapters in Union County and Malheur County. Its mission is to promote social justice, agricultural and economic sustainability, and stewardship of Northeast Oregon's land, air, and water. The organization has worked extensively on food systems projects in the past.⁵⁹



- NEOEDD works in Baker, Union, and Wallowa counties to enhance community and economic development services in the region by providing resources and facilitating decision making.⁶²



- OSUES has an office in both Union and Baker Counties, and its mission is to engage the people of Oregon with research-based knowledge and education that strengthen communities and economies, sustain natural resources, and promote healthy families and individuals.⁶⁰ In particular, the Family and Community Health program promotes healthy individuals, families, and communities through education, action, and forming community partnerships.⁶¹



Oregon State University
Extension Service

These three organizations along with Oregon Health Sciences University's School of Nursing and Community Action Program of East and Central Oregon were part of the Community Food Systems Collaborative started in 2012. The Collaborative was funded through a Meyer Memorial Trust grant for three years. The project had eight goals for food systems in Northeast Oregon: (1) strengthen access to affordable, healthy food for all community members, (2) develop a strong regional food system by building collaborations and regional dialogue on community food systems, (3) organize Food Policy Councils to engage people in their food system, (4) promote sustainable and profitable practices by family farmers and ranchers, (5) support food and agricultural enterprises that recirculate financial capital within communities and create green jobs, (6) encourage local production of food for local consumption, (7) increase local fruit and vegetable consumption by school children through Farm-to-School, and (8) support policies that remove barriers to local, sustainable food production, processing, and consumption. Other

partners involved were Wallowa Slow Food and Union County Fit Kids Coalition.

Some of the projects from the Community Food Systems Collaborative included establishing community gardens, hosting gardening classes, forming or strengthening relationships with local, regional, and state partners, supporting development of the Wallowa County Food System Council and Wallowa County farmers' markets, hosting classes for business planning and food processing laws, upgrading a local custom-exempt meat processor to USDA standards, producing local food and farm directories, supporting Farm-to-School programs in Cove and North Powder, supporting purchases of local foods by schools with farm-to-school funds, and facilitating education on the 1,000 Bird Poultry Exemption and Farm Direct laws.

While ORA, OSUES, and NEOEDD definitely have knowledge and experience with food systems work, they also have constraints on funding and time. However, these organizations are by no means the only ones that work on agriculture, food, and health issues in Union and Baker Counties. One very important lesson to take away from this assessment is the wide variety and number of organizations that have been or are involved in activities that strengthen the community food system in Union and Baker Counties. Other organizations include Community Connection of Northeast Oregon, local food pantries, La Grande and Baker City Farmers' Market Boards, local granges,

community garden groups, local business owners, church groups, Union and Baker Future Farmers of America, Cove Ascension School, Head Start staff, EOU student and faculty groups, and various health services. Local Community Advisory Councils (LCAC) formed in each county in Oregon to assist the Coordinated Care Organizations in meeting health care needs; the Union and Baker County LCACs are associated with the Eastern Oregon Coordinated Care Organization (EOCCO). The LCACs consist of community leaders in health, government, and community members, and their purpose is to advocate for preventative services, improve community health, and health care access.⁶³ The LCACs provide avenues to connect with local health services, so where community food system work overlaps with community health needs they can be important partners in implementing new projects or programs.

At the state level, organizations and agencies that work in agriculture, food, and health formed the Oregon Community Food Systems Network (OCFSN). The network's mission is to provide information sharing, networking, research, education, coordination, evaluation, and communications capacity to its members in order to strengthen local and regional food systems.⁶⁴ The OCFSN currently has six working groups focused on (1) land access, (2) wholesale market development, (3) SNAP-match incentives like Double Up Food Bucks, (4) Veggie Rx programs, (5) diversity, equity, and inclusion, and (6) beginner farmer and rancher.

Veggie Rx programs can take a variety of forms, but they are designed to address food insecurity or diet-related health issues through increasing participants' consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables. Hospitals, clinics, social services or public health organizations can screen for food insecurity or health issues in target audiences and prescribe vouchers to purchase produce or CSA shares. The vouchers can be used at participating farmers' markets and grocery stores. Visit www.gorgegrown.com/veggierx and ophi.org/veggie-rx for more information.

Community food system work as a whole does not have to be directed by one or a few organizations; in recent years a lot of food system activities have been carried out by individuals, civic groups, organizations, or businesses that work on one particular or a related set of issues. Union and Baker County residents have been especially good at volunteering in their communities and forming civic groups to address housing shortages, sourcing local foods at schools, childhood food insecurity, and work on school boards, farmers' market boards, community events, seed saving, and community meals. Working with

organizations on broader food system goals has its benefits though, as systemic challenges that impact local economies, food access, and individual and community health can be addressed. Interagency collaboration also makes projects more appealing to potential funders, as project impact is likely to be broader with more community partners providing support. For Union and Baker Counties, developing organizational capacity and inter-organizational relationships should be a priority, as any future community food system work will need to be carried out by the existing organizations.



La Grande Open Streets.

Community interest and engagement

In late April 2017 there were two FEAST workshops, one in Baker City and one in La Grande, to discuss Union and Baker Counties' food system with community members. FEAST stands for Food, Education, Agriculture, Solutions, Together, and is a program developed and facilitated by the Oregon Food Bank. The intent of FEASTs are to engage community members in a discussion about their food systems issues, assets, and to begin work towards a healthier, more equitable, and resilient local food system.⁶⁵ FEAST workshops have been held in almost every county in Oregon, and results from the process have included new partnerships between food system actors, formation of food system coalitions, and new educational opportunities.



Baker County FEAST workshop in Baker City.



Union County FEAST workshop in La Grande.

For the workshops in Baker City and La Grande, about 30 people attended each event from various backgrounds such as public health, education, OSUES, producers, food pantry staff, farmers' market board, as well as interested community members. The events were held on collaboration with Oregon Food Bank, OSUES, and Oregon Rural Action. Common themes that arose at both FEASTs were the need for improved communication, networking, and resource sharing; and adult and youth education around growing, cooking, and preserving food. Other interests in Baker County included supporting a gleaning program, sourcing community cooking equipment, and SNAP match at the farmers' market. In Union County, a community space for cooking and education, a mobile farmers' market, and increasing SNAP participation rate were discussed.

As of the summer of 2017, there has been work on or interest in:

- Updating the Eastern Oregon Local Farm and Food Guide. ORA will be working to secure funding to update the guide and provide an online directory in 2018. The guide was originally published in 2012 and the producer contact information and farm loops need to be updated to reflect current producers and participants.
- A Cooking Matters program. The partnership between OSUES and ORA was rekindled during the FEAST planning process, and they will now be working together on a Cooking Matters program. Funds were secured in June of 2017.
- Supporting the Baker City Community Garden. ORA will support the Baker City Community Garden through advisement on planning and grants processes, and a few community members in Baker County now want to restart a chapter of ORA. This will increase the organizational capacity of Baker County to work on food systems and social justice issues.
- Improving the Baker City Community Garden. The garden group that runs the community garden would like to start making improvements to their garden, including adding a fence and a new shed. One of the barriers for some people to access the garden has been the costs associated with starting and caring for their plots: the water bill for a plot is a one-time payment of \$25 each year, but additional costs of soil, amendments, tools, seeds, and plant starts add up. The group is pursuing funding so they can provide these materials to low-income residents. The group will also work with DHS and Head Start to attract more community members to the garden.
- Updating the CCNO website's list of food pantries and food resources in Northeast Oregon.
- Developing a gleaning and preservation program. One Transition at a Time, a non-profit in Baker City, provides safe and sober transitional housing and life skills classes on gardening and preserving. A few community members want to partner with and expand the gleaning classes into a community program, and add in more options for preservation methods. The program would increase access to more nutritious foods throughout the year, but especially in the winter when many cannot afford fresh fruits and vegetables at the grocery store.
- Implementing a Veggie Rx program. In Union County there has been interest from those in public health about starting a Veggie Rx program. A meeting at the next Union County LCAC meeting has been set up for July of 2017 to discuss interest in pursuing the program.
- Developing a community kitchen. ORA members have expressed interest in Union County for developing a community space for meal preparation and education. They will be researching other community kitchens to determine what is needed and how it would operate. A community kitchen can be used for many food activities, including cooking community meals and classes on cooking, nutrition, and preservation. A community kitchen could also provide community members access to cooking equipment and freezer storage space for those with inadequate spaces to prepare meals in their homes. If the kitchen became certified as a commercial facility, it could be used by small business entrepreneurs to make value-added goods, and by caterers to serve local clients.

Recommendations

A healthy community food system needs a strong local economy, sustainable agricultural practices, and equitable access to sufficient and healthy foods for all community members. The following recommendations suggest activities that support and develop the local economy through support for producers and food businesses. These activities would also improve food access for community members and improve individual and community health. The recommendations are derived from the issues and assets in the food system identified by community members from interviews, surveys, group discussions, community events and meetings, and the FEAST workshops.

Develop community food system leadership in Union and Baker Counties.

