

# IT'S THE CLIMATE



6/1/12

Looking at Food Security in Josephine  
County

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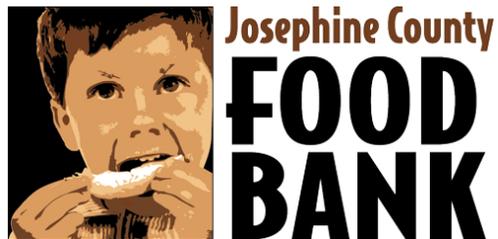
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We would like to thank all of those many people in Josephine County who graciously gave of their time, knowledge, and experience over the past year. This work would have been impossible without their support and engagement. Thank you.

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## FOREWORD

When the first settlers came to Oregon they were amazed by the rich soil, abundant water supply and even the islands of productivity in Oregon's deserts. They were thrilled with the crops, fruits and berries they were able to raise, the rich pastureland as well as the streams teeming with fish and the bounty of wild game available to feed a growing population. It would have been impossible for them to believe that anyone could be hungry or food insecure in this land of plenty. It is incredible that hunger and food insecurity abound in Oregon nearly two centuries later. In fact, many of the areas that seemed so bountiful to those early settlers have the least access to food today.

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

Sharon Thornberry

Community Resource Developer

Oregon Food Bank

## A GLIMPSE INTO OUR PAST

From the Grants Pass Daily Courier, 1909

*Grants Pass: The Center of the Great Rogue Valley Farming District*

### *MARKET FOR EVERYTHING – GOOD FARMERS ARE MUCH IN DEMAND*

There are many specialties in farming which can be carried on around Grants Pass. The one great business, of course, is the planting of orchards or vineyards, but if you prefer to raise alfalfa you can cut two tons to the acre and raise not less than three crops and often four per season, and this can be sold in the market at Grants Pass at from \$17 to \$22 a ton.

If you don't like making a specialty in alfalfa, raise grain, which has been sold in Grants Pass at \$.02 per pound during the past twelve months and often a \$.02 ½ per pound. This grain was shipped in because of a lack of farmers to produce it.

Again, if you would like to undertake farming on a larger scale, add potatoes, beets, carrots, onions, and you can secure a cash crop at all times in the local market. Your income in every instance will be in proportion to your enterprise, your ability and your knowledge of farming.

If you would like something on the side, you can add dairying and you will find plenty of customers who will be glad to pay you \$.30 a pound for your butter.

If you are a farmer, of course you will raise more or less poultry. Eggs can be sold eight months a year at from 20 to 40 cents per dozen and chickens from 15 to 18 cents a pound.

Remember, all these things can be done on cheap land which can be purchased within a few miles of Grants Pass, one of the great mercantile centers of Southern Oregon.<sup>1</sup>



JOSEPHINE COUNTY CANNERY – BETWEEN 6<sup>TH</sup> AND 7<sup>TH</sup> AND G AND F ST.

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<sup>1</sup> (Hill) 5

<sup>2</sup> Sutton, 6

<sup>3</sup> Sutton, 18

<sup>4</sup> Sutton, 18

<sup>5</sup> USDA Census of Agriculture Josephine County Profile, 2007.

## INTRODUCTION

Vegetables, fruits, grains, legumes, beef, mutton, pork, cheese, milk, eggs, the list is literally endless. If you can think it, people have more than likely eaten it. Food is a truly universal experience. It crosses ethnicities, cultures, socioeconomic levels, and lines on any map. One can have too much or too little food. It unites us, after all everybody eats, but the ways in which we choose or can afford to eat also divide us. As the adage goes, “You are what you eat.”



The last 100 years have seen drastic changes in the way that we interact with this most basic resource. Two hundred years ago, all food was local. People were likely to eat what they grew themselves or within a small radius to where they resided. The connection between farmers and the final consumers of their produce, meat, or dairy products was much closer. Driven by industrialization, conflict, increasing efficiency in transportation, and the rising buying power of individuals, that relationship has been largely lost. The rise of the industrial food system has resulted in an America where any food can be purchased at any time regardless of region or season. People no longer know where their food comes from or even in some cases what ingredients are present therein.

This loss of connection between farm and food, farmer and eater has fundamentally changed the way that we eat. Not only are we less knowledgeable about what food is, we have lost knowledge around gardening, preserving, and cooking as well. Authors have written about these losses and what they mean for our culture. Michael Pollan, Alice Waters, Raj Pater, David Mas Masumoto, and others have brought to light the changes in our food culture by industrial food and the dangers they perceive within our current system. Whether or not you are in agreement with their views or their proscribed solutions, the underlying fact that our ways of eating and farming have changed dramatically over the past 100 or even 50 years is not in question.

