

# Q The Agriculture QUARTERLY

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## FoodHub connects the spokes of Pacific Northwest agriculture

By Bruce Pokarney

*It's a little bit of the old-style public marketplace. It's perhaps a relative to the telephone directory. It also borrows from the more contemporary concept of Craigslist. Welcome to FoodHub, a collaborative online network of buyers and sellers of local agricultural foods that acts like a virtual wholesale market.*

"FoodHub provides a unique platform across which all segments of Oregon agriculture, small and large, can participate in the same selling opportunity to the many valued customers of our state's food products," says the Oregon Department of Agriculture's Gary Roth, administrator of ODA's Agricultural Development and Marketing Division.

The simplicity of the FoodHub concept masks the behind-the-scenes hard work and resources it took before the brainchild became a reality. It's a work-in-progress. Operational since the fall, the official kickoff of FoodHub will take place on February 1. Meanwhile, individuals and companies with food to sell are signing up to be part of the evolving database, as are those individuals and companies that want to purchase local foods. Could it be the eHarmony of the food world?

"Matchmaking, when it comes to buying and selling food, is something we always strive to do," says ODA Director Katy Coba. "FoodHub is an exciting development that combines Internet technology with the growing interest in accessing locally grown food."

The aim is to come close at being all things to all people in the food world. FoodHub, ideally, will offer something to the small acreage farmer who sells once a week at a farmers' market as well as offer an opportunity to the large volume operator. It is designed to give a local chef a list of ingredient providers as well as provide a large school district or food processor with sources of Northwest-grown products.

So far, FoodHub is getting noticed by a diverse group of interests.

### Food at your fingertips

Typing in food-hub.org on the Internet will take you to more than just a standard, informative Web site. This is where the online marketplace exists, making it easy and efficient for regional food buyers and sellers to find one another, connect, and ultimately do business.

"Imagine being the school food service director at Portland Public Schools, you serve 20,000 meals a day, and you want to localize your supply chain," says Deborah Kane, vice president of Ecotrust's Food & Farm program and key figure in the development of FoodHub. "With FoodHub, you can walk to your computer, type in the word 'potato' and get a list of all the regional potato producers who might be able to meet your volume, price, and delivery needs. Furthermore, you can sort your returns to select only those with Good Agricultural Practices or \$1 million in liability insurance."

Public schools, colleges, hospitals, and grocery stores are among those larger institutional purchasers who are looking to give preference to locally grown food, assuming all other factors are met—cost, quality, quantity, and delivery requirements. Meanwhile, Oregon farmers, ranchers, and fishermen often struggle to find markets for their products. If not a match made in heaven, FoodHub at least provides a great opportunity to bring these buyers and sellers together.

"FoodHub is designed to be a one-stop-shop for the chef who needs six dozen artichokes for a menu special, the baker looking for a local source for flour, or the large institutional

buyer whose purchasing power could significantly stabilize a family farm," says Kane.

In the past, Ecotrust published hard copy annual guides that listed local farms and buyers, but found that it was often obsolete the moment it was printed. Now, real time information is entered and maintained on the Web site.

For an annual membership fee of \$100, those who register with FoodHub complete an online profile that includes all the necessary details that may lead to a transaction. Currently, there are nearly 200 buyers and sellers enrolled and featured on the Web site. The goal is to have as many as a thousand by spring.

### A big boost for the small producer

In the high desert of Eastern Oregon's Harney County, Don McNab and his family raise all natural grassfed and grass finished beef. The operation—known as "Home on the Range Beef"—has been a regular at farmers' markets in Bend and Boise. With FoodHub, the McNabs hope to expand their reach.

"We felt FoodHub would be a good place to spend advertising dollars in the Portland and surrounding areas for the type of product we sell," says McNab. "My goal is to reach more contacts and be able to meet the needs of the larger markets."

Being a small, rural, family-owned beef business, Home on the Range has found it difficult to make the wholesale connection with businesses. Past efforts have focused on reaching the consumer first hand. FoodHub may help change all that.

Grand Central Baking, operating neighborhood cafes in Portland and Seattle, is both buyer and seller. FoodHub provides the company two ways of benefiting. As a buyer, Grand Central can demonstrate its commitment to local foods by sourcing such items as tree fruits, berries, and eggs through the online marketplace. As a seller, they offer artisan bread at a variety of farmers' markets and would like to expand to wholesale as well.

"For us, using FoodHub is a no-brainer," says Piper Davis, cuisine director. "We need a resource to let us know what farmers have what products available at any given time of the year. FoodHub will hopefully increase the variety, quality, and efficiency in our local sourcing."

Grand Central Baking is hoping to overcome previous limitations to finding stable partnerships between supplier and consumer.

"We are always looking for the right fit—producers who have consistent volumes, high quality, and can provide the customer service and support," says Davis. "I definitely think FoodHub will help advance local foods and companies."

Getting more of the larger, institutional buyers and sellers to participate is one of FoodHub's major goals.



Above: Harney County's McNab family—Don and Anna (middle) with sons Tyler and Tate—operate Home on the Range Beef, which is a new member of FoodHub.