- Community members and organizations already involved should continue working on or exploring their projects highlighted above. This will help Union and Baker Counties develop community food system leadership and strengthen existing relationships.
- Develop food system organizing ability of existing organizations and community groups. ORA, OSUES, and NEOEDD are pursuing projects that increase collaboration with other organizations where interests and goals overlap, and should continue to do so.
- Increase capacity to advocate for policy changes through training and recruitment to community organizations.
- Engage community members in food system activities to increase food system awareness and leadership capability.
- Increase organizational relationships between Union and Baker Counties. Each county has unique resources and programs, and this presents an opportunity for the various organizations and community groups to share information, collaborate, and learn from each other. Programs that exist in one county could be developed and supported in the other.
- Pursue funding for another AmeriCorps RARE volunteer or a staff member at CCNO or ORA to support the opportunities highlighted in this assessment.
- Pursue funding for a Small Farms Agent from OSUES that can support small farm businesses and develop marketing strategies.

Develop resources that facilitate information sharing to increase awareness of available resources.

- Update the Eastern Oregon Local Farm and Food Guide producer/business list: include an online, searchable directory with current phone numbers, email addresses that the producers regularly check, or alternate contact methods (e.g. through Facebook messenger), what they produce, likely quantities, where or how they sell their goods, and if they accept SNAP or Oregon Farm Direct Nutrition Program. Include updated farm loops in the guide if available, with more information about the producers on the loops.
- Investigate how to best improve knowledge of local resources and accessibility of that information. At both FEASTs, participants discussed a lack of knowledge about what resources are available in their communities. Since so much information flows through word of mouth, this is not surprising. However, the information needed depends on who is seeking it. For consumers, where local foods are sold or community meal locations may be of interest; for producers, advertising space or connections to other producers; and for restaurant owners, where they can find particular produce in a specific quantity. Updated, accurate, and accessible lists of producers, community meal sites, CCNO and non-CCNO contracted food pantries, and health services are most needed. Determine feasibility of developing websites that centralize information or make referrals to existing business and organization websites.

Develop more market opportunities for local producers.

- Continue developing farm loops, and encourage community members to explore these farm loops by advertising the loops at farmers' markets, local festivals, and through visitor centers and county government websites. Union and Baker County could update their counties' tourism websites to include more agritourism opportunities and places to find local produce.
- Similar to wine production of the Willamette Valley, develop a Northeast or Eastern Oregon regional marketing or branding strategy for local malt barley, craft malts, and beer, and assess a potential strategy for local meats.
- Investigate opportunities for institutional sourcing of local foods: determine requirements for institutional sourcing of local foods at EOU, schools, and hospitals. Generate community support for institutional sourcing by engaging faculty and student groups at EOU, school district administrators, parents of school children, hospital administrators, and producers.
- Encourage school districts to apply for Farm-to-School grants to buy locally produced foods.

Increase security of the future of farms and farmlands.

- Support new and existing producers through improving access to farmland and assisting navigation to loans and business plan development.
- Encourage organization and producer participation in OCFSN land access and beginning farmer and rancher working groups.
- Continue holding succession planning workshops periodically to help transition farms between generations, prevent land fragmentation, and conserve natural resources.



Photo by Amy Young.

Increase access to local foods at local markets by building wholesale relationships between producers and retailers.

- Identify the producers, and their potential products, who are able to sell to grocery stores, restaurants or other venues. Identify the grocery stores and restaurants that are willing to buy from local producers, and what products they are interested in.
- Develop collaborations among producers to meet the pricing and quantity needs of grocery stores and restaurants, and to collaborate on distribution and marketing to these retailers. Many producers have expressed interest in expanding and diversifying their operations as well as accessing wholesale markets, while grocery store and restaurant managers have expressed their willingness to source local, but face some barriers in obtaining what they need. Increased collaboration among producers and communication with retail establishments is needed to overcome these barriers.
- Consider the need of an intermediary who can facilitate purchasing and transportation by working with store managers and producers to find out what is needed from each party.
- Assist food businesses in advertising for the local foods they carry.

Support the local food economy by increasing consumer support for local agriculture and local foods consumption.

- Educate consumers about where local foods can be found, and the economic impact of supporting local producers, processors, and independent restaurants and grocery stores.
- Determine if there is interest from producers in holding Field-to-Fork meals for their communities to increase their visibility and to educate on food production.
- Increase accessibility of local foods by creating a guide for where local foods can be found, such as farmers' markets, local groceries, restaurants, and farm stands. This could be included as part of the Eastern Oregon Farm and Food Guide.
- Support continued education and advertising about use of SNAP benefits at farmers' markets, and make sure DHS staff can explain the process. Pursue Double Up Food Bucks at the Baker City Farmers' Market, and continue to do so at the La Grande market by finding funding through state programs or local funding to sustain the program.
- Increase consumer use of farmers' market by advertising availability of goods in advance, so those who budget and plan meals can work shopping at the markets into their shopping routine.³⁰ A comparison of local foods' prices to non-local foods could be included. For the La Grande Farmers' Market, encourage consumers to sign up for the text and email list on the markets' website.
- Increase visibility of the Baker City Farmers' Market. While the Farmers' Market Board has increased signage, the city government and Board could collaborate to help improve advertising. Creating a Farmers' Market trail that guides people from downtown to the market could be a simple first step. A new, more central, location for the market could also be investigated.



Farm-to-Table Summer Brunch at La Grande Farmers' Market.

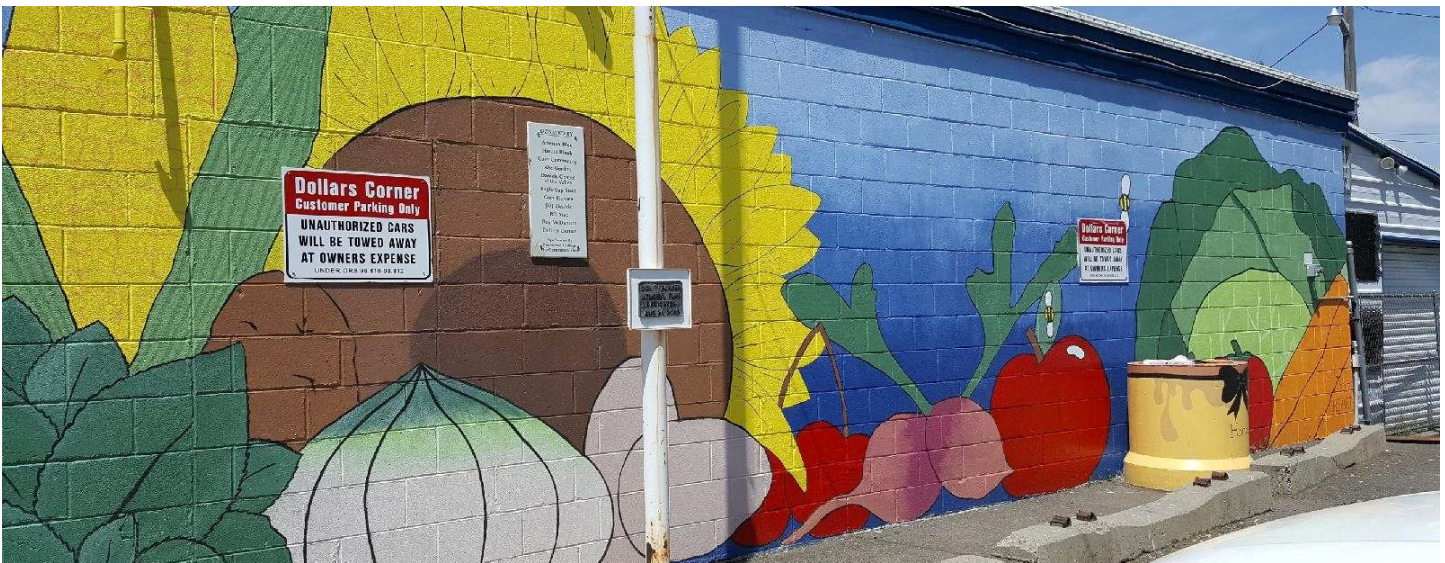
Increase capacity of the regional food bank and food pantries.

- Increase storage space of CCNO in La Grande so that more shelf-stable and frozen foods can be stored for longer to relieve pressure on space-limited pantries.
- Develop more relationships between food pantries and producers to encourage and facilitate donations, including a method to donate produce after farmers' market.
- Develop functional capacity of pantries by assisting with recruitment of new volunteers, locating and applying for grants, and modernizing their communication. Increased capacity may be especially important as food pantries may be relied upon more for food needs, since as of the summer of 2017 the future of funding for federal assistance programs is uncertain.

Improve access to food, healthy food, and education on health and nutrition.

- Increase accessibility of existing food resources by compiling and disseminating a list of the food pantries, churches, and organizations that offer supplemental food programs, community meals, and other meal programs.
- Determine if a Friday backpack program is needed for the whole of Baker County. The Friday Backpack program that operates out of the First Presbyterian Church is for the Baker School District only. Determine if there is a need for more summer meal programs outside of La Grande and Baker City.
- Pursue educational opportunities that can reduce stigma and increase SNAP and WIC participation rates. Pursue programs that assist low income community members in the application process for supplemental food programs, and requirements for continued enrollment.
- Advocate for policies at the state and federal levels that maintain or improve food assistance programs.
- Determine gleaning opportunities available by working with producers, home owners with fruit trees, and institutions with meal services; develop a communication system so community members can be informed of these opportunities.
- Incentivize the use of the Baker City Community Garden by community members through offering supplies for low-income families, and holding free gardening classes.
- Develop and support educational opportunities for adults and youth like Cooking Matters and SNAP Ed in both counties that incorporate nutrition and health components. Investigate how to increase participation in these programs and possible alternative platforms like online classes.
- Determine if there is interest and need for a community kitchen in La Grande, and in what capacity the kitchen would operate. Considerations include space, equipment, management, certifications, and community and government investment.
- Support existing school gardens and pursue funding to create new school gardens; develop school garden hubs for information sharing between existing school garden programs and schools interested in starting one.