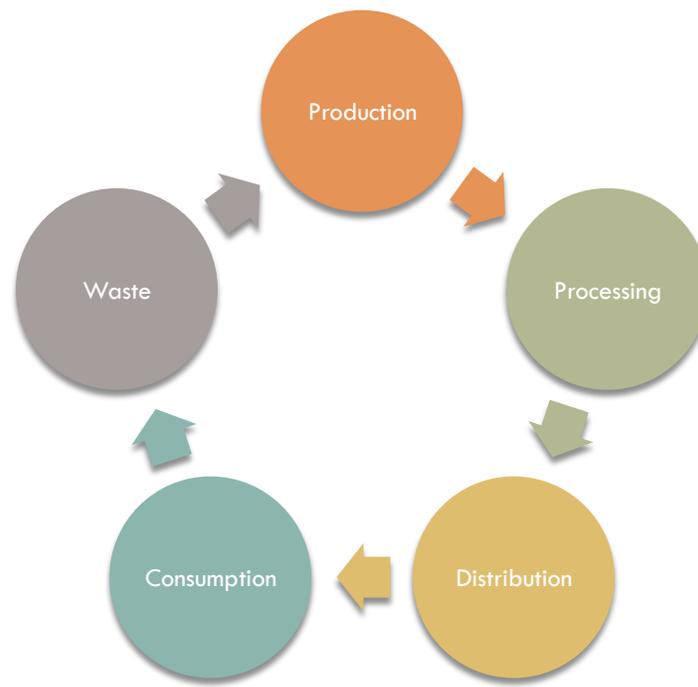
The local system in Josephine County, however, remains and there are steps that we can take to be more knowledgeable and supportive of our local food infrastructures. We tend to associate food with farming and in some ways there is no more fundamental connection to our food than connecting with those who pull it from the ground. But farming is not the only part of a food system. The food system is farmers, but also grocery stores, farmers markets, food pantries, education and support for farmers and ranchers, good land use policies and understandable regulation, co-ops, community and school gardens, and local food in local schools. It is a far more complicated issue than simply waving a new piece of legislation or undoing a burdensome regulation. Like our most complicated problems, the solutions, if there are solutions, are knotty and difficult to find.

This assessment is an attempt to create a baseline of information to begin looking at the problems that face Josephine County and creating our own local food system. Some possible conclusions will be drawn, but the primary purpose is to inform and spark in our community the desire to help in the construction of a sustainable local food system that not only improves how we eat, but improves how we live.

## COMMUNITY FOOD ASSESSMENTS AND FOOD SECURITY 101

A community food assessment is a collaborative and participatory process that systematically examines a broad range of community food issues and assets, so as to inform change actions to make the community more food secure. All communities are different and what makes each community food insecure varies, but for that to make sense, a little bit more of an introduction is needed.

A food system can be defined in many ways, but for our purposes, it is defined as the sum of all activities required to make food available to people. A sustainable food system is one in which all of the elements are integrated to enhance environmental, economic, social, and nutritional health for all persons. Ideally, all food systems would be sustainable, however, most systems are works in progress trying to move towards sustainability in one or more areas.



The end point of moving towards a sustainable food system is attaining community food security. According to Mike Hamm and Anne Bellows, community food security is a condition in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice.

This assessment is merely a starting point, a way to bring together information in a visually appealing and easy to understand format to further drive the conversation about our food system and move Josephine County further along the path to having a sustainable community food system and food security for all our residents.

## JOSEPHINE COUNTY

Welcome! You've arrived at a lovely place. The title of this piece, "It's the Climate" is the unofficial motto of Grants Pass, the county seat of Josephine County.

### HISTORY

The history of the county itself began January 22, 1856 when the territorial legislature passed a bill separating Josephine and Jackson counties<sup>2</sup>. In 1885, the Oregon Legislature adjusted the county boundaries between Jackson and Josephine Counties in order to move Grants Pass into Josephine County, to locate a railhead in the county.<sup>3</sup> In June 1886, Grants Pass won a three way race to be named the County Seat of Josephine County where it has remained.<sup>4</sup>

The original draw to the county for many settlers was its mineral wealth, and the main economic activity was mining and the provision of supplies to miners. However, by the time that statehood was granted to Oregon in 1859, gold had been discovered in British Columbia resulting in an exodus of population from the county. The timber and agricultural industries became the main economic drivers of the county although mining continued to play a role.

Josephine County was the last county to be created prior to Oregon's admission to the United States in 1859.

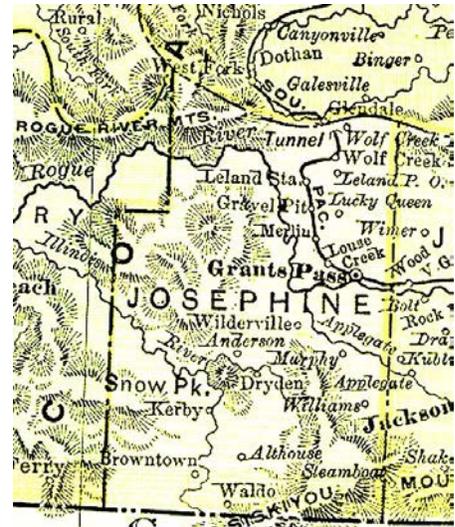
The County takes its name from Josephine Rollins, the first white woman to settle in Southern Oregon.

