



Columbia River Gorge Community Food Assessment

2010 Edition

Covering: Klickitat and Skamania Counties in Washington State, and Hood River, Sherman, and Wasco Counties in Oregon.

Prepared by:

Gorge Grown Food Network, Wy'East Resource Conservation and Development, and the Klickitat County Health Department

<http://www.gorgegrown.com>

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Local Project Partners

Gorge Grown Food Network
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Mid-Columbia Medical Center
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The Assessment Team

Project Coordinator and Editor

Sarah Hackney

Primary Contributing Authors

Meghann Dallin
Katherine Loeck
Kate Stoysich

Advisers and Researchers

Gail Aloisio
Lauren Fein
Ann Kramer
Ken Meter
Sharon Thornberry
Johanna Wyers

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I. Introduction



Why a Community Food Assessment?

Drive in any direction along the Columbia River in Oregon or Washington – north, south, east, west - and you're bound to see acre upon acre of agricultural land. The Columbia River Gorge Region produces a diverse bounty of food, including orchard fruits, grains, livestock, vegetables, and more. Much of the region's land base is devoted to agriculture, and farms, ranches, and the businesses that serve them are a primary driver of the regional economy.

Yet every day some Gorge residents go hungry. Others are forced to make the choice between healthy food for their families and rent, medical bills, and other expenses. More residents than ever are accessing local food banks as supermarket prices rise along with the cost of living.

This is not seen only in the Gorge. For the last 50 years, the US agricultural system has been dominated by international interests as our rural communities and local infrastructure have suffered. Family farmers and small food processors have found it increasingly difficult to make a living growing and selling real, fresh, healthy food, while federal subsidies rendered some food products – highly processed ones – artificially cheap. A family can purchase a six-pack of soda for less than the price of a pound of fresh, healthy, local cherries.

Influenced by price, convenience and advertising, many of us are accustomed to shopping at large supermarkets where the food travels thousands of miles from farm to market. The farmer remains anonymous, and his or her product has hidden costs behind its reasonable price: fossil fuel inputs, greenhouse gas emissions, and money draining from local economies. For every dollar we spend on food, the average farmer only sees 19 cents of it. The other 81 cents goes to external costs – packaging, transportation, distribution, and middlemen.¹

Where does the food we grow go? And how can we ensure everyone who lives here has access to the food they need? Most of us know very little about where our food comes from, and much less about how it is grown, packed, sold or shipped to the store. But all of these pieces – production, distribution, consumption – are connected. Food is a basic human need and a major economic

driver in our community. *To understand the big picture, we've got to examine all the parts. This Community Food Assessment for the Columbia River Gorge aims to do just that.*

What is a Community Food Assessment?

A CFA is a collaborative, participatory project that takes a big picture, holistic look at our food system. As such, most CFAs have three basic characteristics in common: they use an asset building approach, seeking ways to build on existing community resources; they engage community members to help set priorities, conduct research, and develop recommendations; and they have an action orientation and include recommendations for changes.²

These three characteristics help ensure that this CFA is not just another report to gather dust on someone's desk. It is a resource, yes, but it is also an organizing tool: actions identified in this CFA are strategies to address real need in the community, and the information gathered here helps to make that case.

At the end of each section of this report you will find a summary of action recommendations: these are projects, ideas, and potential solutions identified by community members through focus groups, interviews, survey responses, and research. They range from small and simple to large and complex, and many challenges will take years to address. Identifying them is a great start. These recommendation summaries are the place to go when you find yourself thinking, "What can we do to improve our local food system? *What can I do?*"

Food is a basic human need; it is a resource that we mismanage or ignore at our peril. It is time to take a serious look at our local food system and find out how we can make things better: how we can reduce hunger, improve nutrition, and strengthen the local economy all at once. This assessment is the first step.

Project Goals

This purpose guided our work: *to identify both resources and needs in the community surrounding food security, agriculture, and health, and to ultimately improve access to locally grown food, especially for people with low and moderate incomes.*

The Hood River County portion of the assessment includes additional goals that were formulated with our partner team that guided our initial research and helped us develop a framework for questions to ask as we worked across the region with a large team of partner organizations and volunteers.

1. Increase opportunities for low-income residents to improve their food self-reliance.

- ❖ *Objective:* Gather data on residents' ability and interest in growing, harvesting, preserving, consuming/cooking their own food, and selling excess through local, direct markets; and ability to access food, including locally grown food
- ❖ *Objective:* Determine barriers to accessing food, and growing, harvesting, preserving, consuming/cooking and selling their own food
- ❖ *Objective:* Develop a formal food security coalition that will create and implement a plan to increase resident food self-reliance using local assets and partnerships

2. Address the sustainability of the region's emergency food network.

- ❖ *Objective:* Provide data to emergency food programs to assist in determining future infrastructure, development and service plans
- ❖ *Objective:* Develop a formal food security coalition to plan long-term to reduce the number of individuals receiving emergency food and our food banks' reliance on food produced outside the region

3. Enhance the viability of and participation in our local, direct food markets.

- ❖ *Objective:* Provide data to local markets to assist in creating entrepreneurial opportunities for low-income residents
- ❖ *Objective:* Implement and encourage food stamps (EBT) and Farm Direct Nutrition in local markets
- ❖ *Objective:* Promote, encourage, and assist participation in direct food markets through coalition

Project Methodology

How we gathered data

We took a holistic approach to data collection for this report, recognizing the value of both statistics and human stories in assembling a picture of our local food system. In addition to an original survey

designed specifically for this project, we utilized extensive secondary research conducted by our partners and by state and federal sources, and numerous focus groups and interviews with a wide variety of stakeholders.

A significant portion of the secondary farm-related data in Chapter II was collected by Ken Meter, a specialist in food systems economic analysis from the Crossroads Resource Center. All such data is cited with credit to Ken and to the original data source.

The following tools were our primary research methods:

Consumer Survey

Gorge Grown Food Network (GGFN) referenced food surveys from other Oregon communities to design and pilot a community food survey specifically for this project. The survey was field tested twice in 2007 and revised for clarity, readability, and effectiveness each time. We sought a statistically significant sample size for the Gorge region, and achieved it: a total of 2,441 surveys were completed for this assessment.

Survey distribution was not fully random; project organizers felt this would disadvantage some members of the community who do not have permanent addresses or phone numbers, or who might be unable or unwilling to mail a survey back. Instead, we took a deliberately broad approach, aiming to reach all segments of the community by administering surveys throughout each county via project partner organizations such as local churches, food pantries, public events, schools, and via the Internet. Survey outreach was also conducted through local newspapers, newsletters, and radio outlets. In total, over 40 sites distributed surveys for this project.

Producer Survey

The producer survey was designed to ask research questions not already covered by existing research; in addition, we incorporated some USDA Farm Census questions to aid in comparing the data. Producer surveys were distributed to farmers at food producer focus groups, in addition to a random phone sampling selected from GGFN's producer database. A total of 46 producer surveys were collected from these sources.

Supermarket Survey

The supermarket survey was conducted to assess food access in rural areas for those living below the poverty line. The survey was conducted in all the grocery stores in Klickitat, Skamania, Wasco, and Sherman Counties using the USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) Food Survey Instrument. This data was then analyzed using the USDA's Thrifty Food Plan as a base representative of foods that are economical for low-income households and to meet Federal dietary guidelines and Food Guide Pyramid serving recommendations for a family of four (two adults ages 20 to 50 and two children ages 3 to 5 and 6 to 11) for one week.

Pre-existing research

Project partners collaborated to collect complementary pre-existing, secondary research relating to the CFA's goals; this is incorporated throughout the text where applicable. Secondary text is cited with endnotes; much of the state and federal data utilized in this report is available for free to the public online.

Interviews

Project partners and volunteers conducted over 50 interviews with key local stakeholders; interview findings are incorporated throughout the text where applicable.

Focus Groups

Project partners and local volunteers hosted a series of focus groups designed to foster honest conversation about food issues in the community and ideas for improving challenges. Focus groups were conducted with local farmers, low-income residents, working professionals, healthcare professionals, and community members at large in each county in the region.

Volunteers

Over 35 volunteers contributed time and effort, including over 600 hours of service, towards the completion of this report. The Hood River County portion of the assessment benefited from grant funding to support volunteer stipends for committed volunteers; 18 individuals, primarily low-income community members in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF) , completed over 200 hours of invaluable service toward the completion of this project, including survey outreach, data entry, and interviews.

II. *Growing Food:* Farms, Ranches, and Local Markets for Local Produce



Farms & Ranches: Who's growing what?

The Columbia River Gorge region of Oregon and Washington is home to a productive diversity of agricultural enterprises, which make up a substantive portion of the region's economy and provide food for the region, the country, and the world. Family-owned farms come in many different sizes in the region – the eastern Gorge farms are larger, reflecting the larger acreage needed for their primary crops: grains (wheat, barley) and beef cattle. In the western Gorge, smaller parcels dominate, with blocks of orchard fruit trees and grapes comprising much of the agricultural acreage.

A tour through Hood River County quickly reveals its principal crop: fruit. Row upon row of fruit trees line the valley, from the Columbia River to the shoulders of Mt. Hood. A drive from The Dalles to Maupin or from Maryhill to Goldendale is flanked on both sides by rolling hills covered in wheat and barley, fruit trees, and rangeland for cattle.

Four of the region's five counties are heavily agricultural – Wasco is the top cherry producer in Oregon and the fifth highest grain producer in the state, Sherman is the second highest barley and third highest wheat producer, Hood River is the top fruit producer, and Klickitat is fourth in Washington for sheep (lamb) and grapes. Skamania County, with its preponderance of publicly owned forest lands, does not have the volume of ag products that other Gorge counties do, but does rank eighth in Washington for grape production.

The bounty from these local orchards, fields, and pastures is predominantly bound for elsewhere. However, in the last 5 years, numerous small farms focusing on local sales have sprung up. This complement to larger operations has enabled a small – but growing – local market for local farm products to develop. Many area farmers produce crops for local markets: orchard fruit for fresh eating, grains for flour milling, fresh vegetables, cut flowers, and free ranging cattle, pigs, poultry, and other meat animals.

Across the nation, the percent of farm products sold direct to consumer – the USDA Census of Agriculture’s closest proxy to measuring “local” sales – is only 0.4% of gross farm receipts. In the Gorge, the percentage is 0.8% - a small amount, but one that is twice the national average.

Agriculture is a significant regional economic driver, totaling over \$281 million in gross sales in 2007.³ The region’s farms received \$18.4 million in government payments in this same year (the most recent year for which there is USDA Census of Agriculture data). Farms and the businesses that serve them make up a substantial portion of the region’s employment base, and the majority of farms in the region are family-owned. The average age of a Gorge farmer is 56.3, just below the national average of 57.1.

Unlike many parts of the country, the Gorge is actually seeing an increase in the number of farms – the region saw a 15% increase in the number of farms from 2002 to 2007. However, at the same time, the amount of actual land in farms decreased modestly across the region, as did the average farm size.

This is not intended to be a comprehensive report on agriculture in the Columbia River Gorge: the primary focus of our research is on farms and ranches who sell their product directly to local consumers, or who hope to, rather than to wholesale distributors. However, the larger context of conventional farming in this region is also important, as larger-scale production for wholesale and commodity markets continues to be the dominant business model in agriculture in this county. We recognize this and hope to emphasize potential means for *all* farmers in this region to maintain successful businesses and support their families.

Gorge Agriculture at a Glance - 2007

County	Total Sales (millions)	Direct to Consumer Sales	Land in Farms (acres)	Number of Farms	Average Farm Size (acres)
Hood River	\$100,443,000	\$1,237,000	26,952	553	49
Wasco	\$89,862,000	\$432,000	949,462	649	1463
Sherman	\$31,749,000	\$81,000	514,004	208	2471
Klickitat	\$57,298,000	\$525,000	601,216	893	673
Skamania	\$2,661,000	\$68,000	5,472	123	44

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture, 2007

A County by County Overview of Agriculture: Hood River County

Hood River County, covering 536 square miles, is the smallest county in the region and the second smallest county in Oregon. Three quarters of county land is publicly owned, and residents are concentrated in population centers. 47 square miles of the county are designated Exclusive Farm Use, totaling a little over 30,000 acres.⁴ The most recent USDA Farm Census data shows 20,914 acres in current production, with 26,952 acres in farms.⁵

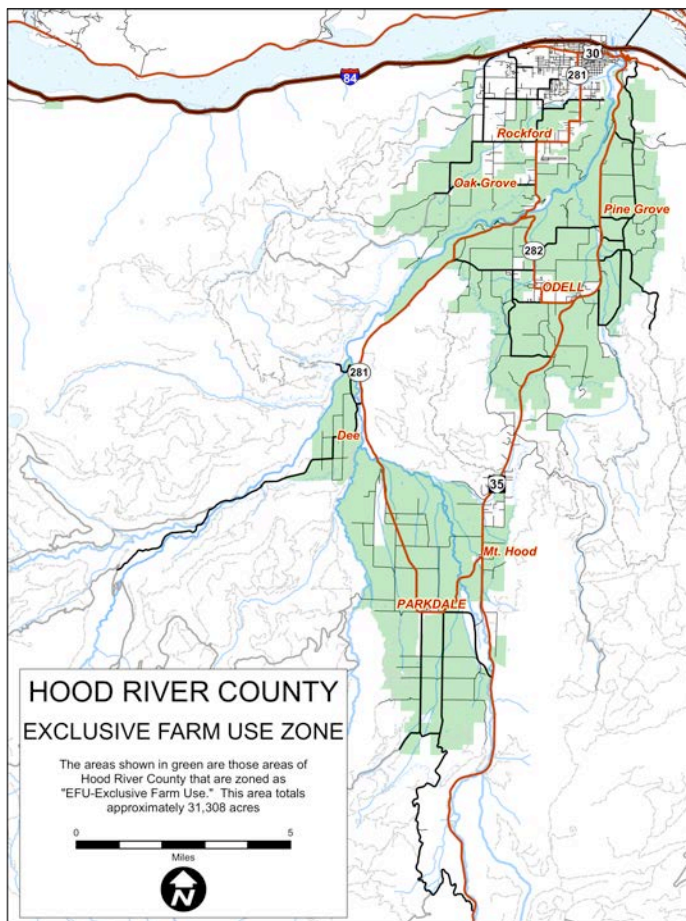
As of 2007 there were 553 farms in the county. Perhaps reflecting the county’s small size, there are no farms larger than 1,000 acres in Hood River County. The average farm size in the county is 49

acres, down from 52 acres in 2002.⁶ 68% of the county's farms are under 50 acres in size and 32% are under 10 acres in size.⁷

Most of those farms are involved exclusively in fruit production. Hood River County is the top fruit-growing county in the state of Oregon, and ranks 42nd nationally for fruit production. As of 2007, Hood River County was the top pear producing county in the entire nation.⁸ This pear crop represents 1/3 of the winter pears eaten in the US.⁹ Of those 20,914 acres of cropland, at least three quarters - 12,194 in pears, 1,694 in cherries, and 1,631 in apples – is in tree fruit. (*note: 2002 figures*)¹⁰

County farmers also report producing hay (1,700 acres), wine grapes (99 acres), vegetables, berries, other tree fruit crops such as peaches and nectarines, poultry/eggs, beef, cut flowers, live plants and bulbs, and seed stock (beans, grains). (*note: 2002 figures*)¹¹ Unfortunately, no accurate data exists for how much of these smaller products are being produced, as the numbers involved are too small for the Oregon Agricultural Information Network to track and release.¹² OSU's Hood River County Extension office reports a nearly 100% increase in wine grape and blueberry plantings in the last decade, but total acreage is still small and "a blip compared to tree fruit production."¹³

Hood River County Exclusive Farm Use Zones



Source: Hood River County Planning Department

Organic Production in Hood River County

The 2002 Census of Agriculture reported only 4 organic farms in the county. No organic data is available for 1997, so trends only be partially measured. However, research indicates that there are many more organic farms in the county in 2009: 15 organic farms in Hood River County registered for GGFN's 2008 *Who's Your Farmer?* Local buying guide¹⁴, and Oregon Tilth lists 22 certified organic producers in the county.¹⁵ This is over five times the number of organic producers in the county in 2002.

In our farmer survey, 18.2% of farmers were certified organic, and another 63.7% incorporate at least some organic principles into their growing practices or are transitioning toward more organic practices. Even growers with no official certification reported an interest in using organic principles to reduce costs and better steward their land.¹⁶

A County by County Overview of Agriculture: Wasco and Sherman County

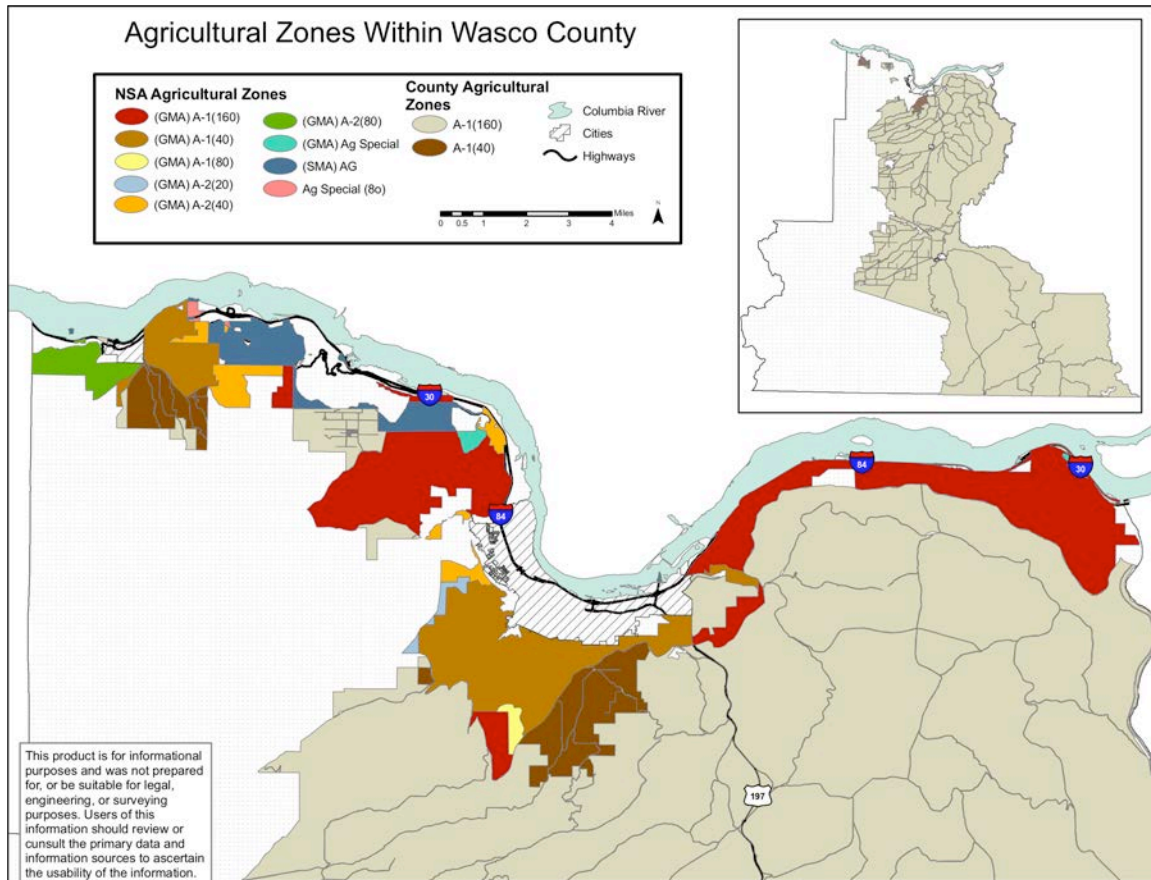
Wasco County, covering 2,395 square miles, is significantly larger than its neighbors Hood River and Sherman County. Sherman County covers 831 square miles. Residents are concentrated in population centers, with The Dalles (population 12,000) being the only community in either county over 1,000 residents.

Land in Agriculture: Wasco and Sherman Counties

	Exclusive Farm Use (square miles / acres)	Acreage in Farms and Ranches (acres)
<i>Wasco</i>	Unavailable	949,462
<i>Sherman</i>	Unavailable	514,004

Source: USDA Ag Census, Wasco and Sherman County Planning Departments

Wasco and Sherman County Exclusive Farm Use Zones



Source: Wasco County Planning Department

Sherman and Wasco County Farms

	Number of Farms	Average Size of Farms (acres)	% of Farms Under 50 Acres	% of Farms Over 500 Acres
Wasco	649	1,463	40%	24%
Sherman	208	2,471	5%	73%

Source: 2007 USDA Ag Census

Very few farms in Wasco or Sherman County are under 10 acres in size – just 16% of Wasco County farms and 1.9% of Sherman County farms.¹⁷ As these figures show, most farms in Wasco and Sherman County are large – over 1,000 acres in size. This is reflective of the type of agriculture most common in the region – crops such as cherries or wheat are grown on a large scale and sold at prices much lower than the retail prices found at farmers' markets or other direct outlets.

Of Wasco County's 949,000+ acres of farmland, approximately 65.9% of it is in rangeland, dwarfing the amounts in cropland (19%) and other uses (15%). In Sherman County, the picture is different:

67.2% of the land in farms is used for crops, 29.5% is used for pasture, and another 3.25% is for other uses.¹⁸

More than 96% of the land in Sherman County is in agricultural use, with the vast majority of that land devoted to grain production and range for cattle. Sherman County ranks third in Oregon for grain production.

Wasco and Sherman County farmers and ranchers also report producing vegetables, berries, other tree fruit crops such as pears, poultry/eggs, beef, pork, cut flowers, live plants and bulbs, and seed stock (beans, grains). ¹⁹ The only crops with more than \$1 million in reported countywide sales in 2007 were:

Top Ag Products by Sales, Wasco and Sherman County, 2007

<i>Wasco County</i>		<i>Sherman County</i>	
Product	Total Sales (millions)	Product	Total Sales (millions)
Fruits, tree nuts, and berries	\$59.6	Grains, oilseeds, dry beans, and dry peas	\$29.3
Grains, oilseeds, dry beans, and dry peas	\$15.8	Cattle and calves	\$1.5
Cattle and calves	\$9.7		
Other crops and hay	\$2		

Source: 2007 USDA Ag Census

In comparison, farmers only reported \$252,000 in vegetable sales in Wasco County – and so few farmers reported vegetable sales in Sherman County that sales estimates were unavailable.

Organics in Wasco and Sherman Counties

Producers in Wasco and Sherman County have been slow to adopt organic growing practices. USDA data indicates only one certified organic producer in Sherman County, and 10 in Wasco County. Sherman County has seen no change in organic producer numbers since 2002, but Wasco County has seen a significant increase, from one producer to 10.²⁰

However, the Ag Census is an imperfect measure of growing practices, and may not capture the full scope of organic growers in the two counties. Additionally, several local producers surveyed did report using other conservation minded growing practices, including no-till farming, permaculture, and avoiding pesticide use as much as possible, as well as using fully organic practices without seeking certification.²¹

Even growers with no official certification reported an interest in using organic principles to reduce costs and better steward their land.²²

A County by County Overview of Agriculture: Klickitat and Skamania County

Klickitat and Skamania County make up the Washington portion of the Columbia River Gorge region. They are different in terms of geography and in their agricultural profiles.

Klickitat County, covering 1,872 square miles, is a large, long county, and residents are concentrated in population centers – Bingen/White Salmon, Trout Lake, and Goldendale, with no community of more than 4,000.²³ The most recent USDA Census of Agriculture data shows 601,216 acres in farms in Klickitat County.²⁴

As of 2007 there were 893 farms in Klickitat County, a 27% increase from 2002. The average farm size in the county is 673 acres, down from 864 acres in 2002.²⁵ 65% of the county's farms are under 50 acres in size and 8% are under 10 acres in size.²⁶

By acreage, most of the farms in Klickitat County are growing wheat, forage (for animals), and grapes; by sales, top products are fruit, cattle, wheat (and other grains), and dairy.²⁷ Klickitat County has a sizable agricultural sector and is in the top third of Washington counties for production of several crops, including grains (wheat and barley), forage, tree fruit, livestock, and grapes (fourth in the state for grapes). County farmers and ranchers also report producing vegetables, berries, poultry/eggs, beef, pork, and live plants.

Skamania County, covering 1,656 square miles, is predominantly covered by National Forest land surrounding Mt. St. Helens. Populations are concentrated along Highway 14 near the Columbia River. There are 5,472 acres in farms in Skamania County.

Skamania County has a history as an agricultural community but in recent years has not had as much agricultural activity as its neighbors in Oregon and Washington. The only agriculture sector for which Skamania County is in the top half of state producers is aquaculture. County farmers and ranchers also report producing wine grapes, vegetables, berries, tree fruit crops such as pears, poultry/eggs, beef, pork, cut flowers, and nursery plants. Approximately 45% of the county's farms are less than 50 acres in size.

Land in Agriculture: Klickitat and Skamania Counties

	Exclusive Farm Use (square miles / acres)	Land in Farms and Ranches (acres)
<i>Klickitat</i>	Unavailable	601,216
<i>Skamania</i>	Unavailable	5,472

Source: USDA Census of Ag, Klickitat and Skamania County Planning Departments

Organics in Klickitat and Skamania Counties

Producers in Klickitat and Skamania County do not heavily use organic growing practices. USDA data indicates only 2 certified organic producers in Skamania County, and 13 in Klickitat County.²⁸

However, the Ag Census is an imperfect measure of growing practices, and may not capture the full scope of organic growers in the two counties. Additionally, several local producers surveyed did report using other conservation minded growing practices, including no-till farming, permaculture,

and avoiding pesticide use as much as possible, as well as using fully organic practices without seeking certification.²⁹

Even growers with no official certification reported an interest in using organic principles to reduce costs and better steward their land.³⁰

Demographics of the Gorge Farmer

The average age of an Oregon farmer is 57.5, and only 5% of Oregon farmers are under 35.³¹ In Washington, it is 57. Only 7 farmers (out of 46) in our survey were under 35.

45 percent of farmers in our survey listed farming as only a part-time occupation; farm income varied as a portion of family income from 5-100%. Just over half the farmers in our survey – 56% - reported that farm income makes up less than 25% of their household income. Many farmers reported having a spouse's full-time off-farm job as supplemental income; this is a key asset to farm families to sustain their businesses in lean years.

Their land is another asset – 78% of farmers report owning their own land. This closely matches 2002 Farm Census data, which reports that the majority of Gorge farmers own their land. The remainder lease or operate as tenants.³²

Farmers in our survey were predominantly white, with a small number of Asian-American heritage. Survey respondents were split almost 50/50 between men and women, but most respondents were quick to note that their farms are family operations where spouses and children of both genders are engaged and working for the business.

According to the USDA Census of Agriculture, 18% of the region's farms have a woman as the principal operator*, and 22% of farms have at least one minority operator. Non-white farmers in the region reported American Indian, Asian, and multi-racial racial identity and Latino/Hispanic ethnicity.³³

According to the Farm Census, 17% of Wasco farms and 11% of Sherman farms have a woman as the principal operator*, and 14% of Wasco farms and 1% of Sherman farms have at least one minority operator. Non-white farmers in the county reported American Indian, Asian, Black, and multi-racial racial identity and Latino/Hispanic ethnicity.³⁴

The farmer survey conducted for this food assessment was completed primarily by area farmers who sell at least a portion of their crops direct to consumers; these farms tend to be smaller and newer than many of the conventional larger family farms in the region. Farmer tenure according to the Ag Census varies: in 2007, the average Wasco County farmer had been on the farm for 20.3

* **Operators:** This a new item in the 2002 census. Demographic and other information were collected for up to three operators per farm - the principal operator plus one or two additional operators. This may be fewer than the number of operators on some farms. Demographic data for up to three operators reported are presented separately for women, by race categories, and for Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino origin.

* **Operators:** This a new item as of the 2002 census. Demographic and other information were collected for up to three operators per farm - the principal operator plus one or two additional operators. This may be fewer than the number of operators on some farms. Demographic data for up to three operators reported are presented separately for women, by race categories, and for Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino origin.

years, the Sherman County farmer, 22.8. The most reported tenure in our survey for these two counties was over 20 years (47.4% of respondents).

Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers in the Gorge

Seasonal and migrant farm workers conduct much of the fruit harvest in the Gorge, in addition to springtime pruning and thinning of trees, vegetable harvesting, and many other agricultural tasks. All of the tree fruit harvesting is done by hand, making seasonal labor essential for the fruit crop harvesting needs of the region.³⁵ The grain crops of the region – primarily Sherman, Wasco, and Klickitat County -- are harvested mechanically, requiring less human labor.

It is difficult to quantify how many individuals work in the region as migrant or seasonal farm workers, due to their mobility, at times temporary employment status, and language and cultural barriers. These factors also impact farm workers' vulnerability to poor housing, poor wages, and lack of access to social and health services. The Oregon Child Development Coalition, which runs the Migrant Seasonal Head Start program in Hood River and Wasco Counties, reports that families continue to struggle to find affordable housing, child care, health services, and transportation, especially when harvest time slows.³⁶

Seasonal Farmworker: a farmworker who was employed in farm work at least 25 days and earned at least \$400 during a twelve month period and who has been primarily employed in farm work on a seasonal basis without a constant year round salary/wage.

Migrant Farmworker: a seasonal farmworker who performs farm work during the past twelve months which requires travel such that the worker is unable to return to his/her domicile (permanent residence) within the same day and who establish a temporary residence while performing farm work at one or more locations away from the place he/she calls home. (does not include day-haul workers whose travels are limited to work within one day of their locations.)

Source: Oregon Housing and Community Services

In Oregon, the department of Housing and Community Services estimates that the state's farms employ approximately 123,000 agricultural employees annually, of which 95,000 (77%) are seasonal.³⁷ Determining the number of these seasonal farmworkers who are migrant farm workers (see definition to the right) is even more difficult. The most recent state estimate (2002) is 35,670 migrant farm workers in Oregon.³⁸

There is limited county-specific data available, and none from the last 5 years. The most recent county-specific estimates, from 2002, are listed below, but it should be noted that these are *estimates*, and more data is needed to ensure accuracy. Variations in the size of annual crop harvests can also impact the number of farmworkers employed in a given season.

2002 Estimated Seasonal and Migrant Farm Workers Employed in Oregon Gorge Counties

	Wasco Co	Sherman Co	Hood River Co
Migrant FWs	3,650	12	3,783
Seasonal FWs	5,684	12	7,396
Total FWs	9,333	24	11,179

Source: Oregon Housing and Community Services Farmworker Information Center, 2002 Enumeration Study

A survey of agricultural producers in Hood River and Wasco Counties conducted in 2006 by the Oregon Child Development Coalition revealed that over one-half of growers surveyed expect to employ about the same number of migrant farmworkers next year for tree fruit operations. Additionally, according to this survey, on average, individual operations in Hood River and Wasco Counties require the labor of at least 55 migrant farmworkers each year.³⁹

Wages received by farmworkers vary according to the employer and type of commodity produced. Oregon law requires minimum wage for farmworkers, although they can also receive a "piece rate" or set fee per volume of harvest. County-specific wage information for farm workers is unavailable.

Due to this limited data and several indicators of food insecurity among the seasonal farm worker population in our community survey, more research is needed into the food security and health and nutrition status of farm workers in the region.

Challenges for Gorge Farmers

Farmers and ranchers in the Gorge are determined to succeed into the future. In interviews, they report numerous substantial challenges and barriers to success, but also a commitment to working with their peers and partners like Gorge Grown to seek solutions. Top issues in farmer interviews were:

- Difficulty making a living
- Challenge getting crops to market (distribution and marketing)
- Land prices
- Government regulatory issues
- Energy and input costs
- Water rights and shortages
- Labor issues

Difficulty making a living was the top concern among farmers in most counties. As the regional data show, agriculture as an industry is not always profitable in the Gorge, and many farmers have second jobs or spouses with full-time jobs to make ends meet. The other barriers listed above contribute to the difficulty making a living in farming in the region. However, in these challenges lie opportunities to strengthen agriculture and increase farmers' ability to succeed into the future in the Gorge.

Farming Challenges: Hood River County

Farmers surveyed for this project were asked to report on perceived threats to their farm businesses; concerns spanned a wide range of topics:

Do you perceive any of the following as threats to your farm or as barriers to expansion?

Land prices	18.2%
Global warming	18.2%

Market competition	36.4%
Lack of market	27.3%
Energy/input costs	63.6%
Government regulations	9.1%
Land development	36.4%
Water shortages	36.4%
Hard to make a living	45.5%
Labor issues	54.5%
Other (please specify)	45.5%

Other concerns cited by farmers in the survey:

- Small scale farming is not cost effective
- In a depressed economy, people aren't buying much
- If development occurs, we worry about losing our water (2)
- More demand than we can meet
- Genetically altered seeds

This wide range of concerns illustrates the challenging nature of small-scale farming in this region. In interviews, farmers overwhelmingly report a love for the profession and their work, but the need for solutions to the above barriers is clear.

Farming Challenges: Wasco and Sherman County

Wasco and Sherman County farmers and ranchers surveyed for this project were asked to report on perceived threats to their farm businesses; concerns spanned a wide range:

Do you perceive any of the following as threats to your farm or barriers to expansion?

Land prices	50%
Global warming	19.2%
Market competition	34.6%
Lack of market	50%
Energy/input costs	50%
Government regulations	46.2%
Land development	11.5%
Water shortages	30.8%
Hard to make a living	53.8%
Labor issues	38.5%
Other	26.9%

Source: Wasco and Sherman County Producer Interviews

Of all of the above concerns, “hard to make a living” was the most-often noted challenge for producers in these two counties – more of a concern even than well-known challenges such as water shortages or labor concerns.

Other concerns cited by farmers in the survey:

Concerned about having a large enough local market

Want to retire, no one to take it over
Distance to local markets is too far
Low government payments
Lack of local meat/poultry processors for animals

Farming Challenges: Klickitat and Skamania County

Klickitat and Skamania County farmers and ranchers surveyed for this project were asked to report on perceived threats to their farm businesses; concerns spanned a wide range:

Do you perceive any of the following as threats to your farm or barriers to expansion?

Land prices	26.7%
Global warming	6.7%
Market competition	26.7%
Lack of market	46.7%
Energy/input costs	26.7%
Government regulations	33.3%
Land development	6.7%
Water shortages	20.0%
Hard to make a living	66.7%
Labor issues	33.3%
Other	46.7%

Source: Klickitat and Skamania County Producer Interviews

Of all of the above concerns, “hard to make a living” was the most-often noted challenge for producers in these two counties – more of a concern even than well-known challenges such as water shortages or labor concerns.

Other concerns cited by farmers in the survey:

- Cost of business, bad economy, animal rights, fire
- Obtaining the equipment to do what we need to do
- Need more land close to where we live
- Low prices of wheat
- Biggest hurdle: predators (cougars)
- We have no desire to expand but are concerned about having a large enough local market
- Lack of meat/poultry processors

Markets: Where does the food go?

Agriculture is a significant regional economic driver, with the Gorge's farms totaling over \$281 million in gross sales in 2007. The region's farms received \$18.4 million in government payments in that same period. The region's farm production expenses in 2007 totaled just over \$249 million, for a regional net income of \$32.5 million.

A substantial portion – 74% -- of farms in the Gorge region reported sales of less than \$50,000 in 2007, and 88% of farms reported less than \$250,000 in sales in 2007.

Hood River County

County farms were responsible for over \$100 million in sales in 2007 – with \$95.9 million of that in fruit. Another \$2.1 million went into nursery crops, leaving just \$2.4 million for all other crops – including vegetables and livestock. 69% of the county's farms are under 50 acres in size, and 57% of farms sold under \$50,000 worth of products in 2007. Only one in five Hood River County farms sells direct to consumers, bringing in \$1.2 million in sales in 2007; this represents 1.2% of total ag sales in the county.

Wasco County

County farms were responsible for just under \$90 million in sales in 2007 – with 66%, or \$59 million, in fruit. Livestock sales accounted for \$10.5 million and grain sales for \$15.8 million. Vegetable sales represented only \$252,000 of farm sales in the county. Only 13% of Wasco County farms sell directly to consumers, bringing in \$432,000 in sales in 2007. That \$432,000 represents slightly less than 0.5% of total agricultural sales in the county.

Sherman County

County farms were responsible for more than \$31 million in sales in 2007 — with 93%, or \$29 million, in grain. Livestock sales accounted for \$1.6 million. Only 3% of Sherman County farms sell directly to consumers, generating \$81,000 in sales in 2007. That \$81,000 represents just 0.25% of total agricultural sales in the county.

Klickitat County

County farms were responsible for \$57.2 million in sales in 2007 – with 51 percent, or \$29.5 million, in fruit (and nuts). Livestock sales accounted for \$13.4 million and grain sales for \$8.6 million. Only 15 % of Klickitat County farms and ranches sell directly to consumers, bringing in \$525,000 in sales in 2007. That \$525,000 represents just under 1% of total agricultural sales in the county.

Skamania County

County farms were responsible for \$2.6 million in sales in 2007 – with 33% in fruit. Livestock sales accounted for \$1.6 million. Only 22% of Skamania County farms sell directly to consumers, bringing in \$68,000 in sales in 2007, which represents 2.5% of agricultural sales in the county.