Mural on Dollars Corner Store in Cove. Photo by David Melville.



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Appendix A: A History of Community Food System Efforts

- 1976** First Annual Union County Crop & Conservation Tour
- 2001** Oregon Rural Action established and publishes “The Furrow” newsletter
- 2003-2017** Summer Ag Institute Session #2: Oregon Wheat Production, Marketing, and End-Use Training for Oregon Teachers
- 2006** Union County Fit Kids Community Assessment of factors affecting children's diets and physical activity in school and community environments, coalition formed
- 2008** Oregon Farmers’ Market Promotion Project-helps bolster farmers’ markets in the region
- 2009** OSU Extension SNAP Ed nutrition education program restarts—this program for SNAP eligible audiences’ works with schools and community groups to present garden-based nutrition education through curriculum and demonstrations
- 2010** EOU-ORA collaboration on La Grande Community Garden—improvements over the years include more water spigots, a deer fence and more plots
- 2010** Fresh Alliance program begins providing fresh produce to food banks- fresh fruit and vegetables from stores like Safeway and Walmart are distributed to food banks monthly
- 2010** Farm to School Summit in North Powder
- 2010-2011** Garden fresh cooking classes at La Grande Community Garden
- 2010-2013** Food Hero recipe tastings at Neighbor to Neighbor Food Bank- focus on using foods that aren’t typically well-received at food pantries such as rice or dried beans
- 2011** Farm to School Program & Food Corps Volunteers starts in North Powder
- 2011** ORA receives 3-year Meyer Memorial Trust grant for Community Food Systems work
- 2012** 4-H SNACZ project is funded through USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture grant (4+ years) establishing afterschool clubs focusing on healthy snacking zones in five communities in Union County
- 2013** “Exploring the Small Farm Business Dream” workshops La Grande & Ontario and Small Farms Tour in Union County
- 2013** Eastern Oregon Local Farm and Food Guide published
- 2014** Growing Farms: Successful Small Farms Management Course in Eastern Oregon
- 2014** WealthWorks Northwest exploration grant to OSU Extension Service for Baker County craft beer value chain idea (working with malt barley processing)
- 2015**

2013-2014 Chef at the Market-local and healthy cooking demos- in collaboration with La Grande Farmers' Market, ORA and REMax realty

2014 Moore Family Center Healthy Communities Outreach Project in Union, Baker & Wallowa Counties

2015 & 2016 Women in Ag Conference, five-state conference with La Grande satellite site

2015-2017 Building the Oregon Malt Barley Brand Project

2016 First Double-Up Food Bucks grant to La Grande Farmers' Market

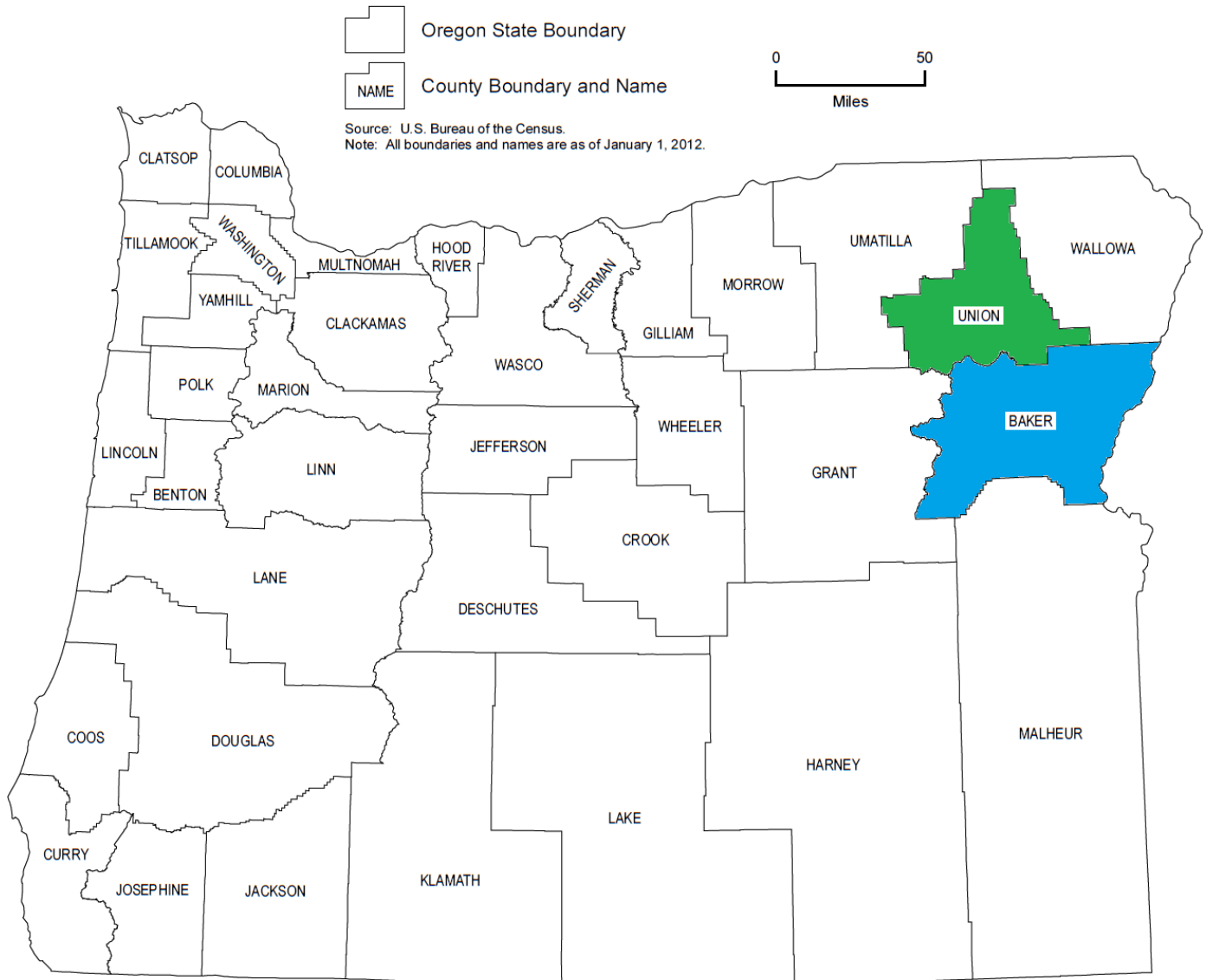
2016 Eastern Oregon Community Food System Gathering in La Grande (5 counties)

2016-2017 AmeriCorps RARE Member conducts Community Food Assessment in Union & Baker Counties