Although there were several Indians tribes present in the area during the settling of the county, by 1856 following the cessation of hostilities of the Rogue River Wars most of the tribes, excepting a few small bands, were relocated to the Siletz reservation in Polk County.

### GEOGRAPHY

Josephine County is a rural county located in southwestern Oregon. Bordered by Curry, Jackson, and Douglas counties in Oregon, the county also borders Del Norte and Siskiyou Counties in California. The county contains two rivers with the scenic designation: the Rogue and the Illinois, as well as the Applegate River. The county contains the Illinois Valley and shares the Rogue and Applegate Valleys (and Wine Appellation) with Jackson County.

Of the counties 1,639.5 square miles, the Bureau of Land Management owns 28% (mainly in the form of Oregon and California Railroad lands) and the US Forest Service owns 39%. This results in only 33% of county lands being available for taxation, development, and other purposes. There are two incorporated cities, Grants Pass and Cave Junction in the Illinois Valley. The terrain is hilly/mountainous punctuated by small inhabited valleys. There are two rivers with wild and scenic designations, the Rogue and the Illinois, as well as part of the Applegate River.



MAP OF JOSEPHINE COUNTY - 1895 FROM PAM REICH AT [HTTP://WWW.LIVGENMI.COM/1895/OR/COUNTY/JOSEPHINE.HTM](http://www.livgenmi.com/1895/OR/COUNTY/JOSEPHINE.HTM)

<sup>2</sup> Sutton, 6

<sup>3</sup> Sutton, 18

<sup>4</sup> Sutton, 18

## ECONOMICS AND POVERTY

Josephine County is like much of the rural part of the state economically depressed. The unemployment rate is consistently above that of the state of Oregon as well as the national unemployment rate. By some estimates, the county is said to be the second poorest in Oregon. Unemployment rates have not fallen below 10% since before January of 2009. Data from the Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates Map tool indicates that the county has 20.4% of its population living in poverty. This is significantly higher than the 14.3% for Oregon as a whole.

Poverty indicators are worse outside of Grants Pass. While 24.5% of students in District 7, which serves Grants Pass, live in families below the poverty level, 30.6% of children in the rural Three Rivers School District live in families below the poverty level. In the county as a whole, 33.5% of children live in poverty. Conversely 6.8% of the elderly population lives in poverty. Additionally, there is not a single school within the public school system where less than 50% of the students are eligible for the free or reduced lunch program. The median household income is also far below that of Oregon as a whole \$36,626 for Josephine County compared to \$48,325 for the state of Oregon.

The high unemployment and general poverty is largely driven by the collapse of the timber and mining industries over the past 25 years. The migration of living wage jobs have not been replaced by the rise of service based industries and the rising number of health services present in Grants Pass. According to the American Fact Finder, 54.2% of those aged 16 and over are in the workforce. In a county with approximately 83,000 people, only 41,500 are working. According to University of Idaho Northwest Indicators, of those that are working, 53.9% work within the retail, healthcare, or service industries. Forestry, fishing, and mining, the previous economic drivers of the county employ only 2.1% or 872 people within the entirety of Josephine County. Agriculture, which was also a prime driver in the past economy of the county, employs a few more people, 2.7% or 1,121 people.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

According to the 2010 United States Census, 82,713 people call Josephine County home of which 22.3% are retirees or senior citizens. While this is common for Southern Oregon, it is higher than the state in general. Most are not native to the area, coming from out

### “TIMBER PAYMENTS”

The federal government provided payments to counter lost revenues from the non-logging of federal lands (67% of Josephine County).

These O&C or Timber Payments have traditionally funded most of the costs of the Sheriffs Office and provided for rural safety services.

Since the payments ceased in September 2011, the county placed a levy increasing the property tax rate to \$1.99 per \$1,000 in assessed value on the May 2012 ballot. The levy failed to pass, and as a result public safety services are being sharply curtailed throughout the county.

The Oregon Youth Authority facility will be shut down and the county jail will only be able to hold 30 inmates at any given time. Patrols will be drastically reduced and most calls will go unanswered.

This conflict has re-inflamed local land use issues in the county.