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# Board of Agriculture profile: An interview with Ken Bailey

*Note: Following December's quarterly State Board of Agriculture meeting Ken Bailey, orchardist from The Dalles, finished his two terms as a member. The AQ asked Bailey to reflect on his time with the board.*

**Q: How has the Board of Agriculture changed over the eight years you served?**

**A:** When I first started, we were an advisory board to the ODA director, but several of us thought we could and should do much more. We began taking on specific projects in areas of sustainability, certification, water quality and others, and began creating committees to work specific issues. We also went to the Oregon Legislature to gain authority to become a full policy making body and be responsible to report to the legislature and the governor on Oregon agriculture and its important issues. We now have published and presented two bi-annual reports and have formed four standing committees to continue work on important issues.

**Q: How have you changed, if at all, because of your time on the board?**

**A:** I have learned a lot! Members of the Board of Agriculture have very diverse backgrounds and knowledge from which we all have much to gain. I had always respected the Oregon Department of Agriculture and its staff, but getting to know the staff from the inside, they have greatly exceeded my expectations for quality and dedication. Working with such quality board members and staff motivated me to do more and set higher goals, and it has been very satisfying. I am very proud of what the Board of Agriculture has been able to do and that I could play a part in making it happen.

**Q: What has been the most positive development or accomplishment by the board over that time?**

**A:** I would list two major positives as I think they go hand in hand and are dependent on each other. The first is the board's efforts to reach out to others to promote issues important to agriculture. This includes getting more involved with the agricultural industry itself, environmental groups,

business groups, government agencies, the legislature and the governor. Secondly, the change from an advisory to a full policy board reporting to the legislature and governor.



**Q: What are the greatest challenges to the industry that the board might be able to address?**

**A:** We have already begun to address several major issues affecting agriculture. They include

- water and air quality and water quantity issues, which are getting more important with additional demands created by an increasing population and the increasing need for agricultural products.
- land use—as the population increases, so will the demands on land. Conflicts between farm practices and non-farm people living nearby will increase causing higher costs and possible regulation of farm practices.
- marketing/food safety—how we deal with the proliferation of certifications, and the demands to prove our food is safe and meets regulatory standards.
- agricultural chemicals are essential to agricultural production, but increasing concerns of proper use and pollution issues will keep this a major issue.
- labor—its availability and cost will continue to be extremely important. In some cases, exchanging technology and machinery for labor will be a factor but there will always be a great need for a quality labor force in agriculture. Immigration reform (or not) will play an important role in the future of agricultural labor.

**Q: What's your advice to the person who will follow you on the board?**

**A:** There are many well qualified people in agriculture that could follow me, so I do not have any reservations that we will continue to have an excellent Board of Agriculture. My only advice for future members of the board is for them to get actively involved, reach out and work with anyone and everyone that is interested, and most of all, have fun!



## Director's Column

*People know me as an optimist by nature. My preference to try and look on the bright side may be challenged in the new*

*year given that 2009 was a rough economic time for agriculture and some operators have had to get out of the business. Still, my hope for 2010 is that the economy starts turning around much more quickly than most people are predicting. I'm really hopeful that our farmers and ranchers can continue to hang on until the economy improves.*

Commodity prices in general aren't real good, but there are some signs they are beginning to turn around. We've already seen that some efforts are starting to make a difference. One example is the dairy herd buyouts by the industry designed to reduce herd sizes. The federal government is also purchasing surplus dairy products and is making some direct payments to dairy farmers. Milk prices are starting to come back up. Unfortunately, our nursery and grass seed industries are more directly tied to housing and construction, and we aren't seeing that turn around yet. Our great diversity of agriculture means some commodities are faring better than others, but most are struggling.

Having said all that, this industry is just incredible. We have multiple century farms and ranches in this state. We have 150 year-old farms and ranches as well. These are families who know how to survive through very difficult circumstances

until they can enjoy the good times. I hope we've survived the hardest part and are about to enjoy the good times again.

As I look ahead to the new year, there are some key issues that will undoubtedly be important to agriculture. The one thing that no one in the industry can overlook is the fact it's a gubernatorial election year. Governor Kulongoski will have finished two terms in office by the end of the year and we're going to elect a new governor in 2010. Certainly the industry is tuned in to that. I would expect that agriculture could possibly play a more prominent role than it has in more recent gubernatorial campaigns because of the growing interest in agriculture. Oregonians want to support local food production, they have concerns around food security, and they have concerns around food safety. I would hope to see agriculture play a more prominent role in the political campaigns and what the candidates discuss.

I believe I know more about the industry and understand the industry better now than I did seven years ago when I first walked into the office of ODA director. I think we in the agency have been fulfilling our mission very well in the time I have been on the job. We have a great staff and an excellent connection with the variety of constituent groups we serve, which is not always an easy task since there is often a diversity of opinion on many issues. The other thing about my job, there is still never a dull moment. This industry is so dynamic and so diverse, and there is always something new coming at us. I can't sit here and pretend to tell you what will be those new challenging or opportunistic issues for 2010, but I know there will be some. In hindsight, a year from now, I'll be able to tell you what they were. But it's an exciting time and it continues to be a real honor for me to be the director of the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

**Another pathway for high volume buyers**

The majority of FoodHub's current membership consists of the smaller volume folks. But not exclusively. The question asked by some larger companies may be, what's in it for me?

ODA's Gary Roth answers the question with another question.