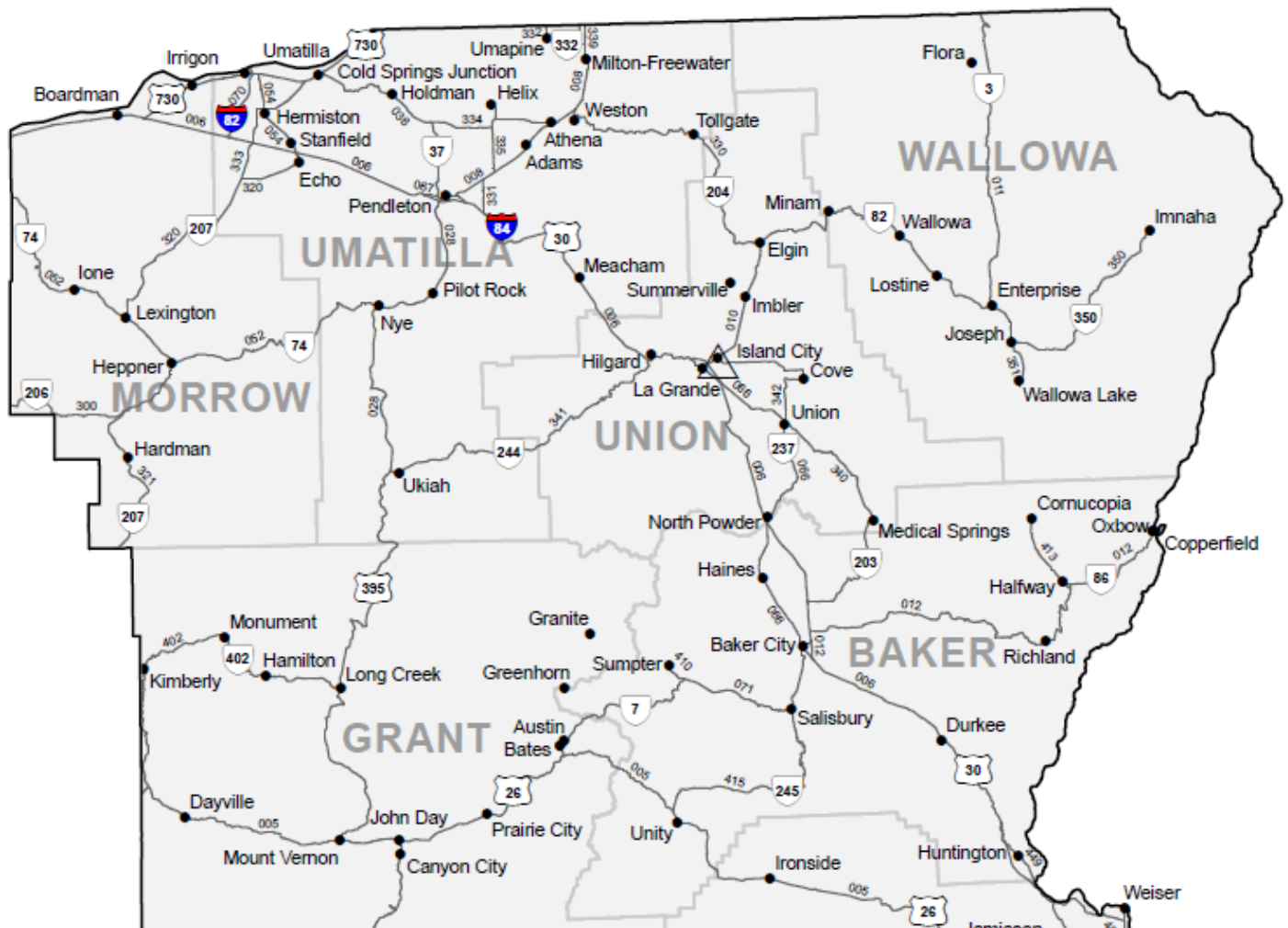
2017 FEASTs in Union and Baker Counties

Appendix B: Resources

Below are additional materials including maps, food pantries and summer meal programs, the Cove-Union farm loop, FSMA flow chart, and links to websites for information, organizations, and programs by category.



Oregon County Map with Union and Baker Counties highlighted.⁶⁶



Oregon Road Map, ODOT Region 5 focused on Northeast Oregon.⁶⁷

Food Pantries	Name	Contact	Phone No.	Site Address	City	Zip	Food Box Distribution Day	Time	Extra Distribution
Baker County	Halfway Lions Club Food Bank	Ivan Crow	541-742-6192	Corner of Lion & Pine Streets	Halfway	97834	3rd Monday of each month	12 pm - 2 pm	
	Huntington Christian Center	Alan & Eileen Driver alan.eileen.drivers@gmail.com	541-709-0132 541-709-1698	447 Lincoln St	Huntington	97907	3rd Saturday of each month	9 am - 11 am	
	Bread of Life of Baker County	Gary Ball	541-519-2258	3453 H St	Baker City	97814	2nd and last Tuesday of each month	9 am - 12 pm	
	Salvation Army	Holli Diamond	541-523-5853	2505 Broadway St www.tsacascade.org	Baker City	97814	Monday, Wednesday, and Friday of each week	1:30 pm - 4 pm	
	May Day Shelter	Millie Joseph millie.maydayinc@gmail.com	541-523-9472	1834 Main St www.maydayinc.net	Baker City	97814	24/7		Crisis Line 541-523-4134

Food Pantries	Name	Contact	Phone No.	Site Address	City	Zip	Food Box Distribution Day	Time	Extra Distribution
Union County	Elgin Food Bank	Sharon Linfield	541-805-5861	1 N 8th St	Elgin	97827	4th Saturday of each month	9:30 am - 12 pm	Wednesday of every week 2 pm - 3 pm: bread and fresh produce
	Cove Food Pantry	Diane Warnock	541-910-1810	1708 Jasper St	Cove	97824	Tuesday of each week	10 am - 11 am	4th Saturday of every month 9 am - 11 am
	Union Food Pantry	Larry & Colleen Miller Joe Davis	541-571-2479 541-571-2478 541-805-4765	1531 S Main St	Union	97883	3rd Friday of each month	10 am - 11:30 am	
	North Powder Food Bank	Joyce Lawyer	541-898-2146 541-910-4043	390 E St	North Powder	97867	3rd Wednesday of each month	3 pm - 6 pm	Thursday of every week 11 am - 1 pm: bread and fresh produce
	Salvation Army	Holli Diamond	541-963-4829	1114 Y Ave www.tsacascade.org	La Grande	97850	Tuesday - Thursday of each week	9 am - 12 pm	Thursday of every week: bread and fresh produce
	Neighbors Together	Gary Biebandorf Maralee Lake	541-963-9653 541-963-4834	907 Palmer Ave	La Grande	97850	Last Saturday of each month	8 am - 10 am	Tuesday of each week 10 am - 12 pm: bread and fresh produce
	Shelter From The Storm	Alisha Potts apselter@eoni.com	541-963-7226	10901 Island Ave www.unioncounty.sfs.org	La Grande	97850	Monday - Thursday 8 am - 4 pm Friday 9 am - 2:30 pm		Crisis Line 541-963-9261
	Friday Back Pack Program	Heather Null	541-963-4593	www.lfbp.org	La Grande	97850		School year	

Weekly Summer Meal Programs	Location	Phone No.	Site Address	City	Zip	Meal	Days	Time
Baker County	Haines Library	541-524-2273	818 Cole St	Haines	97833	Lunch	Tuesday & Thursday	11:30 am - 12 pm
	Geiser Pollman Park	541-524-2260	Madison St	Baker City	97814	Lunch	Monday - Friday	11:50 am - 12:30 pm
	North Baker Elementary	541-524-2260	2725 7th St	Baker City	97814	Breakfast Lunch	Tuesday - Thursday Monday - Friday	7:30 am - 8:15 am 11:15 am - 12 pm
	Sam-o-Swim Center	541-523-8328	580 Baker St	Baker City	97814	Snack	Monday - Friday	1 pm - 3 pm
Union County	Riveria Activity Center	541-963-3186	2609 2nd St	La Grande	97850	Lunch Snack	Monday - Friday Monday - Friday	11:30 am - 12:30 pm 3 pm - 3:30 pm

Cove-Union Farm Loop



Driving directions & highlights

From the first bright-green spring grass on the valley foothills until brilliant fall leaves abound, the Cove-Union Farm Loop is a perfect way to enjoy some of the abundant farms and ranches that are the heart and soul of the Grande Ronde Valley. Dozens of farmers, ranchers, and gardeners and both communities have a rich history connected to agriculture. This self-guided tour includes portions of the Grande Tour Scenic Route and Grande Tour Scenic Byway.

Starting in Island City, Oregon, at the junction of State Highways 82/237, proceed on Highway 82, crossing the Grande Ronde River and railroad tracks. Continue on Highway 82 toward Milner and Elgin for about 5 miles and turn right onto Market Lane, at the mint field. Mint grown here is distilled to oil, which is used to flavor mouthwash, chewing gum, toothpaste, pharmaceuticals, and confectionery and aromatherapy products. Watch for roadside signs, identifying crops growing in the adjacent fields. Market Lane becomes Lower Cove Road. Follow Lower Cove Road to Cove, watching for farm stops and points of interest.