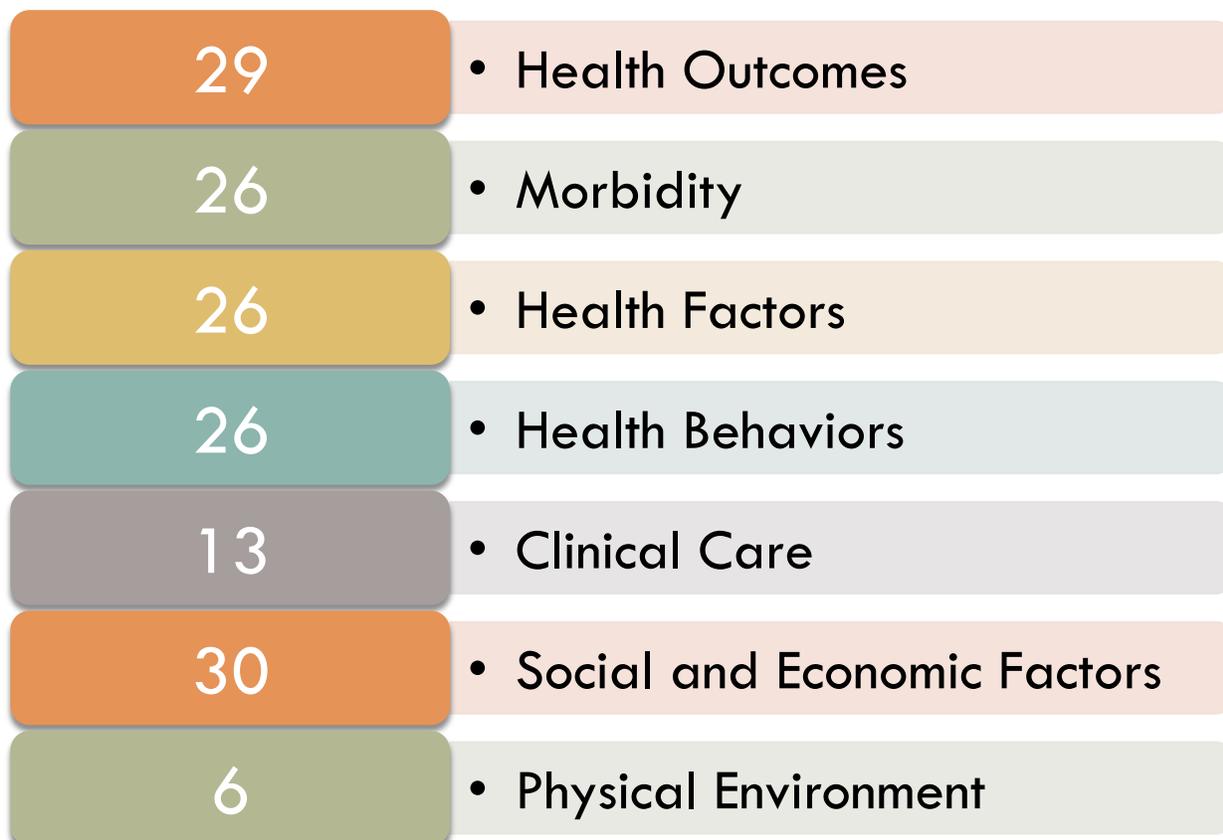
of state to take advantage of the lower cost of living, low property taxes, and the general lower cost of housing. The commonly stated wisdom is that “two out of three people living in Grants Pass are from California”. While the American Community Survey doesn’t support the assertion that they are all from California, it does give legs to the other piece of folk wisdom, 65.1% of people living in Josephine County were born in another state.

Looking around the county, one is also struck by the lack of ethnic diversity. 92.4% of the counties population is white, while 6.3% identifies as Hispanic. This racial homogeneity is not uncommon in Oregon, in fact there are nine counties, which have a higher proportion of people identifying as white. The economic situation in the county is worsened by its strikingly low educational outcomes, especially regarding four-year college and graduate degrees. Of those that are 25 years or older only 10.1% have a bachelors degree and 6.1% have a graduate or professional degree. Even worse, 14.1% of residents lack a high school diploma and 32.1% stopped their education after completing high school.

## HEALTH AND HEALTHCARE

Although the healthcare field is a major player in the local economy, the county itself is not particularly healthy. In fact, out of 33 counties ranked, Josephine County comes in at number 29. The county ranks even worse at 31 when considering the number of premature deaths. In a community where the healthcare field employs 14.8% of the population, it seems unthinkable that 20.4% do not have health insurance.

But health insurance is not the only measure of the health of a county, so thanks to [countyhealthrankings.org](http://countyhealthrankings.org), we have some additional measures and ways to view how we do healthcare in Josephine County. The large numbers are the rankings out of the 33 counties surveyed.



## FEEDING THE HUNGRY – THE EMERGENCY FOOD SYSTEM

So long as there have been people and food, people have been sharing food with others. As the world has grown ever large and more complex, the systems for feeding the hungry have grown as well. In Oregon, most of this system is overseen by local food pantries attached to regional food banks. These regional food banks coordinate with each other and the Oregon Food Bank in Portland to reach as many people who are hungry as possible.