Gorge Farm Production Receipts and Expenses Over Time

Cash receipts and production expenses in the Gorge

	Gorge
Cash receipts	\$234
Production expenses	\$254
Farm production balance	-\$20

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Ken Meter
Gorge figures are averaged for the 30 years 1977-2006

This chart indicates a long-term loss for the region's farmers in terms of cash receipts over the past 30 years. This does not mean that all farmers lose money every year – if so, we'd have no farmers at all! The long-term trends show both good and bad years for the region's farmers:

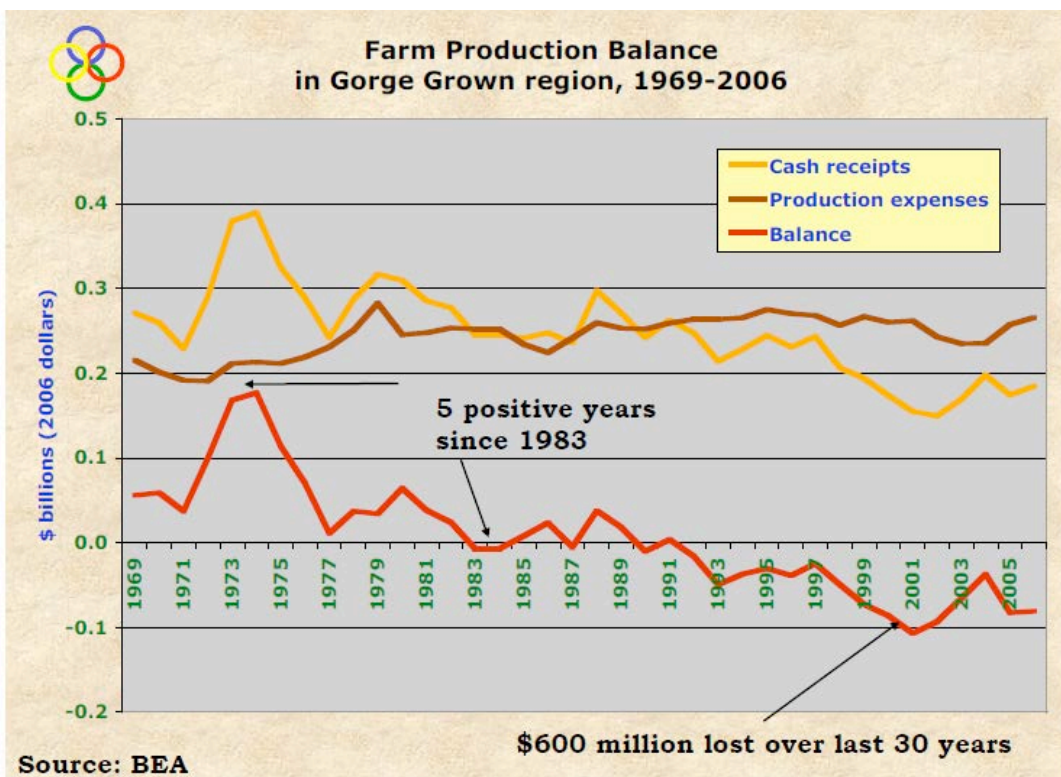


Chart prepared by Ken Meter, Crossroads Resource Center

The picture for Oregon looks similar:

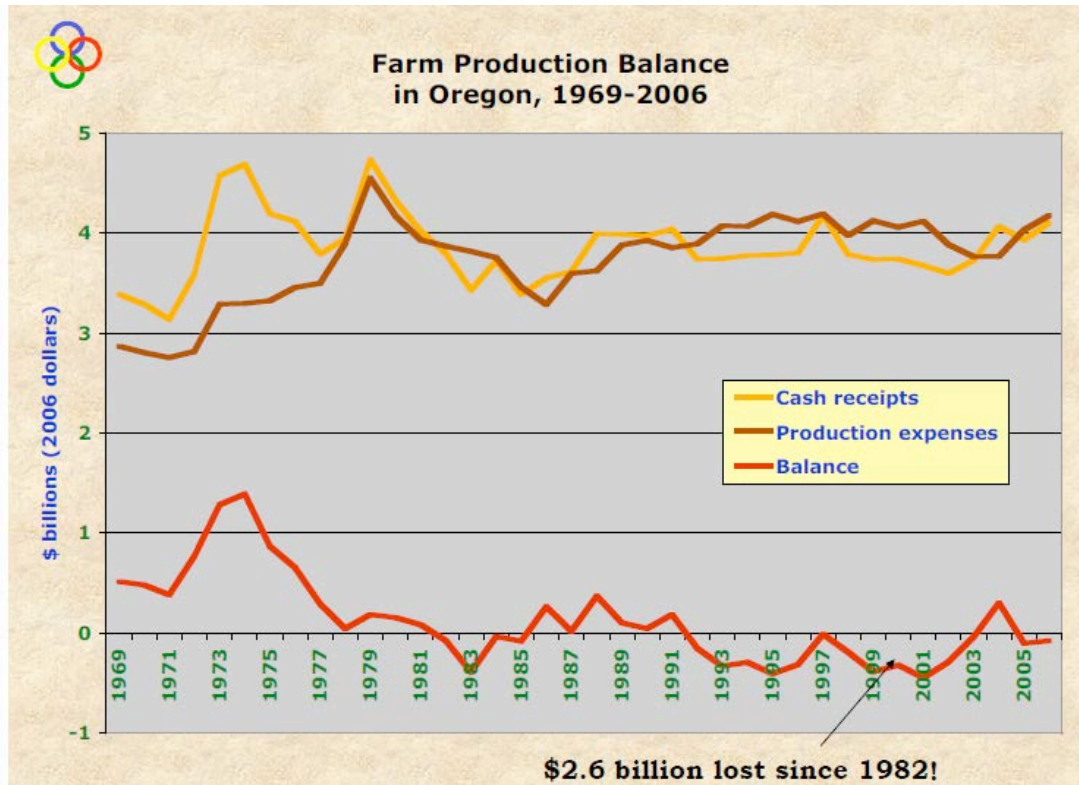


Chart prepared by Ken Meter, Crossroads Resource Center

As these charts, which are adjusted for inflation, show - farmers have held their production costs (the brown line) steady over the years, while profits - influenced by supply, markets, and other factors not always under the farmers' control - vary from year to year. In addition, some farmers have additional income streams on the farm from government payments or activities such as renting land. Farmers and ranchers in the Gorge region earn another \$23 million per year of farm-related income — primarily custom work, and rental income (30-year average for 1977-2006). The region won \$25 million in federal farm subsidies in 2006. Average data for Hood River County over the past 30 years could not be compiled because records were incomplete.⁴⁰

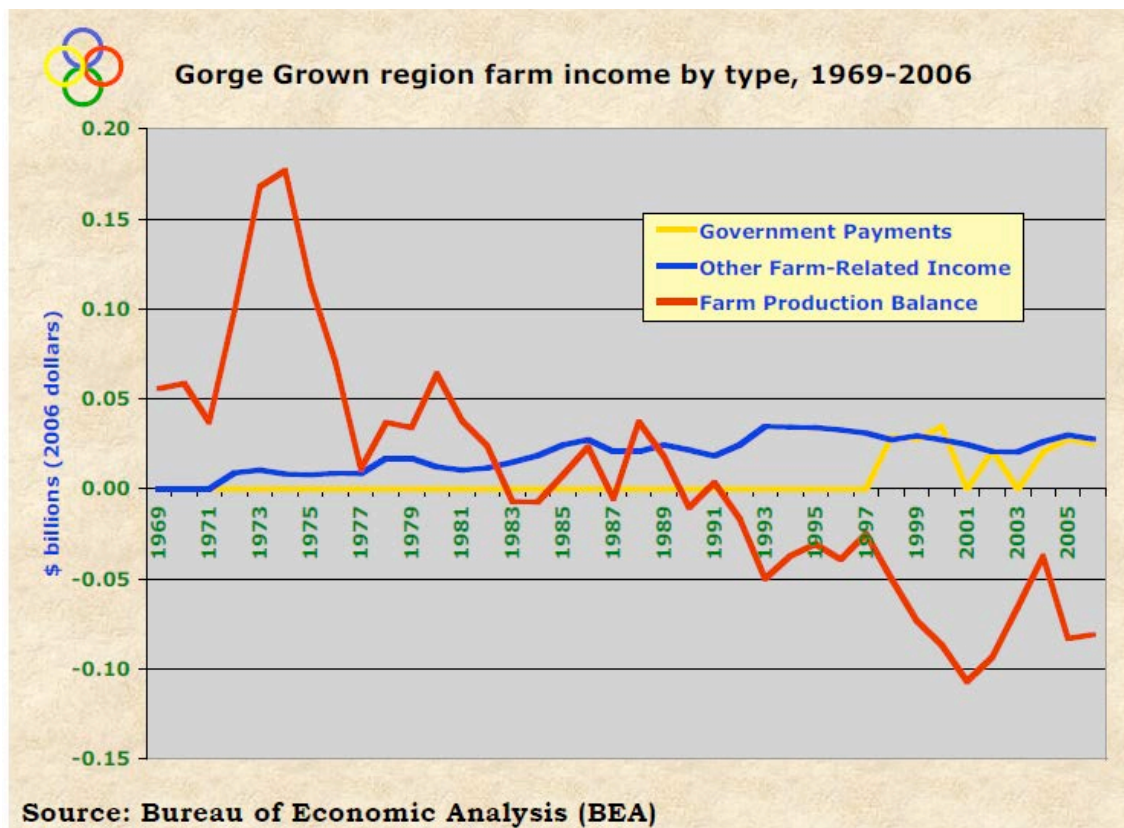


Chart prepared by Ken Meter, Crossroads Resource Center

Many farm production expenses contributing to these annual losses - such as, say, labor or equipment – can benefit the local economy by providing jobs and supporting local businesses. But others are money spent outside the region that has little direct benefit to the community.

When we look at farm expense data from the 2002 Farm Census, these production expenses are broken down by category. Analyst Ken Meter estimates that in the Gorge, approximately \$90 million out of the \$254 million in annual production costs is money spent on products from outside the region.⁴¹ (HRC numbers were unavailable)

The following chart breaks down the major farm production expenses:

(Note: The major drop in labor costs from 1979 – 1983 is a result of incomplete data, not an actual drop in costs)

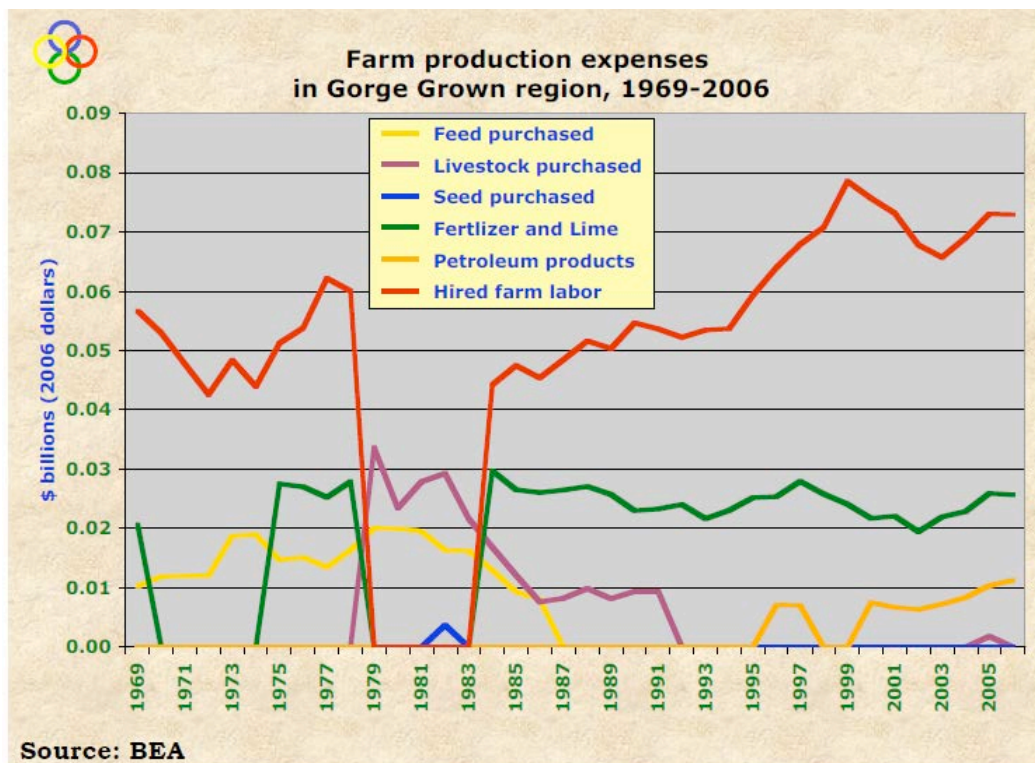


Chart prepared by Ken Meter, Crossroads Resource Center

And that's not the only set of expenses a farmer has.

As mentioned in the Introduction, for every dollar a consumer spends on food, the average farmer only sees 19 cents of it. The other 81 cents goes to external costs – packaging, transportation, distribution, and middlemen.⁴² How does that .81 break down? USDA reports it thus:

Here the biggest chunk of the food dollar



The 'marketing bill' above is impacted by changes in consumer purchasing: items like restaurant meals, microwave dinners, and processed food products have higher marketing costs associated

with their journey from farm to table, thus the marketing bill grows. The marketing bill has taken a larger and larger share of consumer food dollars since 1982, growing from 73% of consumer spending in 1982 to 81% in 2002. (2002 is the most recent data available)⁴³ And notice that this marketing bill does not include actual on-farm production costs.

To put it another way, according to OSU Extension, the average farmer sees only 12-25% of the retail price of his or her product.⁴⁴

National and International Markets

The vast majority of the ag products grown in this region leaves the here for a regional, national, and international market.

Even a determined populace could never eat all of the tree fruit or wheat that the Gorge produces. When local farmers who do not sell locally were asked in our survey, “why not?” the most common response was that the local and regional markets are not large enough.

For example: based on county population and USDA per capita consumption estimates, each year the combined residents of Hood River County eat:

Estimated HRC fruit consumption per capita, in pounds

Fruit	Total lbs	lbs per capita
Cherries	35,174	1.7
Pears	116,963	5.7
Apples	920,662	45.1

Source: USDA, Ken Meter.

Because of the prevalence of these fruits in the county, we can presume that residents of Hood River County are likely above the USDA estimates – but for the purpose of this report, we’ll stick with the standard numbers. To help put these numbers into context, below are the Oregon Agricultural Information Network estimates for total county production of the main 3 fruit crops:

Major HRC fruit crop total yields, in tons

Fruit	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	5-YR AVG
APPLES	8870.4	7697.9	11088	13715.6	12271.8	10,728.74
SWEET CHERRIES	5000	5000	1448	5061	5980	4,497.8
PEARS	142916	154166	153461	171282	160460	156,457

Source: Oregon Agricultural Information Network

We can combine these two charts to get an idea of just how much fruit the county produces vs. how much local residents eat. The below percentage represents what percentage of the total county fruit crops residents in the county *could* eat, if Hood River County residents ate their USDA per capita consumption of apples, pears, and sweet cherries exclusively from Hood River County.

Total HRC fruit crop production vs. total county fruit consumption, in tons

Fruit, in tons	Avg Annual County	Est. Total County Consumption	Percent Potentially Consumed Locally
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	Production		
APPLES	10728.7	460.331	4.29%
SWEET CHERRIES	4497.8	17.587	0.39%
PEARS	156457	78.2285	0.05%

Source: Oregon Agricultural Information Network, USDA, Ken Meter

These numbers show that at average consumption levels, the residents of Hood River County eat only five hundredths of one percent of the county's average annual pear crop. With a pear crop in the hundreds of thousands of tons, growers and packing houses have to seek larger markets for their products. These larger growers report that more of their crop is now traveling overseas, to serve growing middle class populations in India, Russia, and China. With a weak international dollar, these new customers have increased buying power that can offset the distribution costs to travel such distances.⁴⁵

Local and Regional Markets

Most of the food grown in the county is destined for large national and international markets. Opportunities to sell farm products direct to local consumers, through farmers' markets, community supported agriculture, farm stands, and more, are growing at a fast pace across the nation, including here in the Gorge. However, because these opportunities are limited in this rural region, farmers report using 2-5 different direct to market channels, including the above listed channels in addition to online orders, restaurant and caterer sales, and more.

While only 0.8% of farm products in this region are currently sold direct to consumer, this is twice the national average. In addition, direct marketing is growing at a much faster rate than conventional sales methods in both Oregon and Washington. From 1997-2007, Oregon had the fastest-growing rate of growth for direct marketing, 259.1% over 44.1% for other agricultural sales – the greatest increase in the nation. Washington, with the tenth-greatest increase nationally, reported a 163.2% increase over the same time period compared to 37.3% for total agricultural sales.

It would not be feasible for the residents of the Gorge to attempt to consume all – or even a substantial portion – of the crops farmers here grow for national and international markets. The scale of production is far beyond local market capacity to absorb. However, there are opportunities for these producers to identify local channels for some of their harvest, or to develop value-added products for Gorge-wide and Pacific Northwest-wide sales. There is little local or regional market for raw commodities such as wheat or barley, especially given the lack of milling and processing facilities, but there are opportunities for the development of local products, such as flour or animal feed. For this to happen at any scale, we need supply chain infrastructure improvements – distribution, processing, marketing – in the Gorge. Not only would developing this infrastructure help farmers get their crops and value-added products to market, they would create local jobs and keep more dollars in our regional economy.

"Direct to consumer" can mean many things: farmers' market, back of the truck sales, sales to neighbors, internet sales, CSAs, and many other sales avenues. It is considered a close proxy for

local sales, as most (but not all) direct to consumer sales routes are local or regional in nature. Mail-order is the notable exception.

A Closer Look at Direct-to-Consumer sales in Hood River County

In our farmer survey, farmers who reported selling direct to consumer typically utilize 2-5 means of selling their product. These methods include:

Farmers' Markets

On-farm Farmstands

Community Supported Agriculture Farms

Online Sales

U-Pick Operations

By selling through multiple channels, they increase their opportunities to sell more of their product. Several farmers in the survey reported selling first to direct markets and then, when they have extra, selling to lower-margin wholesale outlets like grocery stores or packing houses.

In the 2008 edition of Who's Your Farmer, a local buyers' guide including listings of farms selling direct to consumer in the Gorge region, 85 farms chose to list their business. Of these 39 are located in Hood River County.⁴⁶

Farmers' Markets

"The farmers' market provides a service to the community - for residents and for farmers." – Gorge Grown Market vendor

Hood River County has two farmers' markets: the Gorge Grown Farmers' Market (GGFM) and the Hood River Saturday Market (HRSM). The Hood River Saturday Market is 17 years old; the Gorge Grown Farmers' Market is 3 years old.

Each market averages 15-25 produce and food vendors weekly (HRSM also allows craft vendors, not included in this total).

While a small piece of the larger market for farm products in the region, farmers' markets sales figures are not insignificant:

Gorge Grown Farmers' Market Average Weekly Sales and Customers

<i>Average Weekly Sales</i>	<i>Average Weekly Customers</i>	<i>Average Weekly Purchase per Customer</i>
\$4300	458	\$9.38

Source: Gorge Grown Food Network

Note: 2008 was the first year sales data was collected for the market; sales data for HRSM was unavailable.

Over the course of a 16-week season, that \$4300 weekly totals \$68,800.

Many market customers in our food survey indicated an interest in extending the market season and encouraged growers to take measures to extend their growing season to match an extended market season. Assuming similar average weekly sales, extending the market season by half – 8 weeks – could bring total market sales to \$103,200 annually.

Vendors in our survey indicated several reasons for choosing a farmers' market as one of their sales methods:

"I take home more cash than at wholesale."

"It's a way to move extra produce."

"I can employ my kids as a way to teach them the basics of business." (2)

SPOTLIGHT: The Gorge Grown Mobile Farmers' Market

"If it weren't for this mobile market, there is no way my produce could ever reach these towns," he says. "As a farmer, I just don't have the time to take it there and sell it myself." – Gorge farmer selling to the mobile market

In 2008 Gorge Grown Food Network piloted a new type of local produce market: the mobile farmers' market. The market made its first run in July 2008, taking fresh fruits and vegetables to small rural communities in the Columbia River Gorge region bordering Oregon and Washington.

This program is not a farm-direct sales opportunity: GGFN purchases the farm products and re-sells them. However, farmers were excited for an opportunity to sell more product locally and receive direct payments for their products without having to invest staff time into traveling to the mobile market sites themselves. The service thus helps area farmers develop new markets for their products and brings local, fresh food to communities that don't have farmers markets – and in some cases – grocery stores. All leftover produce from the mobile market was donated to HRC's Meals on Wheels program – at an estimated value of over \$500.

Quick Facts: Mobile Farmers' Market (2008)

Average weekly produce sales: approximately \$1,200

Average weekly shoppers per site / weekend: 34.6 / 138.4

Participating Gorge producers: 19

Gorge communities served: 4 weekly, plus 2 additional trial sites

Community Supported Agriculture Farms (CSAs)

CSAs are a model on the rise in this region. USDA defines a CSA as: "a community of individuals who pledge support to a farm operation so that the farmland becomes, either legally or spiritually, the community's farm, with the growers and consumers providing mutual support and sharing the risks and benefits of food production. Typically, members or "share-holders" of the farm or garden pledge in advance to cover the anticipated costs of the farm operation and farmer's salary. In

return, they receive shares in the farm's bounty throughout the growing season, as well as satisfaction gained from reconnecting to the land and participating directly in food production. Members also share in the risks of farming, including poor harvests due to unfavorable weather or pests. By direct sales to community members, who have provided the farmer with working capital in advance, growers receive better prices for their crops, gain some financial security, and are relieved of much of the burden of marketing."⁴⁷

Seven Hood River County farms list themselves as offering a CSA purchase model to the community in *Who's Your Farmer?*. This is the first attempt at counting the number of CSAs in the community, so data is unavailable on how much of an increase this represents over the past 10 years, and this 7 figure may under-represent the full number given that listing in *Who's Your Farmer?* is voluntary. Gorge Grown Food Network reports that at least half of these 7 CSA operations are likely less than 5 years old.

In our consumer survey, 5.7% of respondents report receiving food through a CSA as one of their food sources. Local CSAs offer both fruit and produce in addition to dairy, bread, and meat products.

Farmstands / U-pick

Hood River County has a long tradition of local fruit stands and U-pick operations. Most of these farms are a part of the Hood River County Fruit Loop, which has 36 member farms along its route from Hood River through Odell, Mt Hood, and Parkdale. The Fruit Loop was organized in 1992 with a mission to promote sustainable agricultural diversity in Hood River County through the promotion of the products of Fruit Loop members. They coordinate on-farm sales, organized retail opportunities, marketing and public relations campaigns, and educational forums that create public awareness of the county's agricultural heritage and provide many local purchasing opportunities for residents.

Fruit Loop members don't just pick and sell fresh fruit; most are diversified operations with additional items: wine, flowers, baked goods, preserves, soaps, honey, oils, and more. In doing so, they add value to their products and their business.

Mail Order / Online

Comprehensive data is not available on how many local producers utilize mail order or online sales venues for their products, but 40% of farmers in our survey report using some means of online sales, be they gift boxes, processed items, or pre-orders of items such as chicken.

Growth Potential for Local and Regional Markets

The potential economic benefit to more local food sales in Hood River County is significant. When we think bigger, and include the more realistic regional market of the entire Columbia Gorge region – Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Klickitat, and Skamania Counties – it's even more notable.

Residents of the Columbia Gorge region spend \$201.8 million each year buying food, including \$118.7 million for home use. As we have seen, most of this is produced outside the region. In Hood

River County alone, residents spend \$52 million each year on food, including \$29 million for home use.⁴⁸

If we break that figure down further, it looks like this:

2006 Markets for Food Eaten at Home: Gorge and HRC, in millions

Product	Gorge	HRC
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$26	\$7
Fruits and vegetables	\$22	\$5
Cereals and bakery products	\$14	\$4
Dairy products	\$12	\$3
"Other," incl. sweets, fats, oils	\$41	\$10
Total	\$115	\$29

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Ken Meter

If we combine this local and regional demand for food, most of which generates a cash flow out of the county and region, with the average outflow already leaving the region in farm losses (\$10 million/yr in HRC, \$20/million/yr in the Gorge), we can estimate the total annual outflow of potential wealth from the county and region.

Potential wealth loss in Gorge and HRC, in millions

Outflow	Gorge	HRC
Farm Losses	20	10
Food Purchases	205	52
Total Loss	\$225	\$62

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Ken Meter, USDA Farm Census

That \$225 million each year amounts to almost the total value of all commodities produced in the Gorge, on average (\$234 million annually). The \$62 million outflow in Hood River County alone is near the average \$67 million annual value of all commodities produced in the county.

Not all of this outflow can or needs to be stopped – as this report notes, the county produces more of certain crops, especially orchard fruits, than could ever be sold here, and some food products, such as coffee or bananas, cannot be grown in the Gorge, meaning these products will always need to come from outside the region! In addition, many of the farms' expenses and inputs cannot be reduced.

The potential market value of additional local and regional direct to consumer sales is substantial. The vast majority of these dollars are spent on food that does not come from local sources. There is significant potential to strengthen our local economy with even a modest increase in local and regional food purchases, and an increase in farms growing crops for local markets.

If Gorge residents purchased just 20% of their fresh food – meats, poultry, fish, eggs, fruits, and vegetables – from local sources, the economic impact on the region would be significant:

Potential Value of 20% Local Purchases (in millions)

Product	GORGE	Hood River	Wasco	Sherman	Klickitat	Skamania
Meats, poultry, fish and eggs	\$5.1	\$1.3	\$1.7	\$.14	\$1.3	\$.67
Fruits and vegetables	\$4.5	\$1.1	\$1.5	\$.13	\$1.2	\$.59
TOTAL	\$9.6	\$2.4	\$3.2	\$.27	\$2.5	\$1.26

These numbers, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics consumption estimates, show that even a small portion of food purchased locally – 20% -- adds up to a large sum of money going back into our local economy.

In addition, \$2.1 million in benefits annually are provided to Hood River County residents in the Food Stamp program.⁴⁹ The US Department of Agriculture estimates that every \$5 spent in food stamps generates about \$9 in economic activity, helping support local grocers and growers. Statewide, this means that the 426,000 participating Oregonians helped generate almost \$855 million in economic activity in Oregon.⁵⁰ In Hood River County, that's \$3.78 million.

Encouraging more EBT participants to use their benefits at markets where they can access fresh, local fruits, vegetables, and meat thus could be an economic boon to local farmers – and a health boon for local residents.

Farm to School, Farm to Institution: potential local markets

Ask any food services director or food purchaser for a local school or hospital what they'd like to be serving in their cafeterias, and they'll tell you: fresh, healthy, local food. However, our local schools face challenges in getting this food from farm to institution.

A 2007 Ecotrust statewide survey of school Food Service Providers listed the following as reasons purchasers want to buy local: to support the local economy, to increase the nutritional value and quality of foods they serve, and to support Oregon businesses.

Price is these purchasers' most frequently cited challenge (36.1%), followed by inconsistent quality (30.6%), too much effort (16.7%), and reliability (13.9%).⁵¹

What could make it easier? Statewide recipients responded:

- Current listings of suppliers, products, and prices
- Help from the state with regulatory and safety info
- Help implementing an easy, usable system for purchases from multiple sources

This food assessment did not interview local institutions (hospital, community college, etc) aside from the school district to gauge their interest in buying local products for their cafeterias, but this step should be taken to better estimate institutional buying as a viable local direct market for farmers.

SPOTLIGHT: Farm to School in Hood River County

"We would love to buy more local products – it is good for the school lunch program and puts money into the local economy." – Hood River School District Food Service Director⁵²

Everyone wants to see their children eating good food at school. The challenge facing the Hood River County school food service program is finding a way to get the fresh, healthy food kids need onto the menu on a very tight budget.*

Hood River County belongs to a 90-district purchasing co-op with a current contract with Sysco; this saves considerable money thanks to the co-op's greater purchasing power. 80% of food purchases are tied up in large co-op orders; the remaining 20% is discretionary. This 20% of discretionary food spending is the window through which local food products can enter the school lunch menu.

Currently, the county food service director purchases only one local product: apples.

She and her cooks are interested in more local foods, though, and especially seek items that are already kid favorites: strawberries, blueberries, kiwis, cherry tomatoes, watermelon, and cucumbers, in addition to kitchen staples like carrots, broccoli, and salad greens.

The primary barrier to getting these local foods into schools is price. The district's purchasing budget allows for only \$1.10 to spend per meal, and in 2008, food prices went up by 12% but the food purchasing budget did not, necessitating a small rise in school lunch prices.

An example of menu planning on this budget illustrates why getting fresh, unprocessed foods onto school lunch trays is a challenge:

Federal protein requirement: 2 OZ

Cost of 2 OZ chicken nuggets: .36 cents

Cost of 2 OZ chicken legs: .74 cents

The healthier, less-processed chicken legs cost almost twice as much, and would leave only .36 cents for the rest of the federally required menu items: vegetable, fruit, and milk.

Additionally, the school district lacks a central storage and distribution facility for food items. Sysco delivers to all 9 schools, which is a time-consuming delivery run. The effort required to contract with multiple small farmers to make multiple varying-size deliveries on a regular basis is a significant barrier.

One local apple grower is able to meet the district's price and delivery needs, and each cook can order from him whenever needed. This is really valuable for the schools, and the Food Service Director highlighted the students' and cooks' enjoyment of these seasonal local apples.

What can help get local food into local schools?

* *Note: all information in this section comes from the same endnote, #36.*

- A local source for produce that is 'ready to use'. (To save on time and labor when preparing hundreds of meals daily at each site, they prefer to buy produce that is pre-washed, cleaned, and/or peeled when possible.)
- A consistent and stable supply of products
- Assistance with facilitating multiple purchases and multiple deliveries from multiple suppliers – perhaps a coordinated approach with several growers but only one delivery run?
- Central location for storage and distribution to all schools
- Recipes and ideas for encouraging children to try healthier foods
- Teaming up with parents to get children excited about new foods
- Additional food purchasing funding to make it possible to afford, and thus prioritize, local foods

HRC FOCUS GROUPS ON FARMING

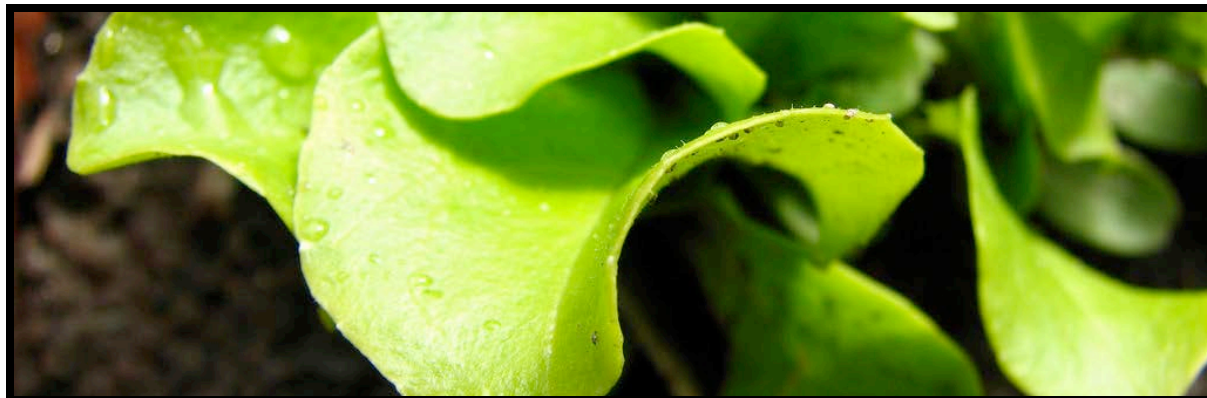
Below are quotes from farmers and ranchers – and some consumers -- on farming in the Gorge.

- ☐ “We would love not to have to go to Portland or Seattle, and sell much more just in the Gorge.”
- ☐ “We practice economic specialization – we can grow pears well here, better than almost anywhere else, so it makes sense to do this and sell to a wider market.
- ☐ “Just how many acres would it really take to feed the Gorge?”
- ☐ “As a small farmer, I don’t see local markets as a threat to bigger producers – they are a complement.”
- ☐ “What happens as the price of gas goes up? Will that require food to get more regional, or do national and international market factors still make it profitable to ship food around?”
- ☐ “In the long run, we’ve got to educate people better about how agriculture works.”
- ☐ “We need more people getting into agriculture as a career, and if seeing farmers at local markets help get them into it, that’s a good thing.”
- ☐ “What do local farmers need from land use? How can the land use system better help them succeed?”
- ☐ “We’ve been spoiled as consumers by cheap food that hurts the farmer.”
- ☐ “Local is not always cheaper or more efficient.”
- ☐ “If there are so many fruit farms in the area, why isn't more of their produce for sale at local grocery stores (i.e. Rosauers and Safeway)?”
- ☐ “I worry about the pesticide levels in food and water here...”
- ☐ “I need help targeting and marketing to restaurants.”
- ☐ We need funding opportunities for equipment.
- ☐ “Above all we need help finding and developing local markets for what we grow!”

RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY: Chapter II

- 1. Encourage the development of more locally-focused farm and food businesses, and the success and growth of existing operations**
 - *Expand and improve producer education and networking opportunities in each county and across the region to facilitate information sharing*
 - *Explore cooperative marketing and market development efforts among multiple farmers and partners to increase farm viability and growth*
 - *Assist beginning and transitioning farmers in securing land on which to operate and start-up capital and materials*
- 2. Develop and improve local markets for local products, including direct to consumer sales opportunities**
 - *Strengthen and develop new direct to consumer market outlets, such as farmers' markets and farm stands*
 - *Identify opportunities for commodity producers to develop products for local direct markets, such as value-added products*
 - *Identify potential new locally marketed value-added products appropriate to local producers*
 - *Work with larger buyers, including institutions and businesses, to encourage and aid them in regularly purchasing locally produced farm products*
- 3. Fill in regional supply chain gaps with local businesses and cooperative opportunities for producers**
 - *Develop stronger food processing (including value added) infrastructure for products destined for local markets*
 - *Develop stronger food distribution infrastructure, including partnership efforts, for products destined for local and regional markets*

III. Accessing Food: Food Security, Emergency Food, and Shopping



While the Gorge is a heavily agricultural region, access to food is difficult for many residents. The region's population of over 75,000 is geographically dispersed across more than 7,500 square miles, meaning many residents must drive long distances to access a full service grocery store. Others have limited incomes and depend on emergency food pantries to supplement their monthly food budget.

Across the Gorge, 15.1% of residents live below the federal poverty line. These residents struggle to balance housing, utilities, transportation, and health care costs, as well as accessing food for their families.

Poverty Rates in the Columbia River Gorge

Gorge Average	Hood River	Wasco	Sherman	Klickitat	Skamania
15.1%	13.2%	14.6%	15.5%	19.3%	13.1%

This chapter begins with demographic profiles of each county profiled in this food assessment.

Demographic Profile of Hood River County

The total population in Hood River County as of July 1, 2006, was 21,533 people. Of this total, children under 18 represented 26.3% and adults 65 and over represented 12.3%. The county's population has grown and diversified in recent decades, with an increase in Hispanic residents most notable: rising to 25.8% in 2006.⁵³

Just over 78% of county residents have a high school diploma; 23.1% have a bachelor's degree or higher. Unemployment in 2007 was just 4.6%, part of a consistent decline in unemployment since the mid-2000s.⁵⁴ Unemployment has risen sharply in the current recession.

Seasonal industries, agriculture, leisure and hospitality, are a major piece of Hood River County's economy. These industries offer seasonal, low-wage jobs and leave many residents struggling to

find work year-round. Not all of those who do have year-round work are able to afford basic family expenses.

According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, Hood River County's per capita personal income was \$25,237 in 2004, 83 percent of the state average of \$30,561, and 76 percent of the national average, \$33,050.⁵⁵ By 2006, this figure grew to \$29,333, 88 percent of the state average of \$33,299 and 80 percent of the national average, \$36,714.⁵⁶ These improvements are good for residents, but still do not guarantee that individuals at the average per capita income can cover basic living expenses.

In 2005, average monthly earnings in Hood River County were \$1,998. Based on this average wage, one-earner families and two-earner families with more than one child could not cover basic family expenses. Families living in poverty could only afford 37.8 to 41.8% of basic expenses in 2005.⁵⁷ As of 2004, 13% of county residents lived at or below the poverty line⁵⁸ (This is the most recent official Census estimate). The Census estimates that 18.4% of children in the county are living in poverty.⁵⁹

While more recent data on the cost of living in Hood River County is unavailable, even at 2005 cost levels the average family cannot cover basic expenses.

2005 Hood River County's basic family budget by family size

Basic family budget/month	1 adult and 1 child	1 adult and 3 children	2 adults and 1 child	2 adults and 3 children
Housing	\$619	\$881	\$619	\$881
Food	\$303	\$580	\$479	\$722
Child care	\$555	\$1,122	\$555	\$1,122
Transportation	\$381	\$381	\$535	\$535
Health care	\$239	\$249	\$324	\$360
Other necessities	\$286	\$453	\$340	\$497
Taxes	\$436	\$602	\$445	\$389
Basic family budget needed/month	\$2,819	\$4,268	\$3,297	\$4,506
Basic family budget total/annual	\$33,828	\$51,216	\$39,564	\$54,072
Hourly wage needed for basic family budget	\$16.26	\$24.62	\$19.02	\$26.00
Poverty threshold	\$12,830	\$19,350	\$16,090	\$22,610
% Of basic budget	37.9%	37.8%	40.7%	41.8%

*(Basic Family Budget was developed by Oregon Housing and Community Services for Oregon's 2006 Report on Poverty)*⁶⁰

Non-citrus fruit orchards require the highest number of seasonal workers out of agricultural employment in Oregon. In 2006, Hood River County farmers employed an average 2,240 workers, ranging seasonally from 3,820 in September to 1,220 in December. Additionally, Nuestra Comunidad Sana (NCS), project of nonprofit The Next Door, Inc., reports that each year our region's orchards, vineyards, nurseries, and fruit packing houses attract from 15,000 to 40,000 migrant and seasonal farm workers.

Demographic Profile of Wasco County

In 2008, the population of Wasco County was 23,775. Of this total, 22.9% were under 18 years old, 17.6% were over 65 years old and 12.3% were Hispanic. From April 2000 to July 2008, the population decreased by .1%.

In 2008, 82.1% of residents were high school graduates and 15.7% had at least a bachelor's degree. Unemployment in September 2009 was 8.0%, a 2.5% annual increase from 5.5% in September 2008.⁶¹

According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, Wasco County's per capita personal income (PCPI) in 2007 was \$30,589. This PCPI ranked 17th in the state, at 87% of the state average of \$35,143 and 79% of the national average of \$38,615. The 2007 PCPI reflected an increase of 7.9% from 2006 when the PCPI was \$28,347, 84% of the state average and 77% of the national average. In 1997, the PCPI of Wasco County was \$21,502 and ranked 14th in the state. The 1997-2007 average annual growth rate of PCPI was 3.6%⁶².

In 2005, the average monthly wage in Wasco County was \$2,226.⁶³ With these earnings, one adult with one or more children could not cover basic family expenses. Families living in poverty could not afford half of the basic family budget in 2005. As of 2007, 14.6% of county residents lived below the poverty line.⁶⁴ The Census Bureau estimates that 24.6% of Wasco County children live in poverty.⁶⁵

2005 Basic Family Budget: Wasco County

Basic family budget/month	1 adult and 1 child	1 adult and 3 children	2 adults and 1 child	2 adults and 3 children
Housing	\$573	\$814	\$573	\$814
Food	\$303	\$580	\$479	\$722
Child care	\$554	\$1,022	\$554	\$1,022
Transportation	\$381	\$381	\$535	\$535
Health care	\$239	\$249	\$324	\$360
Other necessities	\$272	\$432	\$326	\$476
Taxes	\$339	\$0	\$283	(\$27)
Basic family budget needed/month	\$2,651	\$3,458	\$3,064	\$3,936
Basic family budget total/annual	\$31,812	\$41,496	\$36,768	\$47,232
Hourly wage needed for basic family budget	\$15.29	\$19.95	\$17.68	\$22.71
Poverty threshold	\$12,830	\$19,350	\$16,090	\$22,610
% Of basic budget	40.3%	46.6%	43.8%	47.9%

The Basic Family Budget was developed by Oregon Housing and Community Services for its 2006 Report on Poverty.

Demographic Profile of Sherman County

In 2008, the population of Sherman County was 1,638. Of this total, 17.3% was under 18 years old, 21.1% was over 65 years old and 7.7% were Hispanic. From April 2000 to July 2008, the population decreased by 15.3%. Of Oregon's 36 counties, Sherman County's population ranks 35th.

In 2008, 84.3% of residents were high school graduates and 19% had achieved at least a bachelor's degree. Unemployment in September 2009 was 7.6%, a 3.0% annual increase from 4.6% in September 2008.⁶⁶ State unemployment increased 4.6%, from 6.2% in September 2008 to 10.8% in September 2009.

According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, Sherman County's per capita personal income in 2007 was \$28,971. This PCPI ranked 23rd in the state, at 82% of the state average of \$35,143 and 75% of the national average of \$38,615. The 2007 PCPI reflected an increase of 41.3% from 2006 when the PCPI of Sherman County was \$20,506, 61% of the state average and 56% of the national average. In 1997, the PCPI of Sherman County was \$18,997 and ranked 30th in the state. The 1997-2007 average annual growth rate of PCPI was 4.3 %. The average annual growth rate for the state was 3.7% and for the nation was 4.3%.

In 2005, the average monthly wage in Sherman County was \$2,436.⁶⁷ With these earnings, one adult with one or more children could not cover basic family expenses. Families living in poverty could afford 45.5 to 51.2% of the basic family budget in 2005. As of 2007, 15.5% of county residents lived below the poverty line.⁶⁸ The Census Bureau estimates that 22.9% of Sherman County children live in poverty.⁶⁹

2005 Basic Family Budget: Sherman County

Basic family budget/month	1 adult and 1 child	1 adult and 3 children	2 adults and 1 child	2 adults and 3 children
Housing	\$564	\$764	\$564	\$764
Food	\$303	\$580	\$479	\$722
Child care	\$514	\$992	\$514	\$922
Transportation	\$381	\$381	\$535	\$535
Health care	\$239	\$249	\$324	\$360
Other necessities	\$269	\$417	\$323	\$461
Taxes	\$82	(\$152)	\$275	(\$81)
Basic family budget needed/month	\$2,352	\$3,161	\$3,014	\$3,683
Basic family budget total/annual	\$28,224	\$37,932	\$36,168	\$44,196
Hourly wage needed for basic family budget	\$13.57	\$18.24	\$17.39	\$21.25
Poverty threshold	\$12,830	\$19,350	\$16,090	\$22,610
% Of basic budget	45.5%	51.0%	44.5%	51.2%

The Basic Family Budget was developed by Oregon Housing and Community Services for its 2006 Report on Poverty.