"Why wouldn't a large supplier want to be involved with FoodHub? When a company like Food Services of America (FSA) is a strong supporter of this program, that tells you that the objective of FoodHub is not just to sell small, individualized lots into specialized markets. The intent is to also make known large quantities of Oregon food products for volume purchases."

In November, FSA made all of its Oregon restaurant and K-12 school customers an offer they hope can't be refused. As an incentive to join FoodHub, FSA agreed to underwrite 20 percent of the cost of the annual membership. While saving \$20 may not seem like a windfall, FSA believes it may help FoodHub add to its list of buyers.

"FSA has always supported local farms and suppliers, and regularly stocks a great variety of seasonal offerings," says Jim Reynolds, vice president of marketing. "Through FoodHub, our restaurant customers will be able to keep a direct tab on what is in season, and find information on their source so they can market them effectively on the menus. By providing a year-round supply of perishable products, FSA is best able to efficiently distribute local products in season, and out-of-area product when local becomes unavailable."

FSA shares the same vision as the much smaller Grand Central Baking when it comes to seeing FoodHub successfully advancing local foods and companies.

"Most definitely," says Reynolds. "As a Northwest company, Food Services of America is directly tied to the long term health of our region, both economic and ecological. It's in all of our best interests to support a vibrant and healthy atmosphere for supplying the needs of our dining community."

Now in its fourth decade of operation, Truitt Brothers, Inc. of Salem has earned a reputation for being a leading processor of shelf stable foods, from soups and entrees to fruits and vegetables. With products distributed through FSA and Sysco, a wide range of customers count on the food processed by Truitt. One of the sizeable sellers in the FoodHub database, the company didn't need much convincing to join.

"The simple and appealing concept of linking buyers and sellers via this platform is so patently obvious, it makes one wonder why it hasn't been done before?" says Peter Truitt. "I truly believe our participation and leadership in this compelling concept will absolutely result in more business opportunities."

As you look at the list of FoodHub subscribers to date, there are many quaint and relatively unknown company names. However, there are plenty of recognizable ones as well. The roster of buyers includes Portland, Beaverton, Salem, and Bend-LaPine school districts, Oregon Health Science University, Providence Medical Center, Burgerville, Safeway, and New Seasons. On the seller side, there are Bob's Red Mill, Columbia Farms, Country Natural Beef, and Rogue Creamery.



*Above left: Truitt Brothers of Salem is one of the larger "sellers" now part of FoodHub. The processor is hoping to find some new buyers for their wide range of products.*

*Below left: A typical page found on the FoodHub Web site, designed to match buyers and sellers of locally-grown food.*



**All on the same (Web) page**

The list of FoodHub supporting cast members is as impressive as the members themselves. With momentum and support from a variety of partners, including the Oregon Department of Agriculture, the online marketplace is now up and running.

"It had been a goal of ours to create a Web based tool that would allow for buyer and seller to become aware of one another and exchange information," says ODA's Roth. "In the early stages of pursuing this goal, we learned that Ecotrust was pursuing a similar objective. After lengthy discussions, we determined that partnering with them on the FoodHub tool was cost effective, efficient, and avoided duplication of effort and resources."

ODA has helped secure federal funds for the effort. The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) has also contributed, helping to make FoodHub a truly regional tool. Other supporters and collaborators have joined along the way.

The system is available to food buyers and sellers of all types in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, California, and Alaska. If FoodHub takes off the way everyone hopes, it could become a vehicle for the entire western US. It's a lofty goal but one that many people feel is worth pursuing.

**Look for FoodHub representatives at the following events around the state in February:**

- February 1 - Local Connections, Canby
- February 8 - East-Central Oregon Farmer-Chef Connection, Hermiston
- February 9 - InFARMation, Portland
- February 22 - Food Connection Conference, Ashland
- February 26 - Oregon Farmers Market Association Annual Meeting, Corvallis
- February 27 - OSU Small Farms Conference, Corvallis

**Next round of specialty crop project funding underway**

*The Oregon Department of Agriculture is now accepting grant proposals for project funding as part of a federal program for specialty crops. Approximately \$1 million is available to agriculture industry associations, producer groups, commodity commissions, and local government agencies in Oregon. ODA is requesting one to two-page concept papers from applicants describing their proposed projects. Concept papers are due by 5:00 p.m., Tuesday, February 16, 2010.*

The federal funds are part of the US Department of Agriculture's Specialty Crop Block Grant Program and authorized by the 2008 Farm Bill. Specialty crops are defined as commonly recognized fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, and nursery crops. Oregon ranks fifth in the nation in production of specialty crops.

An advisory board of industry representatives will evaluate concept papers and select the top ranked applicants by March 15, 2010. Successful applicants will then be asked to submit full proposals by April 30 for further review. Projects chosen to receive funding will be announced by October or November of 2010.

Concept papers can be submitted online and must be received by February 16, 2010 by 5:00 p.m. Pacific Daylight Time to be considered for funding.

Directions on submitting concept papers and other information is available at <[http://oregon.gov/ODA/grants\\_spec\\_crops.shtml](http://oregon.gov/ODA/grants_spec_crops.shtml)> or by contacting ODA's Agricultural Development and Marketing Division at 503-872-6600.