### DEFINING HUNGER

There are many terms that are used to define hunger or the lack of hunger. When this assessment refers to food insecurity or something similar we are using the definitions below. To make the report accessible to as many people as possible, we will use the generic term hunger.

**High Food Security: No reported indications of food-access problems or limitations**

**Marginal Food Security: One or two reported indications – typically of anxiety over food sufficiency or shortage of food in the house. Little or no indication of changes in diets or food intake**

These types of households are considered to be food secure. In other words, they are not hungry.

**Low Food Security: Reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet. Little or no indication of reduced food intake**

**Very Low Food Security: Reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake**

These types of households are considered to be food insecure, or hungry.

### HUNGER IN JOSEPHINE COUNTY

Josephine County is one of the five most food insecure counties in all of Oregon. In 2009, Feeding America noted that the county had a food insecurity rate of 20.6%. Of those that were food insecure 77% fell below 185% of the poverty level or more simply, the income needed to obtain SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits. While the average cost of a meal is \$.03 cents less than the Oregon generally, it is anticipated that the county would require \$7,110,590 dollars to adequately meet the food needs of all county residents.

### SNAP (SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM)

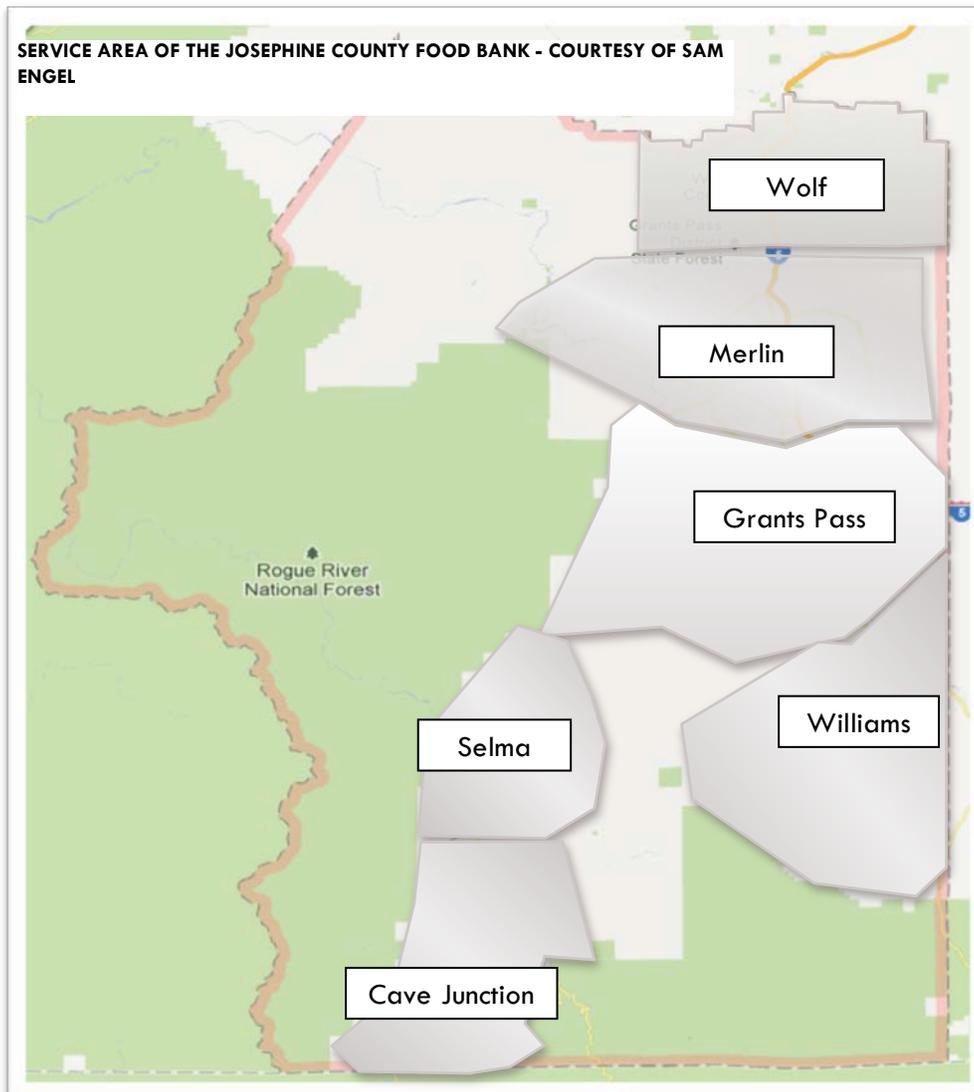
The SNAP 2011 Participation Report indicates the county generally has a high rate of SNAP usage with 95% of those eligible participating. This is a strikingly higher participation rate than neighboring Jackson (75%), Douglas (74%) or Curry (70%) counties. In a population of 82,713, the average number of monthly participants in SNAP is 21,314 or 25.7% of the county population. However, the county typically falls short in Senior Citizen outreach with only 29% of eligible seniors participating in the program. Put in another way, the counties participation rate is highly valuable in that it brings a large amount of money to the community to be spent locally generating and maintaining local jobs and stimulating the economy. The value for Josephine County in 2011 was \$34,035,845 dollars.