Based on these findings, the Mid-Columbia Community Action Council (MCCAC) identified food insecurity and transportation as needs of the low-income populations of Wasco and Sherman counties.⁷⁰

Demographic Profile of Klickitat and Skamania County

The rural areas of Klickitat and Skamania County have an approximate population of 20,377 and 10,794 respectively.^{1,2} In 2008, children under 18 years of age represented 22.4% and adults 65 years and older comprised 16.5% of the population in Klickitat County.^{1,2} In Skamania County, 21.2% of residents were children under 18 years old and 12% were adults 65 years and older.^{71,72}

Almost 82% of residents in Klickitat County have a high school diploma; 16.4% have a bachelor's degree or higher.¹ In Skamania County, about 86% of residents have a high school diploma and 16.8% have a bachelor's degree or higher.²

According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the per capita personal income in Klickitat County was \$26,238 in 2005 and \$29,949 in 2007.⁷³ The 2007 per capita income level in Klickitat County was ranked 19th in the state, which was 23% below the state average and 18% below the national average.^{1,74} In Skamania County, the per capita personal income was \$26,937 in 2005 and \$30,338 in 2007.^{2,4} As of November 2009, the estimated unemployment rate in Klickitat and Skamania County was 9.1 % and 11.7% respectively.⁷⁵

Percentage of People Living Below Federal Poverty Level

	Klickitat County	Skamania County
People of all ages below poverty level	19.3 %	13.1 %
Related children under 18 years in poverty	29.2 %	18.1 %
Related children ages 5 to 17 in families in poverty	25.4 %	17.7 %

A basic family budget indicates the financial cost of a family's most basic needs, which is limited to food, shelter, clothing, child care, health care and transportation needs. Basic family budget does not include savings, travel, entertainment, and other costs that are considered nonessential.⁷⁶ The 2007 basic family budget in rural Washington demonstrates that low income residents living in rural counties like Klickitat and Skamania County may struggle with meeting the cost of living, and therefore go without some basic needs.⁸

2007 Basic Family Budget by family size in Rural Washington ⁸

Basic Family Budget per Month	1 adult and 1 child	1 adult and 3 children	2 adults and 1 child	2 adults and 3 children
Housing	\$669	\$935	\$669	\$935
Food	\$317	\$616	\$514	\$776
Childcare	\$518	\$999	\$518	\$999
Transportation	\$390	\$390	\$524	\$524
Health Care	\$237	\$343	\$329	\$435

Other Necessities	\$237	\$373	\$284	\$411
Monthly Tax	\$127	\$211	\$218	\$225
Basic Family Budget needed/month	\$2,494	\$3,865	\$3,055	\$4,304
Basic Family Budget Total/annual	\$29,932	\$46,385	\$36,657	\$51,652
Hourly Wage needed for basic family budget	\$15.59	\$24.16	\$19.09	\$26.90
2007 Poverty Threshold	\$14,291	\$21,100	\$16,689	\$24,744
% of Basic Budget	47.7%	45.5%	45.5%	47.9%

The main industries in Klickitat County include advanced manufacturing, orchards and fruit packing, and a growing number of wineries.³ During the 1990's, there was a steady increase in employment, which slowed in 2001 due to the closure of an aluminum smelter in Goldendale, in which the county lost 600 high-wage jobs.³ Since 2005, employment opportunities have increased in the county with the establishment of InSitu, an engineering firm and contractor, in western Klickitat County and wind farms along the eastern part of the county.³

In the last 20 years, small to mid-size farms, ranches and wineries have grown and have helped to stabilize the local economy in the eastern portion of Klickitat County. Throughout the county, one quarter of jobs remain in the agriculture and forestry industries, which somewhat reflects the economy as it was historically, but at a decreased level.

A Profile of Community Food Survey Respondents

The demographic profiles of the survey respondents closely reflect the county profiles as reported in the US Census, which suggests that the CFA results represent residents fairly. Because the community food survey was conducted over a period of 2 years, with a separate database for each county, the survey respondent profile is separated as it was in its implementation: Hood River County, Wasco and Sherman Counties together, and Klickitat and Skamania Counties together.

(Some % ages may not total 100% because respondents may have skipped a question.)

HOOD RIVER COUNTY

(Total respondents: 656. Total surveys completed in Spanish: 44. Some percentages may not total 100% due to participants skipping questions)

ZIP Code

(Cascade Locks) 97014	10.3%
(Hood River) 97031	72.2%
(Mt Hood / Parkdale) 97041	10.0%
(Odell) 97044	1.4%

Household Income

Under \$10,000	10.9%
\$11,000 to 20,000	11.6%
\$21,000 to 40,000	20.4%
\$41,000 to 60,000	15.7%
\$61,000 to 100,000	18.7%
\$101,000 or more	6.9%
Prefer not to say	15.9%

Seasonal Farmworkers

Yes	15.0%
No	85.0%

Languages Spoken at Home

English	77.0%
Spanish	17.0%
Other	6.0%

Gender, Age, Race, and Ethnicity:

Male	27.7%
Female	72.0%

Under 18	25.9%
19 to 25	7.7%
26 to 35	14.6%
36 to 55	28.9%
56 to 70	13.1%
Over 70	9.7%

White	80.7%
Asian	1.9%
American Indian or Alaska Native	3.1%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.9%
African American/ Black	1.0%
Other	15.0%
Prefer not to say	3.7%

Of Latino / Hispanic Ethnicity

Yes	28.8%
No	71.2%

* Other includes: Russian and French, but most respondents checking "other" reported speaking BOTH English and Spanish in the home.

Household Size (number of individuals residing in the home)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9.6%	29.6%	17.4%	21.9%	11.6%	5.8%	2.3%	.5%	.2%	.7%

Children in the Household

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
20.6%	24.7%	32%	14.5%	4.1%	1.7%	1.7%	.3%	0	.3%	0

Seniors over 65 in the Household

0	1	2	3	4	5
55.8%	25.6	14.9%	2.9%	0	.4%

WASCO AND SHERMAN COUNTY

ZIP Code

Wasco County	678
(Antelope) 97001	<1%
(Dufur) 97021	5.5%
(Maupin) 97037	6.1%
(Mosier) 97040	7.2%
(Shaniko) 97057	<1%
(The Dalles) 97058	76.3%
(Tygh Valley) 97063	4.7%
Sherman County	131
(Grass Valley) 97029	11.5%
(Kent) 97033	1.5%
(Moro) 97039	36.6%
(Rufus) 97050	13.0%
Wasco (97065)	37.4%

Household Income

Gender, Age, Race and Ethnicity

	Wasco	Sherman
Male	19.9%	17.8%
Female	80.1%	82.2%
Under 18	1.2%	0.0%
19 to 25	8.0%	3.1%
26 to 35	20.1%	10.8%
36 to 55	41.4%	36.2%
56 to 70	21.4%	34.6%
Over 70	8.0%	15.4%
White	90.1%	93.8%
Asian	.6%	0.0%
American Indian or Alaska Native	4.0%	3.1%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.0%
African American/Black	.5%	0.0%
Other	4.9%	1.5%
Prefer not to Say	3.5%	6.2%
Latino, Chicano or Hispanic Ethnicity	12.4%	2.4%

Household Size

	Wasco	Sherman
1	13.5%	13.5%
2	36.5%	42.9%
3	16.8%	16.7%
4	16.0%	10.3%
5	10.3%	7.9%
6	3.4%	4.0%
7	1.1%	2.4%
8	1.2%	1.6%
9	0.5%	0.0%
10	0.5%	0.0%

	Wasco	Sherman
Under \$10,000	11.2%	8.6%
\$11,000 to 20,000	13.5%	13.3%
\$21,000 to 40,000	20.0%	21.9%
\$41,000 to 60,000	18.3%	16.4%
\$61,000 to 100,000	19.4%	18.0%
\$101,000 or more	6.0%	4.7%
Prefer not to say	11.5%	17.2%

Seasonal Farm Workers

	Wasco	Sherman
Yes	7.2%	1.6%
No	92.8%	98.4%

Languages Spoken at Home

	Wasco	Sherman
English	88.3%	97.7%
English and Spanish	6.4%	1.5%
Spanish	4.9%	0.0%
Other	.4%	.8%

Children in the Household

	Wasco	Sherman
0	33.3%	36.4%
1	21.8%	22.7%
2	25.3%	19.7%
3	13.8%	15.2%
4	3.3%	1.5%
5	1.0%	1.5%
6	1.0%	3.0%
7	0.5%	0.0%
8	0.3%	0.0%

Seniors Over 65 in the Household

	Wasco	Sherman
0	62.1%	50.8%
1	18.2%	26.2%
2	17.8%	23.1%
3	1.0%	0.0%
4	0.6%	0.0%

Seasonal Farm Workers

	Klickitat	Skamania
Yes	5.8%	5.2%
No	94.2%	94.8%

Languages Spoken at Home

	Klickitat	Skamania
English	95.1%	97.5%
Spanish	2.1%	1.0%
Other*	2.8%	1.5%

*Other includes: Italian, American Sign Language, and Native Indian, but most respondents checking "other" reported speaking both English and Spanish in the home.

Klickitat and Skamania County

(Total respondents in Klickitat County: 719. Total surveys completed in Spanish: 10. Total respondents in Skamania County: 202. Total surveys completed in Spanish: 1. Some percentages may not total 100% due to participants skipping questions)

ZIP Code (Unavailable for Skamania / Klickitat responses)

Klickitat County	78.1%
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	Klickitat	Skamania
Under 18	8.7%	3.0%
18 to 25	3.8%	4.1%
26 to 35	16.9%	15.7%
36 to 55	36%	41.6%
56 to 70	26.5%	27.4%
Over 70	8.1%	8.1%

Skamania County	21.9%
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Household Income

	Klickitat	Skamania
Under \$10,000	8.4%	15.2%
\$11,000 to 20,000	12.4%	13.6%
\$21,000 to 40,000	20.1%	20.4%
\$41,000 to 60,000	22.5%	16.8%
\$61,000 to 100,000	17.6%	17.3%
\$101,000 or more	6.6%	5.8%
Prefer not to say	12.4%	11%

Gender, Age, Race, Ethnicity

	Klickitat	Skamania
Male	22.5%	20.3%
Female	77.4%	78.7%

	Klickitat Survey Respondents	All Klickitat County Residents	Skamania Survey Respondents	All Skamania County Residents
White	91.4%	92.1%	89.3%	88.9%
Asian	0.4%	0.5%	1.5%	0.7%
American Indian or Alaska Native	5.7%	2.2%	8.6%	6%
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.2%	0.0%	0.2%
African American/Black	0%	0.3%	0.5%	0.1%
Other	2.9%	2.4%	4.6%	2%
Prefer not to say	3.6%		4.6%	

Of Latino/Hispanic Ethnicity

	Klickitat	Skamania
Yes	6.7%	2.6%
No	93.3%	97.4%

Household Size (number of individuals residing in the home)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Klickitat	10.8%	31.7%	17.4%	20.7%	10.1%	4.7%	2.0%	0.7%	0.3%	1.0%
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Skamania	18.9%	37.9%	8.4%	20.0%	9.5%	3.2%	1.1%	0.5%	0.5%	0

Children in the Household

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
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Klickitat	20.1%	23.4%	31.8%	14.4%	6.0%	2.2%	0.2%	0.7%	1.0%
	0	1	2	3	4	5			
Skamania	33.3%	17.1%	30.6%	9.9%	8.1%	0.9%			

Seniors over 65 in the Household

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Klickitat	60.9%	17.5%	19.0%	1.1%	1.1%	0	0	0	0.4%
	0	1	2						
Skamania	61.4%	26.1%	12.5%						

Shopping for Food in the Gorge

Where Residents Shop: Hood River County

Asked where they primarily get the food they eat, the vast majority of respondents from Hood River County selected grocery stores. An additional 61.1% eat out at sit-down or fast-food restaurants as an additional primary source of food, although those who did so predominantly eat out only 1-3 times a week (92.8% of sit-down patrons, 92.7% of fast food patrons).

An additional 1.7% listed farmers' markets and fruit stands as a *primary source*. Less than 1% listed their home garden as a *primary* food source.

Grocery store shoppers overwhelmingly visit Hood River County's two largest grocers, Safeway and Rosauer's, as their primary shopping source. A significantly smaller number shop primarily at smaller grocers McIsaac's in Parkdale and Columbia Market in Cascade Locks, in addition to the smaller Mother's Market Place in Hood River.

Most (52.4%) respondents travel only 0-5 miles to get to their primary shopping source. 34% travel 6-20 miles, and another 13.6% travel more than 20 miles to shop.

Perhaps because of their close proximity to grocery stores, most respondents shop frequently – 73.4% shop at least once a week or more. Residents who report traveling more than 20 miles to get to a grocery store shop less often; 63.6% shop only once or twice a month.

In addition to these *primary* food sources, respondents listed a wide range of *secondary* sources of food.

Where else do you get the food you eat? (multiple responses allowed)

Specialty or small stores (Juanita's, etc)	47.9%
Farmers' Market	45.0%
Farmstands or Orchards	33.3%
Home garden	37.6%
Gleaners	2.1%
Community garden	1.8%
Food Bank or Pantry	8.3%
Senior Center	3.5%
Free community meals (Soul Café, etc)	2.0%
Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)	5.7%
Church/Community organizations	3.4%
Convenience stores or gas stations	11.5%
Home-delivered meals (Meals on Wheels)	3.0%

In addition to the above locations, respondents had the opportunity to write in additional food sources. These included:

- ☐ Azure Standard / Waucoma Food Co-op

- ☐ Foraging
- ☐ Hunting
- ☐ 4-H Animals
- ☐ Community events
- ☐ Wal-Mart
- ☐ The Dalles-area stores: Grocery Outlet, Fred Meyer
- ☐ Portland-area stores: Costco, Whole Foods, New Seasons, WinCo, Trader Joe's

The Dalles and Portland-area stores listed were predominantly either budget / discount-priced chains (WinCo, Grocery Outlet, Costco) or high-end grocers (Whole Foods, New Seasons, Trader Joe's).

Where Residents Shop: Wasco and Sherman County

The majority of Wasco and Sherman County survey respondents buy most of their food at grocery stores. Overwhelmingly, shoppers in both counties visit The Dalles' two largest grocers, Fred Meyer and Safeway, to buy most of their food. A significantly smaller number shop at Grocery Outlet and Cash & Carry-United Grocers, which are discount stores. The smaller markets in rural Wasco and Sherman County communities were rarely mentioned. In Wasco and Sherman Counties respectively, 5.9% and 2.3% also listed farmers' markets, CSAs and farm stands as primary sources of food purchases.

In Wasco County, most respondents (63.6%) travel 0-5 miles to grocery shop. 10.7% travel 6-10 miles, 11.5% travel 11-25 and 14.1% travel more than 26 miles.

Most residents shop frequently — 78.9% shop at least once a week. Residents who report traveling more than 26 miles to a grocery store shop less frequently — 53.7% shop only once or twice a month. When asked "What (if anything) makes it hard for you to get the food you need?," transportation was the fourth most common response from this group. "Nothing" was the most common response (35%) followed by cost and time for shopping.

In Sherman County, most respondents (88.8 %) travel more than 26 miles to go grocery shopping. 8.0 % travel 11-25 miles and 3.2% travel 0-5 miles. Likely because of the distance, 47.5% of residents traveling more than 26 miles to a grocery store indicated that they shop only once or twice a month. However, the remaining 52.5% still shop at least once a week. When asked "What (if anything) makes it hard for you to get the food you need?," transportation was the fourth most common response from this group. "Nothing" was the most common response (29.5%) followed by cost and time for shopping.

40.5% of Wasco County residents and 65.4% of Sherman County residents report buying food at sit-down or fast-food restaurants. However, the majority of those eating out do so only 1-2 times a month (Wasco: 69.4% of sit-down restaurant patrons and 64.8% of fast-food restaurant patrons; Sherman: 72.4% of sit-down restaurant patrons and 74.7% of fast-food restaurant patrons).

In addition to grocery stores as primary food sources, respondents reported a wide range of secondary sources.

Where else do you get the food you eat? (multiple responses allowed)

	Wasco	Sherman
Small or specialty stores (General Store, etc.)	35.0%	43.2%
Farmers' Market	46.6%	26.4%
Farmstands or Orchards	33.1%	35.2%
Home garden	51.3%	52.0%
Gleaners	4.2%	2.4%
Community garden	3.8%	0.8%
Food Bank or Pantry	10.9%	8.8%
Senior Center (including Meals on Wheels)	7.0%	14.4%
Free Community Meals	3.0%	1.6%
Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)	2.7%	0.0%
Church/Community Groups	2.9%	4.8%
Convenience Stores or Gas Stations	8.5%	8.8%
Scavenging	2.4%	0.8%
Hunting or Fishing	19.3%	25.6%
Other	10.5%	12.0%

In addition to the above locations, respondents specified other food sources that include:

- Wasco Market
- Azure Standard
- Organic2Go Store
- Friends and Family
- Portland-area stores: Costco, WinCo, Trader Joe's, New Seasons
- Central Oregon stores: Thriftway in Madras, Super Wal-Mart in Redmond
- Hood River-area stores: Rosauer's, Safeway, Mother's Market, Wal-Mart, Juanita's

Where Residents Shop: Klickitat and Skamania County

The majority of residents living in Klickitat and Skamania County get the food they eat primarily from grocery stores. In Klickitat County, of those residents who get food at sit down restaurants, the majority (69.7%) go only one to two times per month. Fast food restaurants are the food sources least accessed by residents. Of Klickitat County residents who purchase food at fast food restaurants, 62.6% purchase fast food only one to two times per month; 9.8% purchase fast food two to six times per month.

The food stores most accessed by Klickitat County respondents include IGA and Sentry in Goldendale, Thriftway in White Salmon, Fred Meyer and Grocery Outlet in The Dalles, and Safeway, Rosauer's, and Wal-Mart in Hood River. Specialty or bulk stores that Klickitat County respondents sometimes use include Mother's Market Place in Hood River and Costco, Trader Joe's, and WinCo in Portland, Oregon. Of all Klickitat County respondents, 8.6% said they access food from other primary sources, including farmers' markets, food coops, and home grown vegetable or meat foods.

In Klickitat County, 50.9% of respondents travel between 0-10 miles to go grocery shopping. Other respondents typically travel farther to access grocery stores; 22.2% travel between 11 and 25 miles and 26.9% travel more than 26 miles.

In Skamania County, 98% of respondents said they get most of their food from grocery stores. Of respondents who access food at sit down restaurants, 77% of them do so one to two times per month. A higher number of Skamania County respondents, 88.4%, access food at fast food restaurants between one to two times per month. A smaller number of respondents, 11.6%, go to fast food restaurants once per week.

Skamania County respondents shop at grocery stores similar to those that Klickitat County respondents access, with the exception of stores located in Goldendale. Skamania County respondents frequently access A&J Select in Stevenson. About 42% of Skamania County respondents travel between 0 and 10 miles to access food at grocery stores; 28.9% travel 11-25 miles and 28.9% travel more than 26 miles.

Stores located in The Dalles and Portland that are accessed by Klickitat and Skamania County respondents are predominantly budget/discount chain stores or high-end grocers. In addition to these primary food sources, respondents listed a wide range of secondary sources of food.

Where else do you get the food you eat? (multiple responses allowed)

Location	Klickitat County	Skamania County
Specialty or small store (Dickey's, etc.)	46.8%	52.7%
Farmers' Market	33.8%	37.1%
Farm stands or Orchards	30.4%	22.0%
Home garden	44.8%	49.5%
Gleaners	4.3%	1.6%
Community garden	1.3%	2.2%
Food Bank or Pantry	13.9%	20.4%
Senior Center (including Meals on Wheels)	4.3%	8.1%
Free community meals	1.5%	1.1%
Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)	2.0%	6.5%
Church/community organizations	3.5%	3.2%
Convenience stores or gas stations	12.5%	15.1%

Survey respondents had the opportunity to comment on other food sources they access other than the secondary food locations listed above. These include:

Klickitat County	Skamania County
Hunting/fishing	Hunting/fishing
Home raised meat	Home raised meat
Market Street Café	Friends gardens
Neighbor Exchange	Neighbor Exchange
Potlucks	Tribal fish vendor
WIC	Worksite
Azure Standard	Azure Standard
Family/friends	Family/friends
Schwan's	
Foraging	
Home orchards	
Long house	

Local farm raised beef
Hospital Cafeteria

What residents buy: Hood River County

Just over half of survey respondents (62.2%) report that half, most, or all of their food purchases are fresh fruits and vegetables. This is an encouraging figure!

How much of what you buy is fresh fruits and vegetables?

None	0.9%
A little (25%)	36.9%
About half (50%)	46.3%
Most of it (75%)	14.8%
All of it (100%)	1.1%

Residents who report traveling more than 20 miles to get to a grocery store (13.6% of respondents) are less likely to purchase fruits and vegetables: 50.4% report that half, most, or all of their food purchases are fresh fruits and vegetables. Among all respondents, 91.6% sometimes or always choose food grown locally when it is available.

When it is available, do you choose food grown locally (in the Gorge) over other food?

Yes	54.1%
No	8.4%
Sometimes	37.5%

The 8% of respondents who checked NO on choosing local food did so predominantly – 39.3% - out of price concerns. However, for another large number of individuals, they simply cannot find local food. This represents a market opportunity to better identify / label / advertise local food products so that people who want to preference local products are able to do so.

If you do NOT choose food grown locally (in the Gorge), why not?

I can't find local food	31.8%
It is more expensive	39.3%
I don't see any reason to buy it	19.6%
Other (please specify)	15.9%

Respondents who checked "other" listed a multitude of reasons, summarized below:

- ☐ Choose organic over local out of pesticide concerns (2)
- ☐ Buying at the store is more convenient (2)
- ☐ Decide by quality and price, not local factor
- ☐ Hadn't ever considered it (5)

As for the individuals who said they cannot find local food, they are more likely to have household incomes under \$40,000 (58.1%), be Latino (43.8%), and be under 35 years old (62.5%).

For those who do buy local food, their purchasing is dominated by fruits and vegetables, which reflects what is actually primarily produced in the county. While fruit is ubiquitous given that the area is considered the pear producing capital of the country, the percentage of individuals purchasing local vegetables is also high – perhaps reflecting the fact that those who do buy local are looking to buy a variety of fresh products.

What do you buy that was grown in the Gorge?

Vegetables	74.9%
Fruits	93.9%
Meat or Dairy	22.0%
Other (please specify)	6.1%

Items listed in “other” included:

- ☐ Eggs (10)
- ☐ Herbs
- ☐ Mushrooms
- ☐ Juice
- ☐ Honey
- ☐ Bread
- ☐ Anything!
- ☐ In addition to local value-added products such as Juanita’s corn chips and several locally-made salsa varieties.

What shoppers want

Survey respondents were asked to specify what foods they want but are unable to get. These items included:

- “Wish there was more locally grown meat and dairy available on a small scale”
- “Need more local fruits, veggies, dairy”
- “Not enough organic foods”
- “We would like raw milk and cheese”
- “Where can we buy local in the winter?”

What Residents Buy: Wasco and Sherman County

More than half of Wasco County residents (55.5%) and Sherman County residents (57.2%) report that half, most or all of their food purchases are fresh fruits and vegetables. However, the majority of Wasco County residents report that fresh fruit and vegetables comprise only 25% of their food purchases.

How much of what you buy is fresh fruits and vegetables?

	Wasco	Sherman
None	1.8%	.8%

A little (25%)	42.7%	42.0%
About half (50%)	42.2%	42.7%
Most of it (75%)	12.6%	13.0%
All of it (100%)	0.7%	1.5%

Surprisingly, Wasco County residents traveling more than 26 miles to a grocery store (14.1%) are slightly more likely to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables: 59.7% report that half, most or all of their food purchases are fresh fruits and vegetables. Sherman County residents traveling more than 26 miles to grocery shop (88.8%) are slightly less likely to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables: 56.7% report that fresh fruit and vegetables comprise half, most of all food purchases. The insignificant difference in food purchases by rural and non-rural county residents demonstrate that transportation is not a barrier to accessing fresh produce in Wasco and Sherman County.

93.7% of Wasco County respondents and 93.9% of Sherman County respondents sometimes or always choose food grown locally when it is available.

When it is available, do you choose food grown locally (in the Gorge/your community) over other food?

	Wasco	Sherman
Yes	60.5%	68.5%
No	6.3%	6.2%
Sometimes	33.2%	25.4%

Expense of locally grown food is the primary reason respondents do not choose food grown locally. However, many respondents also struggle to find local food. This represents a market opportunity to connect more local consumers directly with local producers by improving the identification and advertising of local food products. In addition, efforts that encourage food stores to sell locally grow foods can help residents who prefer purchasing and consuming local products. .

If you do not choose food grown locally, why?

	Wasco	Sherman
I can't find local food	18.8%	26.7%
It is more expensive	45.8%	40.0%
I don't see any reason to buy it	13.5%	20.0%
Other (please specify)	30.2%	20.0%

Residents in both counties who receive government assistance for food are less likely to purchase locally grown food: 9.2% in Wasco County and 7.8% in Sherman County do not purchase locally grown food. This compares to 6.3% and 6.2% (respectively) of general survey respondents who do not purchase locally grown foods.

Several comments from residents who mentioned "other" reasons for not choosing food grown locally are included below:

- I buy based on price and quality. I pay no attention to where food is from.
- I am a thrifty shopper, so I usually grow my own, get it free or buy the best-price items.

- It's not well advertised when food is locally grown. Usually it is much more expensive. If it is going to cost more, then the consumer needs to be aware of the benefit.
- I don't always know which is which.
- Sometimes it is not easy to get.
- Time. If it is in a store or at the farmers' market, we buy ... otherwise no.

Wasco County residents who cannot find local food are less likely to know of any local farmers' markets (53.3% compared to 22.5%). They also purchase fewer fresh fruits and vegetables: 50% report food purchases containing "a little" fresh fruits and vegetables. They are more likely to receive food from government assistance programs (60%), more likely to report household incomes under \$20,000 (47%) and more likely to be less than 35 years old (55.6%).

Sherman County residents who cannot find local food are less likely to know of any local farmers' markets (66.7% compared to 31.9%). They also purchase fewer fresh fruits and vegetables: 75% report food purchases containing "a little" fresh fruits and vegetables. Although 50% of this group report receiving food from government assistance programs, limited survey data makes it difficult to correlate household income, age and the challenge of finding local food in Sherman County.

Survey respondents specified the foods they are unable to find:

- I would like to have more sources of locally produced food. I try to eat as locally as possible. It is difficult to find affordable sources of locally produced poultry and dairy products. It is also difficult to find local produce in the winter.
- Wish more local, organic food was available. Grass-fed meat, eggs and dairy would be great, too.
- I would prefer a close source of local food (such as food stand) that is open daily. Or, more local foods in grocery stores for when farmers' market is closed.
- Don't know where to find local beef or pork.
- I would love to have access to fresh produce and meat locally.

What Residents Buy: Klickitat and Skamania County

The majority of respondents in Klickitat and Skamania County, 44.4% and 43.8% respectively, indicated that about half of the foods they buy are fruits and vegetables. A slightly lower percentage of respondents said that fruits and vegetables account for about 25% of the foods they buy.

How much of what you buy is fresh fruits and vegetables?

Amount	Klickitat County	Skamania County
None	0.8%	2.5%
A little (25%)	41.7%	42.3%
About half (50%)	44.4%	43.8%
Most of it (75%)	12.4%	10.9%
All of it (100%)	0.7%	0.5%

When it is available, do you choose food grown locally (in the Gorge) over other food?

Response	Klickitat County	Skamania County
Yes	58.5%	56.2%

No	6.6%	9.0%
Sometimes	34.9%	34.8%

Cost is the primary reason respondents from both counties gave for not choosing locally grown food over other food. Almost 44% of Klickitat County respondents and 51.3% of Skamania County respondents said they do not choose locally grown foods because of the cost.

If you do NOT choose food grown locally (in the Gorge), why not?

Response	Klickitat County	Skamania County
I can't find local food	26.5%	23.1%
It is more expensive	43.9%	51.3%
I don't see any reason to buy it	15.3%	5.1%
Other (please specify)	26.5%	25.6%

Respondents who checked other:

Klickitat County	Skamania County
Buy most affordable foods	Poor Quality
Shop in bigger city	Lack of availability
Quality	
No labeling in stores	
Time	
Don't like organic local food	
Grow own food	
Distance too far	

Almost 60% of Klickitat County respondents who do not buy local food because it is more expensive also stated that cost makes it hard for them to purchase the food they need in general. Of respondents who do not buy locally grown food, 66.7% have accessed food stamps, 54.2% have used Women, Infants and Children (WIC) services, and 66.7% have used free or reduced school lunch services. Most respondents, 51.2%, who cannot afford locally grown foods are between the ages of 36 and 55. Of these respondents, 25% make under \$10,000 per year; 7.5% make between \$11,000 and \$20,000 per year; and 22.5% make between \$21,000 and \$40,000 per year.

In Skamania County, 77.8% of respondents who stated they do not buy locally grown foods because of the cost also find it hard to get the food they need in general. Respondents who do not purchase local foods are likely to access food service programs; 83.3% have at some point in their lives accessed food stamps and 66.7% have used WIC services. Over 47% of respondents who cannot afford locally grown foods are between the ages of 36 and 55. More than 21% make less than \$10,000 per year; 10.5% make between \$11,000 and \$20,000 per year; and 26.3% make between \$21,000 and \$40,000 per year.

Barriers Gorge residents face in getting the food they need

The factors that impact access to foods throughout the United States are persistently related to food insecurity and hunger. Low-income families living in rural areas like the Columbia River Gorge experience challenges in accessing food, including cost, distance to food, and lack of transportation.

On a national scale, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for all food is forecast to increase 2.0 to 3.0% in 2009 — low to moderate food price inflation.⁷⁷ As lower commodity and energy costs combine with weaker domestic and global economies to pull inflation down from 2008 levels, pressure on retail food prices has subsided. Food-at-home prices are projected to increase 1.0 to 2.0%, while food-away-from-home prices are projected to increase 3.5 to 4.5% in 2009. The all-food CPI increased 5.5% between 2007 and 2008, the highest annual increase since 1990.

However in 2009, the food CPI is *below* the previous year's level (September 2008) as declines in meat, dairy and produce prices have pushed the food CPI to negative levels, which has not occurred in 42 years. According to the Economic Research Service, as energy prices rise overall consumer inflation should soon return to positive annual levels and put an end to the recent deflationary period.

Although food prices decreased in 2009, food budgets are still significant for low- and middle-income households.

Barriers: Hood River County

What (if anything) makes it hard for you to get the food you need? *(check all that apply)*

Nothing	36.7%
Cost	39.1%
Time for shopping	20.0%
Transportation	11.8%
Cannot find the foods I want or need	8.7%
Other (please specify)	4.7%

Residents over the age of 70:

Nothing	58.2%
Cost	27.3%
Time for shopping	5.5%
Transportation	16.4%
Cannot find the foods I want or need	3.6%
Other (please specify)	0.0%

Residents of Latino ethnicity:

Nothing	28.2%
Cost	46.6%
Time for shopping	25.8%
Transportation	16.0%
Cannot find the foods I want or need	6.7%
Other (please specify)	1.2%

Residents with household income under \$40,000:

Nothing	20.2%
Cost	59.2%
Time for shopping	15.9%
Transportation	18.5%
Cannot find the foods I want or need	6.4%
Other (please specify)	3.0%

Seniors, low-income, and Latino residents all report transportation as a barrier at higher rates as well. Of all food concerns, cost was the top issue across all groups.

Other specified barriers were:

- Cost of gas (2)
- Time for preparing food
- Distance to stores (3)
- Fresh fruits and vegetables are more expensive
- Can't find it
- There is a difference between want and need - I WANT organic, but can't always afford it. As far as NEED - we're not in any danger of going hungry
- All of these are true occasionally, but nothing like others less fortunate.
- Seasons – hard to eat fresh in winter and spring (3)

Barriers to Farmers' Market shopping in Hood River County

Cost was also perceived as an issue with regards to local farmers' markets, albeit not as large of one as for all-around food barriers. Respondents who said that they do not shop at local farmers' markets were asked to say why:

If you did NOT check "Farmers' Market" above, why not? (check all that apply)

I don't know of any local Farmers' Markets	39.0%
They are too far away	13.0%
I don't have time	16.7%
I'm not interested in what they sell	7.7%
They are too expensive	14.6%
Other (please specify)	22.5%

The high number of respondents who don't know of any local markets shows a clear need for more and better market outreach for the county's two farmers' markets. Of the 147 respondents who reported not knowing any local markets, they were also more likely to report difficulty finding local food in general (43.9%) and almost twice as likely to be Latino (53.3%).

Other specified reasons for not shopping at farmers' markets:

- Time / location is inconvenient, hard to find, out of the usual routine (17)
- Forget to go (5)
- Distance is too far from home (9)
- Home garden produces plenty / the same products (13)

- Other farm stands or orchards are closer to home (10)
- Just don't go / don't know (10)
- No English (2)
- I have seen the small markets, but I never go because I don't speak English and I'm scared.
- Can't count on market having what you need (2)
- Parking (1)

Barriers: Wasco and Sherman County

What, if anything, makes it hard for you to get the food you need? (check all that apply)

	Wasco	Sherman
Nothing	32.9%	33.1%
Cost	37.8%	29.0%
Time for shopping	23.1%	25.8%
Transportation	8.4%	19.4%
Cannot find the foods I want or need	11.4%	5.6%
Other (please specify)	8.7%	12.9%

Of the residents who report cost as a barrier to accessing food, most (25.9% in Wasco County and 25.7% in Sherman County) have yearly household incomes between \$21,000 and \$40,000. This income bracket places a family of four below the poverty line.

Residents with household income under \$40,000

	Wasco	Sherman
Nothing	22.1%	29.6%
Cost	55.4%	38.9%
Time for shopping	14.0%	18.5%
Transportation	15.1%	27.8%
Cannot find the foods I want or need	8.9%	3.7%
Other (please specify)	8.1%	11.1%

2009 Federal Poverty Guidelines

Persons in Household	
1	\$10,830
2	\$14,570
3	\$18,310
4	\$22,050
5	\$25,790
6	\$29,530

Residents over the age of 70

	Wasco	Sherman
Nothing	43.8%	50%
Cost	25.0%	16.7%

Time for shopping	6.3%	5.6%
Transportation	22.9%	22.2%
Cannot find the foods I want or need	6.3%	0.0%
Other (please specify)	8.3%	22.2%

Residents traveling more than 26 miles to grocery shop

	Wasco	Sherman
Nothing	35.0%	29.5%
Cost	32.5%	28.6%
Time for shopping	23.8%	27.6%
Transportation	13.8%	20.0%
Cannot find the foods I want or need	6.3%	3.8%
Other (please specify)	11.3%	14.3%

Residents of Latino, Chicano or Hispanic ethnicity*

Nothing	32.5%
Cost	42.9%
Time for shopping	19.5%
Transportation	7.8%
Cannot find the foods I want or need	10.4%
Other (please specify)	3.9%

Responses from Wasco and Sherman Counties were combined given the limited number of responses from Sherman County.

Comments on “other” specified barriers are summarized below:

- Seasons
- Expensive travel distance to shop
- Disability/poor health
- Energy for shopping
- Virtually no fruit or vegetables available at small stores in Sherman County
- Inconvenient hours of farm stands and farmers’ markets
- Hard to find organic food
- Lack of local variety
- Don’t go to town that often. Fresh foods perish too quickly.
- Weather
- Having a place to prepare food
- No healthy restaurant options in The Dalles. Everything is a fast food franchise!
- Picky about quality
- Limited selection of good, fresh produce
- No motivation to prepare or cook food
- No natural food stores

The Oregon Food Bank Voices project includes the voices of low-income Oregonians in the discussion about who is hungry and what needs to be done to end hunger. In September 2009, OFB

coordinated conversations with emergency-food pantry clients in The Dalles and Maupin to learn about what is happening in their communities and to hear their ideas.

According to OFB, listening to our fellow Oregonians — those who receive emergency food and live with the ramifications of hunger and poverty — makes us more successful in addressing the root causes of hunger. The complete Voices project will be available in 2010. The following is edited conversation from the OFB Voices project to provide a snapshot of the barriers residents experience in accessing food in South Wasco County. Although residents do not commonly report transportation as a barrier, transportation to affordable food stores is an issue for extremely low-income households.

Kate loves driving down the road and realizing there are still small places like Maupin in the world. But for her small family, it is not a good place. There is no after-school care for children. No counseling. Her daughter has special needs, but Kate has to drive to another town to get her medication. For a single parent with two children, there are necessities this household cannot have. SNAP benefits disappear quickly because of high food prices. Once, Kate went without groceries for two months until she finally caught a ride to The Dalles. "If I had a good car and could afford gas, driving to The Dalles would be nothing."

Barriers to Farmers' Market Shopping in Wasco and Sherman County

Although cost is a perceived issue in regards to local farmers' markets, it is not the most common barrier to farmers' market shopping. Respondents who do not shop at local farmers' markets gave the following reasons:

If you did NOT check "Farmers' Market" above, why not? (check all that apply)

	Wasco	Sherman
I don't know of any local farmers' markets	22.5%	31.9%
They are too far away	9.3%	47.9%
I don't have time	19.9%	20.2%
I'm not interested in what they sell	5.1%	4.3%
They are too expensive	22.5%	11.7%
Other (please specify)	39.3%	17.0%

The high number of respondents who don't know of any local markets demonstrates a clear need for effective outreach for The Dalles Farmers' Market, the Maupin Farmers' Market, the Gorge Grown Food Network Mobile Market site in Dufur and the Rufus Farmers' Market. Rufus Farmers' Market opened for its first season in 2009, which could explain why many Sherman County residents do not know of any local farmers' markets and commonly report that markets are too far away.

Of the Wasco County respondents who do not know of any local markets, they are more likely to report difficulty finding local food in general (34.8% compared to 18.8%). In contrast, Sherman County respondents who do not know of any local markets do not struggle to find local food: 90% of this group still choose food grown locally. This demonstrates an unmet demand for local food in Sherman County grocery stores and farm-direct markets.

Other specified reasons for not shopping at farmers' markets are summarized below:

- Home garden
- Inconvenient time and day
- No transportation
- Disability/handicap
- Lack of consistency in selection, limited selection
- Just beginning to use local produce
- Forget
- Too lazy to stop
- We joined a CSA and do not need to go as often
- Easier to get everything I need at one place. Saves gas.
- The local fruit stand offers similar items at more convenient times.
- Not well advertised, don't know when it's open
- Seasonal, no year-round market in the area
- Have an orchard/farm
- Only one in the area
- Just haven't thought of it as an option
- Quality not always the best

Barriers: Klickitat and Skamania County

About 40% of Klickitat County respondents and 34% of Skamania County respondents indicated that nothing makes it hard for them to access food, which means that more than half of respondents in their respective counties experience at least one barrier in accessing the food they need. Among Klickitat and Skamania County respondents, 36.7% and 44.4% respectively, stated that cost is a barrier in accessing food. Other barriers include transportation, time for shopping, and respondents' difficulty in finding the foods they need. While time for shopping is the second most common barrier for respondents from both counties, transportation issues also impede their access to food.