**ODA hires new Farm-to-School manager**

*Michelle Markensteyn Ratcliffe has 16 years of experience*

*working with diverse sectors of the food system, including agricultural operations, and most recently was the Farm-to-School Director for Ecotrust. She will work with farmers, food processors, distributors, and school district food service staff as well as existing farm-to-school groups to help get more nutritious, locally-produced foods into Oregon schools.*



Right: Leif Benson, executive chef for Oregon's Timberline Lodge and member of the Oregon Potato Commission, demonstrates how to use Oregon fingerling potatoes during cooking demonstration for Philippine chefs and food services operators in Manila

Below: Happy Hong Kong shoppers were eager to snap up two-pound bags of fresh fingerling potatoes from Oregon during a recent in-store promotion and bi-state trade mission to Asia.

## Northwest spuds highlight joint trade mission between Oregon and Washington

*In the end, the achievement was no small potatoes. But the centerpiece of a 10-day November trade mission to Asia by the Oregon Department of Agriculture and its State of Washington counterpart was, literally, small potatoes. Toting two-pound bags of fresh, multi-colored specialty spuds and featuring a notable Oregon chef to perform in-store cooking demonstrations, an 18-member delegation of government and industry made a good impression on buyers in Taiwan, the Philippines, and Hong Kong. The results lay the foundation for future collaborative trade missions between two states that have a lot in common.*

"This was a very exciting trade mission for us and a first of its kind," says ODA Director Katy Coba. "Never before have the agriculture directors of Oregon and Washington alone traveled together to lead a delegation to Asia. We believe having the two states in tandem gives us that much more of a presence. We can both talk about Pacific Northwest agriculture. So much of the agriculture in both states is similar. We are just basically separated by a big river—the Columbia."

Coba's counterpart to the north is in full agreement.

"With our high quality food products and a weaker US dollar, agriculture exports are going to help lead us out of this recession," says Director Dan Newhouse. "This mission will help open and expand international markets to benefit individual growers and economic growth in our region. Here in the Pacific Northwest, we have great working relationships across state lines. As neighbors and partners, our two agencies are doing more together for farmers in our states than we could do alone."

Along for more than just the ride were key marketing staff members from the two agencies, members of both the Oregon and Washington Potato commissions, and the president of the Oregon Wheat Growers League. Leif Benson, who serves as Timberline Lodge's executive chef and is the public member of the Oregon Potato Commission, performed his specialty before

representatives of restaurants, wholesalers, and retailers. Using fingerling potatoes from the Klamath Basin, Chef Benson showed customers of Hong Kong's Park n' Shop supermarkets what's so great about Northwest potatoes. Customers were impressed and it wasn't long before the two-pound bags of specialty spuds were sold—each ending up in a shopping cart and bound for home at \$6 a pound. That's the kind of lucrative potential Asian markets offer.

"We saw retail markets that were wanting to find potatoes," says Coba. "A couple of the stores we visited didn't have any. A few had some small russets from Australia and the US that, frankly, didn't look very good. With the help of the cooking demonstrations, consumers came in and grabbed the bags right and left. They know about French fries and potato chips, but not so much about fresh potatoes. The potato growers who were part of our delegation came back from the trip very positive about the potential for additional sales."



In fact, growers are excited enough to begin thinking about planting additional acreage of fingerling potatoes with the idea of supplying more to the three Asian nations.

The discussion involved all kinds of potato products from Oregon and Washington, as potential buyers lined up for French fries and chipping stock for potato chips.

"The surprising market is the Philippines," says ODA Assistant Director Dalton Hobbs. "We found an extremely receptive marketplace. Jollibee Foods Corporation, headquartered in the Philippines, is the single largest buyer of exported French fries out of the Port of Portland. They operate a McDonald's-like restaurant chain and are a significant consumer of our potatoes. So this was a good opportunity to go over there and actually say thank you for their business."

Hong Kong is now the fourth largest export destination for agricultural products from the US, surpassed only by Japan, Canada, and Mexico. More product goes into Hong Kong than all of China, but much of it is re-exported into China. Truly a gateway to the world's largest country, Hong Kong is a key market for Oregon and Washington trade officials.

"It's actually cheaper for southern China to have our potatoes shipped to Hong Kong and then delivered than it is to have potatoes grown in northern China and shipped by land," says Hobbs. "Along with Australian production, we can provide a year around supply to southern China."

That will become increasingly exciting as Asian consumers expand from a rice and noodle diet to include potatoes.

"In Taiwan, there is an emerging creative class driven by educated people," says Hobbs. "These are the ones who are buying our wines and the same people who are interested in western foods. We are targeting that group. In the Philippines, the cuisine is already very western with many of the entrees being very familiar to US consumers. And in Hong Kong, there is considerable western influence. For both food service and at-home preparation, there is an excellent opportunity for fresh potatoes."


The trade delegation is also hoping the potatoes cause a coattail effect.

"The conversation didn't stop at potatoes," says Jim Cramer, administrator of ODA's Commodity Inspection Division. "We were able to talk about other Oregon commodities such as hazelnuts and blueberries."

There was also a discussion on the potential of wheat from the Pacific Northwest for specialty breads and using ingredients like Oregon or Washington fruits and nuts as part of the bakery item.

The struggling economy at home places more importance on these overseas trade missions at this time, according to ODA Director Coba.