The most recent numbers from the Oregon Department of Human Services indicate that the percentage of households receiving SNAP has increased in both Grants Pass and Cave Junction. In April 2011 there were 8,479 households receiving SNAP benefits in Grants Pass as compared to 9,057 in April 2012. An 8.1% increase was seen for households in Cave Junction. The value of these benefits to Josephine County was \$2,929,075 in April 2012.

## WIC –WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN

WIC is a key program for fighting food insecurity in Josephine County. While the state of Oregon serves 46% of eligible women, Josephine County reached 63% in 2011. Services provided in Josephine County through the dedicated workers at Josephine County Public Health include breastfeeding partnerships with birthing hospitals, support through peer counseling and education, *nutritious foods purchased with WIC vouchers*, immunization screening and referral as well as many other valuable services. Most are provided in Grants Pass although there are satellite sites in both Cave Junction and Wolf Creek although these are not staffed on a full time basis.

In addition to the voucher program, WIC also has the Farm Direct Nutrition program providing vouchers to purchase local food from farmers, farmers markets, and farm stands. The program also educates members on how to select and prepare their produce. This program brought \$10,580 dollars to local farmers in 2011.



## THE JOSEPHINE COUNTY FOOD BANK

The Josephine County Food Bank coordinates and manages the emergency food system in Josephine County. Originally a county agency, the food bank was in danger of ceasing to exist in the early 1990's when it was dropped by the county and needed to find a new umbrella agency. The United Community Action Network, based in Douglas County, took over the food bank and enabled it to continue serving the hungry in Josephine County.

There is frequently a fair amount of confusion as to how the food bank actually works. The food bank warehouse itself does not give out emergency food boxes. It serves as a single point through which emergency food from the Oregon Food Bank, USDA, local grocery chains and stores, food drives, and donations is consolidated and then distributed out to pantries throughout Josephine County. These pantries come during the week to pick up their allocation (the amount of food they receive based on the number of people that they serve) and then give it directly to low and no income families.

The local network consists of eleven pantries, four community kitchens, and 14 supplemental agencies. Five pantries are located in Grants Pass, two in the Illinois Valley, and one each in Merlin, Williams, and Wolf Creek. The food bank also does a mobile distribution once a week in Selma. The community kitchens provide hot meals to people throughout Grants Pass, and the supplemental agencies (not a full pantry but a place where people can receive an emergency food box) are located throughout the county to reach additional at risk families.

By the numbers, the food bank serves between 12,000 and 13,000 people monthly with the meal sites serving an additional 7,500 meals monthly.



THE ROC (REACHING OUR COMMUNITY)  
FOOD PANTRY

In the past year, 2.4 million pounds of food have been distributed through our network. To understand just how much food that actually is, let's engage in a little bit of visualization. Think of each food box as a grocery bag with about 15 pounds of food in it. That's quite a lot of bags, 160,000 to be precise. If you stacked those bags end to end, they would reach all the way to Ashland from Grants Pass (40 miles). 160,000 bags of emergency food would fill every seat in Autzen Stadium (Go Ducks!) three times over. For the Beaver fans, those 160,000 bags would fill every seat at Reser Stadium three and half times over. That emergency food is the equivalent weight of 261 African elephants or 1,251 VW Beetles. In terms of everyday household items, that emergency food weighs the equivalent of 6,000 refrigerators. Whatever visualization you choose, the underlying facts remain the same; it is a lot of emergency food.

## WHO IS USING THE EMERGENCY FOOD SYSTEM?

Elephants and refrigerators aside, the real question for those that work in the world of emergency food systems, is who is using the pantries. How do they get there?

How often do they come? Are they working? Do they have children? Since the USDA places strict limits on the data that can be collected to receive emergency food, those questions have previously been answerable only through the Hunger Factors survey done statewide by the Oregon Food Bank. The Josephine County Food Bank had not undertaken a similar survey of only Josephine County until early in 2012. The surveys were distributed out in late December and had been fully collected by the middle of February. All surveys were



anonymous and those with identifying data were removed from the sample and their data is not present in the results. The results allowed the staff at the Josephine County Food Bank to gain a better understanding of their clients and to educate the community about the realities of hunger within the county.

Some of the questions and their answers are included here to give an idea of the type of information collected and the realities of the food system that it uncovers. A full report on the results is being prepared for distribution later in the year.