According to the Community Food Security Coalition, "because population densities are low and stores widely scattered in rural areas, distance to market is a significant barrier for low-income, elderly, and disabled residents."⁷⁸ In Klickitat and Skamania County, most residents do have vehicles, but for those living in the more rural areas of the counties who do not have transportation, they experience problems in accessing food sources.

Transportation issues cause 7.4% of Klickitat County respondents and 15.9% of Skamania County respondents to have difficulty in accessing the food they need. Among survey respondents over the age of 70, 4.2% in Klickitat County and 7.1% in Skamania County find transportation a barrier to accessing food. Respondents from both counties who have a household income less than \$40,000 per year also experience difficulty in accessing food due to transportation issues; 10.3% in Klickitat County and 20% in Skamania County. Seniors, low-income, and Latino residents all report transportation as a barrier at higher rates. However, of all food concerns, cost was the top issue across all groups.

What (if anything) makes it hard for you to get the food you need? (check all that apply)

Barrier	Klickitat County	Skamania County
Nothing	39.1%	33.9%
Cost	36.7%	44.4%
Time for shopping	22.3%	19.6%
Transportation	7.4%	15.9%
Cannot find the foods I want or need	9.8%	9.0%
Other (please specify)	7.0%	6.3%

Respondents over the age of 70:

Barrier	Klickitat County	Skamania County
Nothing	68.8%	50.0%
Cost	8.3%	42.9%
Time for shopping	8.3%	7.1%
Transportation	4.2%	7.1%
Cannot find the foods I want or need	8.3%	0
Other (please specify)	6.3%	0

Respondents of Latino ethnicity:

Barrier	Klickitat County	Skamania County
Nothing	37.5%	0
Cost	55.0%	50.0%
Time for shopping	5.0%	50.0%
Transportation	2.5%	25.0%
Cannot find the foods I want or need	12.5%	0
Other (please specify)	5.0%	0

Respondents with household income under \$40,000:

Barrier	Klickitat County	Skamania County
Nothing	30.5%	26.7%
Cost	50.0%	56.7%
Time for shopping	14.9%	8.9%
Transportation	10.3%	20.0%
Cannot find the foods I want or need	8.8%	5.6%
Other (please specify)	5.7%	7.8%

Other barriers respondents specified:

Klickitat County	Skamania County
Distance	Distance
Cost of gas	Cost of gas
Limited organic foods	Lack of storage space
Lack of specialty stores/foods (vegetarian, gluten free)	Lack of specialty stores/foods (low-fat, no aspartame, food allergies)
Don't know how to cook	Other expenses
Health problems	

Lack of connection with local farmers
Time for cooking
Weather
Lack of local produce during off-season

Barriers to Farmers' Market Shopping in Klickitat and Skamania County

Cost was also perceived as an issue in regards to respondents accessing local farmers' markets. Respondents who stated that they do not shop at local farmers' markets were asked why. The most common reason respondents in Klickitat and Skamania County gave for not shopping at local farmers' markets was that they did not know of any. Other important barriers respondents experience in accessing farmers' markets include cost and distance.

If you did NOT check Farmers Market" above, why not? (check all that apply)

Response	Klickitat County	Skamania County
I don't know of any local farmers' markets	36.6%	41.7%
They are too far away	17.2%	26.5%
I don't have time	14.9%	11.4%
I'm not interested in what they sell	7.9%	3.0%
They are too expensive	15.9%	16.7%
Other (please specify)	27.3%	22.0%

Of Klickitat County respondents who indicated that they do not shop at farmers' markets because of expense, 70.3% said that cost makes it hard to get the food they need in general. Almost 50% of respondents said that one-fourth of the groceries they purchase are fruits and vegetables; 42.9% said that about half of the foods they buy are fruits and vegetables. More than 40% of respondents indicated that they eat fruits and vegetables one to six times per week.

For Klickitat County respondents who do not buy food at farmers' markets, the lack of fruit and vegetable purchase and consumption in general may be related to their economic situation. Of respondents who do not shop at farmers' markets, 14.7% of the households make less than \$10,000 each year; 18.7% make between \$11,000 to 20,000 per year; and 28% make \$21,000 to \$40,000 per year. Almost 10% of Klickitat County respondents who do not shop at farmers' markets stated that they go without eating a meal at least once a month due to lack of food resources. Over 8% of these respondents go without eating a meal two to four times per month and 5.5% go without eating five or more times per month. One-fourth of the respondents stated that they skip meals so that their children can eat. Of respondents who do not shop at farmers' markets, more than 61% have at some point received government food assistance programs.

Of Skamania County respondents who stated that they do not shop at farmers' markets due to cost, almost 64% stated that cost in general makes it hard to get the food they need. Almost 48% of respondents stated that one-fourth of the groceries they buy are fruits and vegetables; 43% said that about half of the foods they buy are fruits and vegetables. Almost 64% of respondents said that they eat fruits and vegetables one to six times per week.

As in Klickitat County, the lack of fruit and vegetable purchase and consumption in Skamania County may be related to income. Of Skamania County respondents who do not shop at farmers' markets, 19% of the households make less than \$10,000 each year; 14.3% make between \$11,000 to 20,000 per year; and 28.6% make \$21,000 to \$40,000 per year. Over 18% of Skamania County respondents who do not shop at farmers' markets stated that they go without eating a meal at least once a month due to lack of food resources. About 4.5% of respondents go without eating a meal two to four times per month and 9.1% go without eating five or more times per month. Over 33% of the Skamania County respondents stated that they skip meals so that their children can eat. Of respondents who do not shop at farmers' markets, more than 59% have at some point received government food assistance programs.

Klickitat and Skamania County respondent comments about shopping at local farmers' markets:

"Food has gone out of reach for many due to cost. I am a wise shopper: use coupons, buy cow, garden and we still struggle with a one-income household with three special need kids. [We have a] limited income and minimal resources."

"If there could be a farmers market close to us, one that would not cost that much and/or we could get coupons or low cost, I would go in a heartbeat."

Other specified reasons for not shopping at farmers' markets:

Klickitat County	Skamania County
Time and location of farmers' market is limited/inconvenient	Time and location of farmers' market is limited/inconvenient
Grow own produce (garden/orchard/farm)	Grow own produce (garden/orchard/farm)
Do not have what is needed	Older Adults cannot afford the prices
Do not take food stamps	Poor Quality
Do not shop on Saturday Sabbath	Prefer to support local stores rather than a person
Too busy on weekends	Difficult to park at farmers market locations
Not in the habit, don't think about it, forget about it	Forget
Farmers' market has limited produce (Goldendale, WA)	Away on weekends, time inconvenient
Don't know quality of produce (pesticides, etc.), sanitations, inspections	
No market within walking distance	

Gorge Community Voices on Shopping for Food

Below are quotes from local residents from community group discussions on shopping for food in the Columbia River Gorge.

Hood River County

"Most of the time I shop at the store closest to where I live, but it doesn't have much that is local."

"We need local food more dispersed, not just at farmers' markets"

"It's common for people to travel into Portland for work and do shopping while there."

"I'm shocked at the jump in food prices - \$1 here or there starts to really add up."

"The integrity of food is something I pay attention to – pragmatics first, value/culture later."

"We need to reach people who don't have the transportation to get to the market."

"I want a larger, more central farmers market - including baked goods, canned goods, meats, flowers, cheese - all locally grown in the Gorge."

"I have seen the small markets, but I never go because I don't speak English and I'm scared."

"I really want to buy and support local food, but cost is a big issue in my life and local food is often more expensive."

"I would like to see the grocery stores step up and support even more local organic products including meat and dairy to keep economic growth in the local area."

"Quality food here in the Gorge is relatively more expensive than anywhere else I have lived - all larger cities."

"Low cost veggies at the different grocery stores would be great. I think the "farmers' market" fruits and veggies are too expensive for a lot of folks."

Wasco and Sherman Counties

"I think our grocery stores should be forced to sell locally grown."

"Why is the local food at the farmers' market so unaffordable when it is supposed to be local and not travel as far and most isn't even organic? Most of the food there I cannot afford. I buy what I can because I want to support the cause."

"We buy lots of fresh fruit at the grocery store. It accounts for a large part of my grocery bill each week. I think produce is the most expensive part of my shopping. I need to be more proactive in utilizing local farmers' markets, and I recognize this."

"Would like more at the local store. Fresh fruits and most vegetables require a 2+ hour trip. Not enough selection locally."

"I would love to see an organic market with fresh foods available for take out."

"I do my best to provide healthy, wholesome food for my daughter and myself. I must admit that food

cost is the major issue in selecting food rather than sources. If my economic situation was to change, I would prefer local, organically grown foods.”

“I would like to see a greater variety of stores and food types.”

“I would love for my family to eat organic food but it is too expensive. I do everything I can to let my daughter eat healthy, which does not allow much room for me and her father to eat healthy due to cost. I would also love if there was a low-cost farmers’ market.”

“The Dalles Farmers’ Market is wonderful. Prices are very reasonable and it’s wonderful to have that available at the city park each week.”

“Would love to have a fully expanded farmers’/organic (affordable) market in The Dalles area. I don’t want to drive to Hood River to get decent fresh produce.”

“The lack of organic fruits and veggies in Wasco County is terrible.”

“I would love to see a farmers’ market, fresh fruit stand or other ways to get a variety of fresh fruits and veggies available in Sherman County without having to drive all the way to The Dalles to purchase those items.”

“Si a veces no hay la suficiente variedad de verduras y la carne a veces es muy cara.” (Sometimes there isn’t the right variety of vegetables. And sometimes meat is very expensive.)

“Mi esposo si, es trabajador agricola temporal. Yo he notado que las frutas y verduras frescas son las mas caras, tambien cual quiera comida saludable y nutritiva es mucha mas cara que las comidas no tan saludables.” (My husband is a seasonal farmworker. I’ve noticed that the fresh fruits and vegetables are the most expensive. Also the other healthy and nutritious food is more expensive than the foods that aren’t healthy.)

Klickitat and Skamania Counties

“Sometimes those foods that are healthier for you are a little more expensive and some of the things that are not so good for you are cheaper. So people have a tendency to lean towards that because they are on a limited income.”

“When you go buy fruits and vegetables, they are very expensive if you don’t have a way to grow a garden. A lot of people don’t. They live in apartments, they don’t have that resource.”

“I think people tend to lean towards unhealthy food because that’s what they can afford for their family.”

“We eat so unhealthy because the cheaper foods are the unhealthiest.”

County by County Grocery Store Assessment

A grocery store assessment was conducted to help assess the availability and affordability of food in retail outlets that residents access in the region. All convenience and grocery stores provided permission for the assessment to be conducted. The assessment included the use of a survey instrument that listed foods that are commonly eaten by low-income households and that meet the federal dietary guidelines and Food Pyramid serving recommendations for a family of four, which makes up the Thrifty Meal Plan (TMP).⁷⁹

Access to food can often be difficult for people who live in rural areas, especially for those who do not have access to transportation or are living below the poverty line. The grocery store survey was conducted using the USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) Food Store Survey Instrument⁸⁰.

The USDA's Thrifty Food Plan (TFP) was the basis for the survey. The USDA selected the food items on the TFP to represent foods that are economical for low-income households. The items also meet federal dietary guidelines and serving recommendations for a family of four (two adults ages 20 to 50, and two children ages 3 to 5 and 6 to 11) for one week (see appendix).⁸¹ This grocery store assessment was completed for all Gorge counties, and occurred between June 2009 and March 2010; prices reflect most-recent at the time available data.

Hood River County

The totals below represent the weekly, monthly and yearly totals for the TFP in four Hood River County grocery stores.

Food Cost Comparisons for a Family of Four

	Weekly ¹	Monthly ²	Annually ³
Store 1	\$135.40	\$541.61	\$6499.32
Store 2	\$150.45	\$623.05	\$7476.57
Store 3	\$156.14	\$633.89	\$7606.74
Store 4	\$135.39	\$541.58	\$6498.91

The lowest price food on the TFP in Hood River County is \$135.39 for one week or \$6,498.91 for one year, with another grocery store having comparable prices (a difference in one cent for the weekly price.) The highest price in the region is \$156.14 for one week and \$7,606.74 for one year. The price difference between the two stores is \$1107.83 (a 14.6% increase.) An important factor to consider is how TFP prices in Hood River County compare to the TFP prices set by the USDA ERS.

¹ Weekly total based on quantities from USDA and store prices plus cost to purchase missing items from nearest full grocery (average price of individual missing items summed for each store)

² Monthly cost of Thrifty Meal Plan ((Grand weekly total x 4) plus federal mileage (mileage x .55) to purchase missing items once a month from nearest full grocery store)

³ Yearly cost of Thrifty Meal Plan (monthly total x 12)

TFP Reference Prices on a National Level for a Family of Four

	Weekly	Monthly	Annually
December 2009 ⁴	\$133.40	\$577.90	\$6934.80
March 2010 ⁵	\$135.50	\$587.10	\$7045.20

Two different prices are listed as the survey was conducted in December of 2009 and March of 2010.

Percentage Difference Between Local and National TFP Prices (Annual)

	TFP Dec 2009	TFP March 2010
Store 1	-6.3%	-7.7%
Store 2	7.8%	6.1%
Store 3	9.7%	8.0%
Store 4	-6.3%	-7.8%

Because the cost of the Thrifty Food Plan is higher in two of the four stores surveyed than the Thrifty Food Plan reference cost, half of the stores in Hood River County are not affordable for low-income households. In addition, two of the stores were missing items from the TFP shopping list. Residents who live near these two stores must travel to access a full-service grocery store to complete their shopping at least once a month, adding to the cost of food.

Item prices vary at different stores throughout the region. The chart below demonstrates the price discrepancies on several items.

Item Price Comparisons: USDA Shopping List Quantities for One Week

	Potatoes (fresh)	Apples (fresh)	Milk (1%)	Beef (ground, lean)
Store 1	\$2.72	\$0.99	\$5.60	\$10.99
Store 2	\$4.18	\$1.61	\$6.73	\$13.35
Store 3	\$3.87	\$1.49	\$6.95	\$11.77
Store 4	\$3.66	\$0.61	\$6.50	\$11.77

Accessing affordable food is related to the challenges rural grocery storeowners face. Because food distributors add a surcharge to orders, many rural stores are unable to afford weekly deliveries — making supply of fresh produce difficult. Some of the rural stores that participated in the survey are suffering, which presents another barrier for low-income families and community food security.

Wasco and Sherman County

The totals below represent the weekly, monthly and yearly totals for the TFP in eight Wasco and Sherman County grocery stores.

⁴ Official USDA Food Plans: Cost of Food at Home at Four Levels, U.S. Average, December 2009

Food Cost Comparisons for a Family of Four

	Weekly ⁶	Monthly ⁷	Annually ⁸
Store 1	165.28	700.61	8407.32
Store 2	157.33	672.88	8074.56
Store 3	176.09	720.09	8641.08
Store 4	186.89	781.00	9372.00
Store 5	174.57	731.28	8775.36
Store 6	154.73	661.16	7933.92
Store 7	98.48	393.92	4727.04
Store 8	114.69	458.76	5505.12

The lowest price food on the TFP in the two counties is \$98.48 for one week or \$4,727.04 for one year. The highest price in the region is \$186.89 for one week and \$9,372.00 for one year. The price difference between the two store is significant (nearly 50%), especially for those living below the poverty line. An important factor to consider is how the TFP prices in Wasco and Sherman Counties compare to the TFP prices set by the USDA ERS.

TFP Reference Prices on a National Level for a Family of Four

June 2009 ⁹	134.60	583.40	7000.80
Oct. 2009 ¹⁰	133.30	577.40	6928.80

Two different prices are listed as the survey was conducted in June and October of 2009.

Percentage Difference Between Local and National TFP Prices (Annual)

	TFP June 2009	TFP Oct. 2009
Store 1	20.1%	21.3%
Store 2	15.3%	16.5%
Store 3	23.4%	24.7%
Store 4	33.9%	35.3%
Store 5	25.3%	26.7%
Store 6	13.3%	14.5%
Store 7	-32.5%	-31.8%
Store 8	-21.4%	-20.5%

Because the cost of the Thrifty Food Plan is higher in six of the eight stores surveyed than the Thrifty Food Plan reference cost, the majority of stores in Wasco and Sherman Counties are not

⁵ Official USDA Food Plans: Cost of Food at Home at Four Levels, U.S. Average, March 2010, Family of 4: Couple, 19-50 years and children 6-11 years.

⁶ Weekly total based on quantities from USDA and store prices plus cost to purchase missing items from nearest full grocery (average price of individual missing items summed for each store)

⁷ Monthly cost of Thrifty Meal Plan ((Grand weekly total x 4) plus federal mileage (mileage x .55) to purchase missing items once a month from nearest full grocery store)

⁸ Yearly cost of Thrifty Meal Plan (monthly total x 12)

⁹ Official USDA Food Plans: Cost of Food at Home at Four Levels, U.S. Average, June 2009

¹⁰ Official USDA Food Plans: Cost of Food at Home at Four Levels, U.S. Average, October 2009, Family of 4: Couple, 19-50 years and children 6-11 years.

affordable for low-income households. In addition, the majority of stores (75%) were missing items from the TFP shopping list. Residents who live near these six stores must travel to access a full-service grocery store (most likely in The Dalles) to complete their shopping at least once a month, adding to the cost of food.

It is also important to note the price differences between counties:

Food Store Cost Comparisons by County (Annual)

	Wasco	Sherman
Average Cost for TFP	7454.52	8354.64
County High	9372.00	8775.36
County Low	4727.04	7933.92
Lowest-Priced Store in Region	4727.04	

There is a significant price difference (40.4%) between the lowest-priced stores in Wasco and Sherman Counties. Many Sherman County residents regularly rely on services in Wasco County, making it possible for those residents to access food that is more affordable. However, a household in poverty without access to transportation would be unable to afford the TFP in Sherman County.

Item prices vary at different stores throughout the region. The chart below demonstrates the price discrepancies on several items.

Item Price Comparisons: USDA Shopping List Quantities for One Week

	Potatoes (fresh)	Apples (fresh)	Milk (1%)	Beef (ground, lean)
Store 1	\$5.46	\$1.11	\$8.55	\$15.71
Store 2	\$5.15	\$1.49	\$6.75	\$10.20
Store 3	\$4.62	\$1.24	\$8.95	\$11.38
Store 4	\$2.63	\$3.75	N/A	\$16.74
Store 5	\$3.78	\$3.00	\$8.30	\$11.77
Store 6	\$3.78	\$1.99	\$9.88	N/A
Store 7	\$3.36	\$.98	\$5.60	\$5.83
Store 8	\$1.58	\$1.24	\$4.48	\$6.97

Accessing affordable food is related to the challenges rural grocery store owners face. Because food distributors add a surcharge to orders, many rural stores are unable to afford weekly deliveries — making supply of fresh produce difficult. These stores often supplement their stock with shopping trips to Cash & Carry in The Dalles. Some of the rural stores that participated in the survey are suffering, which presents another barrier for low-income families and community food security.

Klickitat and Skamania County

In August 2009, the USDA Thrifty Meal Plan for a family of four (couple aged 20 to 50 and two children aged 6 to 8 and 9 to 11) reference cost was \$577 per month.⁸² The Klickitat and Skamania County grocery store assessment was conducted in August 2009. In comparing the USDA Thrifty

Meal Plan reference cost of August 2009 and the grocery store assessment results, the actual cost of the Thrifty Meal Plan in seven out of the eleven stores surveyed was greater than the reference cost.

Store	TMP Cost at Store	Difference from USDA TMP reference cost
Store 1	\$559.76	-\$17.24
Store 2	\$763.43	+\$186.43
Store 3	\$752.70	+\$175.70
Store 4	\$674.28	+\$97.28
Store 5	\$659.91	+\$82.91
Store 6	\$573.84	-\$3.16
Store 7	\$578.90	+\$1.90
Store 8	\$620.95	+\$43.95
Store 9	\$774.14	+\$197.14
Store 10	\$393.92	-\$183.08
Store 11	\$458.76	-\$118.24

In 2009, the average household Supplemental Nutrition Assistance program (SNAP) benefits for a household was \$276.73, which is not enough to cover the cost of the Thrifty Meal Plan items at any convenient or grocery store in the Klickitat and Skamania County area.

Aside from cost, transportation is another challenge indicated by survey respondents and was emphasized in the grocery store assessment in terms of distance in accessing a full grocery store for Klickitat and Skamania County residents. Only two of the 11 stores surveyed are considered full grocery stores. Residents have to travel more than 25 miles round-trip in the communities where seven of the stores are located to access a full grocery store. In six of those communities, residents must travel between 40 and 67 miles round-trip to access a full grocery store.

Food Security: Are the food needs of residents being met?

Statewide Food Security – the picture in Oregon and Washington

According to the Oregon Food Bank and Oregon Hunger Task Force, Oregon is now among the five states with the highest hunger rates in the country, and the rates of food insecurity and hunger continue to increase in Oregon.⁸³ A report released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture indicates that there is also an increase in households experiencing hunger in the state of Washington.⁸⁴ The report provides information, from 2007 survey data, prior to the economic recession, and indicates that the state of Washington had significant food insecurity and hunger, particularly in rural communities.¹³

Between January 2006 and December 2008, an average of 6.6% of Oregon households (about 95,000 households per year) experienced times when they were hungry but did not eat because there was not enough money for food. Compared to 3.9% from 2003 to 2005, this represents a 2.7 percentage point increase. These households that ate less, skipped meals or sometimes went without food for whole days are categorized as households with “very low food security” — or “hunger.”

A larger group, 13.1% of Oregon households, lacked access to adequate amounts of nutritious food and is categorized as households with “food insecurity.” Compared to 11.9% from 2003 to 2005, this represents a 1.2% increase.

From July 2008 to June 2009, the Oregon Food Bank Network set a record for distributing the highest amount of food in a single year — 66.2 million pounds. During this time period, distribution of emergency food boxes throughout the statewide network increased 14%. In many parts of the state, emergency food distribution increased more than 20%. Of the Oregonians eating meals from emergency food boxes, 36% are children.

The rise in hunger is related to the recession and rise in unemployment. Despite efforts to boost food assistance programs, wages are not keeping up with household needs.

Food Insecurity Rates in the United States, Oregon, and Washington

Household Averages ⁸⁵		Washington	Oregon	U.S.
Low or Very Low Food Security	2006-08	11.1%	13.1%	12.2%
	2003-05	11.2%	11.9%	11.4%
Very Low Food Security	2006-08	4.3%	6.6%	4.6%
	2003-05	3.9%	3.9%	3.8%
Children Under 18 Years of Age ⁸⁶		Washington	Oregon	U.S.
Average Number of Children		1,572,750	879,696	73,848,169
Average Number of Food Insecure Children		373,000	166,465	12,535,422
Average Rate of Food Insecure Children		23.7%	18.9%	17.0%

According to an Oregon State University study, Northwest food insecurity is significantly higher in non-metro (rural) areas than in metro areas. This pattern is not demonstrated elsewhere in the United States. Latino food insecurity rates were dramatically higher than rates for non-Latinos, regardless of location⁸⁷.

In April 2008, the Oregon Food Bank surveyed 3,896 households that received an emergency food box from one of the 160 emergency food box agencies selected for participation in the 2008 Oregon Hunger Factors Assessment. Of those households, 69% worry at least some of the time about finding their next meal.

Food Security	Assured access to enough food for an active, healthy life
Food Insecurity	Uncertainty of having, or being able to acquire, enough food to meet basic needs of all household members because of insufficient money and other resources
Hunger	When an individual unwillingly goes without food for an intermittent or extended period of time

Households with children are the largest group served by the Oregon Food Bank. 27% of households cut children's meals during the year — 30% of those said this happened every month. Furthermore, 28% of households report that their food situation negatively impacts their children's health.

A living wage allows families to meet their basic needs without resorting to public assistance and provides them some ability to deal with emergencies and plan ahead. In 2007, only 20% of single adults with two children in Oregon earned a living wage for their household type⁸⁸. In 2009, a fulltime job at Oregon minimum wage earned \$17,500, while the Federal Poverty Line for a household of three was \$18,310.

Sixty-seven percent of responding households live below the Federal Poverty Line (FPL), which is based on a 1955 household survey. Although updated annually, the FPL does not address the influence of today's living expenses. Most adult emergency food box recipients are working, retired or disabled, but 40% of them still report higher wages as critical to improving their situation; 45% report employment as critical to improving their situation.

Situations Contributing to Need for Emergency Food Box

Household Responses	
52%	Ran out of food stamps (of those receiving food stamps)
52%	High food costs
40%	High fuel/heating costs (31% in 2006, 21% in 2000)
26%	Unusual expenses lately
25%	Health/medical costs (18% in 2000)
25%	Low wages
23%	High rent or mortgage costs
22%	Unemployed a long time
21%	Retired: on a fixed income
18%	Debt
16%	Too sick to work (e.g. disabled, mental health problems)
11%	Recent job loss
10%	Public assistance is not enough
Other	Food stamps cut, unemployment ran out, childcare costs

Oregon Food Bank 2008 Hunger Factors Assessment

Fifty-five percent of households profiled in the Oregon Food Bank Hunger Factors Assessment currently participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). For more than half of this group, monthly benefits last two weeks or less. When asked "What would help improve your present situation and make emergency food assistance less necessary for your family?," respondents focused on employment, living wages, affordable housing, education and health, which is consistent with past Oregon Food Bank Hunger Factors Assessment results.

How Long Food Stamps Last (Percent of Responses)

Household Responses	
Less than 2 weeks	33%

2 weeks	32%
3 weeks	27%
All month	8%

Food Security in Hood River County

USDA and Oregon Food Bank food security data is not available on a county-specific basis, so local food security data comes instead from this project's Consumer Survey, combined with data from a 2007 Hood River County Needs Assessment commissioned by Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital. Some of the local data is directly comparable to OFB and USDA state data, but not all. Connections are shown where possible.

Nonetheless, local data shows that many county residents struggle to get the food they need for their families and that even those who access government food assistance programs still have food needs beyond what the programs offer.

A significant number of survey respondents have received food or food assistance from government programs: 36.6% in total.

Of those who have accessed food assistance, the breakdown is as follows:

Government Assistance Programs accessed by Survey Respondents

Food Stamps (EBT, Oregon Trail Card)	59.9%
WIC (Women, Infants, and Children)	44.9%
Head Start (children)	11.5%
Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program	3.5%
Free or Reduced School Lunch (children)	43.6%
Summer Free School Lunch Program (children)	7.0%
Other (please specify)	6.2%

(Most respondents checking "Other" listed FISH Food Bank, which is not a government assistance program; FISH is discussed later in this report)

Even with the help of these programs, 12.7% of Hood River County residents report skipping a meal at least once a month because food is scarce:

How many times per month do you go without eating a meal because you cannot afford to buy food?

Never	87.3%
Once a month	5.4%
2 to 4 times a month	5.4%
5 or more times a month	1.9%

Survey respondents who checked "Yes" for either skipping meals so that their children could eat or "Yes" for having difficulty feeding them were far more likely to have received food from government assistance programs: the figure nearly doubles, to 64.1%. Of those respondents, the access to assistance programs was as follows:

- Food Stamps (EBT, Oregon Trail Card) - 58.1%
- WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) - 64.5%
- Head Start - 21.0%

- Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program - 4.8%
- Free or Reduced School Lunch - 48.4%
- Summer Free School Lunch Program - 12.9%

These individuals are also most likely to have a household income under \$40,000. Just over half – 53.8% - are Latino, and 35% are seasonal farm workers.

Survey comments from this vulnerable population further exemplify their concerns:

- “Food is getting very expensive. Something needs to be done about the gas prices and whatever else is causing it.”
- “The healthy food is too expensive, so sometimes we are unable to buy the best and healthiest quality.”
- “Since I buy nearly all of my food with food stamps and live in Cascade Locks, it's difficult to take advantage of the farmers' markets.”
- “I think that the price keeps going up and it is hard to afford to pay for food.”
- “Access to health care and costs of illness have greatly reduced our circumstances.”
- “We need good prices for the middle class folks. That is why the poor people in our community have to eat less than the minimum daily requirements and us middle folk also.”

HRC Community Needs Assessment

In 2007, Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital conducted a Needs Assessment for Hood River County. This assessment did not address food issues in the county directly with the exception of question, but several issues identified as concerns or needs are corollaries for food insecurity, including housing, health care, and transportation issues.

This needs assessment data helps us to take a broader view of Hood River County residents with food insecurity. These individuals are not always “low income” or below the poverty line, but many find themselves in financial straits due to the high cost of living in the community.

Living expenses, such as housing (rent, mortgages, etc) and transportation, can directly impact residents’ ability to eat enough food or to eat the food they prefer.

The needs assessment did include “money for food” as one out of a series of potential expenses that residents might need help with.

Twenty-nine percent of Hood River County residents reported not having enough money for food either sometimes or often. This was up three points from 2004.⁸⁹

Additionally, certain populations in the community were even more likely to need help with food:

- Those with no insurance - 48%
- Younger women - 44%
- Renters - 39%
- Hispanics - 38%
- Lower income – 36%
- Families with children – 37%

Out of a list of 25 potential community problems, 67% of respondents rate poverty as a major/moderate problem, which places it at number seven in the top ten Community Problems – an increase of seven points from 2004.

Hispanics (89%), and lower income people (73%) were more likely to rate poverty as a major/moderate problem.

Housing and the cost of living being too expensive was rated as the most important problem by 30% of respondents, an increase of 9% since 2004. This makes it Hood River County's most important problem in the needs assessment.

In addition to housing/cost of living being the overall most pressing issue for respondents, 46% of respondents reported that they, their family, or their neighbors need help with money for housing, and 42% need help finding housing that meets family needs.

Another corollary issue for food security, transportation access within the county, is considered an “emerging issue”, with 53% of respondents considering it a major/moderate problem.⁹⁰

In comparison, in the food assessment survey, 11.8% of respondents rated transportation as an issue that makes it hard for them to get the food they need.

Food Security in Wasco and Sherman Counties

Local data from the Wasco and Sherman County Community Food Survey shows that many county residents struggle to access the food they need for their families, even those who rely on government food assistance programs.

A significant number of survey respondents have received food or food assistance from government programs: 49.3% in Wasco County and 44.4% in Sherman County.

Of those who have received food assistance, respondents reported the following:

Government Assistance Programs Access

	Wasco	Sherman
Food Stamps (EBT, Oregon Trail Card)	68.0%	52.9%
WIC (Women, Infants, and Children)	48.1%	33.3%
Head Start (children)	12.0%	3.9%
Senior Farm Direct Nutrition Program	2.5%	0.0%
Free or Reduced School Lunch (children)	39.6%	49.0%
Summer Free School Lunch Program (children)	9.5%	2.0%
Other (please specify)	8.2%	9.8%

Despite the help from these programs, 28.4% of Wasco County households and 22.3% of Sherman County households are food insecure, worrying at least once a month that food will run out before there is money to buy more. These local levels are significantly higher than state figures for food insecurity: 13.1% from January 2006 to December 2008.⁹¹

How often does your household worry that your food will run out before you have money to buy more?

	Wasco	Sherman
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Never	71.7%	77.8%
Once a month	17.2%	15.1%
2 to 4 times a month	8.9%	4.0%
5 or more times a month	2.3%	3.2%

10.1% of Wasco County residents and 9.2% of Sherman County residents report skipping a meal at least once a month because food is scarce.

How often do you go without eating a meal because you cannot afford to buy food?

	Wasco	Sherman
Never	89.9%	90.8%
Once a month	3.7%	4.6%
2 to 4 times a month	5.1%	2.3%
5 or more times a month	1.3%	2.3%

Wasco County survey respondents who report skipping meals so their children could eat are far more likely to receive food from government assistance programs: 90.3%. For those respondents, assistance is as follows:

Government Assistance Programs accessed by Survey Respondents

Food Stamps (EBT, Oregon Trail Card)	70.2%
WIC (Women, Infants, and Children)	59.6%
Head Start (children)	17.5%
Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program	<1%
Free or Reduced School Lunch (children)	57.0%
Summer Free School Lunch Program (children)	14.9%
Other (please specify)	7.9%

Sherman County survey respondents who report skipping meals so their children could eat are also far more likely to receive food from government assistance programs: 92.3%. For those respondents, assistance is as follows:

Government Assistance Programs accessed by Survey Respondents

Food Stamps (EBT, Oregon Trail Card)	53.8%
WIC (Women, Infants, and Children)	61.5%
Head Start (children)	7.7%
Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program	0%
Free or Reduced School Lunch (children)	46.2%
Summer Free School Lunch Program (children)	0%
Other (please specify)	7.7%

Do you have extra food stored in case of an emergency?

	Wasco	Sherman
Yes	62.4%	71.6%
No	37.6%	28.4%

Households that do not have extra food stored report higher rates of food insecurity and hunger. In Wasco County, 48.8% of this group worries at least once a month that food will run out before there is money to buy more; 21.1% skip a meal at least once a month because food is scarce. In Sherman County, 46.7% of this group worries at least once a month that food will run out before there is money to buy more 19.4% skip a meal at least once a month because food is scarce.

Survey comments from this vulnerable population express concerns:

- “Most of us don’t have a) the room or b) the money to get ahead to store it.”
- “I know that if I can go out and hustle food, anyone can do it. If they are going hungry, it’s their fault. They can go out and do what we have to do.”
- “You’re just not eating what you want to eat.”
- “If you don’t have HUD, you’re not going to make it.”
- “Some of us have learned to live with no money.”
- “We try to avoid those food banks. There are a lot of people that hit those food banks whether they need it or not.”
- “There are not as many healthy, affordable options as there could be.”
- “For fresh fruits and vegetables, the cost is astronomical.”
- “At least some of the local things are staying in the community, but it’s just a temporary thing. In the winter the prices are worse at the store.”
- “I go to WINCO twice a month, and it’s worth the gas. You can fill the whole trunk of the car for \$150.”
- “I get a lot of fresh fruits and vegetables, so I run out of food stamps by the end of the month.”
- “I always shop by price per pound. I think we all have to. I don’t think any of us can afford not to.”
- “If you can get a job, it’s beneficial, but you need to be careful what you take because if you quit or are fired, you cannot come back on TANF and your food stamps are gone.”

Food Security in Klickitat and Skamania Counties

Local data and survey information indicates that many residents in Klickitat and Skamania County struggle to get the food they need for their families. Those residents who access government food assistance programs still have food needs beyond what the programs offer.

In Klickitat County, 45.8% of respondents receive food or food assistance from government food assistance programs. Over 54% of Skamania County respondents indicated that they receive food or food assistance from government programs. Of those who have accessed food assistance, the breakdown is as follows:

Government Assistance Programs accessed by Survey Respondents

Program	Klickitat County	Skamania County
Food Stamps (EBT, Quest Card)	54.7%	61.5%
WIC (Women, Infants, and Children)	51.8%	54.2%
Head Start (children)	16.4%	9.4%
Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program	1.3%	5.2%
Free or Reduced School Lunch (children)	52.4%	47.9%
Summer Free School Lunch Program (children)	5.8%	2.1%
Other (please specify)	11.3%	13.5%

(Most respondents checking “Other” listed Washington Gorge Action Programs (WGAP) food banks, which is NOT a government assistance program; WGAP is discussed later in this report.)

Even with the help of these programs, 7.9% of Klickitat County and 15.3% of Skamania County residents report skipping a meal at least once a month because food is scarce:

How many times per month do you go without eating a meal because you cannot afford to buy food?

Response	Klickitat County	Skamania County
Never	92.1%	84.6%
Once a month	3.3%	6.9%
2 to 4 times a month	2.9%	4.6%
5 or more times a month	1.7%	3.8%

In Klickitat and Skamania County, survey respondents who marked “Yes” for either skipping meals so that their children could eat or “Yes” for having difficulty feeding them were far more likely to have received food from government assistance programs.

Almost 92% of respondents in Klickitat County and 100% of respondents in Skamania County that answered “Yes” to these questions access government assistance programs. Of those respondents, the assistance access breakdown was as follows:

Program	Klickitat County	Skamania County
Food Stamps (EBT, Quest Card)	58.8%	100%
WIC (Women, Infants, and Children)	58.8%	100%
Head Start (children)	26.5%	22.2%
Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program	0%	0%
Free or Reduced School Lunch (children)	79.4%	55.6%
Summer Free School Lunch Program (children)	14.7%	0%

Klickitat and Skamania County respondents who access these programs are also more likely to have a household income under \$20,000.

Children and Food Security in the Gorge

Children are especially vulnerable to food insecurity in the Gorge. Families with children have a harder time meeting their food needs. In Hood River County, 19% of parents with children report skipping meals so that their children can eat; (frequency of meal skipping specifically for children’s sake was not evaluated) and 62.5% of parents who skip meals for their kids’ sake report skipping a meal at least once a month; 8.3% of those do so more than 5 times a month.

In Wasco County, 11.6% of households with children skip meals so that their children can eat. 21.6% of those skip a meal at least once a month and 4.1% do so five or more times a month. In Sherman County, 11.6% of households skip meals so that their children can eat. 21.4% of those skip a meal at least once a month and 14.3% do so five or more times a month.

Additionally, 21.7% of Hood River County, 13.2% of Wasco County, and 11.1% of Sherman County households with children struggle to provide enough food for children when school is not in session.

About 8% of Klickitat County and over 18% of Skamania County respondents who are parents reported skipping meals so that their children can eat. In Klickitat County, 18% of parents who skip meals so their children can eat report that they skip a meal at least once a month; 20% skip two to four times per month; and 22% skip five or more times per month. In Skamania County, 34.6% of respondents who skip meals so their children can eat reported that they skip a meal at least once a month; 15.4% skip two to four times per month; and 15.4% skip five or more times per month.

Additionally, 10.9% of Klickitat County respondents and 20.9% of Skamania County respondents who have children report that it is harder to have enough food for their children when school is not in session. Specifically, 69.2% of Klickitat County respondents and 54.5% of Skamania County respondents who report skipping meals for their children's sake also report that it is harder to have enough food for their children when school is not in session.

School Lunch Assistance in the Gorge

99% of America's teachers agree: proper nutrition and proper food consumption affect a child's ability to learn. When Share Our Strength, a national leading nonprofit organization to end hunger, conducted a national survey of 740 kindergarten through eighth grade public school teachers, an alarming number believe that children in the classroom regularly come to school hungry because they do not get enough to eat at home.⁹²

- Nearly 90% of teachers believe childhood hunger should be a high priority for our nation.
- A strong majority of teachers (64%) say most or a lot of students rely on school meals for their primary source of nutrition.

Most nutrition assistance reaches children through school breakfast, lunch and after school snacks via the USDA's Free and Reduced Price School Meals Program. But making food available does not ensure it will reach children. Problems, as complex as stigmas and as simple as getting to school on time, get in the way.

A significant portion of Hood River County's youth are eligible for the Free or Reduced School Lunch Program.

School Lunch Assistance in Hood River County

	2002-2003	2006-2007
<i>% of Children Receiving Free and Reduced-Price Lunch</i>	47.3	49.0
<i>Eligible for Free Lunch</i>	NA	1,617
<i>Eligible for Reduced Lunch</i>	NA	331
<i>Student Enrollment</i>	NA	3,977

Source: Oregon Department of Education, Child Nutrition Programs

Just over 50% of survey respondents (50.6%) reported that they or their children had utilized free or reduced school lunch or the free summer lunch program; 6.2% of the 50.6% had accessed the summer program).

Full price school lunch meals cost \$1.50 for breakfast and \$2-2.75 for lunch (varies from elementary to high school). Students qualifying for reduced lunch prices pay \$.30 for breakfast and \$.40 for lunch.⁹³

Nearly half of Wasco and Sherman County youth are eligible for the free or reduced-price school lunch program. Of the 49.3% of Wasco County residents receiving food from government assistance programs, 39.6% participate in the free or reduced school lunch program and 9.5% participate in the summer free school lunch program.

