

Sustainability Commission: Food Subcommittee March 2012 Update and Recommendations

A subcommittee of the Sustainability Commission coordinated or attended a number of meetings with relevant stakeholders to gain a better understanding of the state of local food production and to gather ideas for city policies and actions that would support these efforts.

When possible (marked with an *) we asked those with whom we met to respond to five probe questions:

1. What are some of the key food issues facing our region?
2. What are you doing to address these issues?
3. How do your efforts fit in with a regional initiative?
4. How can the Sustainability Commission or the City of Eugene support your efforts?
5. What should the Commission's food priorities be?
6. Who else should we talk to?"

We gathered information from:

- * Kelly Hoell of Good Company (Shawn Boles, Stacy Vynne)
- * Lynn Fessenden of Willamette Valley Food and Farm Coalition (Shawn Boles, Art Farley, Stacy Vynne)
- Local Food Connections Conference (Art Farley)
- * Karen Edmonds of Food for Lane County (Art Farley)
- Mike Sullivan, Sarah Mizejewski and others of the Regional Food Initiative (Art Farley, Stacy Vynne)
- * Lane County Food Policy Council - (Shawn Boles)

We also received a written response to our probe questions from the staff of the Neighborhood Economic Development Council (NEDCO).

As a result of these interactions, the subcommittee identified a series of themes and compiled the following list of possible city actions and policies that could be considered under each of the themes. We italicize those items that align with recommendations from Eugene's Climate and Energy Action plan (CEAP).

1. Expand Access to Markets

1. Locate and subsidize a year-round, covered farmers market
2. Allocate a city lot downtown for a seasonal Saturday farmers market which provides better access for the public and equal opportunities for the vendors
3. Facilitate creation of a local food hub, with market, kitchens, etc.
4. *Incentivize local government and institutional purchases (city, public schools)*
5. Complete a TBL analysis of benefits and costs of local food production

2. Increase Access to Land for Production

1. *Increase availability of, and access to, community gardens*
2. *Enhance support and training for food producing gardens*
3. Lease garden plots on city parks land to groups/CSA
4. *Strengthen land-use protection for farm land bordering UGB*
5. *Encourage planting of food bearing shrubs and trees in parks*
6. Find opportunities for a private/public partnership for management of public services (e.g., community gardens) given reduced city resources

3. Improve and Expedite Access to Processing Sites

1. Create special (enterprise, cluster) zone for local food processing
2. Incorporate policy supporting local food processing in Envision Eugene
3. Update land use code to facilitate food production siting
4. Appoint (or identify) city staff with expertise in local food systems

4. Provide Access to Capital

1. Create a public bank to provide micro-loans to food-related firms
2. Fund city backed loans for local food startups
3. Pursue federal USDA grants that support local foods

5. Ensure Access to Public Transportation

1. Encourage LTD to explore options for allow shopping bags of food on buses (e.g. to provide public transportation options for those visiting markets, community gardens, etc.)

6. Enhance Food Security

1. Incentivize food donations, possibly through a tax deduction or other means for businesses and individuals
2. *Create city liaison to local food production and hunger relief systems*

7. Engage In and Expand Regional Initiatives

1. Develop Lane County and Willamette Valley foodshed studies
2. Support efforts for recognizable branding of local food
3. Assist regional, cooperative food production, processing and distribution

Recommendations

While all of the actions should be considered by the Sustainability Commission as recommendations to City Council, the subcommittee recommends three immediate actions that we believe should be taken in 2012:

- Allocate of larger city lot for seasonal farmers market (1.2)
- Update land use code to facilitate food processing siting (3.3)
- Appoint/identify a city staff member with expertise to evaluate other actions for feasibility (3.4).