- **How often do you and your family use food boxes?**
  - Weekly – 13.4%
  - Monthly – 61.6%
  - A Few Times a Year – 23.9%
  - Once a year or First Time – 1.1%
- **Do you visit multiple pantries to get enough food for the month?**
  - Yes – 48.4%
  - No – 51.6%
- **Do you or your family receive SNAP benefits (Food Stamps)?**
  - Yes – 65.2%
  - No – 34.6%
- **If yes, how long do your benefits usually last?**
  - 1 week – 18.1%
  - 2 weeks – 36.9%
  - 3 weeks – 34.0%
  - All month – 8.4%
  - Over 1 month – 2.7%
- **In 2011, did you not pay a utility bill so that you could afford to buy food?**
  - Yes – 54.5%
  - No – 45.5%
- **In 2011, did you not buy food to be able to pay a bill?**
  - Yes – 61.7%
  - No – 38.3%
- **Do you or your spouse/partner skip or reduce the size of your meals to feed children?**
  - Yes – 41.7%
  - No – 58.3%



Other questions revolved around issues of transportation, employment, operating hours, and preservation and processing awareness and education. Together the data paint a compelling portrait of the people that we serve that is sometimes at odds with the public perception of the clients that we serve. We know now that 49.5% of families have at least one child under 18 years of age; that nearly 50% have one adult that is working full time; that nearly 60.5% didn't buy food to pay a bill; and 42% have one or more family members that are skipping or reducing the size of meals so that a child can eat.

## RAPTOR CREEK FARM – A UNIQUE SOLUTION

Lack of access to fresh fruits and vegetables among those with low or no income has long been a problem for the food bank. The local community is deeply generous and gives a significant amount to local food drives, in 2011 158,554 pounds were donated in local food drives. However, the problems of getting high quality fresh produce in sufficient quantities to meet local demand remained since most of the food donated was processed, shelf stable food. The Plant-A-Row program and local farmers donated, 42,654 pounds of produce in 2011, but again, this was not enough to meet the demands of an ever-growing need in the community. Out of the realization that more fresh produce had to be locally grown, the idea for Raptor Creek Farm was born.



Raptor Creek Farm (the Farm) is the food banks dedicated food production site. Located on Upper River Road about five miles outside Grants Pass, the farm currently has a little over two acres in production and is expected to produce around 80,000 pounds of fresh supermarket-quality produce for the food

bank. In 2011, the Farm produced 51,000 pounds of produce that was distributed through the local network of pantries, kitchens, and supplemental agencies. This produce both improved the quality of emergency food boxes in Josephine County but also made up for a shortfall in other commodities and a reduction in USDA and other emergency food over the summer. The Farm currently only grows during the summer months but hopes to expand the season to grow during eight months of the year.

The farm site will eventually expand to include perennial asparagus production, a four-acre espalier apple and pear orchard, and 25 to 35 acres of land across the road



RAPTOR CREEK FARM



for further intensive production. The food bank also plans to relocate food bank operations, construct a food preservation kitchen to not only extend the usability of our produce, but also allow other local farmers the opportunity to process their goods or engage in value added activities. It is intended to become a multi-purpose hub to encourage local production, processing, and garden and cooking education.

Phase one of the project was completed in 2011 with the relocation of the full garden operation from M street to the Farm and the completion of the first growing season. A capital campaign to fund the construction of the food storehouse and food bank offices was begun in October 2011 and was successful in raising \$438,532 towards the

estimated \$1.9 million dollar budget. The rest of the funds were raised through a Community Development Block Grant award of \$1.5 million received in May 2012.

## PLANT-A-ROW/THE BACKYARD GARDEN PROJECT

Even before the decision to grow food with Raptor Creek Farm, the need for locally grown fresh fruits

and vegetables was readily apparent. Started in 1995 by the Garden Writers Association, Plant-A-Row (PAR) is a program in which local garden writers encourage local gardens and farmers to plant an extra row in their gardens and donate the excess to local soup kitchens, food pantries, or food banks to help feed the hungry.



DAVID JAMES

David James, a garden columnist for the Grants Pass Daily Courier and founder of Greenleaf Industries, has been instrumental in the local PAR program. The program currently exists under the auspices of the Josephine County Food Bank and meets monthly on the



third Monday of the month. The program has been successful in raising increasing amounts of fresh produce for low and no-income families in Josephine County.

The project has naturally appealed to those who garden intensively and on a scale that is more akin to small farming than the traditional backyard gardeners. The project is currently in the midst of a redesign to make it more appealing to those who are small-scale or hobby gardeners to participate on equal footing with those who have a more intensive background. Titled the “Backyard Garden” project, it rebrands the project with a new logo and an emphasis on the diversity of small ways in which people can contribute, such as planting an extra plant, bringing small amounts of excess harvest, or gleaning (harvesting a field that has already been harvested or won’t be harvested for economic reasons). Gleaning is not well established in Josephine County outside of Cave Junction, but a small program has begun in the last few months through the Josephine County Food Bank.

## JOSEPHINE COUNTY AGRICULTURE

Farming has always been a key part of Josephine County. From melons to hops to orchard crops, many things have found a home and a place growing in the rich soil.