Of the 44.4% of Sherman County residents receiving food from government assistance programs, 49% participate in the free or reduced school lunch program and 2.0% participate in the summer free school lunch program.

Any child at a participating school may purchase a meal through the National School Lunch Program. Children from households with incomes at or below 130% of the poverty level are eligible for free meals. Those with incomes between 130% and 185% of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals, which cost no more than \$.40. Local school food authorities set their own prices for full-price (paid) meals, but must operate their meal services as non-profit programs.⁹⁴

Wasco and Sherman County School Districts

2007-2008	Dufur	S. Wasco	N. Wasco	Sherman
% of Children Eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch	43%	54%	52%	50%
Eligible for Free Lunch	104	97	1,263	101
Eligible for Reduced Lunch	17	37	254	35
Student Enrollment	280	248	2,901	272

Oregon Department of Education, National School Lunch Program, 2007-2008 Area Eligibility

Although the 2009 district information was not available for this assessment, the 2009 school-level information is as follows.

According to the Oregon Department of Education, the only school in Wasco and Sherman Counties with 40 to 49% free and reduced eligibility is the Sherman County Junior/Senior High School.⁹⁵ The following schools have 50% and greater eligibility: Dry Hollow Elementary (The Dalles), Chenoweth Elementary (The Dalles), The Dalles Middle School, Maupin Elementary and Sherman County Elementary.⁹⁶

Schools with less than 40% eligibility include the Dufur School District schools, the Mosier Community School, Colonel Wright Elementary (The Dalles), The Dalles High School and the South Wasco County Junior/Senior High School (Maupin).

The 2009 Oregon Health Teen Survey, conducted at two schools in The Dalles, provides a closer look at childhood food insecurity. 14.8% of eighth grade students and 15.5% of 11th grade students ate less than they felt they should (in the past 12 months) because there was not enough money to buy food.⁹⁷ These levels are slightly lower than statewide totals: 16.4% of eighth grade students and 18.1% of eleventh grade students report food insecurity.⁹⁸ However, when comparing the Oregon

Healthy Teen and Community Food Survey results, food insecurity is more prevalent among children than general respondents in Wasco County.

Across the river, a significant number of children and youth in Klickitat and Skamania County are eligible to participate in the free or reduced school lunch program. As of 2009, student participation in the free or reduced lunch program provided in Klickitat and Skamania County schools is as follows:

Klickitat County School District Free or Reduced Lunch Program Enrollment

Free or Reduced Lunch Program	2008-2009
Bickleton School District	0%
Glenwood School District	45.3%
Goldendale School District	52.7%
Klickitat School District	63.1%
Lyle/Dallesport School District	97.6%
Roosevelt School District	0%
Trout Lake School District	0%
White Salmon Valley School District	50.2%
Wishram School District	98.6%

(Schools that have 0% enrollment indicate that the schools do not participate in the federal food lunch program. These schools provide students access to lunch through locally organized school food programs.) Source: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction: Washington Report Card

Skamania County School District Free or Reduced Lunch Program Enrollment

Free or Reduced Lunch Program	2008-2009
Mill A School District	52.5%
Skamania School District	59.4%
Stevenson-Carson School District	36%

Source: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction: Washington Report Card

In Klickitat County, 52.4% of respondents reported that they or their children used free or reduced school lunch; 5.8% stated that they or their children accessed a free summer lunch program. In Skamania County, 47.9% of respondents reported that they or their children used free or reduced school lunch; 2.1% said they or their children accessed a free summer lunch program.

Emergency Food Access in the Gorge

Hood River County

There are numerous sites in Hood River County where residents can access emergency food pantries; most of these receive food from Oregon Food Bank through the regional Mid-Columbia

Community Action Council (MCCAC). The primary food pantry in the county is FISH Food Bank, located in Hood River. Secondary pantries are operated by the Seventh-Day Adventist church in Hood River and by volunteers in Cascade Locks. FISH also partners with volunteers to operate a monthly pantry in Parkdale. FISH is entirely volunteer-run, and the majority of volunteers are congregants of churches affiliated with Gorge Ecumenical Ministries (GEM). In addition, the Commission on Children and Families reports that numerous local churches operate smaller food pantries throughout the county, but these are unaffiliated with MCCAC and rely solely on private donations. Local clinics, including the county health department and La Clinica del Cariño, also provide limited food items at not cost to clients when available.

9.8% of survey respondents report utilizing one of FISH's sites as a source for food at some time. In the months of April, May, and June 2008, all MCCAC-affiliated food pantries served an average of 1319 individuals each month.⁹⁹ This represents 6.46% of the population of Hood River County. This number may also under-represent the number of residents accessing emergency food in the county because it does not include individuals who access food at La Clinica, the health department, or at any local church not affiliated with MCCAC and Oregon Food Bank. Client numbers for these sites were unavailable.

FISH is generally well-regarded by clients; a 2008 survey of clients during one week in March shows that clients were 100% 'very' or 'mostly' satisfied by foods provided by the pantry.

In FISH's client survey, respondents were given the opportunity to offer feedback on foods that they would like the food bank to have, and to report on foods that they discard or never use from their boxes.

Do you have suggestions for foods you would like us to purchase?

Beef
Pork
Sugar
Diabetic-specific foods (2)
Foods for people who are missing teeth
Fresh fruit (2)
Fresh vegetables (2)
Eggs (2)
Cheese (3)
Butter
Soy or rice milk
Whole grains

Are there foods FISH provides that you discard or never use?

Peanut butter (3)
Powdered milk
Foods diabetics can't have (2)
Mac & cheese
Liver (2)
Cranberries

FISH volunteers interviewed noted that easy-to-make meals and sweets, like leftover Starbucks pastries, disappear much faster than bulk goods. Fresh items, like those donated from local grocery stores or the farmers' market, are also quick to be taken.¹⁰⁰

Volunteers noted that demand rises at the end of the month, when residents' paychecks and/or food stamp benefits have run low. This correlates with OFB statewide data that shows 64% of food stamp recipients' benefits run out before the end of each month.¹⁰¹

FISH receives only one Oregon Food Bank delivery each month, at the beginning of the month, from the regional food bank warehouse in The Dalles. Mid-Columbia Community Action Council manages the regional warehouse and works with FISH to make and deliver food orders.

After repeatedly running low on staple foods toward the end of the month, FISH now purchases food from local grocers and from the Food Services Agency (FSA), a food service company, to supplement when stocks run low. Approximately 70% of their food stocks from Oregon Food Bank; 30% comes from local purchases and donations. Like all state food pantries, FISH is able to buy food from Oregon Food Bank at a rate significantly cheaper than retail prices: approximately .08 cents/lb.¹⁰² FISH reports spending \$6.55 per person each year on food.¹⁰³

FISH is currently facing the challenge of a significant spike in the number of families needing emergency food. In April-June 2008, FISH served 3958 individuals; for the same period in 2007, 2673 individuals, and 2006, 2948 individuals. This represents a 48% increase in individuals served from 2007-2008, and a 34% increase over 2006 levels.

Volunteers on site report that the number of children accessing FISH assistance has grown even more: FISH served 58.2% more children from January-September 2008 than in the same time period in 2007.¹⁰⁴ A significant portion of FISH clients include children:

Children served by FISH, January-September 2007-2008

2007	2,759
2008	4,364

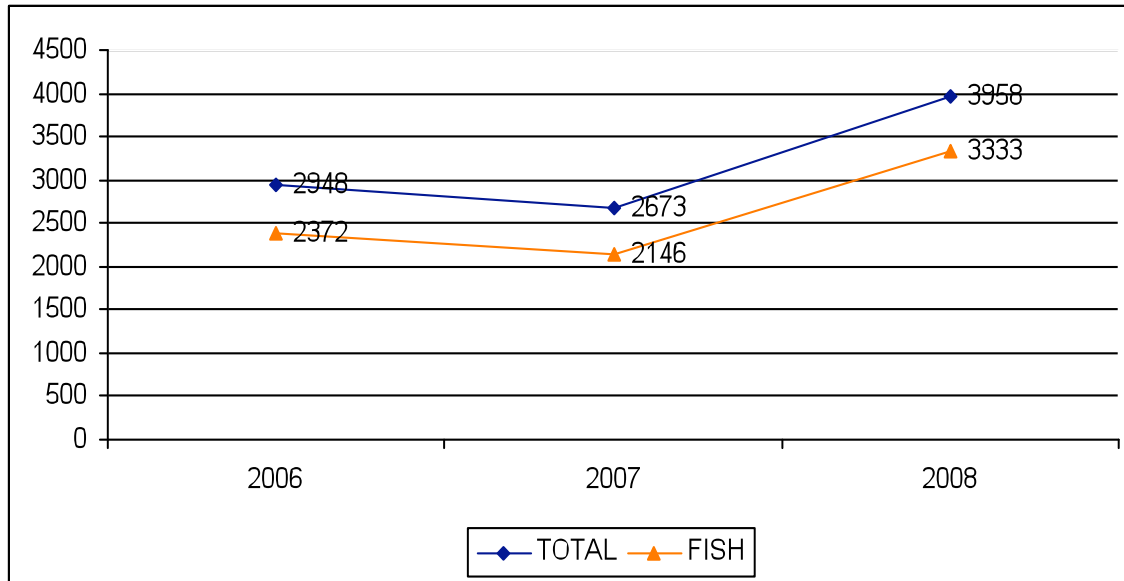
On an annual scale, FISH's numbers are up as well:

Total Individuals Served by FISH, 2002-2008

2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008 (Jan-Sept only)
7810	7702	9857	9560	8713	8948	9719

These numbers show a general upward trend, with a spike in 2004-2005. The number of people to access FISH services from January-September 2008 surpassed FISH's busiest year in the past 6 years (2004). While it is uncertain whether this sharp rise in need is temporary or a long-term trend, FISH needs the resources to help these individuals either way.

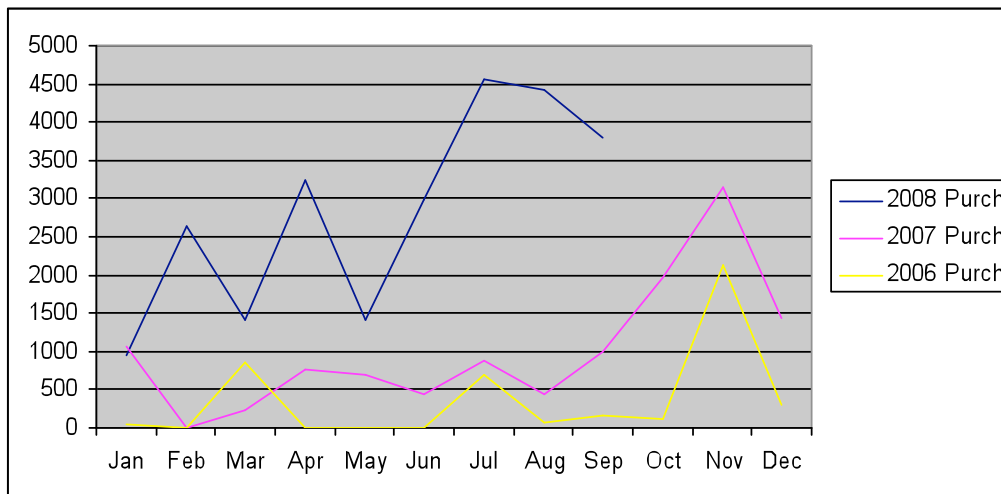
Individuals served by all HRC emergency food sites, April-June 2006-2008



A full spread of data for all county emergency food sites from before 2006 is unavailable for longer-term trend reporting.

Because of this jump in need, FISH has had to purchase more food than ever before – in April-June 2008, FISH purchased over \$7500 in food to supplement donations and their OFB food delivery. This concerns them, because FISH cannot sustain this level of purchasing indefinitely. Prior to 2006, FISH was not purchasing significant quantities of food, but as need for their services rise, so do their purchases:

FISH Food Bank food purchases, 2006-2008, in dollars



As food needs are rising, food supplies are not. MCCAC staff at the regional food bank warehouse report that USDA commodity food availability is down by nearly 50% (trend data was not available).¹⁰⁵ FISH reports that donations have remained relatively steady and that typically they are able to meet the community's needs; the organization accepts both food and cash donations from the community and considers residents' donations to be generous and sufficient on the whole, but when need jumps, donations do not rise as quickly to match the need. Cash donations are thus

especially valuable because the organization can use the donations to respond to spikes in demand or particular client food needs.

Local grocery stores are another valuable food donation source. Several regional stores participate in the statewide Fresh Alliance program and donate perishable goods such as cheese when they are available. These local grocers do not generally donate produce.

Local Produce at the Food Bank

The availability of fresh produce at FISH is limited by seasonality. During harvest season, FISH frequently receives fruit from local orchards and weekly donations from the Gorge Grown Farmers' Market. In 2008, donations from the Gorge Grown Farmers' Market totaled 648 pounds.¹⁰⁶ These donations are primarily limited to the summer and fall months, however, and are not always available. Fresh fruits and veggies were a frequently-identified desired food item in the FISH survey. One limitation for fresh products is that FISH does not have extra refrigerated storage space. The pantry owns several family-size refrigerators and freezers that are typically full to capacity with items such as meat and cheese donated by local grocery stores. Thus FISH cannot accept large fresh product donations at once.

Another limitation for FISH at its current location is that the site is not suited for repacking food. This means that FISH cannot take advantage of some discounted Oregon Food Bank food items that arrive in bulk and must be repackaged. Their storage limitations also limit the amount of food FISH can order from OFB on any given month. They would prefer to order larger quantities from OFB at lower prices, but with only one delivery a month, cannot store the quantity of food needed for the current demand for a month. When FISH makes purchases at local grocers, they pay full retail price, and are unable to stretch their limited purchasing dollars as far.¹⁰⁷ Additionally, MCCAC staff note that some grocers that donate food are working to improve their inventory stocking, which has the potential to reduce grocery-donated products both locally and statewide through OFB in the future.¹⁰⁸

MCCAC and the Regional Food Bank

The regional food bank in The Dalles serves 13 food sites in the Gorge, including all of FISH's sites in Hood River. The newly renovated warehouse also houses Wasco County's gleaning group, Windy River Gleaners, and has the capacity to repack large bulk food orders.¹⁰⁹ However, FISH is the only food pantry in the county to receive a direct delivery from MCCAC's warehouse in The Dalles – food must then be reloaded and transported to Parkdale and Cascade Locks sites.

MCCAC, FISH, and the Hood River County Commission on Children and Families have indicated an interest in exploring the possibility of an improved emergency food facility in Hood River County that would allow FISH to store more food, including more fresh fruits and vegetables, to repack bulk items, and potentially to host kitchen and classroom space as well to make for a multi-use facility.

In Wasco County, MCCAC partnered with the county to apply for a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to support the development of their regional warehouse; a similar approach could work well in Hood River County to develop a site with improved storage and repacking capacity. Such a project could again go through a CDBG grant with Hood River County government support,

or could be folded into another project, such as the Commission on Children and Family's Community School project in Odell.

La Clinica del Carino – another emergency food partner

Currently, La Clinica del Carino, a local non-profit health clinic focusing on the needs and wellness of farmworkers in the region, distributes a modest amount of food at its main clinic in Hood River. However, this is mostly limited to day-old breads and pastries from local grocers – helpful, but not particularly healthy. La Clinica leaders would like to expand their offerings and be able to offer the kind of healthier items, like fruit and produce, that they promote at their practice and in their wellness programs.¹¹⁰

La Clinica staff also note that some Spanish-only-speaking farmworkers are afraid to visit FISH, as they worry about deportation. FISH does not track or ask for proof of citizenship, but for these families, it is a barrier. Having some items available at La Clinica could help provide food to these families.¹¹¹

A final recommendation from La Clinica was to partner with FISH for a late-spring food drive during cherry harvest time, when the concentration of families in town to work the seasonal harvest is greatest. Foods specific to the diet of Latino families are often in short supply at FISH, so a food drive at this time could be directed towards these items. See Chapter IV for more information on La Clinica's programs.

Emergency Food needs and ideas:

- Some, but not all, of FISH's informational materials and instructions are in Spanish. They would benefit from having all of these translated.
- More Spanish-speaking volunteers would help ensure that Spanish-speaking clients are able to get their needs met.
- FISH has no computers on site and must keep all records on paper. This system works well with volunteers but means that all important digital FISH documents must be kept on volunteers' computers.
- Improved site dry and cold storage for larger shipments of goods.
- A site capable of repacking food to take advantage of bulk items.
- Potentially a warehouse site with expanded storage capacity, repacking ability, and educational kitchen space.
- Expand/extend emergency food offerings in communities outside of Hood River (Cascade Locks, Odell, Parkdale)
- Potentially partner with La Clinica to offer emergency food on site
- Partnerships with local growers to accept fresh produce donations (would require improved storage)

Wasco and Sherman Counties

The Emergency Food Box Program is a three-to-five day supply of groceries accessed from one of the 268 pantries run by churches and other non-profit groups in the Oregon Food Bank Network. Although a majority of households rely on emergency food boxes only one to three times a year¹¹²,

pantries are serving more first-time clients while also meeting increased needs of those already accessing emergency food.¹¹³

There are several sites in Wasco County where residents can access emergency food resources. Half of these sites are located in North Wasco County and receive Oregon Food Bank food through MCCAC. The primary emergency food box site in Wasco County is the St. Vincent de Paul food pantry, located in The Dalles. The Salvation Army and The Dalles Seventh Day Adventist also operate pantries in The Dalles. In addition, several local churches operate smaller, informal food pantries throughout the county that are unaffiliated with MCCAC and rely solely on private donations.

10.9% of Wasco County respondents report using a food bank or pantry as a source of food. From July to September 2009, the three MCCAC-affiliated food pantries in Wasco County served an average of 1,392 individuals each month — a 12.7% increase from the average during this period in 2007.¹¹⁴ This represents 5.9% of the Wasco County population but may under-represent the number of residents who access food at informal pantries not affiliated with MCCAC and the Oregon Food Bank. Client numbers for other sites were unavailable.

8.8% of Sherman County respondents report using a food bank or pantry as a source of food. One emergency food box site in Sherman County receives food from MCCAC, the Methodist Church United in Wasco. From July to September 2009, this food pantry served an average of 88 individuals each month — a 25.7% increase from the average during this period in 2007.¹¹⁵ This represents 5.4% of the Sherman County populations but may under-represent the number of residents informally receiving food assistance.

MCCAC Emergency Food Box Sites, July to September 2009

	Individuals Served	Boxes Distributed
Salvation Army	1,299	446
The Dalles Seventh Day Adventist	805	247
St. Vincent de Paul	2,072	740
Methodist Church United	263	115

SPOTLIGHT: The Wasco Food Pantry

The only MCCAC-affiliated food pantry in Sherman County, the Methodist Church United distributes

emergency food boxes once a month. According to volunteer pantry operator Bryan Vangilder, the farming industry and seasonal employment opportunities in Sherman County make getting by in the off season hard. Most food box recipients are senior citizens and are geographically widespread and about half of the clients travel from Rufus.

Because the levels of food insecurity in Sherman County are higher than the number of individuals accessing the food pantry (5.4% of the population), many residents who need emergency food access do not access services. Although Vangilder and other residents recognize an attached stigma, it is hard to dispel.

The Wasco pantry runs on county funds and private donations. Limited cold storage space restricts orders, and some of the pantry's food is stored at the MCCAC warehouse in The Dalles. Although there is a demonstrated need to serve more food insecure residents in Sherman County, Vangilder

says the pantry's facility cannot handle more. "It would be nice to have something other than what we've got. It would be nice to have a bigger area and more freezer capacity. The church isn't really wired to have more freezers stuck in the basement."¹¹⁶

As in Wasco County, churches in Sherman County informally provide food boxes for congregation or community members in need.

The following is excerpted (with editing) from the Southern Wasco County Emergency Food Pantry Feasibility Study.

Demographically, South Wasco County residents are more likely to need emergency food services than North County residents.¹¹⁷ Because South Wasco County is geographically remote, it is difficult for residents to access assistance. The closest MCCAC-affiliated emergency food box sites are 40 miles north of Maupin in The Dalles and Moro. Although St. Vincent de Paul delivers emergency food supplies when requested (an average of nine boxes a month), it is difficult for assistance providers in the North Wasco County to share services because of the lack of facilities and manpower in the South Wasco County. With limited resources, several local faith-based organizations and service groups try to address a portion of the need for emergency food assistance in South Wasco County.

Maupin

The Maupin Chapter of the Lions Club distributes emergency food boxes to those in need every Christmas. Also, the Maupin Community Evangelical Church uses discretionary funds to assist community members in need — most often families with grandparents fostering grandchildren. As identified by one of the church's project directors, the largest challenge is the lack of a central, widely known emergency assistance effort with enough capacity to address the high level of local need.¹¹⁸

Wamic

The Wamic Community Church has an emergency assistance project called "The King's Pantry." It stores non-perishable food items, which are distributed to two or three families each month. This church identifies the following project issues: lack of space and capacity to serve the community's need, lack of knowledge regarding available assistance, and hesitation to use assistance because of religious affiliation.

Tygh Valley

The Tygh Valley Community United Methodist Church also runs a small food pantry. It collects non-perishable food items and cash donations, and distributes food to community members in need or seeking assistance. Because the church lacks storage facilities, volunteers generally collect donations on an as-needed basis. The church's pantry generally serves two or three families every month, with heightened need in the summer for seasonal workers.

Many of the communities in South Wasco and Sherman Counties fall within twenty miles of Maupin. Establishing an emergency food pantry in Maupin would reduce the travel time to emergency food services by half for people living in most of the communities in South Wasco and Sherman Counties. MCCAC has expressed interest in supplying an emergency food facility in Maupin, but there is not an organization in South Wasco County that is currently capable of managing a pantry.

Local Produce

MCCAC-affiliated pantries mostly receive shelf-stable food, and the availability of fresh produce at food pantries is limited by seasonality. In 2009, The Dalles Farmers' Market donated surplus produce to the St. Vincent de Paul emergency food box site. Currently, there are no active or coordinated efforts to source more fresh produce. Because managing large amounts of fresh produce is logistically complex, there is need for increased donations from home gardeners and improved coordination with producers.

Only 5% of the Oregon Food Bank food MCCAC distributes is fresh produce.¹¹⁹ Depending on the season, MCCAC receives a couple bins of potatoes, squash, onions, cucumbers, tomatoes, apples, oranges or pears each month. "If we want an assortment, we're better off asking local growers," Janeal Booren, Regional Food Bank Coordinator, said. "Especially with the variety we're able to grow around here."

Because the Wasco food pantry only distributes emergency food boxes once a month, it does not typically accept fresh produce from the Oregon Food Bank unless the items will hold, such as potatoes or onions. Although the pantry can accept a very limited amount of home-grown donations, food box recipients often bring fresh produce to share with other recipients at distribution.¹²⁰

The Windy River Gleaners in The Dalles receives more fresh produce, which is gleaned from farms or donated from gardens, than any site in Wasco or Sherman Counties. Because Gleaners are able to handle large quantities of fresh produce and distribute weekly, they move fresh food quickly and efficiently.

St. Vincent de Paul can handle fresh produce, but not in large quantities at once. The Salvation Army site cannot effectively receive or distribute fresh produce because of storage limited to the hallway. The Dalles Seventh Day Adventist is equipped to receive fresh produce but accepts a limited amount from the Oregon Food Bank because of its connection to Evans Fruit Stand and other sources of fresh produce.

Overall, the MCCAC food pantries can handle fresh produce, but only in small doses. When fresh produce arrives from OFB or USDA, the quantities are often too large to manage efficiently. The same challenges arise when local farmers donate large quantities because freezer and refrigeration space is poor at the agencies. The best approach to sourcing local food pantries with fresh produce is for local people to donate from gardens. "I don't think there is an agency that would turn it down," Booren said.

Klickitat and Skamania Counties

There are numerous sites in Klickitat and Skamania County where residents can access emergency food pantries, which are organized by the Washington Gorge Action Programs (WGAP), its headquarters located in Bingen, Klickitat County. There is one food bank location in Skamania County, the Stevenson Food Bank. There are several food banks located throughout Klickitat County; the Goldendale Food Bank, the Seventh Day Adventist Community Center Food Bank in

White Salmon, the WGAP Food Bank in Bingen, and the Klickitat Food Bank, which opened in 2009.¹²¹

In April 2010, the community of Wishram started to receive emergency food services from WGAP. Food boxes and commodity supplemental foods were delivered to Wishram and distributed out of a truck. WGAP intends to continue providing this service in Wishram and other outlying areas throughout 2010.¹⁴

In 2008, 9,943 food boxes were distributed from the food banks in Klickitat County and 3,708 food boxes were distributed from the food bank in Skamania County. In 2009, 9,878 food boxes were distributed from food banks in Klickitat County. As of October 2009, 2,835 food boxes were distributed from the food bank in Skamania County and through 2010, an average of 300 food boxes are distributed monthly from the food bank in Skamania County.¹⁴

While 2009 boxes distributed through WGAP food banks were less than those distributed in 2008, there was a higher percentage of individuals and families accessing emergency food services in 2009. For all WGAP food banks in Klickitat and Skamania County, 544,2092 pounds of food were distributed in 2008 and 777,2024 pounds of food were distributed in 2009.¹⁴ In 2009, WGAP prepared larger food boxes that held more food and redesigned their food bank system to work similar to a grocery store where participants can walk through the food bank and choose which foods they want to take from shelves. These two changes provided foods that families were more likely to use and a larger amount of food per box, which may have caused less of a need for individuals and families to access emergency food services more than once a month.¹⁴

Agency-wide, throughout all WGAP programs (including emergency food, energy, and shelter), 1,996 households were served in 2008 and 3,803 households were served in 2009, almost double the number from the year before.¹⁴

WGAP food banks are part of Northwest Harvest, an ecumenical ministry in Seattle, and Second Harvest in Spokane. WGAP does not have to pay fees for food provided through Northwest Harvest, but WGAP must arrange to have the food picked up in Seattle and transported to WGAP's main office in Bingen. Through WGAP's partnership with Second Harvest, there is no cost for the food provided to WGAP, but there is a shared maintenance fee of between \$0.3 and \$0.19 per pound of food. In 2009, Second Harvest started to deliver food to WGAP once a month on a semi truck, which allows for the transportation of larger quantities of food.¹⁴

WGAP receives local food donations to help support the food banks, including donations from local grocery stores in White Salmon, Goldendale, and Stevenson. WGAP also receives donations from the Horizons Program, in which communities have developed community gardens to provide full or partial harvests to WGAP food banks. Local growers regularly donate a portion of the produce they grow and harvest. Community members throughout Klickitat and Skamania County donate food and money to support the purchase of food. The amount of donations from community members has increased in recent years.¹⁴

These efforts contribute to bringing more food to the WGAP food banks; however, there has been an increase in the cost of the food WGAP needs to purchase to provide adequate food boxes to individuals and families in need of them.¹⁴

Government Food Assistance

As mentioned previously, a significant number of survey respondents have received food assistance from government programs administered locally: 36.6% in Hood River County, 49.3% in Wasco County, 44.4% in Sherman County, 45.8% in Klickitat County, and over 54% in Skamania County. These programs, including SNAP (food stamps), WIC, Head Start, and more, have the ability to significantly increase food security. The high percentage of Wasco and Sherman County residents who access these resources warrants a look at how these programs could better serve clients.

Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program

WIC is a supplemental nutrition program that serves to safeguard the health of low-income pregnant women and mothers, infants and children up to age 5 by providing supplemental foods, health care referrals, breastfeeding support and nutrition education. WIC provides families with checks or vouchers each month that are intended to be used to purchase nutritious foods to help supplement their diets.¹⁶ Foods that families can purchase using WIC benefits are highly nutritious and include milk, cheese, peanut butter, eggs, dried beans, peas, lentils, tuna, and fresh fruits and vegetables.¹⁵

The program, federally funded by the USDA, is designed to address health disparities and reach families most in need of preventive health services. In 2008, WIC served 174,000 women, infants and children across Oregon and 292,000 in Washington.¹²² During this year, over 65% of infants born in rural areas in Washington received WIC services.

WIC 2008 Service Data: Columbia River Gorge

	Hood River	Wasco and Sherman	Klickitat	Skamania
Total Served	1,586	1,694	1,220	256
Infants and Children Under 5		1,216	860	174
Pregnant, Breastfeeding and Postpartum Women		478	360	82
Pregnant Women Served	56%	57%	n/a	n/a
Dollars to Grocery Stores		\$633,810	\$519,156	\$93,699

In Wasco and Sherman Counties, 64.6% of WIC client families have household incomes at or below the federal poverty level.¹²³

WIC's food vouchers are of primary interest in this report. These vouchers provide an average of \$44 in nutritious foods to each participant monthly.¹²⁴ In addition to helping improve the health and nutrition of WIC clients, these vouchers strengthen Oregon's economy. In 2008, WIC vouchers spent at grocery stores totaled \$70 million.¹²⁵ WIC participants can redeem vouchers at the following authorized sites in Hood River and Wasco County. There are no authorized sites in Sherman County.

- Columbia Market (Cascade Locks)
- Jim's Market (Mt Hood)
- McIsaac's Store (Parkdale)
- Mid-Valley Store (Odell)

- Rite Aid (HR and The Dalles)
- Rosauers (HR)
- Safeway (HR and The Dalles)
- Fred Meyer
- Walgreens (Hood River and The Dalles)
- Maupin Market (Maupin)

All Washington families using WIC vouchers in 2008 generated \$127 million spent at grocery stores and \$738,000 in purchases through the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program.¹²⁶

Klickitat and Skamania County do not currently have WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Programs, as there is a lack of local farmers markets that can implement the program. In 2011, the Klickitat County WIC office will partner with Dickey's Farms Farm Stand to provide WIC families with WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition vouchers.

In August 2009, the WIC program made its biggest transformation in more than 30 years. The WIC food package was amended to encourage clients to eat more fruits and vegetables; increase whole grain and fiber consumption; lower saturated fat in the diet; drink fewer sweetened beverages, including juice; and exclusively breastfeed their babies. In Oregon, this project is called Fresh Choices. Key nutrition messages include varying vegetables and focusing on fruit.

Cost is the most common barrier to accessing fresh fruits and vegetables. However, the Fresh Choices program provides participants with a voucher valued between \$6 and \$10 each month to purchase fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables.¹²⁷ In the past, carrots were the only vegetable that could be purchased with WIC vouchers. The Farm Direct Nutrition Program provides another avenue for WIC participants to access fresh fruits and vegetables.

Regional Impacts of the Oregon and Washington Farm Direct Nutrition Program and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program

The Oregon Farm Direct Nutrition Program (FDNP) is a state administered federal nutrition program that brought more than one million dollars into the hands of Oregon farmers in 2009. WIC clients and eligible low-income seniors participate in the Farm Direct Nutrition Program. The FDNP provides WIC families with vouchers worth \$20 to purchase fresh, locally grown fruit, vegetables and herbs directly from authorized farmers at farm stands and farmers' markets. Information is also provided to WIC FDNP recipients on how to prepare these foods.

Value of FDNP WIC Coupons, 2008

	Wasco County	Hood River County	Oregon
Dollars to Farmers	\$3,858	unavailable	\$426,000

These vouchers are distributed to a limited number of WIC clients: in 2009, 216 participated in FDNP in Wasco County; the redemption rate is 85%.¹²⁸

The FDNP provides seniors with vouchers worth \$30 to purchase fresh, locally grown fruit, vegetables and herbs directly from authorized farmers at farm stands and farmers' markets. In 2009, the Seniors and People with Disabilities Division of DHS invited 345 Wasco and Sherman

County seniors to participate in FDNP; 232 seniors received the vouchers, and the redemption rate is to be determined.¹²⁹

No farm stands or farmer's markets are FDNP authorized in Sherman County. The sites where participants can redeem FDNP vouchers in Wasco County are limited.

FDNP Authorized Sites in Wasco County

Farmers' Markets	Farm Stands
Maupin Farmers' Market	Seed to Table Farm (Maupin)
The Dalles Farmers' Market	Forest Evans Orchard (The Dalles)
	Renken Farms (The Dalles)

FDNP vouchers are another valuable income stream for local farmers. Limited FDNP sites in Wasco and Sherman Counties make voucher redemption challenging for recipients. In an effort to increase the range of shopping options for voucher recipients, The Dalles Farmers' Market encouraged and registered 11 new producers in 2009.

FDNP Authorized Sites in Hood River County

Farmers' Markets	Farm Stands
Gorge Grown Farmers' Market (Hood River)	Alice's Orchard and Fruit Stand (HR)
Hood River Saturday Market (Hood River)	Cody Orchard Fruit Stand (Odell)
	Kinsey Orchard (HR)
	Kiyokawa Family Orchards (Parkdale)
	Mt. View Orchards Fruit Stand (Parkdale)
	Packer Orchards (HR)
	Rasmussen Farms (HR)
	Smiley's Red Barn (HR)

Not every WIC family receives the checks – they are first come, first serve. In 2008, Hood River County distributed 262 check packets and had a waiting list. State level funding for this program has not increased with caseload rate increases. The redemption rate in 2007 was 73%, 2008 redemption rates were not yet available for 2008.¹³⁰

County sites where WIC shoppers can redeem their coupons are located in the major three population centers in the county, helping ensure their ease of redemption.

Starting in 2010, farmers may register to accept the new WIC fruit and vegetable cash value voucher (worth \$6 to \$10 each month) for fresh produce year round. The FDNP will continue to be seasonal and will not be replaced by the new vouchers.¹³¹

The Seniors Farmers Market Nutrition Program, part of the Senior Nutrition Program, is intended to provide locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables to low-income adults over the age of 60.¹³² The program, funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, helps to improve nutrition of older adults

by providing them with vouchers they can use to purchase foods at participating farmers' markets.²²

The Klickitat County Senior Services provides vouchers to older adults in western Klickitat County who can use them at Dickey's Farms in Bingen, which in 2010, was the only farm in the county contracted as a provider. In 2009, the Klickitat County Senior Services distributed 127 vouchers, each worth \$40, to older adults in the county. In 2010, they have received 129 vouchers, which was the highest number of vouchers they have been provided with to distribute to older adults since the start of the Seniors Farmers Market Nutrition Program in Klickitat County.¹³³

In 2008, the Skamania County Senior Services received approximately 50 vouchers to distribute to older adults living in the county. As in Klickitat County, in 2010, Skamania County Senior Services received more vouchers to distribute than the year before, totaling 64 vouchers.¹³⁴

WIC and Senior Farm Direct Nutrition Program needs and ideas:

- More cooking classes for WIC clients, potentially utilizing donated fresh produce from farmers and/or farmers' markets to supplement limited class budgets and help clients use their coupons to take advantage of fresh, seasonal produce
- Increased WIC and Senior FDNP coupon availability for all interested families
- Increased number of producers participating in the FDNP program for increased shopper options

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

The federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp Program) provides a food safety net for 313,000 low-income Oregon households. The federal government authorized the current program in 1977 with the goal of alleviating hunger and malnutrition by subsidizing the food expenditures of low-income households.

In Oregon, families with incomes up to 185 % of the federal poverty line are eligible for some level of SNAP benefits. SNAP is administered by the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) Children, Adults and Families (CAF) Division.¹³⁵ In Washington, SNAP is administered by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).

The intent of SNAP is to help improve the health and well being of low-income households and individuals. SNAP benefits do not satisfy the food needs of a household or an individual, but rather supplement nutritional needs. In May 2009, the average monthly benefit in Oregon and Washington was about \$250 per household.¹³⁶

The USDA estimates that eating a low-cost but nutritionally adequate diet of home-cooked meals for a month would cost about \$2.40 per meal for an adult man and about \$2.10 per meal for an adult woman.¹

The Oregon Center for Public Policy emphasizes several key facts about food stamp use in Oregon¹³⁷:

Oregon SNAP households receive, on average, \$1 dollar per person per meal in benefits.

SNAP brought \$463 million federal dollars into the Oregon economy in 2007, generating approximately \$832 million in new economic activity, benefiting farmers, grocers and small businesses.

About 82% of Oregon SNAP benefits go to households with children, many in working families. Most of the other benefits go to households with seniors or people with disabilities.

Unmet Needs: in the United States, in Oregon, in Washington, in the Gorge

Nationally, only 60% of those eligible for food stamps receive them. Oregon's rate is higher, 77% in 2006, but Hood River's rate is below the state average at 63% in 2006 (see chart below). Continuing outreach efforts are needed to ensure that eligible families are able to access the benefits.

According to the Oregon Center for Public Policy, increasing the share of eligible households that participate in SNAP by just five percentage points would provide food stamps to an additional 26,000 low-income Oregonians, bring about \$18 million into our local economy, and result in about \$33 million in new economic activity in the state.¹³⁸ In Hood River, the value is estimated at approximately \$985,000 (see chart).

SNAP figures for HRC and Oregon, 2003 and 2008

Hood River County						
MONTH OF JULY	POP ¹¹	EST POP IN POVERTY ¹²	FOOD STAMP ACTIVITY			
			TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS	TOTAL PERSONS	BENEFIT PER HH	% OF POP PARTICIPATING
2003	20,450	2,845	848	1,972	\$164.90	9.6
2008	21,470	3,105	947	2,380	\$224.38	11.1
Oregon						
2003	3,504,700	388,740	202,662	405,778	160.81	11.6
2008	3,745,455	497,319	249,585	482,407	185.97	12.9

SNAP participation rates and economic value of benefits, HRC and Oregon, 2005 and 2006

Hood River County			
YEAR	PARTICIPATION RATE ¹³	ANNUAL VALUE OF FOOD STAMPS ¹⁴	VALUE OF INCREASING PARTICIPATION ¹⁵
2005	61 %	\$2,243,187	\$1,042,803
2006	63 %	2,312,571	985,428

¹¹ Population by county is based upon certified estimates from 2002 and 2007 from the population research center, Portland State University.

¹² The number of persons in poverty is based upon 2000 and 2005 census information from the U.S. Census Bureau and does not include people in military barracks, institutional group quarters or children in foster care.

¹³ Monthly participants divided by the number of people earning 130 percent or less of the federal poverty guidelines according to U.S. Census data.

¹⁴ The total value of federal food-stamp dollars going to participants in each county. Data provided by DHS.

¹⁵ The average between the estimated value of the minimum and maximum annual increases.

Oregon			
2005	77 %	457,978,544	99,796,381
2006	77 %	464,295,240	97,457,795

Source: Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force analysis of Department of Human Services and 2000 Census

Percent of children participating in SNAP, HRC and Oregon, 2003

% OF CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN SNAP	Hood River County	State of Oregon
January 2003 ¹⁶	17.9	20.0

Source: OSU Extension Service, "Poverty and Food Assistance in Hood River County"¹³⁹

Beginning in late 2000, Oregon's aggressive expansion of the Food Stamp Program improved the state's hunger rates.¹⁴⁰ By expanding eligibility for food stamps, making the application process simpler and funding outreach to eligible families, Oregon markedly increased the number of Oregonians receiving food stamps. However in 2009, SNAP participation rates, which rose more than 28% in Oregon during the economic downturn, increased alongside food insecurity rates, leaving Oregon the second hungriest state in the country.¹⁴¹

Nationally, only 60% of those eligible for SNAP receive benefits.¹⁴² Oregon's participation rate is one of the highest in the country, 79% in 2007 (see chart below). Yet continued outreach efforts are needed to ensure that eligible households are accessing benefits. According to the Oregon Center for Public Policy, increasing the share of eligible households participating in SNAP by just five percentage points would provide benefits to an additional 26,000 low-income Oregonians, bring about \$18 million into our local economy, and result in about \$33 million in new economic activity in the state. In Wasco and Sherman Counties, the value of increasing participation rates is estimated at \$794,197.