Cove

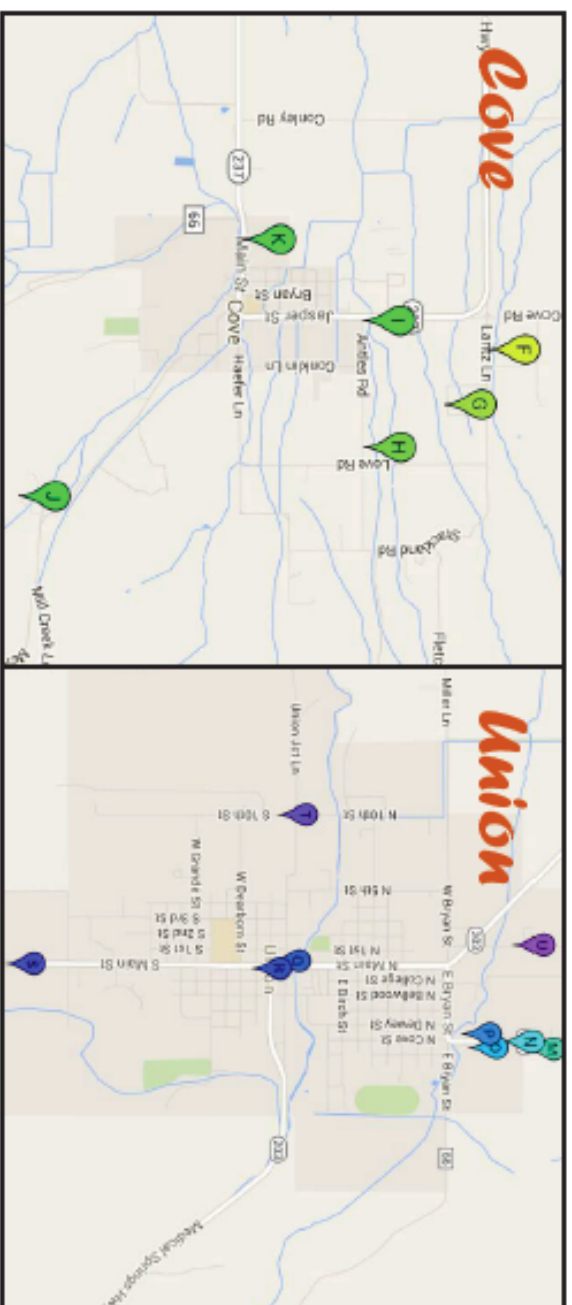
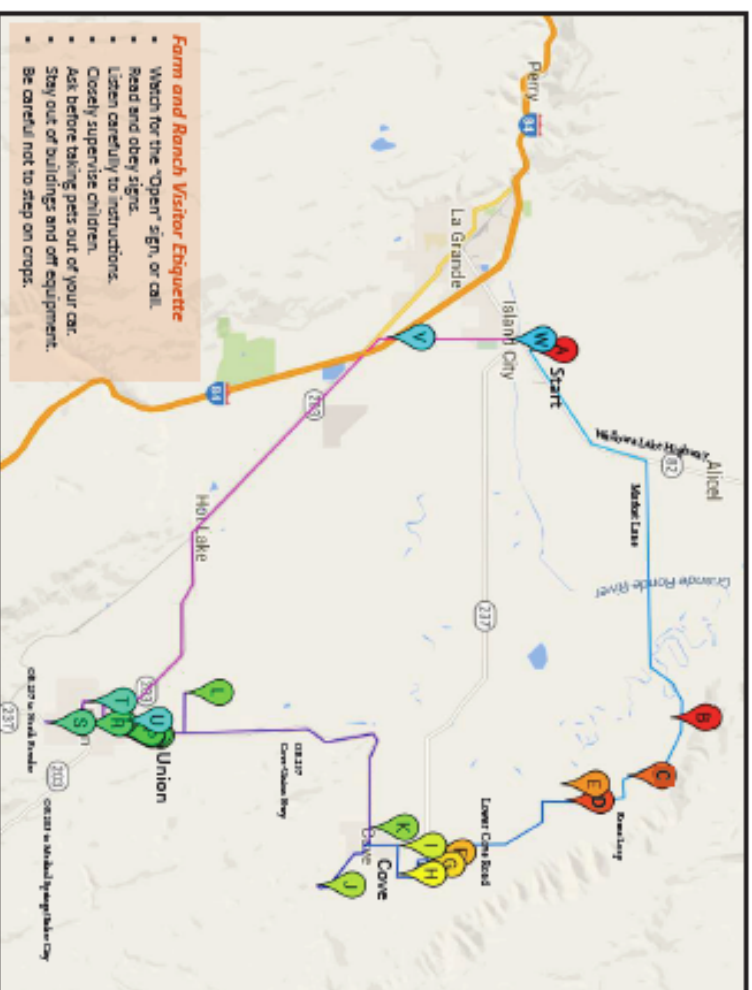
Cove history and activities: coveoregon.org
Cove has been a fruit production center for over 100 years. Today, approximately 500 acres of commercial orchards, planted mostly to sweet cherries and peaches, grace the hillsides above town. Cherries are in bloom in spring, ripening in early summer and ready to eat during July. The Cove Cherry Fair is held in August to celebrate the crop. Cove is also home to small-scale livestock production and processing: field crops, and produce growers make up the remaining farm operations. Follow the map and watch for farm loop signs for stops and points of interest. Continue on Hwy 237 to Union.

Union

Union history and activities: unionoregon.com
In the quaint Victorian era town of Union there are lots of opportunities to get out of your car, explore and have a meal or snack. Experience the town's charm, then head north toward La Grande on OR 203. Along the way, you'll pass Hot Lake, a restored historic landmark on your left. Continue on OR 203 under the freeway, then take McAllister Road across the railroad tracks, past the livestock auction yard and back to Island City. We hope you enjoy the Cove-Union Farm Loop!



- Kauffman's Market
- Pigtail Pork
- Mt. Harris Pastures Poultry
- The Sister Shio
- Pick'n Patch
- The Plantworks
- Folly Farm
- Rainbow Orchards
- Mella Meel's Farm
- Apple Spring Farm
- Martens Farm
- Grande Ronde Goat Dairy
- Wing's Upick Co.
- Bar MD Cattle Co.
- Dora's Garden
- Wired Wiggler Worm Wranch
- Homelown Hardware Store
- Union County Museum
- B.O.B. Grass-Fed Beef
- EO Ag Experiment Station
- Platz Family Produce
- Intermountain Livestock
- D & B Supply



Am I affected by new **FOOD SAFETY RULES** under the **FOOD SAFETY MODERNIZATION ACT?** *A Flowchart for Farmers and Food Businesses*

How to Use This Flowchart:

- 1) There are 2 sections: one for the Produce Rule and one for the Preventive Controls (Facility) Rule — these are the two main FSMA rules for businesses that grow and process food for people to eat. Start with PART 1 of each. If you find out at the end of Part 1 that you may be affected, proceed to Part 2 for details.
- 2) FARMERS: some farms may not be subject to either rule, some farms may be subject to just the Produce Rule, and some farms may be subject to BOTH the Produce Rule and the Preventive Controls Rule. You should read PART 1 of both to be sure.
- 3) This flowchart is intended to help you determine whether and to what extent your farm or food business MIGHT be impacted by the FSMA rules. **This is not legal advice.** Each operation is different, and your obligations under FSMA could change based on the specifics of your operation.

Timing Reminder: all farms have at least two years - until January 2018 - to come into compliance with the Produce Rule. Many smaller farms will have three or four years. And most smaller processors will have two to three years to come into compliance with the Preventive Controls (Facility) Rule (Sept 2017 or 2018).

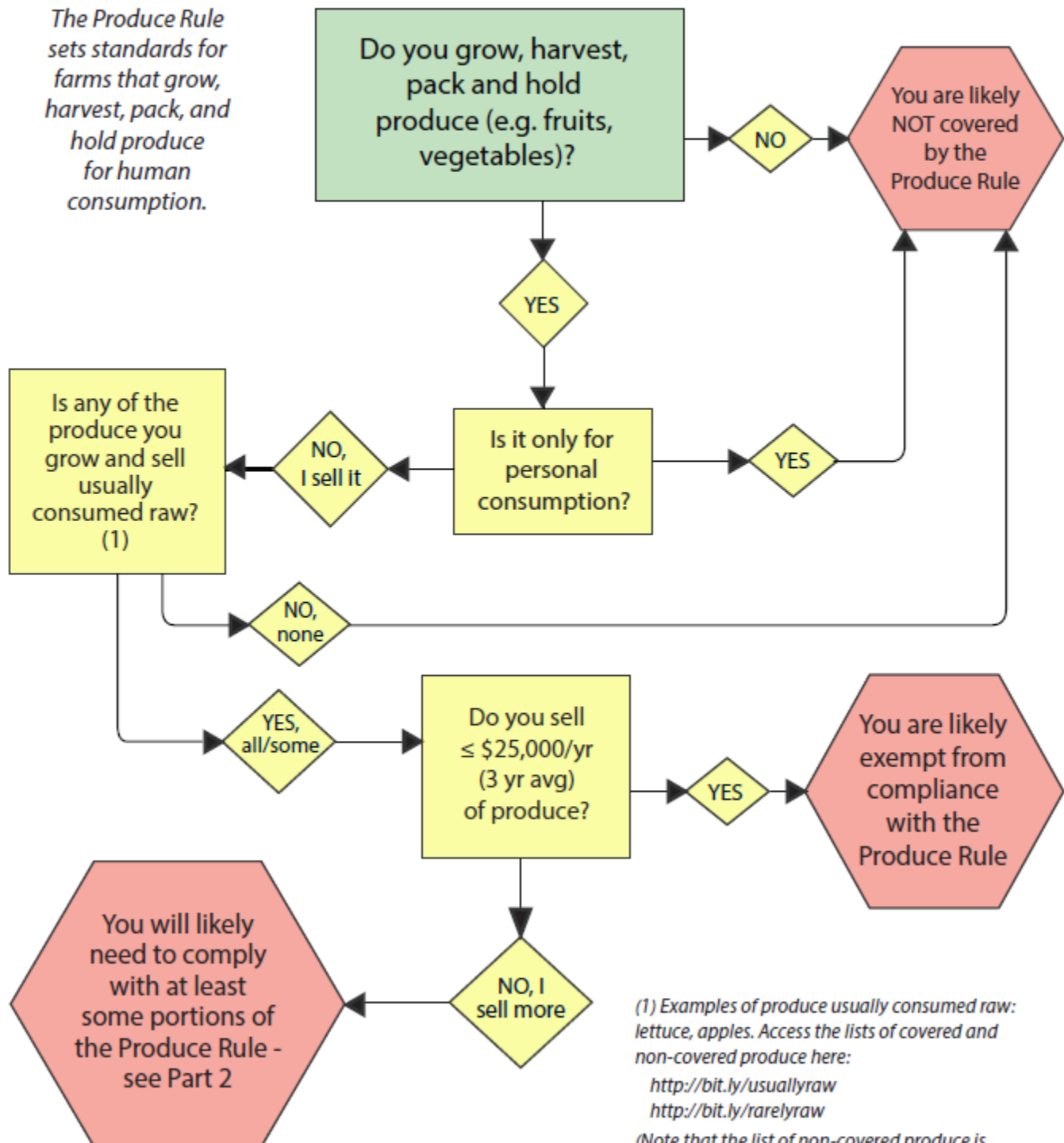
More FSMA Information:
<http://sustainableagriculture.net/fsma>