"Oregon agriculture is so dependent on what I call the three-legged stool of local markets, domestic markets, and international markets. We've been very active in all three areas. But when we see the domestic or local market in a downturn like this for many of our commodities, we need to take advantage of that third leg of the stool—the export market. Providing international market opportunities for our producers can help keep them healthy enough to get through this economic cycle, and that's a very good thing."

As with all ODA-organized agricultural trade missions, a final assessment of success may not be possible for a while. The real and lasting value of the trip—including additional sales—may not be known for months, if not years. But having two states send their agriculture directors, marketing staff, and key industry folks should pay off in both the short term and the long run. 



# Add organic certification to list of ODA services

*The Oregon Department of Agriculture is now offering organic certification. The US Department of Agriculture announced this fall that ODA has become an accredited certifying agent for the National Organic Program (NOP). ODA inspectors will assess organic production and handling operations to certify they meet USDA standards. Oregon becomes the 16th state to offer certification under NOP, joining its neighbors Washington and Idaho.*

“We believe our entire program of certification services has great integrity,” says ODA Director Katy Coba. “We have good people who are well trained. Along with other organic certifiers in the state, we look forward to ensuring that high quality services are available to Oregon’s organic producers.”

Now that ODA is ready to perform audits for the organic program, those interested in certification can apply anytime before the deadline of April 1, 2010 to be on the inspection schedule through the year. Producers and handlers will need to apply to ODA every year for certification. More details of the program can be found at [oregon.gov/ODA/CID/organic.shtml](http://oregon.gov/ODA/CID/organic.shtml).

“For several years, we’ve had requests to provide organic certification as we perform other inspections to meet our customers’ needs,” says Jim Cramer, administrator of ODA’s Commodity Inspection Division (CID). “This is a natural fit for our program because we currently conduct a range of fee-for-service inspections. Our analysis indicates there are a number of growers and handlers that would like ODA to provide NOP certification during the course of other inspection work we conduct.”

Six ODA employees are trained and qualified to conduct organic audits. These individuals will add organic certification to the many other tasks they perform for Oregon agriculture. Inspectors will be located in all ODA district offices across the state to offer regional expertise and close proximity.

ODA has a rich history of providing certification. Over the years, billions of pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables have been certified through inspection at the shipping point. From fresh potatoes to hazelnuts to a variety of berries, ODA inspectors certify that products meet the grade or contract requirements as agreed upon by the grower and the


processor. Longstanding ODA certification efforts include nursery and Christmas tree inspection, and weights and measures inspection. In 2002, CID began offering a Good Agricultural Practices/Good Handling Practices (GAP/GHP) certification program for fresh fruits and vegetables that ensures steps to reduce microbial contamination. Oregon was the first state to implement such a program. ODA has long provided certification that potatoes are free of A2 late blight—the disease associated with the Irish potato famine. Other “in the field” services offered by ODA include identity preserved certification that assures the product is what the grower or handler says it is.

The adoption of an organic certification program has more to do with efficiency and need than wanting to tread on someone else’s turf.

“It’s not to take away from Oregon Tilth or any of the other organic certifiers currently operating in the state,” says Director Coba. “But if we have a grower come to us asking for an audit on whether they meet the organic standards, and we are already on the property performing a GAP/GHP audit, for example, we want to be able to respond. If it’s a government standard, there is no question we can perform that audit function. It will still be the choice of the grower or processor. They don’t have to use ODA’s organic certification services. But if they ask for us and are willing to pay the fee for service, we can conduct the audit.”

Adding organic certification to the mix provides growers and handlers with something like a one-stop shop, with the ODA inspector doing the stopping at the farm or handling facility.

The agency will focus on crops in the first year and will not conduct organic livestock certification, such as organic dairies, or certify organic wild crops, such as wild mushrooms.

Organic production still represents a small percentage of overall agricultural production in Oregon, but it continues to grow. According to the latest US Census of Agriculture—which is done every five years—organic production sales in Oregon increased nearly 900 percent, from about \$9.9 million in 2002 to \$88 million in 2007. More than 92,000 acres are now planted for organic production. With demand and supply of organic agriculture both expected to increase in the future, ODA is ready to help. 



*ODA has joined Oregon Tilth and others who are able to certify agricultural products as organic.*

## Cultivating common ground

*The Agri-Business Council of Oregon’s Keeping Ag Viable Committee is launching an aggressive awareness campaign designed to develop a dialogue between urban and rural. The aim is to create areas of mutual interest, understanding, and appreciation between those who are in agriculture and those who aren’t. Initially showcased during the annual Denim & Diamonds gala in November, the Cultivating Common Ground campaign strives to build a relationship with the people who use the food and fiber being produced by farmers and ranchers.*

“We have conducted extensive research to identify current perceptions about Oregon agriculture,” says Margaret Magruder, owner of Magruder Farms and the current chair of ABC’s Keeping Ag Viable Committee. “It is clear that Oregonians have a favorable opinion of local agriculture, but they do have concerns about some of our practices. As producers, it’s our responsibility to engage them about these practices so they have a better understanding. We simply can’t allow these misperceptions to fester.”

Campaign organizers hope to raise \$500,000 to fully implement the initial campaign. However, aspects of the campaign will be launched as certain fundraising goals are met. When fully implemented, the campaign will consist of an extensive public relations effort using social media, guerrilla marketing and a new Web site. Traditional public relations such as radio and print advertising will also be prominent.