2007 SNAP Eligibility Data

	Participation Rate	People not Participating	Value of Increasing Participation
Wasco County	80%	898	\$673,602
Sherman County	59%	166	\$120,595
Oregon	79%	117,839	\$93,957,962

2007 Oregon Food Stamp Participation at the County Level, Oregon Hunger Task Force and Oregon Food Bank

In November 2009, SNAP activity through The Dalles DHS branch office totaled 2,829 households and 5,290 people. This figure represents 20.8% of the Wasco and Sherman County population. (Because Sherman County does not have a DHS branch office, residents most likely access The Dalles office for services.) The average benefit per household was \$213.58.¹⁴³

SNAP Participation by County: 2008 and 2009

	Participants June 2008	Participants June 2009	% Change	Annual Value of SNAP Dollars
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¹⁶ Oregon Department of Human Services

Wasco County	3,855	4,422	14.7%	\$5,048,473
Sherman County	265	272	2.6%	\$322,768
Oregon	479,405	614,630	28.2%	\$722,831,277

Special SNAP Report: Food Security and the Economic Crisis, Oregon Hunger Task Force and Oregon Food Bank

As of June 2009, 18.6% of the Wasco County population and 16.6% of the Sherman County population participated in SNAP.

Klickitat and Skamania Counties

Residents of Klickitat and Skamania County that qualify for SNAP receive them through the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). The DSHS offices in Klickitat County are the White Salmon Branch Community Services office and the Goldendale Branch Community Services office. The DSHS office in Skamania County is located at the Stevenson Branch Community Services office.

In April 2009, 15.5% of the population in Klickitat County and 11.4% of the population in Skamania County received SNAP benefits.

As of March 2010, 17.9% of the Klickitat County population received SNAP benefits, 42% of whom are children. As of March 2010, 14.1% of the Skamania County population received SNAP benefits; of that 40.5% are children.

In 2010, the average SNAP benefits per household have averaged \$252.85. In 2009, the average was \$276.73. The decrease in SNAP benefits in 2010 suggests that there are more working poor families and individuals with slightly higher incomes than years prior are applying for SNAP benefits. Working poor families that have higher incomes receive less SNAP benefits than working poor families with lower incomes or families that do not receive an income.

Farm Direct Sales and SNAP

Traditionally, SNAP clients have been unable to use their benefits to purchase food direct from local farmers: infrastructural requirements for accepting food stamps (including electronic benefit transfer machines) have made the program inaccessible to farmers.

However, more and more farmers' markets across the nation have registered to become food stamp retailers, allowing farmers' market vendors to sell to SNAP clients. The Dalles Farmers' Market began accepting SNAP in 2009. This season, the market processed 94 food stamp transactions totaling nearly \$2,000. SNAP clients regularly visited the market but not in near proportion to the number of consumers receiving SNAP benefits in Wasco County. This demonstrates need for increased marketing and outreach, and potentially incentive programs, to help SNAP clients access the market. Several Community Food Survey respondents reported a desire for a more affordable farmers' market. During its first market season in Maupin, the Gorge Grown Mobile Farmers' Market accepted SNAP benefits. According to the Gorge Grown Food Network, the Maupin site averaged one to three SNAP transactions each week. Although the Gorge Grown Mobile Market site in Dufur has the capacity to accept SNAP benefits, the lack of wireless phone signal access in Dufur prohibits transactions.

Hood River County's Gorge Grown Farmers' Market has accepted SNAP benefits since 2007. While exact sales figures for 2007 and 2008 are unavailable, market staff confirmed that SNAP clients visited the market with regularity during these seasons, but not in proportion to their presence in the county: there is room for increased marketing, and potentially incentives programs, to help SNAP clients access the market. Several survey respondents in the Community Food Survey reported that one reason they do not shop at the farmers' market is that they do not believe the market accepts SNAP benefits. This indicates a need for increased outreach.

In addition, preliminary work is underway in Oregon to pilot having Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms eligible to accept SNAP benefits for weekly farm shares.¹⁴⁴

SPOTLIGHT: SNAP Benefits Discussion

In 2009, the EBT program generated 3.2% of total market sales at The Dalles Farmers' Market. There was an average of 5.2 SNAP transactions per market with an average transaction value of \$23.19. This average is extremely low given that 4,422 Wasco County residents participated in SNAP in June 2009 — 18.6% of the county's population. The majority of SNAP recipients do not know that The Dalles Farmers' Market accepts SNAP benefits or have reasons for not redeeming SNAP benefits at the market. This demonstrates the need to increase outreach efforts to low-income families and individuals receiving government assistance who struggle to access and afford fresh produce and local food.

Although this government nutrition assistance program improved access to fresh, local foods for low-income individuals and provided a new income stream for market vendors, use of the EBT program was low. In coordination with the Mid-Columbia Council of Governments, the farmers' market facilitated a discussion with 10 TANF and SNAP recipients to determine how the market could improve the program in the next season. The TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) program provides cash assistance to low-income families with children to aid them in becoming self-sufficient. To qualify for TANF, families must have very few assets, and little or no income. Like the SNAP program, TANF benefits are not intended to provide for a family's full needs, but to assist with needs and connect individuals to community and government resources while they seek employment. The results of this discussion are summarized below.

Although all participants were aware that The Dalles Farmers' Market accepted the Oregon Trail Card in 2009, most did not shop at the market. Reasons included forgetting, transportation challenges, inconvenient day and time, and lack of signage directing SNAP clients to the EBT machine booth. Most participants viewed the farmers' market as more expensive than grocery stores.

What might influence you to use the market regularly?

- Better variety of fruits and vegetables
- Larger quantities
- Lower prices
- Incentive program
- More convenient location
- Reliability of products available

- Knowing what's available in advance
- Clear distinction between who's selling and who's in charge
- More volunteers to man information booth and EBT machine
- More advertising

"It takes five pounds of potatoes for one meal at my house. For it to be more worthwhile for me, I shop quantity. Because otherwise, with what they give us on food stamps, you can't make ends meet when you've got a bigger family and they eat like that so and that's how I shop. I compare by quantity. Twelve little potatoes for \$1, how many of those 12 potatoes is it going to take to feed each and everybody in your family? You're looking at price per pound and how much it costs for a whole meal. If you're paying \$20 for one meal for your family, that's \$60 a day if you're having three meals a day and you just can't afford it when you're on food stamps."

Participants identified the following barriers to accessing the SNAP program at The Dalles Farmers' Market: vendors lacking knowledge about the EBT/SNAP program; feeling uncomfortable at the market (because prices were not displayed, etc.); transportation, time and gas; ineffective outreach/advertising.

Although participants understood the value of purchasing and consuming fresh produce and supporting local farmers and the community, the barriers for this ultra low-income group to access the market supersede. The inaccessibility of the EBT machine and market in general, and the lack of outreach appear to be larger issues than cost concerns.

SNAP Needs and Ideas

- Continue ongoing outreach to ensure that all eligible Gorge residents sign up for SNAP benefits
- Increase SNAP-eligible shopping locations in rural Gorge communities

SNAP Needs and Ideas: Farmers' Markets

- Work with market staff and Gorge Grown Food Network to ensure vendors are effectively trained and familiar with the EBT/SNAP program
- Improve educational handouts and booth signage
- Work with market staff and vendors to display clear food prices on individual booths
- Consider offering value price-per-pound options for large quantities
- Improve signage directing SNAP customers to the EBT machine and listing "deals of the day" or bargains.
- Banner with SNAP logo at market information booth
- Increased outreach to underrepresented populations
- Place promotional materials throughout the community, targeting low-income service locations
- Move farmers' market banner to different locations in town throughout the season
- Recruit volunteers to assist with EBT and information booth shifts

- Explore community-supported, money-saving incentives: SNAP dollar per dollar match, coupons, discount cards, sales, Farm Bucks
- Explore an arrangement with the Transportation Network and Mid-Columbia Council of Governments to provide a bus service to City Park on Saturdays

Community Voices on EBT and The Dalles Farmers' Market

Below are quotes from low-income TANF and SNAP clients on the EBT/Oregon Trail Card and The Dalles Farmers' Market.

"If I knew that cucumbers were five for \$1 there, if you guys had advertised that ahead of time, I'd force myself to go there every week."

"I think it would be better to advertise what they're going to have that weekend."

"I think that it needs to be advertised way better. There are no signs or anything directing you to that booth where you get the tokens."

"Yes, the taste difference you can really tell. Right off the farm."

"Man that was the highlight of my weekend you guys. It was really cool that we could use it to buy plants."

"I think if they would have advertised a little bit more, I would have been down there more."

"Bigger quantity, more variety. To me, I shop quantity. It's not worth just going and getting a little bit of something because that little bit just feeds one of my kids."

"I never really went to the market. I live way over there on the west end."

"Hit and miss."

"If you don't find anything, you just wasted all that gas."

"I think I went into the farmers' market with a totally different attitude. I would indulge myself. That was my splurging for the week, going to the farmers' market. I set that money aside to go play with, to go have fun."

"Selection. I have six kids that live in my home so it's really about quantity. The farmers' market I like because I make a lot of fresh salsa. I prefer locally grown stuff. I think that it tastes better. I think I would have been there more if I would have known more about it or knew how easily accessible it was. It's not real helpful even once you're there. You're still pretty lost."

"I buy more vegetables and fruit than I do meat."

"It puts back in the community and hopefully the community will put back into its own people."

"I think there's room for definite improvement."

Additional Food Access Sources: Hood River County

Soul Café

Soul Café was a local non-profit coffeehouse and community gathering space, and offered a free community meal every Sunday in Hood River since 2003, in addition to an annual free Thanksgiving dinner. Soul Café's free meal site was the only consistent free meal available in the county, though several area churches offer meals on a limited basis. However, as of spring 2010, Soul Café has closed its doors.

Soul Café Goal: To create a place where people of all ages can gather and be present with openness, freedom, love, and respect - learning from and with one another.

Two percent of survey respondents report accessing Soul Café for food; an additional 3.4% reported accessing "church/community organizations", which may include other sites of free community meals.

Meals on Wheels and Senior Meal Sites

In Hood River County, many seniors rely on the Hood River Valley Adult Center's (HRVAC) Meals on Wheels and on-site lunch meals for low cost meals. A prepared-from-scratch hot lunch is available daily for \$3.50 (less for those with financial need), with frozen meals prepared for weekends. HRVAC staff report serving 26-30 meals via Meals on Wheels each week, and another 30 seniors daily at the center. Long term trend data was unavailable.

HRVAC staff report that many low-income seniors who frequent the lunches take additional portions home for a second meal; this practice is allowed and encouraged to ensure that these seniors are getting the food they need.

The program welcomes donations from home gardeners and farmers to supplement its limited budget. In 2008, the Gorge Grown Mobile Farmers' Market donated over \$500 worth of fresh produce to the program, including fruits and vegetables.

Staff strive to meet seniors' nutritional needs and provide the food items they want, which include: "meat and potatoes" dishes, bread, filling carbohydrates, and familiar vegetables like green beans, tomatoes, and carrots.¹⁴⁵

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program provides cash assistance to low-income families with children to aid them in becoming self-sufficient. The program's goal is to reduce the number of families living in poverty, through employment, education, and community resources.¹⁴⁶

To qualify for TANF, families must have very few assets and little or no income. The current maximum monthly benefit for a family of three is \$528.¹⁴⁷ Like the SNAP program, TANF benefits

are not intended to provide for a family's full needs, but to supplement them and connect families to as many other community and government resources as possible while they seek employment.

There is significant overlap between TANF, SNAP, and WIC programs in the county, but precise figures on how much so were unavailable. In 2008, TANF enrollment fluctuated between 64 and 91 families, a small fraction of the population compared to families enrolled with WIC or SNAP.¹⁴⁸

Gleaning

Gleaning is the act of collecting useable food from sources where, if not gleaned, it would go to waste. Traditionally, this was a practice done in farmers' fields after the main harvest; today it can also include working with local grocery stores and restaurants.

It is a hands-on, volunteer-driven, "do-it-yourself" method by which people can supplement their food supply and help others in need at the same time. Many gleaning groups collect food not only for themselves but for local food banks, meal sites, and for 'adoptees' – community members who are unable to glean themselves but who have unmet food needs.

Today, more than 10,000 low-income households belong to 25 gleaning organizations throughout Oregon. There is currently no organized gleaning activity in Hood River County.¹⁴⁹

Local individuals report that organized gleaning has not occurred in the county since the 1980's. Some local farmers do report allowing gleaning in their fields, but only to farm workers or other individuals associated with the farm (neighbors, employees, family, etc). Growers who allow gleaning are eligible for tax credits and protected from liability.¹⁵⁰

Only 1.8% of consumer survey respondents reported gleaning as a significant source of food, but 33.3% of county residents reported having gleaned at some point in time in the county.

While this survey did not assess where residents might have gleaned, it is surmise that much of this gleaning activity takes place in local orchards, given the preponderance of orchards on the county's agricultural land.

Additionally, 19.1% of respondents with no gleaning experience reported an interest in learning more about the practice. This interest level indicates an opportunity for the county to both reduce hunger and reduce food waste.

Additional Food Access Sources: Wasco and Sherman Counties

St. Vincent de Paul Ministry

For 26 years, church groups, service organizations and families have cooked free community meals at the St. Vincent de Paul Ministry in The Dalles. "It's for everybody," said Pat Lucas, community meal program coordinator. "It's a community meal for everyone to sit down and eat together."

Including takeout meals, the site serves about 45 people, three days a week. In October 2009, the site served 689 meals and 386 people. This demonstrates an increase of 261 meals and 110 people from September 2009. According to Lucas, numbers increase with colder weather.¹⁵¹ The difference

in the number of meals and number of people served is due to the option for people to take leftover food as a “takeout” meal.

Local organizations fund the program, which receives donations from private individuals and churches. The site also receives Oregon Food Bank and USDA food from MCCAC, and collaborates with the St. Vincent de Paul and Salvation Army food pantries in The Dalles to share and trade food. The largest need for the facility is to update cooking appliances and to have a large enough supply of knives, forks and spoons to support the number of clients served. In the summer, the ministry welcomes fresh produce donations.

Bread and Blessings is another community meal program that offers lunch Monday through Friday in this facility. Because of these two programs, there is a free meal available every day of the week in The Dalles.

Meals on Wheels and Congregate Meal Sites

Through the Mid-Columbia Council of Governments, the Area Agency on Aging funds two home delivered meal programs in Wasco and Sherman Counties. The Meals on Wheels program is designed to provide one nutritious meal a day, seven days a week along with safety checks for clients. Dedicated volunteers deliver the meals to eligible homebound individuals. Adults 60 years of age and older who are home bound (i.e. do not leave their home in regular circumstances) and cannot prepare three meals a day on their own are eligible to receive home-delivered meals.

The AAA provides services through The Dalles Meals on Wheels in Wasco County and Moro Meals on Wheels in Sherman County. The AAA also provides Older American Act dollars for seven congregate meal sites in Wasco and Sherman Counties. Meals are provided to adults 60 years of age and older on a donation basis (suggested donation amounts vary between sites). Individuals less than 60 years of age are welcome to eat at the sites and are required to pay the full cost of the meal, which also varies between sites.¹⁵²

Both the home delivered meals and the congregate meals must comply with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. They must also provide a minimum of 33.33% of the current daily Recommended Dietary Allowances as established by the Food and Nutrition Board of the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences.

The Dalles: Meals on Wheels and Congregate Meal Site

The Dalles Meals on Wheels program, based at the Mid-Columbia Senior Center, delivers hot meals Monday through Friday and provides frozen meals for the weekends. The program serves 75 to 80 home-delivery clients. At the Senior Center, hot lunch is served five days a week for 60 to 115 people a day. Including congregate meals, The Dalles Meals on Wheels serves 46,000 meals a year.¹⁵³

Although The Dalles MOW receives funding through AAA, its once a week bingo fundraiser fills in the gaps. The program faces funding cuts this year and is in need of volunteers and donations (food and monetary). The program does receive and welcome fresh produce donations from the community during the summer.

Moro: Meals on Wheels and Congregate Meal Site

The Moro Meals on Wheels program, based at the Sherman County Senior Center, delivers seven frozen meals one day a week. The program serves six home-delivery clients in the county. At the Senior Center, lunch is served five days a week for 12 to 35 people a day. Predominately, seniors participate.¹⁵⁴

Although the number of congregate meals is increasing, the number of home-delivery clients has significantly dropped. According to Jodi Whitley, Sherman County Senior Center Food Service Coordinator, the MOW program has lost clients who have moved to nursing homes or to The Dalles to be closer to medical services. Currently, all of the home-delivery clients reside in the Wasco/Rufus areas.

One challenge for the program is finding home-delivery drivers □ MOW currently functions with one senior volunteer deliver for the whole county. Because there are not enough volunteer drivers, MOW is not advertising the program to recruit new clients. “There are definitely people out there who could use this service, but we don’t have the volunteers,” Whitley said.

Although the MOW program receives some reimbursement from AAA, the program is partially funded by Sherman County. Because of the amount of fresh produce donations the program receives, it is able to serve fresh produce every day. “I have probably six farmers who grow in their gardens and bring excess to me,” Whitley said, “I know there are lots of seniors and other people in the community who could use this food at a reduced rate. A lot of our seniors say this is their main meal of the day. They’re eating toast in the morning and popcorn at night. If there are seven people doing that, there are probably three dozen doing that who need to know we are available.”

Although the meal site has received new clientele recently, most of the people eating at the Moro Senior Center also visit the Moro potlatch for lunch on Wednesdays. Outreach and advertising is complicated by stigmas regarding food assistance that Whitley recognizes are especially strong in the senior population. Transportation is another challenge. The county has considered a bus route to bring people from surrounding areas to Moro for lunch but cannot justify the expense.

Pioneer Potlatch Association Congregate Meal Sites

“They’re good at taking a Ford meal and making a Cadillac out of it.”¹⁵⁵

The Pioneer Potlatch Association has operated in The Dalles since 1975. It serves the other five meal sites in Wasco and Sherman Counties supported by the Mid-Columbia Council of Governments (MCCOG) Area Agency on Aging. There are three potlatch sites in Wasco County: Dufur (serving every Wednesday at the Methodist Church), Tygh Valley (serving every Thursday at the Tygh Valley Community Center) and Mosier (serving every Monday and Wednesday at the Mosier Creek Terrace Apartment complex). Wamic and Maupin may have senior meal programs not affiliated with the Pioneer Potlatch Association, but this information could not be confirmed. There are two potlatch sites in Sherman County: Moro (serving every Wednesday at the Presbyterian Church), and Wasco (serving every Monday at St. Mary Catholic Church).

From July through October 2009, the Pioneer Potlatch Association served an average of 169 people age 60 and older per month. Moro: 59 per month average; Wasco 163 per month average; Tygh Valley: 180 per month average; Dufur: 204 per month average; Mosier 240 per month average.

Food orders through MCCAC and donations are collected in and distributed from the association's warehouse, which has limited capacity to accept fresh produce donations. Although MCCOG administers the federal funding for the program, each meal site pays the association a percentage of its gross income each month. "Right now we're really all struggling for money," said Sue Elliot, Pioneer Potlatch Office Manager, "It's really hard right now. The money just isn't coming in right now like it should. We've been thinking about increasing our prices."

Tygh Valley Potlatch

A community meal is served Thursdays at the Tygh Valley Community Center. This program serves 50-60 people each week. In addition, volunteers make three to ten home deliveries a week. In addition to the food available through the Pioneer Potlatch Association, volunteers visit The Dalles once a week to shop for large quantities of food at discount stores.

The site also serves as an informal emergency food box site. "With extra food in storage, when someone comes in and needs food or says so and so needs food, we give them a box," said Lucille Peterson, Tygh Valley potlatch coordinator. Recently, the site has distributed two or three boxes a month. "In the last few months, when things have gotten worse and people have lost their jobs, we're putting out more," Peterson said.

The site accumulates donated odds and ends. Garden produce donated in the summer is a great help, but the site lacks enough refrigeration to handle the fresh food it receives.

Wasco and Moro Potlatches

A community meal is served Mondays at St. Mary Catholic Church in Wasco. The site opened as a potlatch in the summer of 2009 and now serves an average of 50 people of a variety of ages each week. According to Cyndi Adams, Wasco potlatch volunteer, the site spreads awareness of its service by word of mouth and by calling community members directly.

Most food used in the meals comes from the Potlatch Association. However, food is also purchased from discount stores in The Dalles.

The Moro Potlatch serves lunch on Wednesdays. Data from this site is currently unavailable.

Gleaning

Windy River Gleaners is the only organized gleaning activity in Wasco and Sherman Counties. Some local farmers report allowing gleaning in their fields, but mostly to farm workers or other individuals associated with the farm (neighbors, employees, family, etc.). Growers who allow gleaning are eligible for tax credits and protected from liability.¹⁵⁶

More than 150 people belong to the Windy River Gleaners, with an average of two or three new members each week. The suggested donation for a membership is \$13 and six volunteer hours a month, and but no one is turned away. If a member is not able to volunteer, another member can help cover the hours. Volunteers distribute food to 110 to 120 families each Friday from the Mid-Columbia Community Action Council food warehouse in The Dalles.

Although the membership donation helps keep the program afloat, volunteers raise additional funds selling coffee at the Memaloose rest stop. Gleaners receive outdated food from local grocery stores, bakeries, local farms and other gleaning groups in eastern Oregon and Washington. The organization also has the opportunity to purchase Oregon Food Bank food at a reduced rate: \$.08 to \$.16 a pound. “We get what everybody else doesn’t order off the food share sheet,” said Maryanne Schrader,¹⁵⁷ “I never know what I get, and it’s just a challenge to put things together to make sure there’s something of equal value.”

In the winter, Gleaners struggle to find fresh produce. In the summer, the program receives substantial donations from backyard gardens and fruit trees. It also accepts home-canned goods. Farmers can call gleaners, and the organization will send out volunteers. “I just kind of survive on whatever people donate to us,” Schrader said.

According to Schrader, the members who enjoy the program the most are the senior members who probably live on \$300 to \$400 a month. However, the aging population of volunteers is concerning. “I have one lady that’s in her 90s, and she loves to come and volunteer once a week,” Schrader said, “But they’re not physically able to go out and pick fruit and stuff like that. It’s just too hard for them.”

When the cherry market flooded in the summer of 2009 in Wasco County, an exorbitant amount of fruit was left to rot on the trees or dumped. Although Gleaners distributed 10 bins of cherries (about 3,500 pounds), they did not have the capacity to handle the large quantity of cherry surplus in the 2009 season.

According to Schrader, most Gleaners members are skilled in canning, with the exception of the younger members, as a method of food preservation (specifically with fruit). “I have one gal that lives out at Dufur. She’s only been canning two or three years. They don’t have electricity so they do everything on a generator.”

Although the program has operated in The Dalles for 23 years, its needs include a stronger community awareness and volunteer base.

Additional Food Access Sources: Klickitat and Skamania Counties

Meals on Wheels and Senior Meal Sites

The Meals on Wheels programs in Klickitat and Skamania County serve directly in the homes of older adults who may have limited mobility and cannot access food at the Senior Meal Sites. The Meals on Wheels program in Klickitat County is based out of five areas, Bickleton, Goldendale, Klickitat, Lyle and White Salmon. Approximately 30 individuals receive Meals on Wheels services in Klickitat County. The Meals on Wheels program in Skamania County, based out of Stevenson, typically serves about 14 individuals.

There are five Senior Meal Sites in Klickitat County located in Bickleton, Goldendale, Klickitat, Lyle, and White Salmon. On average, there are about 270 older adults who participate regularly in the meals served at the Senior Meal Sites. In Skamania County, there is one Senior Meal Site located at

the Skamania County Parks and Recreation in Stevenson. There are approximately 130 older adults who receive meals at the Senior Meal Site regularly.

Gleaning

The Rainbow Valley Volunteers Gleaning Program, through the Washington Gorge Action Programs, is comprised of area residents who help to reduce waste of food and produce and increase their self-reliance by gleaning, or harvesting, unwanted foods from local farms and grocery stores.¹⁵⁸ As of 2010, there are three gleaning groups through WGAP that access thousands of pounds of food yearly.²⁶ Participants keep some of the food and donate the rest for the WGAP food banks.

In 2009, the Klickitat County Health Department partnered with WGAP to enhance the gleaning program by developing a harvest registry that area residents can sign up to have their personal fruit and nut trees and home gardens harvested by gleaners. This program is intended to further reduce food waste and increase access to local, fresh and healthy foods for gleaners and WGAP food banks.

Gorge Community Voices on Food Security and Emergency Food

Below are quotes from local residents from community group discussions on food security and emergency food in the Columbia River Gorge.

Hood River County

"We need more places to use food stamps, for fresh food."

"I would love to try gleaning."

"We need to find better ways to help families access food programs like WIC and resources like FISH."

"I wish we had a food bank more than once a month in Cascade Locks."

"It's sad that we have such abundance in this community, and people still go hungry."

"In the Latino community, there are two especially tough times: April, when work is low between tree trimming time and tree thinning time, and in the winter, when there is much less work."

"Many families just leave in the winter since there's no work."

"I volunteer at the F.I.S.H. food bank every other month. I see many people who come back, month after month - they are "regulars." I also see many new faces each time I'm there. I am saddened by a couple of things: (1) Many of these hungry people will not choose certain items to fill their bags (such as frozen liver, or "weird" vegetables that show up from time to time); and (2) I wish, ideally, that there were more appealing, wholesome choices in the pre-made, basic-needs bags that are automatically given to each person. I realize, however, that they are blessed to even have this food in the first place, since they wouldn't be there if they could afford to buy better quality food."

"What can we do about these grocery stores throwing away produce that is unsightly, or slightly blemished, and getting them to donate to soup kitchens or at least for compost?"

"We see hungry people at the clinic who do not want to go to FISH for fear of deportation. Could we bring the food here?"

Wasco and Sherman County

"I had a niece who had three daughters. She would have qualified for the assistance and would never dream to go in and get a food box. Sometimes the pride gets in the way of feeding your kids. Especially in a small town like that, I don't know how you could address it because everybody knows everybody else."

"We are a three generation household just trying to make ends meet. No one can afford to live on their own. Grandpa, Grandma, adult daughter, two granddaughters, adult son."

"When I first came to Wasco County I did face times when I was insecure about my family meals. Food costs did seem high when I was struggling with money. I would have participated in community gardens."

"I feel afraid my income cannot support me due to the rising cost of living."

"Where to go or call for help?"

"Gleaners is a great deal."

"St Vincent de Paul does a wonderful job feeding so many in such a needy small town."

"I do worry about the rising number of people having to access food pantries because it suggests we are not doing a good job of helping people buy healthy, affordable food. Our garden is VERY small and tending a larger one, to give food away, isn't possible with our own health situation. But we do contribute financially to food banks and with canned goods. I wonder how easily perishable foods could be distributed to people who need it? So distribution issues are of interest."

"I am concerned about food costs as oil prices rise in the future, as well as the cost to drive to The Dalles for shopping and work."

"Need a food bank or commodities in Rufus."

"In the event of a catastrophe, it would be nice to have a local food bank completely stocked for our community to draw from."

"The Latino community is pretty educated on what to get where. Believe it or not, they do have a lot of services that some people might not know about if they're not from a mixed family. The ones I see struggling are the Samoans."

"Do you think less of me because I use the food bank?"

"I don't think the access is that great. You have to go from place to place to hunt."

"The way I look at it is if you are young and able bodied and can't find this stuff, you're just not trying too hard."

Klickitat and Skamania County

"Food has gone out of reach for many due to cost. I am a wise shopper: use coupons, buy low, garden and we still struggle with a one-income household with three special need kids. [We have a] limited

income and minimal resources.”

“We probably get a quarter (1/4) of it [fruits and vegetables]. The thing is, when we go there once a month, we get maybe a ¼ of the groceries fresh fruits and vegetables and then it’s gone after not very long. We don’t have the money to go back and get more fruits and vegetables. So, we can get it only for a short time.”

“I feel as though local people are being run out by the wealthier city people wanting to try country living. There are no low income housing and to buy a house is ridiculous. There are no jobs available for locals, everyone is brought in from the cities. Can't work, can't feed your family.”

“More local crops available at a lower cost. Fruits and veggies are too expensive.”

“Our food prices are bad. Farmers cannot make it. Prices to high. Cost of living to high.”

“I am constantly irritated by the cost of food-the healthier you want to eat, the more expensive it is!”

“The food cost has gone up per cost of living and we have not been compensated in any way - food programs.”

“Cost goes up but not government funding for food stamps and other, nothing at food bank, shortage of food in them.”

RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY for Chapter III

1. Increase amount of fresh local produce available in school meal programs, food pantries and community meal sites

- Coordinate multiple food donation streams to ensure steady and sufficient supply from orchards, farmers' markets, farm stands and home gardens
- Explore opportunity to use the Gorge Grown Food Network truck to pick up and deliver surplus produce and donations in coordination with rural mobile market sites
- Work with school districts and community stakeholders to access additional food purchasing funding to make it possible to afford, and thus prioritize, local food and improve quality of school meals

2. Expand and coordinate emergency food infrastructure

- Explore potential for a community supported food pantry in South Wasco County
- Evaluate capacity and influence of emergency food efforts in Sherman County
- Work with MCCAC, WGAP, and emergency food sites to determine fresh produce capacity and to explore options for increased storage
- Work with communities lacking food pantries (including Maupin, Wishram, and Odell) to seek resources and identify potential sites
- Partner with home gardeners to conduct produce drives in communities

3. Increase sustainability of community meal programs

- Work with community groups to increase volunteer initiative and support

4. Improve the affordability and selection of food available in food stores and direct markets, especially in outlying rural communities

- Work with rural grocers to evaluate interest and barriers to sourcing fresh produce
- Encourage farmers' market vendors to diversify product selection
- Work with regional grocers to better identify and market local food items
- Partner with DHS in OR and WA to improve access to food assistance programs
- Increase SNAP participation rates in Sherman County
- Encourage new authorized sites and producers to accept WIC and FDNP vouchers to improve affordability of food available in rural food stores and increase consumer options

- Increase FDNP voucher availability for interested households
- Approach local restaurants to assess interest in sourcing local food

5. Improve farmers' market outreach and marketing to underrepresented populations and expand the establishment of Farmers' Markets that provide WIC and Senior Nutrition Programs

- Explore financial incentives for low-income residents to access farm direct shopping (including farmers' markets) opportunities
- Expand outreach to currently underrepresented populations
- Work with market staff and Gorge Grown Food Network to ensure vendors are effectively trained and familiar with the EBT/SNAP program

IV. Food Skills: Cooking, Nutrition, and Gardening



What's cooking at home in the Gorge?

Information on the food skills (cooking, preserving, etc.) of families in the region is scarce. Local service providers that offer cooking classes do not survey their clients on these topics. Neither the U.S. Census Bureau nor the USDA Food Security Supplement offer county- or state-level data on food skills. Thus, the community food survey included several questions specifically about these skills to get a better picture of what is happening in home kitchens around the Columbia River Gorge.

Home cooking in Hood River County

The following two questions refer to residents' cooking habits.

In a normal week, how many meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner) do you or someone else prepare at home?

None	0.8%
Some (1-10)	18.1%
Most (11-20)	57.0%
All	24.1%

This means that in Hood River County, a significant portion of families, 81.1%, are preparing most or all of their meals at home. As with respondents in other counties surveyed, this question does not specify what "prepare" means, so this could mean meals from scratch, frozen dinners, or anything in between. To get a better picture of what types of meals families throughout the Gorge are eating, additional surveying may need to be conducted.

For respondents who cook less, checking "none" or "some" for this question, they were more likely (23.1% up from 12.1%) to report some level of food insecurity (skipping meals at least once a month).

Reasons why families might not be cooking at home was also evaluated:

If most or all of the meals are not prepared at home, why not?

No one knows how to cook	7.8%
Everyone prefers to eat out	29.2%
No one has time to cook	42.2%
There is no stove or fridge where I live	0.0%
Other (please specify)	27.3%

The majority of respondents report a lack of time as being the main reason they do not prepare food at home. Of respondents who cook only “some” or “none” at home, responses were similar, with these individuals not being any more or less likely to know how to cook. Responses collected under “other” for all respondents included:

- We are at school/work for meals, only cook dinner at home
- Travel into Portland so not home
- We’re all in a hurry
- We grab snacks instead of cooking
- It’s convenient to go out
- I live alone and it’s easier to eat out than prepare food for one
- No money for food sometimes
- Eating out is a social activity for me

Who doesn’t know how to cook?

Because so few respondents reported not knowing how to cook (only 7.8%), the following data may not be fully representative, but are reported here as a starting point:

In HRC, in households where no one knows how to cook, respondents are significantly more likely to be food insecure (33.3% skip at least one meal a month, 30% skip meals so that children can eat). They are also slightly less likely to have a home garden or to preserve food.

Do you freeze, can, dry, or smoke fresh food?

Yes	63.5%
No	23.7%
No, but I would like to learn how	12.7%

Families not cooking often were less likely to preserve food as well (only 47%). Responses to this question also show a modest interest in learning to preserve food, with the amount of cooking at home having no impact on interest levels in learning to preserve, although in families where no one knows how to cook, no respondents (0%) indicated any interest in learning to preserve.

If free or low-cost cooking classes, featuring fresh food and time-saving tips, were offered in the community, would you be interested in going?

Yes	36.0%
Maybe	39.2%
No	24.7%

The majority of survey respondents indicated at least some interest in free or low-cost cooking classes (75.2%); among households doing only limited cooking, interest was virtually the same (76.4%); among households where no one knows how to cook, interest was slightly higher (81.9%).

Staff working with food pantry clients indicate that some clients do not know how to use raw food ingredients they receive at the food bank, such as dried beans. Clients also do not always know how to take a standard food pantry item like macaroni and cheese and make it healthier with additions of vegetables. There are currently no systematic efforts in place to provide recipes for such ingredients and healthy add-ins, but it would be relatively easy to implement.

Where can families already get cooking and preserving help?

There are some cooking education options already in Hood River County. Some are tied into broader nutrition education efforts (see next section); others deal specifically with cooking.

Hood River County Community Education: this fee-based program includes numerous cooking classes each season, catering to all education levels and various cooking interests. They also have a limited number of home preserving classes available.

WIC: the WIC program offers occasional cooking classes for its clients, as has been documented in Chapter III.

OSU Extension Master Food Preservers: While the Master Food Preserver curriculum is only offered in Wasco County at this time, Hood River County residents can attend and become certified MFPs in Wasco County. Because this program, like the Master Gardener program, requires trained MFPs to continue sharing their skills with the community, this program could be an ongoing resource to other organizations or service providers hoping to offer education on home preserving of fresh food.

For additional resources that incorporate some cooking education into broader nutrition education, see the next section.

Home cooking in Wasco and Sherman Counties

The following two questions refer to residents' cooking habits:

In a normal week, how many meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner) do you or someone else prepare at home?

	Wasco	Sherman
None	1.6%	0.8%
Some (1-10)	19.5%	18.8%
Most (11-20)	55.4%	46.9%
All	23.5%	33.6%

A significant portion of families are preparing most or all of their meals at home in Wasco (78.9%) and Sherman (80.5%) Counties. This question does not specify what "prepare" means, and depending on the household its definition could range from meals cooked from scratch to frozen dinners heated in the microwave. To get a picture of what types of meals Wasco and Sherman County families are eating, additional surveying may be required.

Respondents who cook less (those checking “none” or “some” for this question in Wasco County) are slightly more likely (16.0% up from 10.1%) to report some level of food insecurity (skipping meals at least once a month).

This assessment evaluates why families might not be cooking at home:

If most or all of the meals are not prepared at home, why not?

	Wasco	Sherman
No one knows how to cook	3.4%	0.0%
Everyone prefers to eat out	15.1%	25.0%
No one has time to cook	45.3%	14.3%
There is no stove or fridge where I live	2.8%	0.0%
Other (please specify)	42.5%	67.9%

In Wasco County, the majority of respondents reported lack of time as the main reason they do not prepare food at home (45.3%). No one knowing how to cook was not a main factor in those who did not prepare most or all meals at home, with similar reporting among those who cook “most or all” meals at home and “some or none” meals at home. The majority of respondents in Sherman County reported “other” as the main reason for not cooking at home, which is summarized below with responses from Wasco County:

- We eat breakfast and lunch at work/school
- We eat out at restaurants
- Cooking with a microwave is easier
- My family is absent at meal times and not home in time to eat together.
- I eat my meals at the senior center/potlatch
- I get all of my food from meals on wheels
- Preparing food takes too long and is too difficult
- It is too difficult to cook for one person
- I don’t have enough money to shop for healthier foods
- We’re always gone at night for the kids activities

Who doesn’t know how to cook?

Because so few respondents reported not knowing how to cook (only 3.4% in Wasco and Sherman Counties), the following data may not be fully representative but are reported here as a starting point:

In Wasco County households where no one knows how to cook, respondents are significantly more likely to be food insecure (33.4% skip meals at least once a month, 66.7% skip meals so that children can eat). They are also significantly less likely to have a garden (80% do not have a home garden) or preserve food (50% do not preserve food).

No Sherman County respondents reported not knowing how to cook.

Do you freeze, can, dry or smoke fresh food?

	Wasco	Sherman
Yes	69.2%	69.8%
No	21.8%	27.1%

No, but I would like to learn how	9.0%	3.1%
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Families not cooking often were less likely to preserve food as well (45% in Wasco County, 37.5% in Sherman County). Responses to this question in both counties also show a modest interest in learning to preserve, with the amount of cooking at home having no influence on interest levels in learning to preserve food. In Wasco County, for families in which no one knows how to cook there was only slight interest (33.3%) in learning to preserve.

If free or low-cost cooking classes, featuring fresh food and time-saving tips, were offered in the community, would you be interested in attending?

	Wasco	Sherman
Yes	39.1%	31.7%
Maybe	32.5%	35.7%
No	28.3%	32.5%

The majority of survey respondents indicated some interest in free or low-cost cooking classes (71.6% in Wasco County, 67.4% in Sherman County). Among Wasco County households not cooking, interest was significantly lower (30%). Of the households doing some cooking, 73.6% expressed some interest in classes. For households in which no one knows how to cook, interest was higher (83.3%). Among Sherman County households not cooking, interest was high (100%). Of the households doing some cooking, 60.8% expressed some interest in classes.

If you would not attend free or low-cost cooking classes, why not?

	Wasco	Sherman
Too busy	26.7%	28.9%
Not interested in learning	16.4%	20.0%
Don't need to learn	44.1%	42.2%
Other (please specify)	21.5%	17.8%

In both Wasco and Sherman Counties, the majority of respondents who would not attend free or low-cost cooking classes “don’t need to learn” (44.1% and 42.2% respectively). In Wasco and Sherman Counties, families who reported low levels of cooking reported comparable levels of not needing to learn to cook, as did families who reported high levels of cooking in their homes. “Other” responses from both Counties include:

- ☐ I cannot afford the gas to attend the class
- ☐ I may not have the time to attend
- ☐ The economy is not stable enough
- ☐ I don't have the money to pay for the class
- ☐ Classes don't usually cater to healthy or vegetarian options
- ☐ I already have the skills and know how to cook
- ☐ It's too much trouble to prepare food for one person

Where can families access cooking and preserving help?

OSU Extension Master Food Preservers (Family Food Educators): The Master Food Preserver curriculum is currently offered in Wasco County through its OSU Extension office. Because this program, like the Master Gardener program, requires trained MFPs to share skills with the community, this program could be an ongoing resource to other organizations or service providers working to offer education on home preserving of food. While no MFP curriculum is offered in Sherman County, the extension office does have a MFP manual available for use. Residents of Sherman County may become certified through Wasco County¹⁵⁹. There were no Family Food Education courses held in Sherman County.

For additional resources that incorporate some cooking education into broader nutrition education, see the next section.

Home Cooking in Klickitat and Skamania Counties

The following two questions refer to residents' cooking habits.

In a normal week how many meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner) do you or someone else prepare at home?