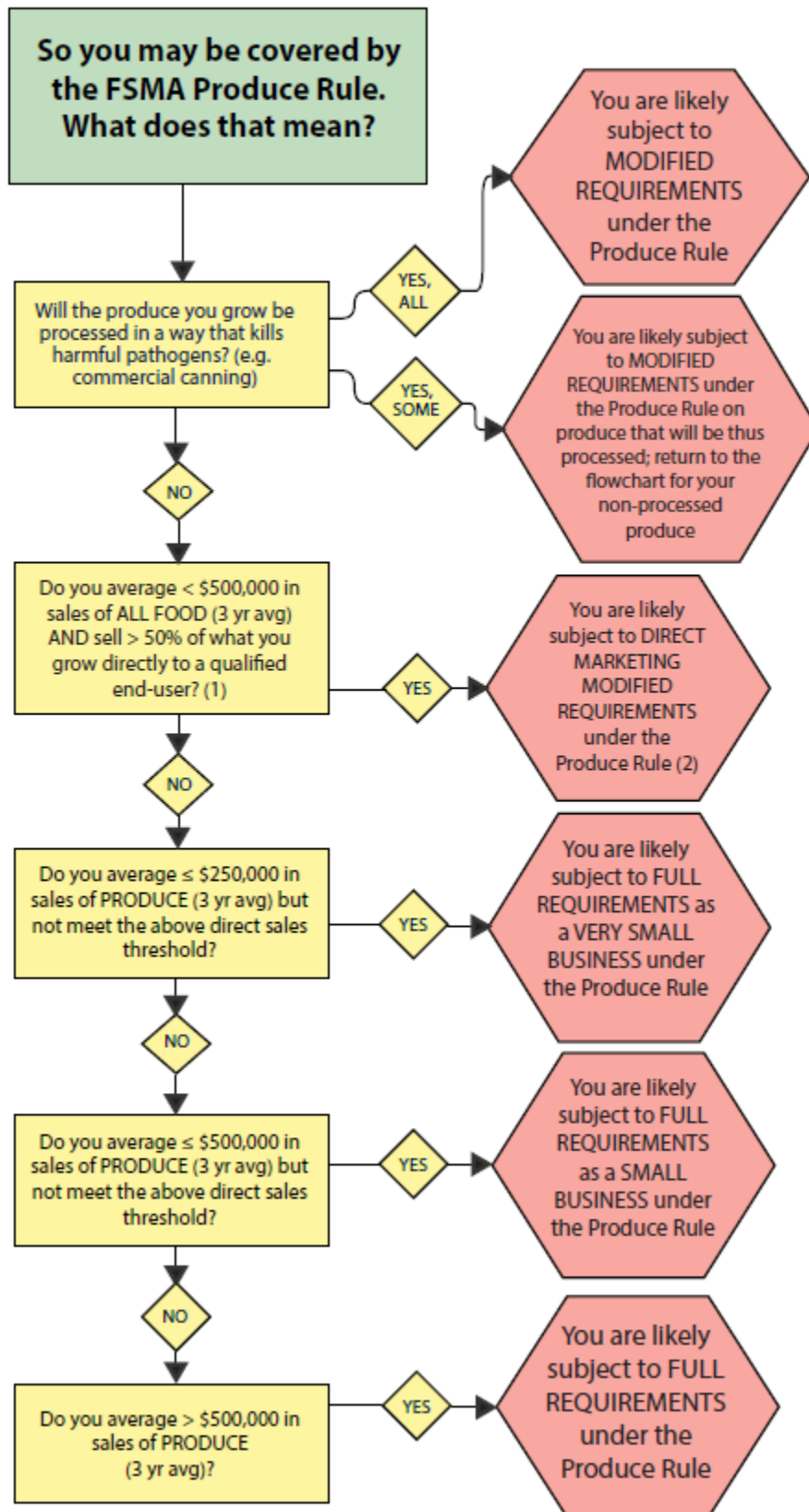
*Prepared by the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
January 2016*

Am I Affected by the FSMA Produce Rule?

The Produce Rule sets standards for farms that grow, harvest, pack, and hold produce for human consumption.



The FSMA Produce Rule - Part 2



What are MODIFIED REQUIREMENTS?

- Farms must comply with **SOME** Produce Rule measures under FSMA: recordkeeping, compliance, and enforcement (3)
- Farms are **NOT** subject to other Produce Rule measures around water, soil amendments, etc (3)
- Farms under **DIRECT MARKETING MODIFIED REQ**s: all of the above + must label all food at point of sale; also subject to withdrawal measures (3)

What are FULL REQUIREMENTS?

- Under full requirements, farms must comply with **ALL** Produce Rule measures: recordkeeping; worker health, hygiene, and training; soil amendments; water testing; wild and domesticated animals; buildings and equipment, etc (4)
- **SMALL BUSINESSES**: 3 years to comply; 5 years for water testing (4)
- **VERY SMALL BUSINESSES**: 4 years to comply; 6 years for water testing (4)
- **ALL OTHER BUSINESSES**: 2 years to comply; 4 years for water testing (4)

1) What is a "qualified end user"? Either an individual (in any location) or a retail food establishment located in-state or within 275 miles. More details: <http://bit.ly/nsacproduce>

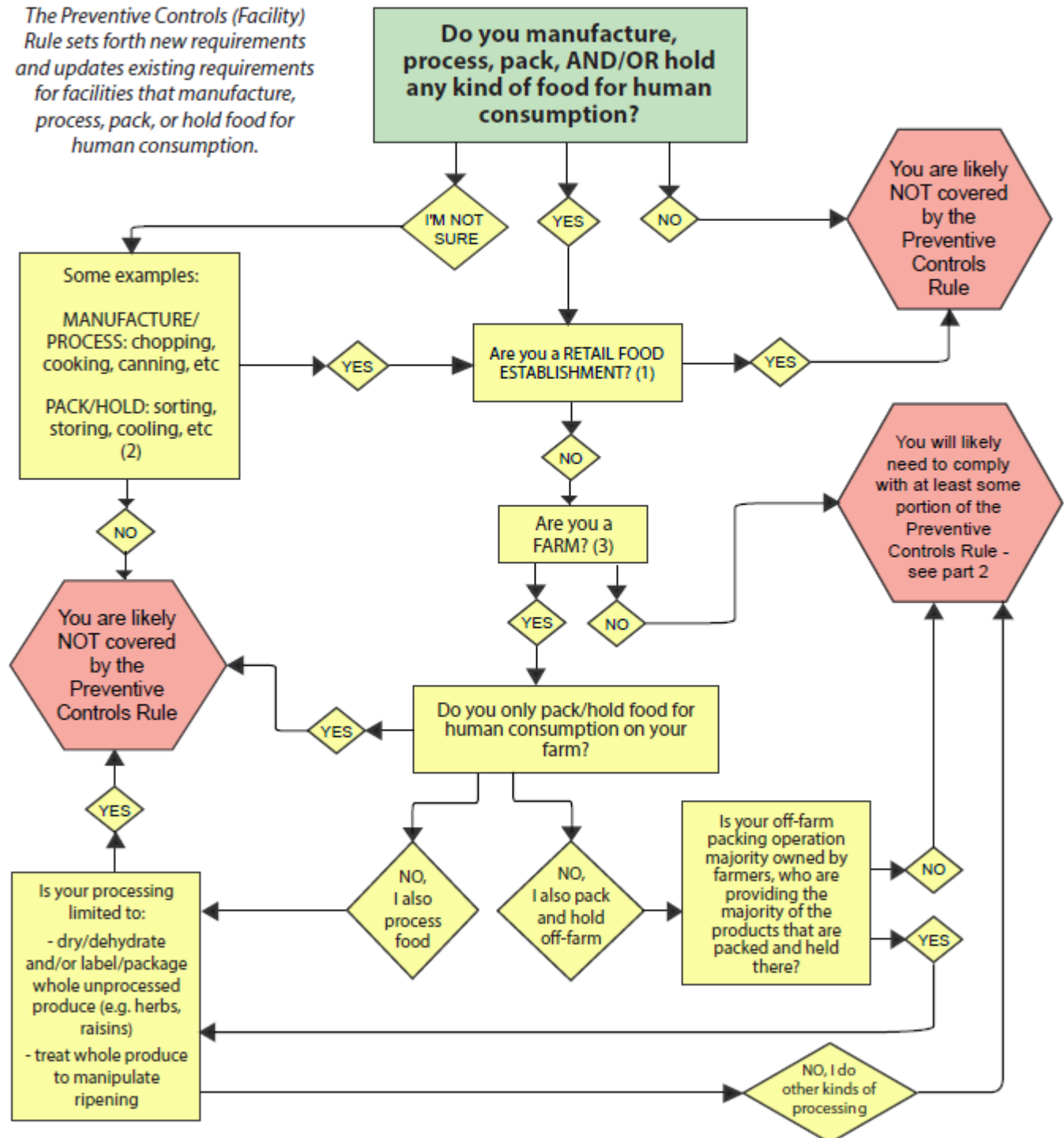
2) Direct Marketing Modified Requirements are also known as the Tester-Hagan Exemption.