“We’re not going to wait until we’ve reached our final goals to launch this campaign,” Magruder says. “We are building a structured campaign that will allow us to start educating the public early in the process.”


Success of the campaign, which will initially focus on water quality, water quantity, and pesticide application practices, may hinge on the industry’s ability to organize as one entity.

The strength of Oregon agriculture is our diversity, but it’s also our weakness,” says Geoff Horning, executive director of the Agri-Business Council of Oregon. “We get so busy with our own set of challenges that we fail to look at the big picture of Oregon agriculture. We can do so much more together than individually. Imagine the relationships we could build with urban Oregonians if we simply came together and told the same story. There really is little difference between the cattle rancher in Jordan Valley and the row crop farmer in the Willamette Valley.”

Initial fundraising efforts have focused on partnership development with industry associations, but the campaign is looking toward the private sector for support.

“It’s important that we start getting the support of private industry,” Horning says. “We understand that the economic climate makes it difficult for anybody to give, but for this campaign to be successful it’s critical that we work together. The environmental community will continue their efforts, and waiting until the economic climate is more favorable is not an option. We have a call to action, and we need both economic and intellectual support.”

The Cultivating Common Ground campaign is managed by the Agri-Business Education Corporation, a 501 (c) (3) charitable corporation. Any contribution to the Cultivating Common Ground campaign is likely to be 100 percent tax deductible.

In addition, the Agri-Business Council of Oregon is preparing two fundraisers in 2010 that will help facilitate the campaign. The first is a golf tournament that will be held in August, and the second is the annual Denim & Diamonds gala held in November. For more information on the campaign and its fundraising efforts contact the Agri-Business Council of Oregon at 503-595-9121. 

The OCF&R management committee reviews applications for the new program coordinator. From left, clockwise: Larry Landis, Kimberly Dunn, Richard Engeman, Chair Kyle Janssen, Madeline MacGregor, Dale Buck, and Dave Dillon. Not pictured: Glenn and Judith Mason, Cheryl Gribskov, Don Schellenberg, and Janice Reed.



## Will the real OCF&R management committee please stand up?

*For many farming and ranching families within our state, the Oregon Century Farm & Ranch Program is synonymous with sustainability—always there to make certain that the status of “family owned and operated,” remains for another 100 years. But for those outside the loop, programs are meaningless unless you know the people driving the mission forward.*

The OCF&R Program has been coordinated by husband and wife team Glenn and Judith Mason for the past six years. The couple has extensive backgrounds in archival management and museum curatorship. Their commitment to OCF&R is a story which most members of the management team find difficult to rewrite or replace: working long hours; contributing time and materials; guiding members of the management team in community outreach and monthly meetings; and making sure that Oregon’s farming and ranching families come first. The Masons will be tough to replace, but have decided to retire from the program. Glenn and Judith’s love of old photos and documents—many of which illustrate the history of Oregon agriculture—follow them into their business, Cultural Images. The management committee is now in the process of hiring their replacement.

Janice Reed, Director of the Oregon Agricultural Education Foundation (OAEF) for the last three years, works from her office located at the Oregon Farm Bureau (OFB) in Salem. Reed grew up on a 130-year old farm that is still occupied by her 90-year old parents and farmed by a younger sibling. “We recognize the many generations of farmers and ranchers whose challenges and struggles have helped build Oregon’s strong agricultural heritage and our state’s economic well-being,” stresses Reed. And without Reed’s contribution, the OCF&R program would not exist. OAEF is the umbrella for its partner non-profit programs, of which OCF&R is one. “We also manage the Summer Ag Institutes and the OFB Memorial Scholarships,” says Reed.

Program Chair Kyle Janssen, has been involved with OCF&R since 2001. He is employed by the Oregon Heritage Commission to coordinate its statewide activities related to heritage and history. Janssen grew up in eastern Washington where his father (a farmer’s son) taught veterinary medicine. Janssen’s grandfather operated farms, ranches, and miscellaneous agribusinesses in the Midwest. With a lifelong interest in agricultural history, Janssen developed the farm and ranch history guides that are available on the ODA Web site.

Vice Chair Richard H. Engeman is an archivist and Pacific Northwest historian. He was the ideal choice to write *Eating It Up in Eden: the Oregon Century Farm & Ranch Cookbook*, a fundraising project featuring recipes from OCF&R honorees. In 1902, his father’s family founded a farm in Silverton and his sister still maintains the family home. He is also the author of *The Oregon Companion: An Historical Gazetteer of the Useful, the Curious, and the Arcane*, which includes information about Oregon’s agricultural history.

Committee member Kimberly Dunn lives on a farm that has been in her family since 1852. At an early age she dove into the local history of her ancestors and studied adjacent donation land claims surrounding her farm. Dunn is employed by the State Historic Preservation Office as their grants coordinator. Kim values her participation on the OCF&R board because “I am able to bring the heritage and history of farming into the public’s awareness.”

Dave Dillon may wear the big hat of executive vice president at the Oregon Farm Bureau and represents the OCF&R team passionately. “Families that have weathered world wars and depressions and almost unbelievable changes in society, economy, and the world around us with these remarkable 100

and 150-year old operations bring a whole new perspective to the meaning ‘sustainable.’ When you think about building something with your own blood and sweat and ingenuity that will last and sustain a family over the generations, and to have each successive generation do its part to build and survive—it’s truly a staggering accomplishment.”