	Klickitat	Skamania
None	1.3%	1.0%
Some (1-10)	14.7%	13.8%
Most (11-20)	53.6%	53.1%
All	30.4%	32.1%

This means that a significant portion of the families are preparing most of all of their meals at home in Klickitat County (84.0%) and Skamania County (85.2%). For respondents who cook less, checking "none" or "some" for this question in Klickitat County, there were more likely (15.5% up from 7.9% of the general survey population) to report some level of food insecurity (skipping meals at least once a month). Food insecurity was also higher in Skamania County for those residents who reported cooking less (24.0% up from 14.0% of the general survey population).

Reasons families had for not cooking at home were also evaluated:

If most of all of the meals are not prepared at home, why not?

	Klickitat	Skamania
No one knows how to cook	1.9%	2.6%
Everyone prefers to eat out	13.5%	5.3%
No one has time to cook	48.1%	42.1%
There is no stove or fridge where I live	1.9%	5.3%
Other (please specify)	43.3%	50.0%

Lack of time was a major barrier for a large portion of the respondents in Klickitat County (48.1%) and Skamania County (42.1%). Of respondents who cook only "some" or "none" at home, responses were similar to the general survey population, with these individuals not being any more or less

likely to know how to cook. Residents of Klickitat and Skamania Counties also reported “other” as being a barrier to cooking at home. Responses from the two counties are summarized below:

- ☐ There is no food
- ☐ We’re not home during meal times
- ☐ I’m at school or work during meal times
- ☐ We go to family or friends houses to eat
- ☐ It is easier to buy food at restaurants
- ☐ I eat through Senior Meal Programs and at the Senior Center
- ☐ I don’t like to cook
- ☐ We eat out at restaurants a lot.

Who doesn’t know how to cook?

Because so few respondents reported not knowing how to cook (only 1.9% in Klickitat and 2.6% in Skamania), the following data may not be fully representative, but are reported here as a starting point:

In Klickitat County, in households where no one knows how to cook respondents are more likely to skip meals for children (50.0% compared to 8.0% of the general survey population) and more likely not to have a home garden (50.0% compared to 34.4% of the general survey population). In Skamania County, in households where no one knows how to cook respondents are more likely to not preserve food (100% compared to 27.1% of the general survey population).

Do you freeze, can, dry, or smoke fresh food?

	Klickitat	Skamania
Yes	73.2%	73.0%
No	18.4%	19.4%
No, but I would like to learn how	8.4%	7.7%

Families not cooking often were less likely than the general survey population to preserve food as well (50.9% in Klickitat County, 60.7% in Skamania County). Respondents to this question in Klickitat County show modest interest in learning to preserve, with the amount of cooking done at home having no impact on interest levels in learning to preserve food. There was no interest among those respondents from Skamania County who did minimal cooking in learning how to preserve food. For those families where no one knows how to cook in Klickitat and Skamania Counties there was no interest (0%) in learning how to preserve.

If free or low-cost cooking classes, featuring fresh food and time-saving tips, were offered in the community, would you be interested in attending?

	Klickitat	Skamania
Yes	29.3%	36.8%
Maybe	40.3%	36.8%
No	30.3%	26.4%

The majority of survey respondents indicated some interest in free or low-cost cooking classes (69.6% in Klickitat County, 73.6% in Skamania County); among households doing no cooking in Klickitat County interest was higher (88.4%) and slightly lower for households doing some cooking (63.6%). Among households in Skamania County that were not cooking at home, interest was lower (50.0%) and slightly lower among households cooking some (61.6%). Among households in Klickitat and Skamania Counties where no one knows how to cook, interest in cooking classes was very high (100% in both counties).

If you would not attend free or low-cost cooking classes, why not?

	Klickitat	Skamania
Too busy	25.7%	13.1%
Not interested in learning	9.9%	8.2%
Don't need to learn	50.5%	57.4%
Other (please specify)	20.7%	26.2%

In both Klickitat and Skamania Counties, the most common response from those who would not be interested in attending free or low-cost cooking classes was “don’t need to learn” (50.5% in Klickitat, 57.4% in Skamania). In Klickitat and Skamania Counties, families who reported low levels of cooking were less likely to respond “don’t need to learn” than families who reported high-level of cooking in their homes (33.3% vs. 54.1% in Klickitat, 23.1% vs. 68.1% in Skamania). Responses collected under “other” for respondents of both counties include:

- ☐ It is too long of a drive and too costly to drive
- ☐ I cannot afford to pay for the class
- ☐ I don't have the time to attend the classes or cook
- ☐ Childcare is a problem for me
- ☐ I can learn more on my own if necessary
- ☐ I already have the skills and know how to cook
- ☐ It's the economics of preserving food: canning myself vs. buying canned products

Where can families already get cooking and preserving help?

Food \$ense Program: The Food \$ense program is a nutrition and cooking service that is part of the SNAP-ED program offered through the WSU Extension offices. Currently there are no cooking courses offered through the Skamania or Klickitat Offices. However, Klickitat County WSU Extension is currently in the planning process of offering cooking courses to adults in conjunction with community partners, focusing classes on parents who have children and teens.¹⁶⁰ There are currently no existing Food \$ense program in Skamania County, but residents are referred to the Clark County Extension Office for assistance.¹⁶¹

Horizons: In 2009 the Horizons Community Group held a series of four classes on food preservation in Wishram. The classes covered the basics in canning and preserving; jams, jellies, and pie fillings; pickling fruits and vegetables – freezing and drying; and pressure canning vegetables and meats.

These classes were free to Horizon members and offered at low cost to other community members.
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4-H: In 2009, the Skamania County 4-H Extension offered basic education on food and nutrition to 59 youth in the county, which included basic skills in food preparation, food safety, and food preservation. The extension service also offered specific classes to 10 youth on food preservation techniques.¹⁶³

Cooking and Preserving Needs and Ideas

- ☐ Additional cooking skills research to better determine specific populations' interest in cooking and preserving education (food bank clients, farm workers, youth, etc.)
- ☐ Basic education for the general public to emphasize the health and economic benefits of cooking and preserving at home
- ☐ Maintain capacity of OSU extension office to continue teaching nutrition and cooking classes in Wasco County
- ☐ Find resources for cooking classes (time, money, USDA certified kitchens, etc.), and use current Master Food Preservers to teach and arrange classes
- ☐ Additional cooking resources for food pantry sites, especially simple pictorial recipes and potentially on-site demonstrations
- ☐ Canning and preserving equipment available at food pantries for use by clients in their homes and provide low cost jars available for purchase
- ☐ Flexible, low-cost courses available in multiple sites based around time-saving and simple techniques, that are hands-on based
- ☐ Additional cooking skills research to better determine specific populations' interest in cooking and preserving education (food bank clients, farmers, youth, etc.)

Gorge Community Voices on Cooking & Preserving Food

Below are quotes from local residents – including farmers, low-income individuals, health service providers, and working professionals – on cooking and preserving food in the Gorge, from community group discussions.

Hood River County

"We're the first people in our family to do things like glean and freezing summer veggies for winter."

"I have trouble cooking from 'real' ingredients, it takes longer if you don't know how to do it well."

"I don't want to eat my mom's food!"

"My parents don't want to cook."

"We are too busy, so everyone makes their own meals on the go."

"Eating out helps us since we're so busy, it means we have more time together as a family."

"My roommates and kitchen are dirty, don't like to use it."

"They tell me I should make my kids healthy Jell-o with fruit and juice, but have you ever tried to make Jell-o with 3 kids running around and a baby? I can just buy the premade ones and it's easy for me."

"Who has time for it? I can barely keep track of everything else in life."

"Cooking I can do, but preserving seems like a lot more work."

"The biggest obstacle for me is knowing enough about cooking & recipes to make something that is appetizing (and something that will make full use of the stuff I buy, instead of half of it going bad from neglect)"

"We seem to have lost a lot of the old food skills our parents and grandparents had, and they themselves often prefer the shortcuts too."

Wasco and Sherman County

"Food is easily grown in our region from fruits and vegetables to wild foraging. We do live in a very bountiful area. We can grow, hunt, fish and forage for most all our daily needs. With some basics we can preserve these foods to get us through the winter months. All it takes is the willingness to learn and to put a little effort into planning. In our area no one should be going hungry."

"They [youth] don't want to learn, they just think McDonald's is easier"

"I cook all the time. There are nine people in my house. After I cook for everyone, I just eat Top Ramen."

"My goal for the year is to get into canning."

"The only reason I learned what I learned was by being in the kitchen with my grandma."

"It just depends on if they cook out of the microwave or cook out of the oven. That has a lot to do with it. It's cheaper and goes further to cook from scratch."

"Many produce items can be grown in Wasco County. I love the quality and taste of home-grown fruits and vegetables. My husband and I are very careful in preserving and preparing our vegetables and game food sources. We get a lot of satisfaction from our ability to produce our own food and have a very healthy diet. I enjoy finding new recipes to use our bounty. It is a source of creativity that we enjoy."

"Sometimes when you have three kids, at the end of the day you're just too tired to make dinner."

"I often mix canned with fresh to cut down on the price but still get it in there. Like with spaghetti sauce, I add fresh tomatoes."

"My biggest challenges to food are mainly self-created. I feel that there are resources I do not take advantage of (due to lack of time) that could increase the health of my food. Because I eat the majority of my meals at work, it is difficult to be motivated about the few meals I do prepare at home."

Klickitat and Skamania County

"Recipes that are low cost and healthy are really needed."

"There needs to be education around how to freeze fruits and vegetables so when they're in season you can get them on sale and learn how to preserve them."

"I would be more willing to attend preserving classes if I could practice in the class and would be able to take home some preserved food and supplies to do it on my own at home."

"Canning equipment is too expensive."

"I think a lot of people who get dried goods from the food bank have no idea what to do with the items and don't end up using them."

"Sometimes the food pantries have recipes for weird items, but sometimes I just don't know what to do with what they've given me."

"Cooking classes or information about how to cook could be really helpful. Our society has become over dependent on fast food and convenience items. If people could see how much food they could purchase and prepare for the cost of a takeout or sit down meal they may start to rethink their food choices. Not to mention improved health."

"I would be interested in a class learning to can foods and prepare healthy, less expensive meals."

"I was never raised eating much vegetable or fresh fruits so I have a hard time putting them into my meals. I know it would be beneficial not to repeat the cycle with my own children. I feel a class on cooking different vegetable would be beneficial to me."

"I believe most people don't want fresh produce because they don't know how to fix it and it spoils before they eat it."

Youth and Adult Nutrition in the Gorge

Information on the nutrition and eating habits of families in the Gorge is limited. Local service providers have not extensively queried clients on these topics, nor do the national level data sets offer county information. Additional research is needed to get a better full picture of the health and nutrition education services available in the county and better determine opportunities for expanded and improved efforts.

Fruit and Vegetable Consumption

How much of the food you buy is fresh vegetables or fruit?

	Hood River	Wasco	Sherman	Klickitat	Skamania
None	0.9%	1.8%	0.8%	0.8%	2.5%
A little (25%)	36.9%	42.7%	42.0%	41.7%	42.3%
About half (50%)	46.3%	42.2%	42.7%	44.4%	43.8%
Most of it (75%)	14.8%	12.6%	13.0%	12.4%	10.9%
All of it (100%)	1.1%	0.7%	1.5%	0.7%	0.5%

How many times do YOU eat fresh fruits and vegetables each week?

	Hood River	Wasco	Sherman	Klickitat	Skamania
Never	0.8%	1.8%	0.8%	1.0%	0.0%
1 to 6 times a week	30.7%	27.9%	29.8%	31.4%	29.9%
Once a day	27.0%	27.0%	29.0%	23.9%	27.4%
2 to 4 times a day	41.5%	43.2%	40.5%	43.7%	42.8%

By these results, less than half the survey respondents in the region eat the required amount of fruits and vegetables daily. USDA recommends two cups of both fruits and vegetables for adults, making four cups total daily.¹⁶⁴

USDA's Economic Research Service conducted extensive research on the factors that impact healthy food choices, including the consumption of more fruits and vegetables. They report nationally:

- ☐ Individuals with higher incomes tend to purchase more fruits and vegetables
- ☐ The cost of meeting dietary recommendations is surprisingly low – there are several ways to meet dietary recommendations for less than \$1 a day
- ☐ Education has a more pronounced effect on fruit and vegetable purchases than income
- ☐ Consumers with more nutritional knowledge are more likely to choose a more healthful mix of vegetables, choosing more dark-green vegetables or deep-yellow vegetables and fewer fried potatoes.¹⁶⁵

These findings indicate a need for more nutrition education around food, especially for low-income individuals.

A concern with the survey data is that it may be a misrepresentation of more people reporting they eat vegetables and fruits than is actually true. This is supported by the data collected by the CDC:¹⁶⁶

Adult (18+) Fruit and Vegetable Consumption in Oregon

	% in Oregon	% in Washington
Adults who eat fruit (+2)/day	33.7%	33.7%
Adults who eat vegetables (+3)/day	29.7%	29.1%
Adults who eat fruit (+2) and vegetables (+3)/day	15.6%	15.1%

There is a significant drop in the percentage (50%, 55%) of adults who consume fruits and vegetables rather than just fruits or just vegetables in the states of Oregon and Washington. In addition, these numbers are lower than the respondents eating “2 to 4 times a day” in Wasco and Sherman Counties (43.2% and 40.5%), Hood River County (41.5%), and Klickitat and Skamania Counties (43.7% and 42.8%), which supports the possible over-reporting of fruit and vegetable consumption. The over-reporting may, however, signify that people recognize the importance in eating fruits and vegetables two to four times a day.

SPOTLIGHT: Pasos a Salud

The Pasos a Salud (Steps to Wellness) program is a project of La Clinica del Cariño in Hood River. Through Pasos, Health Promoters work with families with a history of obesity and/or diabetes to help them improve their health and manage and prevent these diseases. They also incorporate information on the benefits of fresh fruits and vegetables into their education.

This peer education model program occurs in community groups – in both Spanish and English – that last for 15 weeks and are interactive, participatory, and facilitated by professional Health Promoters. Youth are welcome in addition to adults. These Health Promoters act as “puentes”, or bridges to provide the explanation and support patients needs to make necessary lifestyle changes and follow their primary care providers’ recommendations.

The complexity of our medical systems makes it extremely difficult for most patients to clearly understand their health issues and the medical recommendations they receive, especially when they involve lifestyle changes such as a modified diet. Program manager Margie Dogotch reports that one primary benefit of the Pasos program is that the Health Promoters, as peers and experts, can help make sense of the medical recommendations and help patients make the longer-term lifestyle changes that are necessary for continued health. On food, Pasos participants all have an opportunity to garden at La Clinica’s community garden space, and the program also takes participants on grocery store ‘smart shopping’ tours and helps families practice cost effective menu planning.

Pasos staff report that patients in the program have limited access to fresh foods, and bring this issue to the Health Promoters. In summer, when agricultural employment is good and jobs are plentiful, the issue is less pronounced than during winter, when work is scarce. ¹⁶⁷

For more information on La Clinica’s garden, see the next section.

Pasos / La Clinica Needs and Ideas

- Consider a large food drive, targeted to foods for the Latino community, just before cherry harvest time to support farm workers coming in for the harvest
- Seek additional ways for emergency food boxes to better match Latino food preferences and needs
- Partner with FISH, Gorge Grown, and local farmers to have emergency food available at La Clinica – especially fresh produce – for patients who are unable or afraid to visit the food pantry.

Food and Nutrition Education through SNAP-ED

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients also receive nutrition education locally. Many SNAP and SNAP eligible recipients also receive nutrition education by virtue of being part of the Oregon Food and Nutrition Program (OFNP) or Washington State University Nutrition Program (WSUNP). The goal of the OFNP is to provide SNAP-Ed eligible families with the information they need to make healthy food choices and choose active lifestyles. Participants learn practical skills in the following areas: Healthy Eating and Activity, Increasing Household Food Security and Reducing Foodborne Illness. In Wasco County, OSU Extension serves approximately 75 adults and 1,200 youth a year through this program, and Hood River County OSU Extension serves approximately 350 adults and 300 youth. The program works via several means¹⁶⁸:

- ☐ In-school education
- ☐ Mid Columbia Council of Governments (MCCOG)
- ☐ Salvation Army
- ☐ Bilingual assistance through Department of Human Services (DHS)
- ☐ TANF classes
- ☐ In-home education classes
- ☐ Food pantry partnerships
- ☐ Classes in collaboration with local organizations

In addition, Mid Columbia Medical Center (MCMC) serves an average of 60 people a year in classes related to healthy weight and lifestyle¹⁶⁹.

In Klickitat County the program focuses on the education of adults and children. Programming is currently being developed for adults and will include topics such as: food preparation, dietary quality and food safety, supermarket tours and gardening activities. Programming for children is currently administered through school curriculum and includes topics such as new food experiences, physical activity and movement, and gardening. The Klickitat WSU extension office provides programming to Klickitat and Wishram school districts serving a total of 190 students grades pre-K through 12.¹⁷⁰

No classes are currently offered through the Skamania County WSU extension office.

Youth Nutrition, Fruit and Vegetable Consumption in the Gorge

Hood River County

A small amount of data is available on youth nutrition in the county, thanks to surveys conducted by the Hood River County school district in 2007. This information can be compared to Oregon statewide data and our the food assessment survey data to provide a beginning look at youth nutrition in the county.

Youth breakfast consumption in HRC and Oregon, 2007

<i>Did you eat breakfast yesterday?</i>	4th and 5th Grade in Hood River County	
No	9.5%	
Yes	90.5%	
<i>During the past 7 days, how many times did you eat breakfast?</i>	8th Grade in Oregon	11th Grade in Oregon
0 days	8.9%	9.8%
1 day	8.9%	10.8%
2-4 days	21.3%	25.9%
5-6 days	16.2%	16.3%
7 days	44.6%	37.3%

Source: Oregon Healthy Teen, Hood River County School District

While the wording of these two questions is slightly different, it nonetheless indicates a drop in regular breakfast consumption as children grow older. By the time students are in 11th grade, only 53.6% of students eat breakfast a majority of days (5-7) of the week.

Youth fruit consumption in HRC and Oregon, 2007

<i>Yesterday, did you eat any fruit? (excluding fruit juice)</i>	4th and 5th Grade in Hood River County	
No fruit	12.9%	
Ate fruit 1 time	33.7%	
Ate fruit 2 times	29.0%	
Ate fruit 3 or more times	24.4%	
<i>During the past 7 days, how many times did you eat fruit? (excluding fruit juice)</i>	8th Grade in Oregon	11th Grade in Oregon
I did not eat fruit during the past 7 days	9.4%	8.8%
1-3 times during the past 7 days	31.9%	38.0%
4-6 times during the past 7 days	21.7%	22.2%
1 time per day	14.7%	13.1%
2 times per day	12.5%	10.8%
3 times per day	5.8%	4.8%
4 or more times per day	3.9%	2.3%

Source: Oregon Healthy Teen, Hood River County School District

When it comes to fruit consumption, HRC youth seem to be consuming it with some frequency. USDA's dietary guidelines for children suggest 1.5 cups daily of fruit; while amounts of fruit eaten are unavailable from this survey data, we can at minimum look at how many youth are eating fruit at least once a day – and thus more likely to be close to the daily USDA recommendations.¹⁷¹ Of 4th and 5th graders in HRC, 87.1% reported eating fruit at least once the day before. Of 8th and 10th graders in Oregon, only 31% reported eating fruit at least one time per day the week before; if we include 4-6 times in the past 7 days, that figure grows to 53.2% - still barely more than half. Thus the majority of Oregon's 8th and 10th graders may not be reaching their recommended amount of daily fruit intake.

Youth vegetable consumption in HRC and Oregon, 2007

<i>Yesterday, did you eat any vegetables? (excluding French fries and chips)</i>	4th and 5th Grade in Hood River County	
No vegetables	18.3%	
Ate vegetables 1 time	33.3%	
Ate vegetables 2 times	27.9%	
Ate vegetables 3 or more times	20.1%	
<i>During the past 7 days, how many times did you eat vegetables? (excluding green salad, potatoes and carrots)</i>	8th Grade in Oregon	11th Grade in Oregon
I did not eat vegetables during the past 7 days	14.6%	13.2%
1-3 times during the past 7 days	36.4%	42.4%
4-6 times during the past 7 days	23.0%	23.6%
1 time per day	13.4%	11.6%
2 times per day	7.0%	6.4%
3 times per day	2.6%	1.7%
4 or more times per day	3.0%	1.1%

Source: Oregon Healthy Teen, Hood River County School District

The USDA recommends 2.5 cups of vegetables daily for children.¹⁷² Judging from these survey results, most 4th and 5th graders in the county are likely not consuming their recommended daily allowance of vegetables. While it is positive to see that 81.7% ate at least some vegetables the previous day, only 48% ate them twice or more, which would approximate the USDA serving recommendation.

By the time youth reach 8th and 11th grade, their vegetable consumption drops, with only 26% of 8th graders and 20.8% of 11th graders eating one serving of vegetables or more daily. Even fewer consume more than one serving per day – 12.6% of 8th graders and 9.2% of 11th graders. However, because the survey question excluded green salad, potatoes, and carrots, all vegetable items common at school lunch and at home, these numbers may appear lower than they are.

Wasco County

Surveys conducted in two schools in The Dalles provide a small amount of data on youth and nutrition in Wasco County. This information is compared to statewide data and the assessment survey data to provide a beginning look at youth nutrition in the county. Additional information on consumption of individual fruits and vegetables is available but not included in the report. There is no county-specific data available for Sherman County.

Youth breakfast consumption in North Wasco County and Oregon, 2009

<i>During the past 7 days, how many times did you eat breakfast?</i>	8th Grade in The Dalles	8th Grade in OR	11th Grade in The Dalles	11th Grade in OR
0 days	4.0%	8.6%	8.1%	9.1%
1 day	6.9%	6.2%	8.8%	7.4%
2 days	3.5%	8.4%	14.2%	9.6%
3 days	8.1%	9.0%	15.5%	9.7%
4 days	11.0%	7.1%	10.8%	8.9%
5 days	11.0%	9.5%	5.4%	10.4%
6 days	10.4%	9.5%	8.1%	9.5%
7 days	45.1%	41.7%	29.1%	35.4%

Source: Oregon Healthy Teen, North Wasco County School District 21 and the State of Oregon

The data collected in The Dalles indicates a drop in regular breakfast consumption with age. By the time the students are in 11th grade, only 42.6% eat breakfast a majority of the week (5-7 days), down from 66.5% in 8th grade. The level of regular breakfast consumption at the state level only drops slightly from 8th to 11th grade, 60.7 to 55.3%.

Youth fruit consumption in North Wasco County and Oregon, 2009

<i>During the past 7 day, how many times did you eat fruit?</i>	8th Grade in The Dalles	8th Grade in OR	11th Grade in The Dalles	11th Grade in OR
I did not eat fruit during the past 7 days	11.9%	8.3%	8.1%	7.7%
1 to 3 times during the past 7 days	32.4%	33.2%	42.6%	34.7%
4 to 6 times during the past 7 days	25.0%	21.4%	20.3%	23.2%
1 time per day	13.6%	14.0%	11.5%	14.1%
2 times per day	8.5%	12.8%	10.1%	13.2%
3 times per day	5.1%	5.3%	4.7%	4.8%
4 or more times per day	3.4%	5.0%	2.7%	2.2%

Source: Oregon Healthy Teen, North Wasco County School District 21 and the State of Oregon

The survey data provides a minimum look at how many youth are eating fruit at least once a day – and are more likely to approach the daily USDA recommendation.¹⁷³ 11th graders who consumed fruit once a day or more fell slightly at the state level and in The Dalles, from 37.1% to 34.3% and from 30.6% to 29.0%, compared to the 8th graders. These levels are particularly low for fruit consumption. When youth who eat fruit four to six times during a week are included, the percentages do not rise above 61.5% (8th graders in Oregon), signifying that the majority of 8th and 11th graders may not be reaching their recommended amount of daily fruit intake.

Youth vegetable consumption in North Wasco County and Oregon, 2009

<i>During the past 7 days how many times did you eat other vegetables? (don't count potatoes, carrots or green salad)</i>	8th Grade in The Dalles	8th Grade in OR	11th Grade in The Dalles	11th Grade in OR
I did not eat other vegetables in the past 7 days	16.6%	15.0%	14.9%	12.4%
1 to 3 times during the past 7 days	42.9%	36.0%	38.1%	39.1%
4 to 6 times during the past 7 days	22.3%	22.6%	23.8%	23.2%
1 time per day	10.9%	13.5%	11.6%	13.2%
2 times per day	2.3%	7.0%	6.1%	8.0%
3 times per day	2.3%	2.9%	3.4%	2.5%
4 or more times per day	2.9%	2.9%	2.0%	1.6%

Source: Oregon Healthy Teen, North Wasco County School District 21 and State of Oregon

In Wasco County, 18.4% of 8th graders are eating vegetables once or more a day, which is slightly lower than the state average of 26.3% of 8th graders. The consumption of vegetables by 11th graders shows an increase from 8th grader levels in Wasco County, at 23.1%, while the state level of consumption remains consistent for 11th graders at 25.3%. These numbers are particularly low and signify that the 8th and 11th graders may not be getting their daily recommendation of vegetables. However, because the survey question excluded green salad, potatoes, and carrots, all vegetable items common at school lunch and home, these numbers may appear lower than they actually are.

We can take an additional look at the fruit and vegetable consumption through data collected by Mid Columbia Medical Center in Wasco and Sherman Counties.

School	Fruit: % Chosen	w/ >25%Waste	Veg. % Chosen	w/ >25%Waste
Dry Hollow Grade School	71.9	18.0	72.9	32.0
Chenoweth Grade School	92.1	42.7	82.7	36.4
The Dalles Middle School	30.8	17.0	30.8	22.5
Dufur School	67.3	18.2	58.8	22.2
North Sherman Elementary	100.0	50.0	100.0	42.9
South Sherman Elementary	100.0	50.0	100.0	78.6
		w/> 50%waste		w/>50%waste
Colonel Wright Grade School	97.7	29	N/A	N/A

The two schools with the lowest percentage of students who chose fruits and vegetables were The Dalles Middle School and Dufur School, both which include older students. These schools also had some of lowest amount of fruits and vegetables wasted, suggesting that while older students may be less inclined to choose fruits and vegetables they are more likely to eat what they have chosen.

Klickitat and Skamania Counties

A small amount of data is available on youth and nutrition in Washington State, Klickitat County, and Skamania County through the Healthy Youth Survey conducted in the state of Washington in 2008.¹⁷⁴

Percent of Students Eating Less than 5 Fruits/Vegetables Each Day, 2008

	Washington State	Klickitat County	Skamania County
8th Grade	72.0%	63.0%	68.0%
10th Grade	75.0%	87.0%	75.0%
12th Grade	78.0%	77.0%	74.0%

While there is not specific data on amounts of fruits and vegetables eaten, it can be suggested that those students not eating at least 5 fruits and vegetables a day are not receiving their suggested daily nutritional requirements. Looking at the results, it is evident that the majority of 8th, 10th, and 12th grade students in Washington State, Klickitat and Skamania Counties are not eating the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables on a daily basis. At the state level consumption of fruits and vegetables decreases as the students age (72.0% to 78.0% of the students not getting the daily recommendation). In Klickitat County, the 10th graders have the highest percentage of not getting the daily recommendation of fruits and vegetables (87.0%). The group eating the most fruits and vegetables is the 8th graders in Klickitat County (37% eat more than 5 servings a day), yet this group still falls very short of meeting requirements. In Skamania County, the 8th graders are the ones most likely to reach their daily recommendation (32.0%).

The Back Pack for Kids Program, a 501©3 in Klickitat County, helps to support children who may not get all the food they need at home. The mission of the program is to meet the needs of hungry children by providing them with nutritious and easy-to-prepare food to take home on the weekends and school vacations when no other resources are available. In the 2008-2009 school year, the program provided over 250 Head Start, Primary, and Middle School students with weekend food.

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Youth Nutrition and Gorge Schools

"How can we, as a community, change the culture? It takes kids and parents both – and parents are the ones with food dollars."

School food service programs bear significant responsibility for providing children's nutritional needs. As has been discussed, school food service programs must meet USDA dietary guidelines at each meal and also meet children's taste preferences.

In Hood River County, the food service program has instituted numerous changes aimed at providing healthier fare: sandwich bread, hamburger buns and hoagie rolls are all high-fiber whole wheat, as is pizza crust. A variety of fresh fruits and veggies are offered daily. The food service program reports that students' favorites are Hood River apples, kiwi, carrots, and cucumbers.

Hood River School District Wellness Policy Nutrition Goals:

Policy II.1. Overall Goals. HRCSD's goal is to ensure that all foods available on school campuses, including those served through the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs will:

- ☐ Be appealing and attractive to students;
- ☐ Be served in clean and pleasant settings;
- ☐ Meet, at a minimum, nutrition requirements established by local, state, and federal statutes and regulations;
- ☐ Promote improved nutrition through promotion of increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, increased consumption of dietary fiber, and decreased consumption of unhealthy fats and added sugars.¹⁷⁶

Wasco and Sherman School District Wellness Policy Nutrition Goals:

South Wasco County School District #1, North Wasco County School District 21, and Sherman County School Districts Overall Goals. The goal of all three school districts is to help ensure that students possess the knowledge and skills necessary to make healthy choices for a lifetime. The program will be implemented by:

- ☐ Promoting healthy eating through nutrition education
- ☐ Serving healthy and appealing foods at district schools
- ☐ Developing food-use guidelines for staff
- ☐ Establishing liaisons with nutrition service providers
- ☐ Ensuring that physical activity is part of the school day
- ☐ Operating reimbursable school meal programs¹⁷⁷

Klickitat and Skamania School District Wellness Policy Nutrition Goals

The School Districts in Klickitat and Skamania Counties all have common goals based around nutrition and wellness. The districts include: Centerville School District #215, Glenwood school District, Goldendale School District #404, Klickitat School District, Lyle School District #406, Mill A School District, Skamania School District #2, Stevenson-Carson School District, White Salmon School District and Wishram School District. The boards support increased emphasis on nutrition as well as physical activity at all grade levels to enhance the well being of the youth. The policy of the board is to:

- ☐ Provide students access to nutritious food
- ☐ Provide opportunities for physical activity and developmentally appropriate exercise
- ☐ Provide accurate information related to these topics

In addition, each school district shall take a proactive effort to encourage students to make nutritious food choices by ensuring the following:

- ☐ A variety of healthy food choices are available whenever food is sold or served on district property or at district sponsored events

- ☐ Schools shall regulate the sale and serving of foods high in fat, sodium or added sugars
- ☐ Nutritious meals served by the school nutrition and food service operation comply with state and federal law.¹⁷⁸

Youth and adult nutrition needs and ideas

- ☐ Continue the education efforts in HRC through the Oregon Food and Nutrition Program and explore expanded partnership opportunities with local direct markets (farmers' markets, farm stands, local farms) and schools
- ☐ Work with Hood River County School District Wellness Committee to further evaluate youth fruit and vegetable consumption and seek ways to increase it.
- ☐ Continue the education efforts in Wasco County and expand the operations to Sherman County through the Oregon Food and Nutrition Program.
- ☐ Incorporation of nutrition information about fruit and vegetable consumption into school curriculum to increase consumption among students at school and at home
- ☐ Incorporate ways to cook with fruits and vegetables into current nutrition programs
- ☐ Explore expanded coordination and information sharing among different county-based and regional nutrition education programs to better determine the resources available in the community and how to combine efforts and reach more individuals
- ☐ Improve access to affordable fruits and vegetables for low-income individuals through food banks, community gardens, etc.
- ☐ Continue the education efforts in Klickitat County and expand the operations to Skamania County through the Washington State University Nutrition Program
- ☐ Incorporation of nutrition information about fruit and vegetable consumption into school curriculum to increase consumption among students at school and at home
- ☐ Incorporate ways to cook with fruits and vegetables into current nutrition programs
- ☐ Explore expanded coordination and information sharing among different Klickitat and Skamania nutrition education programs to better determine the resources available in the community and how to combine efforts and reach more individuals
- ☐ Improve access to affordable fruits and vegetables for low-income individuals through food banks, community gardens, etc.

Gardening at Home, School, and in the Community

Home gardening in Hood River County

Much like information on cooking and nutrition in the county, data on HRC residents' gardening habits was essentially nonexistent before this food assessment. Survey research indicates that fruit and vegetable gardening is prevalent in the community, with just over half – 60.1% - of the population reporting growing at least “a few plants” for food.

Do you have a home vegetable garden?

Yes, a few plants	25.6%
Yes, a small backyard plot	23.8%
Yes, a large backyard plot	10.7%
No	30.7%
No, but I would like to learn how to start a vegetable garden	9.2%

When asked to list secondary sources of food, 37.6% of survey respondents listed their home garden. Another 1.8% listed a community garden (see p. 30). These individuals may thus be more likely to see their garden truly as a food source for their families.

Families with home vegetable gardens in HRC were demographically nearly identical to the survey respondent base as a whole, indicating that these gardens are spread across families of varying incomes and different ethnicities in the community.

Home gardening in Wasco and Sherman Counties

Much like the information on cooking and nutrition in the two counties and like in Hood River County, data on Wasco and Sherman residents' gardening habits was essentially nonexistent before this assessment. Survey research indicates that fruit and vegetable gardening is prevalent in the community, with over half – 64.8% in Wasco and 66.1% in Sherman – of the population reporting growing at least “a few plants” for food.

Do you have a home vegetable garden?

	Wasco	Sherman
Yes, a few plants	30.7%	29.9%
Yes, a small backyard plot	21.0%	24.4%
Yes, a large backyard plot	13.1%	11.8%
No	28.6%	32.3%
No, but I would like to learn how to start a vegetable garden	6.7%	1.6%

When asked to list secondary sources of food survey respondents listed a home garden as a primary source, 51.3% in Sherman County and 52.0% in Wasco County. Another 3.8% in Wasco County and 0.8% in Sherman County listed a community garden as a secondary source of food. These individuals may thus be more likely to see their garden as a food source for their families.

Families with home vegetable gardens in Wasco and Sherman Counties were demographically nearly identical to the survey respondent as a whole, indicating that these gardens are spread across families of different ethnicities and varying incomes in the community. However, an exception was found among those survey respondents of Wasco County who reported an annual income of less than \$10,000. They were less likely to have a home garden than the general survey population that reported having an income of less than \$10,000 (5.8% down from 11.2%). This suggests a possible need for gardening education among the poorest of Wasco County.

Home gardening in Klickitat and Skamania Counties

Survey research indicates the gardening is prevalent in the community, with over half – 65.5% in Klickitat County and 67.2% in Skamania County – of the population reporting growing at least “a few plants” for food.

Do you have a home vegetable garden?

	Klickitat	Skamania
Yes, a few plants	25.8%	27.3%
Yes, a small backyard plot	20.4%	20.7%
Yes, a large backyard plot	19.3%	19.2%
No	28.9%	26.3%
No, but I would like to learn how to start a vegetable garden	5.5%	6.6%

When asked to list secondary sources of food, survey respondents listed a home garden as a primary source, 44.8% in Klickitat County and 49.5% in Skamania County. Another 1.3% in Klickitat County and 2.2% in Skamania County listed a community garden as a secondary source of food. These individuals may be more likely to see their gardens as a food source for their families.

Families with home vegetable gardens in Klickitat and Skamania Counties were demographically nearly identical to the survey respondents, indicating that there gardens are spread across families of different ethnicities and varying incomes in the community. However, a few exceptions were found among residents of both counties. In Klickitat County, respondents who reported an annual income of less than \$10,000 were less likely to have a garden than the same demographic group from the general survey population (5.8% down from 8.4%). In Skamania County, respondents who reported an annual income of \$20,000 or less were also less likely to have a garden than the same demographic from the general survey population (10.9% down from 14.4%). This suggests a possible need for gardening education among the poorest in Klickitat and Skamania Counties.

Community gardens in the Gorge

As of 2009, community gardening efforts are limited in the Gorge. As the region is composed of predominantly rural communities with plenty of open space, space for gardens may be perceived as less urgent. That said, for many renters or temporary residents, garden space at a community garden is an important resource.

Do you have a gardening plot (space) at a community garden?

	Hood River	Wasco	Sherman	Klickitat	Skamania
No	81.7%	83.0%	88.7%	84.9%	81.6%
No, but I might like to have one	15.3%	12.5%	8.1%	9.8%	14.2%
Yes (Please specify where)	3.0%	4.5%	3.2%	5.3%	4.2%

Respondent indicating “yes” in Wasco County garden at the established community gardens in the county (Mosier, Utopia, DIG, and Eastside) and sharing space with neighbors/family members. There are no known established community gardens in Sherman County, with respondents sharing space within the neighborhood.

Respondents in Klickitat and Skamania Counties indicating that they had a community garden plot were mainly at established community gardens in Klickitat Community (Bethel Congregational Church, Wishram Community Garden, Trout Lake CSA Garden, Common Grounds, and Goldendale Community Garden) and the one established community garden in Skamania County at the County Fairgrounds

In addition, several respondents in all misunderstood the question and specified their homes or farms as where they had a community garden plot, suggesting there may be some education needs around what a community garden is and how it works.

Benefits of home and community gardening: Hood River County

Results from our survey indicate numerous benefits to home gardening, including less food insecurity as measured by meal skipping. Of gardeners in HRC, 9.1% report skipping meals at least once a month, down from 21.1%; and only 5.4% skip meals so that their kids can eat, down from 19%.

Gardeners eat more fruits and vegetables, too: 77.7% of gardeners report eating fresh fruits or vegetables at least once a day, compared to only 52.6% of non-gardeners and 68.5% of the general survey population. They share their bounty, too:

Do you trade or share your extra garden produce with friends or family?

Yes	69.6%
No	30.4%

Having a garden did not measurably impact whether or not survey respondents have sought out help from government food assistance programs. It also did not significantly impact whether or not families cooked most or all meals at home: 85.5% of gardeners, report cooking most or all meals at home, compared to 81.1% of all families. However, families that only cook few or no meals at home are less likely to garden (53.9% do not have a garden, compared to 39.9% of the general survey population).

Benefits of home and community gardening: Wasco and Sherman County

Results from the survey indicate numerous benefits to home gardening, including less food insecurity as measured by skipping meals. Of home and community gardeners in Wasco County, 5.8% and 0% report skipping meals once a month or more, down from 10.1% in the general survey population. Similar results are seen in Wasco County for those home and community gardeners who skip meals for their children, down to 8.9% and 3.7% from 11.6% of the general survey respondents. In Sherman County, the percentage of home gardeners skipping meals is comparable to that of the general survey population, indicating that gardens have little impact on the food security in Sherman County.

Gardeners eat more fruits and vegetables, as well: 79.8% of home gardeners and 79.3% of community gardeners in Wasco County report eating fresh fruits and vegetables at least once a day, compared to 53.6% of non-home gardeners and 70.0% of the general survey population. In Sherman County 79.8% of home gardeners and 75.0% of community gardeners report eating fresh

fruits and vegetables at least once a day, compared to 51.2% of non-home gardeners and 49.5% of the general population. They share their bounty, too:

If you do have a home or community garden:

	Yes		No		Maybe	
	Wasco	Sherman	Wasco	Sherman	Wasco	Sherman
Do you trade or share your extra garden produce with friends or family?	81.6%	91.3%	16.1%	8.8%	2.4%	0%
Would you be interested in selling it?	16.6%	12.3%	60.4%	56.2%	23.1%	31.5%
Would you be interested in donating it to a local food pantry?	37.6%	44.3%	20.2%	15.7%	42.1%	40.0%

Having a garden in Wasco County did not measurably impact whether or not survey respondents have sought help from government food assistance programs. It also did not significantly impact whether or not families cooked most or all meals at home: 83.4% of home gardeners, report cooking most or all of their meals at home, compared to 78.9% of all families. However, families that only cook few or no meals at home are less likely to garden (48.9% do not have a garden, compared to 35.3% of the general survey population).