3) Details on recordkeeping, enforcement, direct market labeling, and all levels of compliance: bit.ly/nsacproduce

4) Details on requirements and compliance timeframes: <http://bit.ly/fsmapr1>

Am I Affected by the FSMA Preventive Controls (Facility) Rule?

The Preventive Controls (Facility) Rule sets forth new requirements and updates existing requirements for facilities that manufacture, process, pack, or hold food for human consumption.

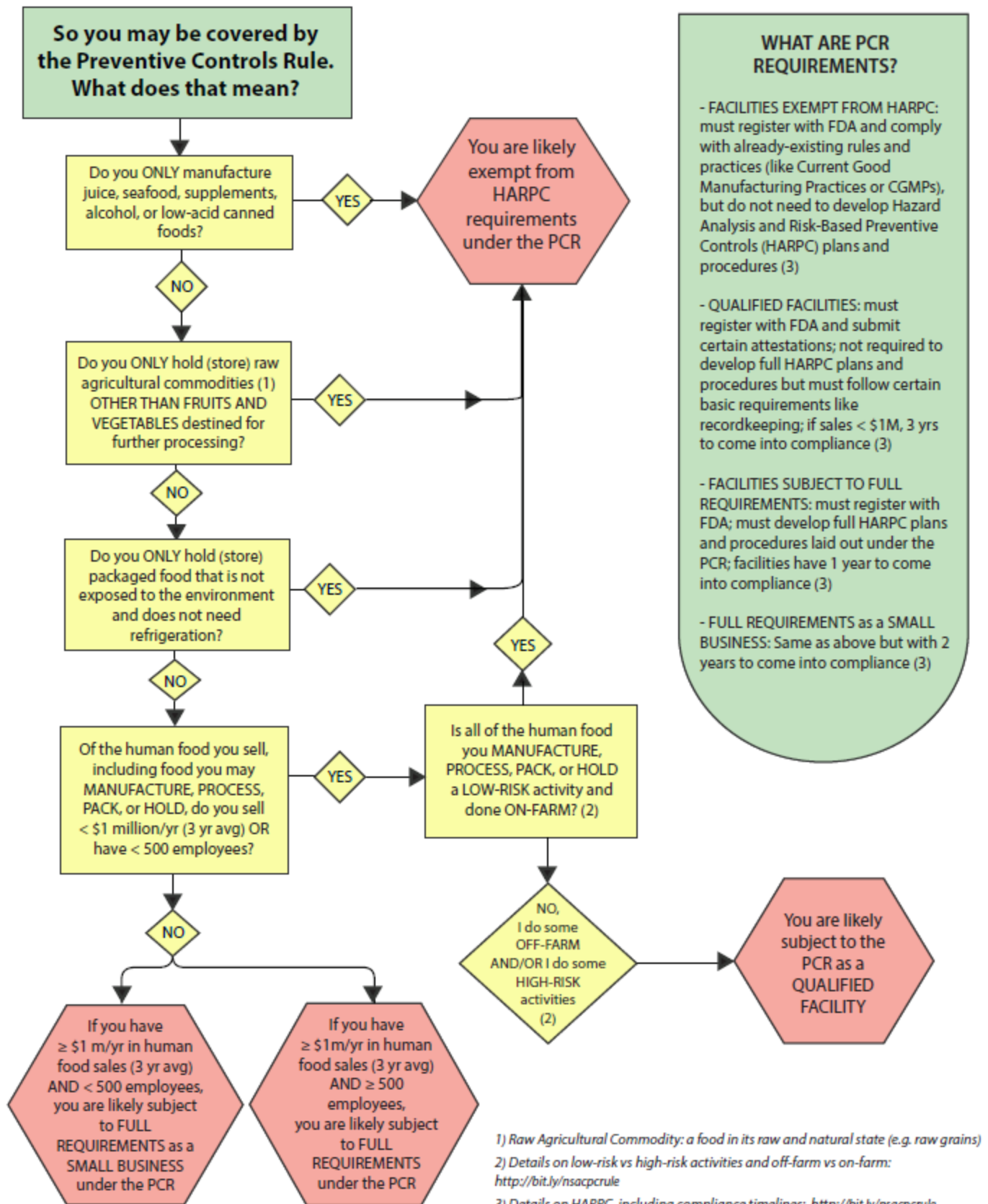


1) Retail Food Establishment: grocery stores, farm stands, and restaurants that sell the majority of their food directly to consumers; details: <http://bit.ly/nsacpcrule>

2) Find definitions of manufacturing, processing, packing, and holding, along with examples of what "off-site" and "on-farm" mean, here: <http://bit.ly/nsacpcrule>

3) Details FDA's "farm" definition and on packaging, labeling, dehydrating, other on-farm activities that do and don't trigger the "facility" definition: <http://bit.ly/nsacpcrule>

The FSMA Preventive Controls (Facility) Rule - Part 2



Below are links to websites for information, organizations, and programs by category.

State, regional, and local organizations

OSU Extension Service Union County
<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/union/>

OSU Extension Service Baker County
<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/baker/>

Northeast Oregon Economic Development District (NEOEDD)
<http://www.neoedd.org/>

Oregon Food Bank
<https://www.oregonfoodbank.org/>

Oregon Rural Action (ORA)
<http://oregonrural.org/>

Oregon Community Food System Network (OCFSN)
<http://ocfsn.net/about/>

Local Community Advisory Council (LCAC)
<http://eocco.com/cac.shtml>

US Department of Health and Human Services, Head Start program through EOU
<https://www.eou.edu/hdstart/>

AmeriCorps RARE
<https://rare.uoregon.edu/>

Wallowa Slow Food
<https://www.facebook.com/Slow-Food-Wallowas-513821311972853/>

Wallowa County Food System Council
<http://neoedd.org/content/food-systems>

Agriculture

Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA)
<http://www.oregon.gov/oda/Pages/default.aspx>

OSU Extension Service Agriculture Sciences and Natural Resources
<http://agsci.oregonstate.edu/main/agricultural-sciences-and-natural-resources-extension-program>

Oregon State University Small Farms
<http://smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/>

Oregon Farm Bureau
<http://oregonfb.org/>

Oregon Cattlemen's Association
<http://orcattle.com/>

Oregon Cattlewomen
<https://www.orcattlewomen.org/>

Eastern Oregon Local Farm and Food Guide
<http://oregonrural.org/our-work/local-food/food-farm-directory/>

Conservation and succession planning

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
<http://www.oregon.gov/oweb/Pages/index.aspx>

Union, Baker Valley, Keating, Eagle Valley, and Burnt River Soil and Water Conservation Districts Directory
<http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/shared/Documents/Publications/NaturalResources/SWCDDirectory.pdf>

Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program
<http://www.oregon.gov/OWEB/oahp/pages/index.aspx>

OSU Austin Family Business Center Resources
<http://business.oregonstate.edu/familybusinessonline/resources>

Blue Mountain Conservancy
<http://www.bluemountainsconservancy.org/>

New and beginning farmer

Farm Service Agency Loans
<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/farm-loan-programs/index>

ODA New and Small Farms resources
<http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/agriculture/Pages/NewSmallFarms.aspx>

Beginning and Expanding Farmer Loan Program (Aggie Bond Program)
<http://www.oregon4biz.com/How-We-Can-Help/Finance-Programs/Aggie-Bond/>

OSU Center for Small Farms and Community Food Systems
<http://centerforsmallfarms.oregonstate.edu/>

NEOEDD Access to capital resource list
<http://neoedd.org/content/food-systems>

Rogue Farm Corps
<http://www.roguefarmcorps.org/>

Food safety, processing, and distribution

Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)
<https://www.fda.gov/food/guidanceregulation/fsma/>

Western Regional Center to Enhance Food Safety
<http://agsci.oregonstate.edu/wrfsc>

Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP)
<http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/MarketAccess/MACertification/Pages/GAPGHP.aspx>

Oregon Department of Agriculture meat processing in Oregon
<http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/FoodSafety/FSlicensing/Pages/Meat.aspx>

Oregon Department of Agriculture food license exemptions
<http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/FoodSafety/FSlicensing/Pages/WithoutLicense.aspx>

OSU Extension Service food preservation information
<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/fch/food-preservation>

OSU Food Innovation Center
<http://fic.oregonstate.edu/>

Oregon Farmers' Market Association
<http://www.oregonfarmersmarkets.org/>

Food assistance

Quad-County Resource Guide for Union, Baker, Wallowa, and Grant Counties
http://www.ccno.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=menu&menu_id=5003

USDA Food and Nutrition Service programs and services
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/programs-and-services>

Oregon Farm Direct Nutrition Program (Senior and WIC)
<http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/MarketAccess/DevelopmentMarketing/Pages/FarmDirect.aspx>

Double Up Food Bucks in Oregon
<http://farmersmarketfund.org/programs/dufb/>

Feeding America
<http://www.feedingamerica.org/?referrer=https://en.wikipedia.org/>

Community Connection of Northeast Oregon (CCNO) food services
http://www.ccno.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=dep_intro&dept_id=3

Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon
<https://oregonhunger.org/>

Fresh Alliance
<https://www.oregonfoodbank.org/give/donate-food/food-industry-donations/>

School Nutrition Programs in Oregon
<http://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/childnutrition/SNP/Pages/default.aspx>