Dale Buck is an appointee to the Oregon Agricultural Education Foundation and longtime OCF&R managing member. Buck also serves as an Oregon Farm Bureau director for Clatsop and Tillamook Counties. He sits on many other boards and committees that support Oregon agriculture. Dale and his wife Jackie are retired from their Tillamook County dairy farm. He now relishes time spent working in their flower and vegetable garden. Buck appreciates the educational value of the OCF&R program and the way it brings history to life.

Larry Landis is employed by Oregon State University as university archivist. He also owns and manages a small commercial orchard south of Corvallis and is involved with historic preservation within Corvallis and Benton County. Landis has been part of the OCF&R management committee since 2005. “It is an exciting program that is a unique intersection of many of my interests, including history and archives, agriculture (especially family farms), and historic preservation,” Landis states. “The OCF&R program has afforded me the opportunity to learn more about Oregon’s wonderful agricultural heritage.”

Madeline MacGregor has been the Oregon Department of Agriculture liaison to OCF&R for the last four years. “Like many Americans, my ancestors on both sides were Midwest farmers and fiber mill operators who lost their businesses during the Great Depression. I experienced that same anguish when I was forced to sell my small farm 35-years ago.” MacGregor is committed to seeing that Oregon’s diverse farming families do not suffer the same outcome. “The OCF&R Program helps ensure that all of Oregon’s agricultural sector survives,” says MacGregor. “Oregon’s century farms and ranches are treasures, and those of us on the management team are incredibly lucky to work on their behalf.”

On board since last summer, Cheryl Gribskov is chief executive officer of the Oregon Travel Information Council. Gribskov says, “We are pleased to partner with the OCF&R Program. Our organization places high value on Oregon’s heritage assets. The program is a natural fit for us. It is vital that we create awareness and preserve these unique features in our state because they make Oregon such a special place to live and do business.” Gribskov has firsthand experience; the Gribskov Century Farm is located in Lane County.

After 28 years of service, Don Schellenberg may be retired from the Oregon Farm Bureau, but he is not retiring from the OCF&R management team. Raised on a farm in Dallas, Schellenberg first joined the OFB 40 years ago. He followed in his father’s footsteps by serving as the Polk County Farm Bureau president for several terms during the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s. Over the decades, Schellenberg was recognized by his county farm bureau twice for his work as a volunteer leader and later for his overall service to the industry. Even though he and his wife are now “snowbirds” with a home in sunny Arizona, Schellenberg still tends a family prune orchard in Dallas and attends the OCF&R committee meetings.

OCF&R program management members are volunteers. The team meets monthly to map out ways to support and raise funds for the program and to help keep Oregon’s family-owned and operated farms in the public eye. Applications for both sesquicentennial and century awards are reviewed by the management team—and if any gaps exist that might prevent a family from receiving an award, every attempt is made to correct or amend an individual application. The team works diligently to provide an annual ceremony for the award families at the Oregon State Fair—and has done so since 1958. For the OCF&R management committee, the summer of 2010 will usher in the latest crop of applicants for all to celebrate. 

# Solar and geothermal water heating reaches a new scale at Blooming Nursery

By Stephanie Page

*Until recently, solar and geothermal water heating examples in agriculture were limited to fairly small-scale systems. However, a new project may encourage larger-scale systems in the future. Blooming Nursery, a diverse nursery operation in Cornelius, has just installed a combination solar and geothermal water heating system that will provide hot water to heat one of the nursery greenhouses.*

In addition to its unusual size, the project also involves a unique combination of three well-established heating technologies: solar water heating, ground-source (geothermal) heat pumps, and in-floor greenhouse heating. Stand-alone solar water heating systems and ground-source heat pumps are common in homes and are becoming more popular in industrial applications. It's also not unusual for a nursery to heat greenhouses with an in-floor or under-bench system using tubing filled with hot water, but the water is normally heated with a propane or natural gas fueled boiler.

Nursery owner and founder Grace Dinsdale decided to try the unique combination of technologies because it helped meet her natural resource goals for the nursery. "I chose solar thermal heating over natural gas boilers for this project because it's consistent with our nursery's goals of using renewable technologies to supply part of our energy needs," she explains. "Additionally, we want to be as responsible as possible, in terms of decreasing our carbon footprint. The nursery industry is environmentally on the "green" side of things, considering our product actively functions to process CO2 emissions. If we are able to do more in terms of reducing our use of fossil fuels to further reduce our own emissions, we want to do that."

Dinsdale partnered with Portland firm Ra Energy, LLC. to install the solar water heating system at the nursery this fall. The system includes solar collectors mounted along the nursery entrance road which contain copper pipes filled with a glycol solution. The sun heats the glycol solution, which cycles to a heat exchanger and transfers heat to water. The hot water is stored in a large, in-ground concrete tank. Since the bulk of the water heating will occur during the summer, the tank is very well insulated to keep the water hot into the winter, when the nursery will consume the heat in the greenhouse.

In addition, the heating system includes ground-source heat pumps that will generate hot water even when the solar resource dwindles in the winter. During the winter, hot water from the tank will flow to the greenhouse into a series of tubes in the floor, providing heat to plant roots.