Having a garden in Sherman County did not measurably impact whether or not survey respondents have sought out help from government food assistance programs. It did, however, have a slight impact on whether or not families cooked most or all of meals at home: 89.1% of gardeners report cooking most or all meals at home, compares to 80.5% of all the families. Families that cook only a few or no meals at home are less likely to garden (64% do not have a garden, compared to 33.9% of the general survey population).

Benefits of home and community gardening: Klickitat and Skamania Counties

Results from the survey indicate numerous benefits to home gardening, including less food insecurity as measured by skipping meals. Of home gardeners in Klickitat County, 7.0% report skipping meals at least once a month or more, a slight decrease from 7.9% of the general survey population. Similar results are seen in Klickitat County for those home and community gardeners who skip meals for their children, down to 7.1% and 5.7% from 8.0% of the general survey population. Of home gardeners in Skamania County 9.1% skipped meals at least once a month and 9.3% skipped meals for children down from 14% and 13.4% of the general survey population. Of community gardeners in Skamania County 0% skipped meals for children.

Gardeners eat more fruits and vegetables, as well: 74.4% of home gardeners in Klickitat County report eating fresh fruits and vegetables at least once a day, compared to 56.2% of non-home gardeners and 67.6% of the general survey population. In Skamania County, 78.7% of home

gardeners report eating fresh fruits and vegetables at least once a day, compared to 52.3% of non-home gardeners and 70.2% of the general survey population. They share their bounty, too:

If you have a garden, do you trade or share extra garden produce with friends or family?

	Klickitat	Skamania
Yes	80.7%	86.0%
No	19.3%	14.0%

If you have a garden, would you be interested in selling your extra produce?

	Klickitat	Skamania
Yes	15.2%	25.9%
No	49.7%	40.7%
Maybe	35.1%	33.3%

Having a garden in Klickitat County had a small impact on those seeking government assistance programs, 42.6% down from 45.8% of the general survey population and significantly lower than those who had no garden (51.5%). It also had a small impact on the percent of families cooking most or all of their meals, 86.7% up from 84% of the general survey population. However, families that only cook few or no meals at home are less likely to garden (45.0% do not have a garden, compared to 34.4% of the general survey population.)

Having a garden in Skamania County had a slight impact on those seeking government assistance programs, 48.8% compared to 54.1% of the general survey population and 65.5% of those who had no home garden. It also had a small impact on the percent of families cooking most or all of their meals, 89.4% up from 85.2% of the general survey population. However, families that only cook few or no meals at home are less likely to garden. (51.7% do not have a garden, compared to 32.9% of the general survey population.)

Who wants to learn to garden in the Gorge?

Hood River County

Survey results indicate that families without a home vegetable garden have modest interest in learning how to start one, particularly in Hood River, Wasco, Klickitat, and Skamania Counties. Much like the county's nutrition education projects, county gardening instructional programs would benefit from better coordination and resource sharing to determine how best to meet the needs of those who want to learn home vegetable gardening. Who are the folks with interest?

Who are the people in Hood River County who have interest in learning to garden?

- 45.1% are on or have been on government food assistance programs
- 21.1% skip meals at least once a month because food is scarce
- 37.9% would also like to learn basic food preserving skills
- 52.6% are also looking for cooking classes

- 36.8% are also interested in gleaning
- 50% are interested in a community garden spot
- 33% are Latino
- 69% are under age 35

Who are the people in Wasco County who have interest in learning to garden?

- 18.2% skip meals once or more a month because food is scarce
- 65.9% are on or have been on government food assistance programs
- 40.8% would also like to learn basic food preserving skills
- 62.2% are also looking for cooking classes
- 37.2% are interested in a community garden spot
- 25.0% are also interested in gleaning
- 48.9% are under the age of 35
- 22.7% are Latino
- 48.9% have an income of \$40,000 or less a year

Who are the people in Klickitat County who have an interest in learning to garden?

- 5.1% skip meals once a month or more because food is scarce
- 52.6% are on or have been on government assistance programs
- 52.6% would also like to learn basic food preserving skills
- 61.5% are also interested in cooking classes
- 47.2% are interested in a community garden spot
- 40.5% have some interest in gleaning
- 66.7% are under the age of 35
- 10.5% are Latino
- 40.5% have an income of \$40,000 or less a year

Who are the people in Skamania County who have an interest in learning to garden?

- 38.5% skip meals at least once a month or more because food is scarce
- 63.6% are on or have been on government food assistance programs
- 23.1% would also like to learn basic food preserving skills
- 91.7% are also interested in cooking classes
- 15.4% are interested in learning more about gleaning
- 38.5% are under the age of 35
- 8.3% are Latino
- 33.3% have an income of \$40,000 or less a year

2008 Community Garden Inventory: Hood River County

As of 2008, community gardening efforts are limited in Hood River County. As a predominantly rural community with plenty of open space, space for gardens is perceived as less urgent. That said, for many renters or temporary residents, garden space at a community garden is an important resource.

Do you have a gardening plot (space) at a community garden?

No	81.7%
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No, but I might like to have one	15.3%
Yes (Please specify where)	3.0%

Respondents indicating yes garden at the two established community gardens in the county (La Clinica and Nazarene, information below) and at several informal/neighbor's type garden arrangements. Several respondents misunderstood the question and specified their home as where they garden, meaning there may be some education needs around what a community garden is and how it works.

La Clinica del Cariño Community Garden

La Clinica's garden was started in 2004 with 50 plots. In 2008 it was expanded to 100 plots, with a limit of 2 per family. The garden was initially free but now costs \$10/plot per season to help cover operating costs. The garden is entirely organic. A primary constituent base for the garden is families in the La Nueva Cosecha program, many of whom are renters or do not have suitable land where they live to garden.

La Clinica covers the garden's water costs; other modest costs are covered by plot rental fees. It is managed by volunteers, some of whom work at La Clinica and some who do not. Because the garden does not have funding for events or educational opportunities, project volunteers indicate that these needs go unmet, and could go a long way toward increasing the sense of community at the garden and building gardeners' skills.¹⁷⁹

Hood River Church of the Nazarene Garden

The Hood River Church of the Nazarene launched its garden in summer 2008. The garden was an initiative of church members and was financially supported completely by church funds. Organizers report that costs were minimal and much time and support was donated. Of 40 spaces, all but approximately 9 were filled by word of mouth. Church volunteers are "learning as they go" and interested in communicating with other community gardens in the region and expanding the garden as need arises.¹⁸⁰

SPOTLIGHT on Raices / La Nueva Cosecha

La Nueva Cosecha: it means "new harvest." In Hood River County, it also means healthier, more food secure Latino families, thanks to 3 years of this home gardening education program. La Nueva Cosecha (formerly called Raices, or Roots) is a 3 year-old project of the Nuestra Comunidad Sana program at The Next Door Inc, in partnership with La Clinica del Carino. It is a nonprofit, community-based venture based on the premise that Latino families in the community who garden are healthier, more active, and more food secure. The results show that this is true:

Impact of Raices, 2005-2007 combined (new families only, n=40)

	Before garden	After garden	Difference
Adults who ate vegetables several times a day	25%	60%	↑140%

Children who ate vegetables several times a day	23%	50%	↑117%
Families who worried they would run out of food before having money for more	50%	10%	↓80%
Adults sometimes skip meals because family ran out of money	23%	5%	↓78%
Children sometimes skip meals because family ran out of money	10%	0	↓100%

Source: 2007 La Nueva Cosecha survey data

In addition, with families who have gardened for multiple years through the program, surveys show that their food worries are lower each year: thus having a garden may help them feel more food secure all year long, even when their garden is not producing, by providing a greater sense of self-sufficiency.¹⁸¹

La Nueva Cosecha works with families who are new to gardening and with those who have gardened in the past. The majority have at least some garden experience, either in the United States or in Mexico. Families in the program live throughout the county, and garden either at home or at the community garden space designed for this project (and the public) at La Clinica. The project's coordinator helps families with startup logistics in the spring, seeks donated seeds and starts when possible, runs gardener meetings where folks can share ideas and questions, and makes garden visits as needed to help gardeners solve problems and improve their gardens. The program hosts an end-of-season harvest party every year as well to cap off the season. Thus, this project emphasizes not just the health benefits of gardening, but the community benefits – program participants note:

- I learned a lot from listening to others (at gardener meetings)
- We ate well and got to meet people we didn't know
- I really liked that they gave us an orientation and support

Many of the participating families have a family member with diabetes or other health concerns.¹⁸² La Nueva Cosecha is linked to another La Clinica health program, the Pasos a Salud (Steps to Wellness) program, discussed earlier in this chapter. This innovative, integrated approach – medical and dietary advising, gardening, and community support groups – is one that has shown positive results, according to program staff *and* participants.

100% of families involved in La Nueva Cosecha said it has helped their family. They got the support they needed and planned to continue with their gardens into the future.¹⁸³

In the future, La Nueva Cosecha would like to find partners and land for more community garden spaces for its gardeners. While the La Clinica garden is amply sized, it can be a long drive for families in other parts of the county, such as Odell or Parkdale. Garden space in these communities would especially benefit families who live in apartments, are seasonal residents, or do not have sufficient home garden space.

Currently, most gardeners in the program do not have a large amount of excess produce, but some have expressed interest in growing extra produce for sale at a local farmers' market.

La Nueva Cosecha Needs and Ideas

- More community garden space outside of Hood River
- Explore the possibility of families jointly selling produce at local farmers' markets

2009 Community Garden Inventory: Wasco and Sherman Counties

Eastside Community Garden

The community garden was started in the spring of 2009 on a small amount of land owned by Randy Hager. The long-term vision of the garden is to increase the size and number of participants in the garden and to increase the production of heirloom seeds. In the first year, 12 people had a plot in the garden. The initial interest and enthusiasm tapered off as the growing season continued. For continued success of the community garden there needs to be more community support and education provided about the importance of growing and eating local food.¹⁸⁴

St. Paul Episcopal - Plant a Row Garden

St. Paul Episcopal Church currently runs the Plant a Row Garden. In 2009, 10 to 15 church members each planted an additional row in their home gardens and donated the extra produce to the Community Connections Food Pantry. The long-term goal of the church is to have a garden plot at the church, but the church currently lacks the funds and administrative support to make it happen. The future of the garden project is dependent on finding ways to motivate church members, as there was minimal interest and participation in the first year.¹⁸⁵

The Dalles Imagination Garden (DIG)

The DIG Community Garden in The Dalles is a 2.5 year-old community garden that is run by Master Gardeners who donate 1100 hours a year volunteering in the garden. The mission of the DIG Garden is educate students about horticulture and teach them how to grow their own food from seed to harvest and have the skills they need to grow their own food for the rest of their lives. The garden has seen lots of community support and has easily been able to involve children. The children take produce home from the garden and the excess is donated to the food pantry. The resources at the garden include 16,000 square feet of land with 11 raised beds and farm space that is used for teaching. Also available is irrigation, a tool shed, and mural wall.¹⁸⁶

SPOTLIGHT on Utopia Community Garden

In 2009, the vision of more than 20 community members and professionals, and the dedication of a volunteer steering committee helped create the Utopia Community Garden: a place where community members interact and families connect with the earth. At the Utopia garden, gardeners learned to grow nutritious food, share resources and influence the world in sustainable ways – from seed to stomach. In the first year of the project new and experienced gardeners were able to learn from one another, work collaboratively and build social capital. Participants in the first year overwhelmingly agreed that the garden improved individual and household health. Results from

participant interviews conducted before and after the gardening season are summarized below to address issues of nutrition and food security:

Impact of Utopia Community Garden, 2009

	Before Garden	Garden in Production	Difference
Adults who ate vegetables several times a day	56%	50%	-10.7%
Adults who ate vegetables once a day	19%	30%	57.9%
Children who ate vegetables several times a day	31%	30%	-3.2%
Children who ate vegetables once a day	0%	10%	100%
Families who worried at least once a month that food would run out before having more money	32%	10%	-68.8%
Adults who skipped a meal once or twice a month because household money ran out	25%	0%	-100%
Children who skipped a meal once or twice a month because household money ran out	6%	0%	-100%

Source: 2009 Utopia Community Garden survey data, Pre and Post Season

The garden had a significant impact on children and adults who were eating vegetables once a day. Beforehand, cost was reported as the biggest barrier for families to access the food they need, especially fresh fruit and vegetables. The garden helped to increase food security, with families who worried about food showing a 68.8% decrease. 90% of the families said the Utopia Community Garden improved the health of their families. Here are some reasons why:

- ☐ “We got to eat a lot more fresh produce than we normally have, which has encouraged us to eat healthier overall once we realized how tasty it is! We are more open to different foods and eat less pre-packaged meals. It was an opportunity for me to get out in the fresh air and get some exercise.”
- ☐ “I ate more vegetables than I would have otherwise, and I benefited from the relaxing environment of the garden.”
- ☐ “I did some canning, and we ate right out of the garden! The boys were very excited to help harvest and eat what we had.”
- ☐ “We already eat a lot of vegetables but the exercise involved in gardening was good, and I think we ate even more vegetables with the garden.”

The garden also allowed the families to be healthier by providing physical activity in their lives. The majority of the families that planted live within walking distance of the garden and do not have space to garden at home. 80% of the families spent a couple of hours a week physically active in the garden and for 50% of the families the garden was their primary source of physical outdoor activity during the gardening season.

Half of the participants had at least beginners-level experience growing their own food before the Utopia Community Garden Project and the majority of the gardeners shared extra produce with friends, family, neighbors, and other gardeners. Overall the garden helped serve as a place to learn and form bonds. Here is what people had to say:

- ☐ "I loved learning the nuts and bolts of gardening from all the experienced gardeners. The garden was a relaxing place for me to relax after work, while watering the plants. I enjoyed meeting the people involved with the garden and eating my delicious tomatoes."
- ☐ "I had a good time, and I actually grew a lot of food and gave some to friends in need."
- ☐ "I learned how to take care of plants. I learned a lot of things I didn't know before."
- ☐ "I can now tell different plants apart and learned which ones need more water."
- ☐ "I had a great deal of fun with the garden. It felt like for the first time in a very long time, I finally had a nice place to go and do something that brought me a great deal of joy, a place where I didn't have to be "Mommy" or "Wife", where I could just go and have enriching quiet time. I had a great deal of enjoyment in growing things, watching plants grow and mature and in sharing the produce with my family, and in eating the tasty results."
- ☐ "I learned what temperature different seeds can begin growing, how to prepare soil/compost, and how I should water my plants."
- ☐ "I learned a lot of planting information and skills on how to make healthy foods with the community and food programs."
- ☐ Since it was my first time really gardening, I think my skills improved. I learned different ways to enrich the soil, how to compost, organic methods of pest control, how much space and water certain plants need, etc."
- ☐ "Wonderful! I produced way more than I thought I would/could."

Involvement was high the first year with 15 groups involved and with 50 people affected by the garden. The garden will be organized by a partnership between The Dalles Gorge Grown, Wy'East Resource Conservation and Development, and Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District in 2010.¹⁸⁷

2009 Community Garden Inventory: Klickitat and Skamania Counties

Bethel Congregational Church, White Salmon

In 2009, the Bethel Congregational Church decided at their annual meeting to focus on food issues and started a small community garden (25 feet by 20 feet, with raised beds) on property donated

by the church. The garden has a volunteer coordinator and is completely run by congregational members, including children. The first year was successful with all the produce being donated to the food bank in Bingen. The church plans to maintain the garden in the coming years, with the goal for it to be a sustainable project for the church.¹⁸⁸

Common Grounds, Bingen

Common Grounds is a group from the WSU Horizons program in White Salmon and Bingen that have managed two community gardens in Bingen since 2008. Humboldt Garden is located near Daubenspeck Park and is planted mainly by Common Grounds members that donate the produce to the local food bank, donating 4000 pounds in 2009. Skyline Garden is located by Rhine Village. Those who lease space use the produce for personal consumption or their businesses. In 2009, the number of gardeners doubled though 2/3rds of the space was not leased out. For the gardens to have continued success there needs to be a push for more participation. The gardens would also benefit from a stronger financial basis and more resources (equipment, cooperative buying power, insurance, etc.)¹⁸⁹

Trout Lake CSA Vegetable Garden

Started in 2009, 16 families pooled together money to lease land together and ran with the assistance of a volunteer manager a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) garden. The membership was based on a sweat equity system, where all the members worked to maintain the garden. The garden was started as a vehicle for sustainable living in Troutlake. The one acre plot was extremely successful in the first year. The members sold the vegetables for \$1 per pound or \$0.50 per pound for U-pick. In addition, the members donated 100 pounds of potatoes to the school and over 500 pounds of vegetables to the food bank in Bingen. 25% of the harvest was taken by the owner of the land to cover partial cost of the lease. Due to the success of the first year, the group is thinking of expanding the garden to 2 or 3 acres in 2010 and selling either subscription boxes or U-pick memberships. For continued success of the CSA garden it may be necessary to have a paid manager and bring in technical support, as none of the members are trained gardeners.¹⁹⁰

Bethel Assisted Living, White Salmon

The garden was started in 2009 when Cassie White, a staff member of Bethel Assisted Living and the volunteer garden coordinator, identified fresh produce and time outdoors as a need of the residents. The garden was started with the help of the Horizons program and was extremely successful in creating a sense of community and neighborhood bonding. The produce was divided among the 46 residents who helped in caring for the garden. There are plans to expand the garden in 2010, as there was not enough space for all the people who wanted to participate, with raised beds and planting of fruit trees. They hope to involve more of the community in the project and provide produce for the community as well.¹⁹¹

Wishram Community Garden

In 2009, the small garden was run through a garden coordinator and four regular volunteers from the Wishram Horizons group. The produce is mainly used by the volunteers that work in the garden, with some also being donated to in-need community members. The garden will be more successful in the future with help from additional volunteers and more community support. The

coordinator would also like to expand efforts in the garden by having a permanent vegetable stand and signage and by working with the school to make the garden an education site.¹⁹²

Goldendale Community Garden

The small garden is currently managed by a volunteer coordinator and volunteers that maintain the garden, including Master Gardeners. The land and water were donated for the community garden and the group would like to expand the garden next year to include more raised beds. The produce is mainly taken home for use by the gardens participants, though some is entered in the County Fair and the extra goes to the food bank. Extra produce may also be utilized by the school in Centerville next year.¹⁹³

Skamania Community Garden

The community garden located at the fairgrounds was started through the visioning process of the youth advisory board to the Skamania County Public Outreach Program (SCPOP) who thought that by having a community garden they could teach people to eat healthier by growing their own food. The garden is supported by the SCPOP Director and a dedicated group of 75-100 volunteers. The garden also received support from a garden committee of 12 members, the SCPOP youth group of 18 members, the Juvenile work crew, adult corrections, Stevenson High School Students for a community workday, Stevenson High School Botany students, Facility and Rec Staff, WSU Extension Agent and Master Gardners from the community. The garden has been very successful and they have plans to expand the garden from 24 to 50 or 54 raised beds in 2010. For this to be possible additional funding for materials is necessary. Most of the produce was taken home by the people who participated, though two groups donated to the Domestic Violence Shelter and to the food bank in Stevenson. The SCPOP director would like to see a community garden in every community in Skamania County.¹⁹⁴

Home and community gardening resources in the Gorge

Resources for aspiring home gardeners do exist in the region, though efforts are slowed by lack of funding and organizational capacity to grow programs or expand offerings. Gardeners in the region gain gardening skills from a variety of sources:

Focus groups: where do they get gardening info?

Friends
OSU/WSU Extension / Master Gardeners
Good News Gardening
Library
Garden Club
Online
Other gardeners

OSU Master Gardener Program

OSU Master Gardener training is currently offered only in Wasco and Hood River County. Residents of Sherman County can be trained through the Wasco County program, as the training is open to everyone with an interest in gardening. The program consists of two parts: 10 weeks of classroom

training followed by 55 hours of community volunteer hours extending home gardening information to others in the community. The program is the most comprehensive garden education opportunity in the county and remains a popular option.

11 new Wasco County Master Gardeners were trained in 2009, bringing the total to approximately 47 Master Gardeners in Wasco County. The group is active with youth in the community and runs the DIG community garden in The Dalles, as well as the Master Gardener Jr. Program. The program in Wasco County is interested in expanding the program and training more people who have an interest in the gardening and horticulture.¹⁹⁵ Since 2001, approximately 115 Master Gardeners have been trained in Hood River County, with approximately 60 Master Gardeners active in the community at any given time in 2008.¹⁹⁶ Current MGs expressed interest during interviews in expanding the program's training and volunteer opportunities with vegetable gardens, especially community and school gardens, which could benefit from the expertise and volunteer hours MGs have to offer.

OSU Master Gardener Jr. Program

Wasco County Master Gardener runs a two-week Junior Master Gardener Program. In 2009, 37 fifth and sixth graders participated. Through two sessions at Chenoweth Elementary School, students learned how to design a garden, encourage backyard wildlife, and identify weeds. They also learned about beneficial insects and how to plant annuals in appropriate settings. The goal of the program is to capture and retain the interest of youth in gardening. The Seeds and Soil program, which teaches fourth grade students the basics of germination and soil health/composition, is an introduction to the Jr. Master Gardener Program.¹⁹⁷

Hood River County Community Education Program

Home gardening classes are also frequently offered through Hood River County's Community Education program, albeit not on a regular basis. Currently neither the MG program nor classes through Community Education are offered in Spanish.

4-H

The 4-H program is extremely active in Sherman County, with 43% use by children that are eligible. This program has a horticulture and gardening portion that teaches the children about gardening from planting of the seeds to harvest and selling vegetables.¹⁹⁸ In 2009, the 4-H Extension office in Skamania County offered course in gardening to 30 youth in the county. The course covered basics including: how to plan, prepare, plant, and care for a garden; selecting, harvesting and preparing vegetables or other plants for exhibit; and designing and conducting an experiment.¹⁹⁹ Hood River County also maintains an active 4-H program.

WSU Master Gardener Program:

There are currently 20 Master Gardeners that live in Klickitat County. In 2009, there were no newly trained Master Gardeners through the Klickitat County WSU extension office. The current Master Gardeners are, however, very active in the county. They participate in the Home and Garden show in Goldendale, held in the spring. They have offer plant clinics at the Fair and every Thursday at the Klickitat WSU Extension office. In addition, they help run the Centerville School Garden and Goldendale Community Garden and run a few activities a year, such as a pumpkin contest to

encourage people to plant. The group is also trying to help the Lutheran Christ the King Church in Goldendale with starting a community garden.²⁰⁰

Currently there is no Master Gardeners program being run through the Skamania County WSU extension office. People who want training go through the Hood River County and Clark County offices and programs.²⁰¹

Home gardening needs and ideas

- ☐ Gardening education targeted at the demographic of survey respondents who indicated an interest in learning to garden: younger, low income, also interested in gaining other food skills.
- ☐ Better coordinate gardening, cooking, preserving, and nutrition education
- ☐ Better utilization of Master Gardeners for garden education classes and training of additional Master Gardeners in the two counties to aid in support
- ☐ Promote gardening among the low-income population by offering free or cheap classes and individual technical assistance
- ☐ Find an easy way to donate produce to the food bank: in focus groups, home gardeners report having excess to share

Community gardening needs and ideas

- ☐ Educate the public on what a community garden is and how it functions. Also, how they can support community gardens in their area
- ☐ Infrastructure support: volunteers to help set up and manage the gardens, pre- and post-season cleanup efforts, etc.
- ☐ Partnering with Master Gardeners and others on management of gardens and development of workshops to maximize space in a garden plot, manage pests, etc.
- ☐ Find more ways to make the gardens more than just a place where people have soil, to have them become community focal points and places for intercultural, intergenerational, and interfaith relationships
- ☐ Funding for shared community tools and storage for tools
- ☐ More organized cost-sharing efforts for large seasonal tasks such as tilling

School gardens in the Gorge

Some of the schools in the region have school gardens with various degrees of activity. There are currently no active gardens in Skamania County, but all other Gorge counties have at least one. The benefits and educational opportunities a school garden can provide are numerous: in addition to the curricular tie-ins to science, history, art, and more, garden provide kids a chance to learn by doing, gain interpersonal and cooperation skills, and develop patience, in addition to potentially improving their diet and fruit and vegetable intake.²⁰²

The brief inventory below provides some information on each school garden in the Gorge area and is followed by collected ideas and needs as reported by school staff in interviews.

Hood River County School Garden Inventory, 2008

<i>School</i>	<i>Type of Garden</i>
Hood River Middle School	Has a well established fruit and vegetable garden that is integrated into several classrooms' studies, youth continue working in the garden through the summer and sell at the Gorge Grown Farmers' Market weekly; they are in the process of starting a large greenhouse project
Hood River Valley High School	Has a garden, they only grow flowers at this time, no vegetables
Pine Grove Elementary	This garden grows lettuce, peppers, tomatoes, squash, corn, sunflowers, and strawberries. The third grade class plants and maintains (until summer) and picks in the fall. Limited volunteer maintenance in summertime. They harvest what they can and serve it with lunch in Sept/Oct
Wy'east Middle School	Just started growing food last year: lettuce, tomatoes, etc on a small scale. Also grew veggie starts to sell in the springtime to the community; had slow sales and may try different plants or different sales approaches to better support the project and encourage kids.
Westside Elementary	Two fifth grade classrooms plant a garden each spring and their class harvests.
Cascade Locks	This school has a nature trail they are working on, but have not started a garden yet. They are planning to in the future.
May Street Elementary	Does not have program at this point, but is interested in the future.
Mid Valley Elementary	Does not have program at this point, but is interested in the future.
Parkdale Elementary School	Will begin a program in 2008-9, still working to prepare land and develop ties with classrooms.

Wasco and Sherman County School Garden Inventory, 2009

<i>School</i>	<i>Type of Garden</i>
Colonel Wright Elementary	This garden has two greenhouses, raised beds and a semi-circle bed in one of the greenhouses where the students grow vegetables and flowers throughout the winter and spring. There is also a leaf composting project associated with the garden. The students have sold some of the produce at The Dalles Saturday Farmers Market in the past. Some of the vegetables have been used in the preparation of school lunches. The garden has been integrated into science classes at the school and can easily be integrated into math and art curriculum.

Chenowith Elementary	The garden is planted with vegetables and maintained for 12 weeks a year by the students. It has been used for science and art projects. The produce is harvested by the students in the fall and used in the school kitchen.
Mosier Community School Garden	The garden consists of 12 raised beds planted with vegetables. It is used by students for science and after school projects. The produce has been used in the kitchen for school lunches. It has the potential to become more of a community garden run for the school.
Sherman County Elementary	Have run a small greenhouse operation for the past two years, growing starts to sell as part of a fundraiser in the spring. It has also been used as part of science projects, though nothing has been produced for onsite consumption. Students also plant flowers for the City of Grass Valley.
Sherman County High School	Have a greenhouse that is not used for on-site production or consumption.

Other school gardens in the area include: The Dalles Middle School and Maupin High School.

Klickitat County School Garden Inventory, 2009

<i>School</i>	<i>Type of Garden</i>
Centerville School	A Master Gardener helps to run the garden with another volunteer. The garden is primarily used to teach the students gardening skills as they help in maintaining the vegetables, flowers, and herbs, with each of the 5 classes having a raised bed. The garden continues through the summer with the help of the students, though does not function during winter. The produce is used in school lunches. While the garden has been successful thus far, it could benefit from fencing and a consistent water supply.
Glenwood Greenhouse	The greenhouse has not yet reached completion, after two years of work. The effort is currently from a volunteer garden coordinator and a garden committee headed by a science teacher. The long-term vision of the greenhouse is to use the produce in the lunch and after school snack program and to allow community members access to the project as well. There has been interest expressed by the elementary wing of the school for using it in their curricula. For the project to be successful there needs to be increased support from the community and more funding to get the greenhouse operational.

Columbia High School, White Salmon	The garden is managed by the horticulture teacher who serves as the garden coordinator. The original vision of the garden was to provide a learning context for students about social issues, environmental science, nutrition, community service, and economics. The garden is used in a variety of activities and labs using the garden as a context for learning, leadership skills, and work related to skill and science standard. The produce is used in the school lunch program during the school year and donated to WGAP in Bingen in the summers. The garden could use additional help during the summer with maintenance and to process the food for the food bank.
Whitson Elementary, White Salmon	The long-term vision of the garden is to have the children pick the produce and sell it at the children's farmers market on Jewett Street. Currently the 1st graders are the students who take the most ownership in the garden, using it to learn how to grow, harvest, plan plantings and put beds to rest after the harvest. The 4th grade has been somewhat involved with the garden education and the kindergarten class has helped in composting the lunch scraps. The produce is taste tested in the class and some is taken by the children and their parents during the summer. The garden would have further success with additional funding and more support from the teachers.

Other school gardens in the area include: Goldendale Primary School and Goldendale High School.

School Gardens Statewide

In 2007, Ecotrust conducted a statewide school garden inventory and developed a set of needs and recommendations to support gardens as they develop and grow in Oregon. A summary of the primary needs are as follows:

- ☐ Incorporating Garden Activities with Oregon Benchmarks
- ☐ Outdoor Classroom Management
- ☐ How to Organize Garden Events²⁰³

In most school gardens in the region, gardens are not extensively integrated into the mainstream core school curriculum, but this is a great opportunity to strengthen both gardens and potential community partnerships around food harvest and preparation, food security, hunger, and nutrition.

A statewide resource that Oregon schools could consider using is the Learning Garden programs offered in Portland, through the Oregon Food Bank.²⁰⁴ Similar resources are needed for Washington schools.

School garden needs and ideas

- ☐ Find a way to maintain the gardens throughout the summer months with volunteers and community groups

- ❑ Better engage local garden and environmental experts (Master Gardeners, DEQ, Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District) into garden programs for support and training
- ❑ Collaboration among the school gardens in seeking additional funding to maintain the gardens and add infrastructure
- ❑ Increase the children's involvement in planting and maintenance of the gardens. Increase the use of the garden into school curriculum
- ❑ Incorporate more of the produce grown into school lunches
- ❑ Fundraising and organizational assistance on both the technical and management sides of garden work

Farms, Food, and Faith Communities: Beginning Links in the Gorge

A largely untapped, but promising partnership opportunity in the region is working with faith communities on food and farm issues. In other regions in Oregon, ecumenical organizations operate numerous food and farm projects, including low-income farm coupon initiatives, congregational farm stands, and community gardens.²⁰⁵

The Gorge Ecumenical Ministries organization assisted with this community food assessment by distributing surveys and helping conduct survey outreach. Several Gorge-area churches have active "Food Committees" that work to bring films and speakers to their congregations to speak on food, hunger, and farm issues nationally.

Hood River County

FISH Food Bank in Hood River is heavily supported by local faith communities, which take turns on a monthly rotation staffing the pantry and preparing food boxes. Local churches also spearhead several annual food drives. Additionally, the Hood River Church of the Nazarene hosts a popular community garden.

There is much room for additional discussion and outreach to find ways for the Hood River County faith community to become a bigger partner in fighting hunger and strengthening our local food system.

Wasco and Sherman County

The faith community has a large role helping to run the emergency food pantry system in The Dalles. St. Vincent de Paul, Salvation Army, and Seventh Day Adventist are all organized and run by faith organizations.

St. Paul Episcopalian Church has a small community garden program being run from its church and would like to expand its efforts by putting a garden plot in at the church (see the community garden inventory for more details).²⁰⁶

Other churches in The Dalles that may have an interest in the food movement include: The Dalles Seventh Day Adventists and the Zion Lutheran Church. Zion Lutheran Church is willing to serve as a leader in the food and faith movement in The Dalles, if there were more participation from other churches and faith based organizations. ²⁰⁷

In South Wasco County, many of the local churches and faith groups loosely and informally organize the limited emergency food assistance. The Wamic Community Church, Antelope Church, and Tygh Valley Community United Methodist Church have small pantries that provided emergency food assistance to families in need. The churches and faith based community in Wasco County also provide much of the organization for the Senior Potlach Meals.

The emergency food efforts in Sherman County are not organized, but supported by the faith community. The Senior Potlach meals are held at Moro Presbyterian Church and Wasco Catholic Church Parish Hall and supported by parishioner volunteers. The Wasco Methodist Church houses the Sherman County Food Bank and parishioners assist in staffing the food bank.²⁰⁸

Klickitat and Skamania County

In Klickitat County, Several of the churches in White Salmon have been involved with emergency food efforts. Grace Baptist Church does several food drives a year, donating the food to WGAP in Bingen. The Seventh Day Adventist Church has a food pantry that provides to community members in need once a week (every Tuesday). Bethel United Church of Christ has a church garden that donates all of the produce to WGAP in Bingen and has a year-round food collection program that regularly donates food to WGAP.

There are some food and faith effort seen in Goldendale, as well. The Goldendale United Methodist Church houses the Backpack 4 Kids program and a soup kitchen. The soup kitchen was started in February of 2009 in conjunction with the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Goldendale, serving two meals a days. By April 2009 other churches and civic groups had joined in the effort serving up an additional meal each week, bringing the total to three meals per week. 4,000 meals were served to the community in 2009 and efforts continue in 2010.²⁰⁹

There is additional discussion needed to find ways for the Gorge faith communities to grow in their role in helping fight hunger and strengthening the local food systems.

Food and Faith and Community Needs and Ideas

- ☐ Discuss and explore partnership opportunities with the faith community on food, farm, and hunger issues
- ☐ Build a centralized support system for churches doing emergency food outreach, including coordination of food donations and installation of more community gardens
- ☐ Partner church leadership with Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon trainings
- ☐ Educate the faith community on the health and societal benefits associated with growing healthy food for the local communities

Gorge Community Voices on Health, Nutrition, and Gardening

Below are quotes from local residents – including farmers, low-income individuals, health service providers, and working professionals – on health, nutrition, and gardening in the Gorge, from community group discussions.

Hood River County

- Mobility is a challenge – I move a lot and it is hard to invest in time and space, could we have classes specifically for apartment dwellers or people on the go?
- Theft at community gardens is frustrating, I have to pick many of my items very early so they aren't stolen
- My family taught me gardening skills, from my grandma down, I am happy to continue the tradition!
- I'd like to garden but I can barely stand and walk let alone bend, thank you.
- I would love to teach and see more small-scale home gardening classes – raised beds, square foot gardening, etc.
- I tried and tried to get a garden at my house, but it just didn't work, so when I saw the Nazarene community garden come in, I was thrilled, and my garden there has been great this year!
- What would happen if I could not depend upon Rosauers or Produce Kountry? It would be nice if I could go to the local farmers' market, but I work from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. and need to go home. I have also heard it's expensive. My daughter and I eat a lot of produce, but I depend upon the aforementioned stores. This year, I will try to grow a few things. That seems best. I will plan to expand that.
- I know fresh fruits and vegetables are better, but they are more expensive.
- More community gardens!
- I am definitely interested in expanding and improving my gardening skills which can be described as rudimentary at best.
- I regret that with young children I end up out of necessity buying things I feel I would make or grow if I had more time.

Wasco and Sherman County

- Anything that benefits your community locally, will benefit you in the long run
- People have to want to be reached. They're given all kinds of pamphlets about free and reduced lunch, but the parents have to want it.
- Encouraging — maybe with incentives — sharing family/community gardens. We need fresh vegetables and fruits in local grocery stores!
- I am interested in improving meals for our local school district, as they are what I ate when I

started going to school 25 years ago. It is deplorable that it hasn't improved in that amount of time.

- ☐ When shopping at grocery stores, it seems the only savings or cheaper foods are prepackaged, fattening, junk foods. Fresh or healthy tend to be not the affordable products. Maybe this contributes to the obese country we have become!
- ☐ I think we need to find as many ways as possible to get more people gardening — including myself!
- ☐ Thank you Meals on Wheels. It makes my sister very happy.
- ☐ I would love to see more fresh local produce available — maybe for trade. Community gardens are great. Start one in Dufur?
- ☐ Raising more awareness and education about home gardens and gardening in small areas/containers would be nice.
- ☐ The cost is higher. It doesn't matter if they're more nutritious.

Klickitat and Skamania County

- ☐ "Food is too expensive. It is hard to eat healthy, since the food with preservatives is a lot cheaper."
- ☐ "The cost of food is too high - it's the main reason we have a garden. I would like to learn about preserving foods (canning, dehydration) and gleaning."
- ☐ "Fresh fruits and vegetables are important for healthy living, but a busy lifestyle and a budget can make them difficult to obtain."
- ☐ "When living in a large city, we participated in a community garden plot area. I feel everyone should have an opportunity to grow wholesome food at low or no cost."
- ☐ "Based on the obesity seen locally, healthy diets are an obvious problem."
- ☐ "People, I think, have a tendency to lean towards that because they are on a limited income. When you go buy fruits and vegetables, they are very expensive if you don't have a way to grow a garden. A lot of people don't. They live in apartments, they don't have that resource. So I think people tend to lean towards unhealthy food because that's what they can afford for their family."
- ☐ "We buy groceries only once a month and maybe a quarter of it is fresh fruits and vegetables. It doesn't last very long and we don't have money to go back and get more fresh fruits and vegetables. So, we can get it only for a short time."
- ☐ "Knowledge of the right things to eat would help. There's the food pyramid but a lot of people don't understand it. Make it so people understand it better on which things you need and the best things for you."
- ☐ "To help get our community garden started it would be great if we could find community tools that can be borrowed or taken out short-term like a rototiller, that we can use for the garden. We just didn't have access to tools."

Recommendation Summary for Chapter IV

1. Expand local availability of cooking and nutrition classes

- a. Better coordinate and publicize existing cooking and nutrition resources*
- b. Offer low-cost or free cooking courses targeted at people with limited time who want to eat fresh foods*
- c. Increase resources available for low-income families at food banks, including recipes, preserving equipment and demonstration*

2. Improve and integrate food skills, nutrition, and self-sufficiency help

- a. Explore expanded coordination and information sharing among different Wasco and Sherman nutrition education programs to better determine the resources available in the community and how to combine efforts and reach more individuals*
- b. Work with school food service, school garden, and teacher to explore partnering growing food with eating food and understanding its health benefits*
- c. Improve access to affordable fruits and vegetables for low-income individuals through food banks, community gardens, etc.*

3. Expand and coordinate local gardening resources for home gardeners

- a. Potentially cost share on expenses such as tools, storage, compost, etc.*
- b. Work with Master Gardeners to provide volunteers to support gardeners, with an emphasis on basic gardening education, development of technical skill workshops, and training additional Master Gardeners*
- c. Provide free or low cost classes to low-income populations to increase food security*

4. Work with school gardens to coordinate efforts, share resources, and expand programs

- a. Help teachers develop curriculum to involve children in planting and maintenance of the garden*
- b. Help schools obtain infrastructure and funding to create gardens and maintain current ones*
- c. Improve summertime participation to maintain gardens and engage youth when school is out of session, through the help of groups like Master Gardeners*
- d. Identify additional space and partnership opportunities for community gardens in the region*

5. Coordinate emergency food efforts among the faith community

- a. Build a centralized support system for churches doing emergency food outreach, including coordination of food donations and instillation of more community gardens*
- b. Partner church leadership with Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon trainings*

V. Conclusions and Summary of Action Recommendations

Summary of Key Findings

The findings of this report indicate both an abundance of food and farm resources and an abundance of food and farm needs. It will take the commitment of everyone – farmers, local government, residents, service providers, faith communities, and more – to build a truly sustainable local food system where farmers can keep farming, consumers are educated to make healthy choices, and everyone has enough to eat. There are many mutually beneficial alliances to be built between people who grow food and the people who eat it, and this report is just the first step. What follows is an executive summary of key findings from this report and a list of report recommendations by chapter.

Please refer to the Appendix for a copy of this report's Executive Summary, which contains a 12-page summary of report findings.

Action Recommendations are available at the end of each subject chapter.

Appendix A: Community Food Survey

Appendix B: Producer Survey

Appendix C: Executive Summary

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