Summer Meals in Oregon
<http://www.summerfoodoregon.org/>

Faith Center Loaves and Fishes backpack program
<http://lg4square.com/outreach/>

First Presbyterian Church Baker City backpack and Open Door programs
<http://firstpresbaker.blogspot.com/>

Union County Friday backpack program
<http://lfbp.org/>

Veggie Rx Programs: Gorge Grown and Oregon Public Health Institute
<http://www.gorgegrown.com/veggierx/>
<http://ophi.org/veggie-rx-pilot-prescription-csa-program-puts-local-produce-in-the-doctors-office/>

Tourism and events

Travel Oregon
<http://traveloregon.com/cities-regions/eastern-oregon/>

Eastern Oregon Visitor's Association
<http://www.visiteasternoregon.com/>

Baker County Tourism
<http://basecampbaker.com/wp/>

Union County Tourism
<http://visitunioncounty.org/visit>

Eastern Oregon Beer Festival
<http://www.eobeerfest.org/>

Travel Oregon Agritourism Development and Agritourism Handbook
<http://industry.traveloregon.com/industry-resources/product-development/culinary-and-agri-tourism-development/test-ag-dev/>

Education

Burnt River Integrated Agriculture/Science Research Ranch (BRIARR)
<https://www.briarr.com/>

Oregon Future Farmers of America Association
<http://www.oregonffa.com/>

OSU Extension Service 4-H Union and Baker Counties
<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/union/4-h>
<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/baker/4h>

National Farm to School Network
<http://www.farmtoschool.org/>

Oregon Farm to School, School Garden Map, and School Garden Regional Hubs
<http://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/childnutrition/F2S/Pages/OregonFarmtoSchoolandSchoolGardenProgram.aspx>

Oregon FoodCorps
<https://foodcorps.org/apply/where-youll-serve/oregon/>

OSU Extension Service Master Gardener Program
<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/mg/>

OSU Agriculture and Natural Resource degree programs at EOU
<http://agsci.oregonstate.edu/agprogrameou>

OSU Extension Service FoodHero
<http://foodhero.org/>

USDA Smart Snacks in School guidelines
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/healthierschoolday/tools-schools-focusing-smart-snacks>

USDA SNAP Education (SNAP Ed)
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-education-snap-ed>

USDA MyPlate
<https://www.choosemyplate.gov/>

Oregon Food Bank Cooking Matters
<https://www.oregonfoodbank.org/our-work/programs/education/nutrition-cooking/>

Datasets and reports

US Bureau of the Census QuickFacts from American Community Surveys
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/>

US Bureau of Labor Statistics databases
<https://www.bls.gov/data/>

USDA Census of Agriculture
<https://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/>

USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service data
https://www.nass.usda.gov/Data_and_Statistics/index.php

USDA Agricultural Research Service datasets
<https://www.ars.usda.gov/research/datasets/>

USDA Economic Research Service reports and data by topic
<https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/>

Feeding America research
<http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/our-research/>

USDA Food and Nutrition Service program reports
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/report-finder>

USDA Farm to School Census
<https://farmtoschoolcensus.fns.usda.gov/>

Oregon Department of Education students eligible for free or reduced lunch
<http://www.ode.state.or.us/sfda/reports/r0061Select.asp>

Appendix C: Example Questions from Surveys and Interviews

Below are examples of the types of questions from some of the surveys, interviews, and group discussions.

Producer Survey for Farmers, Ranchers, and Orchardists

What production practices do you use on your farm or ranch?

What certification programs does your farm or ranch operation participate in?

What are your biggest production expenses? (For example, labor, fertilizer, feed, medicines, etc.)

How many people does your farm or ranch employ?

Please describe the history of your farm or ranch operation (For example, when it was established, by whom, what was grown or raised, why you got into production, what you're passionate about).

How important is off-farm income to your family?

What are your plans for your operation in the future?

How far do your products travel for market?

Do you market directly to the consumer?

What factors limit your direct sales?

Do you create value-added products with what you grow or raise?

What factors limit your ability to donate to schools or food pantries?

Do you believe that a Small Farms Extension Agent would be helpful to your business?

Would you like to be included in an updated Farm and Food Guide for Northeast Oregon?

Food Pantry Manager Survey (and group discussion)

Are there any significant changes that have happened in the food pantry management or funding in the last few years? If so, what are they?

What types of foods do you typically receive from donations?

What types of foods do you typically receive from food banks?

Does your pantry have the ability to receive and store fresh produce?

Does your pantry have the ability to receive and store frozen items including vegetables, fruit, meat, chicken or fish?

Generally, do you feel your pantry is meeting the needs of those served?

What barriers have you encountered or are you currently facing?

Are there additional ways that you would like to meet the needs of those served?

Do you have enough volunteer help?

Consumer Food Access Survey

Do you rent or own your housing?

Do you believe housing is affordable in your community?

Have you ever had to forego buying food in order to pay rent, mortgage, utilities or other bills in the last 12 months?

For you personally, do you believe food is available and affordable in your community?

Where do you get the majority of your food from?

How do you get to the store or food bank?

What factors limit your ability to get the food you need?

What factors do you use in making decisions on food purchases?

Do you buy some food items that are produced locally (within ~100 miles)? If so, what?

If you do not purchase food that is locally produced, what is the main reason that keeps you from doing so?

How often do you go to a farmer's market when it's market season?

If you do not shop at the farmer's market, why not?

Are you eligible for government food assistance?

What food assistance programs have you participated in the last 12 months?

Do any of the following factors make it difficult for you to access emergency food services?

Have you ever taken cooking, nutrition, food preservation, or gardening classes?

What classes would you be interested in taking?

Public Health

What is your position/role in the public health field?

What services does your organization provide?

From your experience, what do you think are the barriers to your clients accessing food, healthy food, using SNAP match at the Farmer's Market, and using SNAP, WIC, food pantries, or other assistance?

How severe do you think food insecurity is in your community?

Have your clients been able to meet their food needs with the assistance they receive?

Have you heard of Screen to Intervene, the Veggie Rx program, subsidized Community Supported Agriculture, or other food security and health related programs?

What projects or ideas do you think would reduce hunger, or increase food security or health in your community? (e.g. cooking or nutrition classes, education on SNAP use at markets, etc.)

Rural Grocery Store Owner Survey

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

Do minimum (purchasing/ordering) buying requirements create a problem for your grocery store?

As an independent grocer, do you feel you are getting fair pricing from your suppliers compared to chain stores?

Have you had problems getting products delivered because of your location?

Do you sell locally-produced food in your store?

What factors limit your ability to source locally-produced foods?

Do you accept Food Stamps/SNAP? Do you accept WIC?

What are major challenges for your store?

Do you collaborate with other small independently owned stores?

What marketing strategies have you used in your grocery stores that have been effective in drawing in customers?

Have you ever or do you participate in gleaning activities?

When running a grocery store, how important is it to you to offer various services (quality of food, availability of food, prices, customer service, business hours, buying locally, accepting SNAP/WIC)?

What is the most important for your store?

How does your store do at providing the above services?

Restaurant Owner Survey

How long have you been in the restaurant business as an owner or manager?

What type of food dishes does your restaurant serve?

How many employees do you have, including yourself?

Who are your main suppliers for food?

What are major challenges for your restaurant?

Do you have an interest in sourcing locally-produced foods?

Do you believe your customers would be interested in buying meals prepared with locally grown or processed products?

Have you or do you source locally produced foods?

If so, what food items have you purchased?

How did you purchase locally? Did producers approach you about buying their product, or did you reach out to them?

For the locally-produced foods, do you do any extra marketing?

What factors limit your ability to source locally produced foods?

School Principal/Superintendent Survey

Are there food, agriculture, nutrition, and/or health related classes available at your school?

If so, are they provided by your staff or another organization (e.g. OSU Extension Service SNAP Ed, 4-H, Head Start)?

Does the school have a garden?

Is there interest in starting a garden?

If the school has a garden, is the garden located on the school property or at a separate location?

If so, who owns or manages the property?

Have any teachers or grade levels taken farm or ranch school trips?

If so, please describe the objectives for these trips.

Are any students involved with extra-curricular activities such as FFA or 4-H programs?

Does the school supply fresh fruits and/or vegetables to the students?

Are they available to all students at the cafeteria or to Youth in Transition?

Has your school ever received food donations from local producers?

If so, what kind of donations? Are they from a specific farm or ranch, or an organization (e.g. Cattle-men's Association)?

Does your school participate in any free or reduced-cost meal programs, or a backpack program?

Do you have any concerns about the types or quality of food available to students in the cafeteria?

Farmers' market

Describe the history of the market. How long has it existed, how was it established?

What perceptions of the farmer's market have you encountered- from consumers and producers on cost of items or culture/environment at the market? Have producers found the market helpful for their businesses?

Do you think many SNAP recipients are making use of SNAP match?

What barriers have you experienced in trying to maintain or expand the market?

Are you currently working on any projects for the market? What do you think the market could benefit from?

What role do you see the farmers' market playing in community?

What would you like to see happen with the market?

Do you know of other farmers' markets in Union and Baker Counties? Has the market board ever collaborated with them formally or informally?

Have you collaborated with other organizations, groups, etc. on projects?

Have you applied for or received grants? If so, what for and who from?