Energy efficiency and other natural resource conservation efforts have been a priority for Grace Dinsdale since she started the nursery 28 years ago. The nursery has completed a variety of energy efficiency projects including installing variable speed drives on its irrigation pumps and ventilating greenhouses through vents, rather than exhaust fans. Most of the greenhouses at the nursery are heated with highly efficient in-floor heating systems.

However, one greenhouse was heated with forced-air heaters, a much less efficient type of heating system. "This was the only greenhouse range where we still used a forced air heating system and hadn't yet installed a more efficient heat delivery system," explains Grace Dinsdale. "It was the least

efficient greenhouse in the nursery. The house is also not the tightest house we have, so significant heat loss occurs through the roofs of that range. In addition, in certain de-humidifying cycles, the roof opens and much of the warmed air is vacated. The new hydronic delivery system will place the heat closer to the plant canopy as opposed to the roof, allowing greater control of the humidity in the range without as much heat loss."


Dinsdale decided to go forward converting the greenhouse heating system to in-floor heat, using solar and geothermal energy to heat the water in the in-floor tubing. Since the system started up in December, the water will not have had the chance to heat from a summer's worth of sunshine, but should produce a little energy this winter and more this spring. "Over a typical year, the system should produce over 15,000 Therms of solar thermal energy and with the long term storage system, cover the greenhouse demand well into December each year," says Randy Stevens with Ra Energy LLC. "The engineers project that the combination of solar thermal and heat pump technologies will offset all natural gas usage in the 2010-11 winter season."

"Energy costs are a significant part of our production costs," explains Grace Dinsdale. "To the extent we are able to control our costs by investing in renewable systems, we gain valuable control of our input costs."

While the up-front cost of the project was significantly higher than a more conventional natural gas or propane fueled boiler, incentives such as Oregon's Business Energy Tax Credit (BETC) helped make the project pencil out. The credit for renewable energy projects is 50% of project costs, taken at 10% a year over a 5-year period. If the project owner does not have the tax liability to use the credit, they may "pass it through" to another entity with a tax liability in exchange for a tax payment.

"We would not have been able to go forward on this project were it not for the BETC," asserts Grace Dinsdale. "The infrastructure required is quite expensive, and the return on investment would have been too long term to make the project economically viable without the support of the tax credit."

Rob Del Mar, energy policy analyst with Oregon Department of Energy, worked closely with the nursery and their solar contractor, Ra Energy, to help the nursery receive a Business Energy Tax Credit for the project. Del Mar believes there are several types of hot water needs in agriculture that could be served with solar hot water heating or a combination of technologies.

"Part of what makes this system so interesting is the combination of the solar thermal process and the heat pumps," Del Mar says. "The solar side of the system will operate more efficiently because of the heat pumps and the heat pumps will operate more efficiently because of the solar. This is an important demonstration project for Oregon." 



*Above: A truck hoists solar collectors onto racks at Blooming Nursery in December.*

*Below center: Workers install insulation and tubing around the hot water storage tank at Blooming Nursery.*

## ODA hires new Measurement Standards Division administrator



*Jason Barber comes to ODA with 21 years of experience in state government, most recently with the Oregon Youth Authority and the Oregon Department of Justice's Crime Victims Assistance Section. He now oversees a division responsible for assuring consumers that the weight or measure of food and nonfood products, services, or commodities purchased in Oregon is accurate.*





# Announcements

## Harvesting Clean Energy Conference

February 7-9, 2010  
 Kennewick, Washington

The conference focuses on renewable energy opportunities for agricultural producers and rural communities in the Pacific Northwest. For more information, visit the conference Web site at <http://harvestcleanenergy.org/conference>

## Oregon State Weed Board Meeting

February 18 and 19, 2010, 8:30-4 p.m.  
 Agriculture Building, Hearings Room  
 635 Capitol St. NE, Salem  
 Contact Jo Davis 503-986-4621  
 E-mail: [jdavis@oda.state.or.us](mailto:jdavis@oda.state.or.us)

## Progress Awards Dinner

March 16, 2010  
 Oregon Garden, Silverton  
 Web: <http://oregon.gov/ODA/ap.shtml>

## Oregon AgFest

April 24 & 25  
 Oregon State Fairgrounds  
 Salem  
 Web: <http://oragfest.com>

## Save a tree

Get the AQ online. Register at <http://listsmart.osl.state.or.us/mailman/listinfo/aq>



This year's Ag Progress artwork features 2009-10 Ag in the Classroom Calendar Contest Honorable Mention winners  
 Post card art (above) by Dylan B., Grade 3 West Valley Academy, Sheridan.

## Office closure

Due to state budget cuts, the Oregon Department of Agriculture will be closed on the following days. Thank you for your patience.

- Friday, March 19, 2010
- Friday, April 16, 2010
- Friday, June 18, 2010
- Friday, August 20, 2010
- Friday, September 17, 2010
- Friday, November 26, 2010
- Friday, March 18, 2011
- Friday, May 20, 2011

View the full list of closed agencies online: [http://oregon.gov/furlough\\_closures.shtml](http://oregon.gov/furlough_closures.shtml)

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## Oregon Agripedia now available

*The 2009 edition of the Oregon Agripedia combines the information of the Oregon Agricultural Statistics Bulletin, the Oregon Farmer's Handbook, and the Oregon Agricultural Resources Directory into one handy reference for Oregon agriculture facts, laws, and resources.*

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