### BY THE NUMBERS

As previously discussed in the economics section, agriculture accounts for only 2.7% of employment in Josephine County and according to Oregon Agriculture Facts and Figures, Josephine County comes in 33<sup>rd</sup> out of 36 counties in gross farm sales with \$18,153,000 in 2010. Sales improved in 2011 to \$21,456,000. But farming is not just about the sales; it is also about the number of farms and those who are working them.



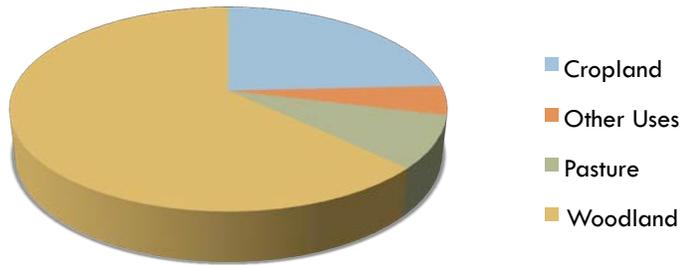
THE QUAD AT EASY VALLEY FARM

The USDA census of agriculture is conducted every five years and the most recent data comes from the 2007 census. The census had a great many things to say about Josephine County, but here are the summary highlights to give an idea of the agricultural scope of the county.

#### In Josephine County in 2007:

- There were 675 Farms.
  - 1 farm harvested oats for grain
  - 260 farms were used for forage (land used for all hay and all haylage, grass silage, and green chop) comprising 6,802 acres
  - 55 farms harvested 158 acres of vegetables
  - 111 farms had 558 acres in orchards
- 37,706 acres of land in the county was in farms, leading to an average farm size of 56 acres and a median size of 16 acres.

## Land in Farms



5

- The average value of a farm was \$494,184 and average value of an acre was \$8,847.
- 517 farms were smaller than 50 acres.
  - Of those 216 were smaller than 9 acres
- 409 of the farms listed harvested crops from 7,762 acres.
- 445 of the farms listed had sales of less than \$5,000
- 20 farms received government payments totaling \$41,000

These numbers presented some changes from the 2002 Agricultural Census data numbers, with the number of farms decreasing by 7% while the acreage increased by 16%. The average size of farms increased from 44 to 56 acres and the average produced per farm also saw an increase to \$20,652. But the most drastic change was the decrease in the amount of government payments. In 2002, government payments to Josephine County totaled \$257,000, an average of \$8,300 per farm. In 2007, total government payments to Josephine County were \$41,000, an average of \$2,051 per farm. This marks a drastic 84% reduction in payments and a 75% reduction in average payments.

## OPERATOR CHARACTERISTICS

Part of a thriving agricultural culture is knowing your farmer and knowing who is farming in the community. The data in 2007 could tell us this about those who were farming Josephine County. 345 of them worked their farms full time while 330 held occupations off of the farm. 489 farmers were men compared with 186 women. The average age of the farmers was 59.2 years.

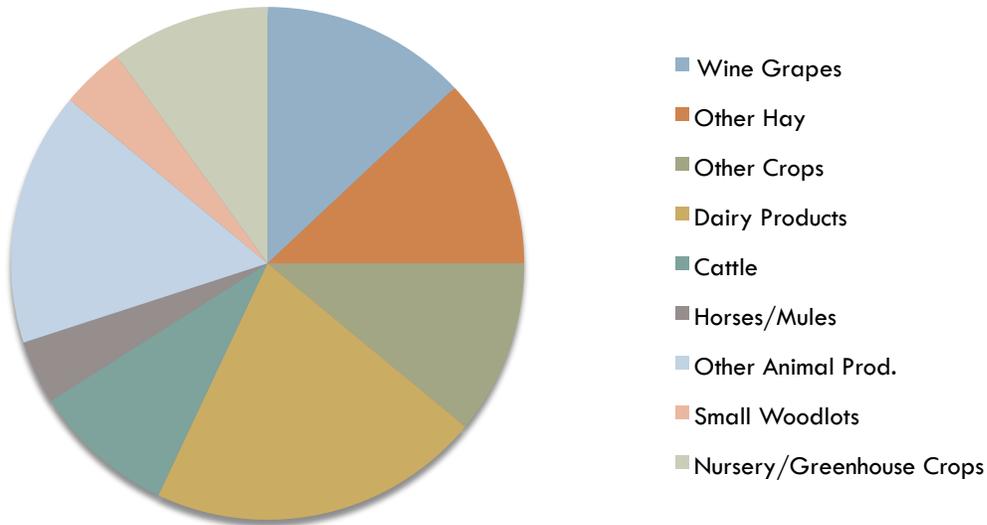


<sup>5</sup> USDA Census of Agriculture Josephine County Profile, 2007.

## WHAT ARE WE GROWING?

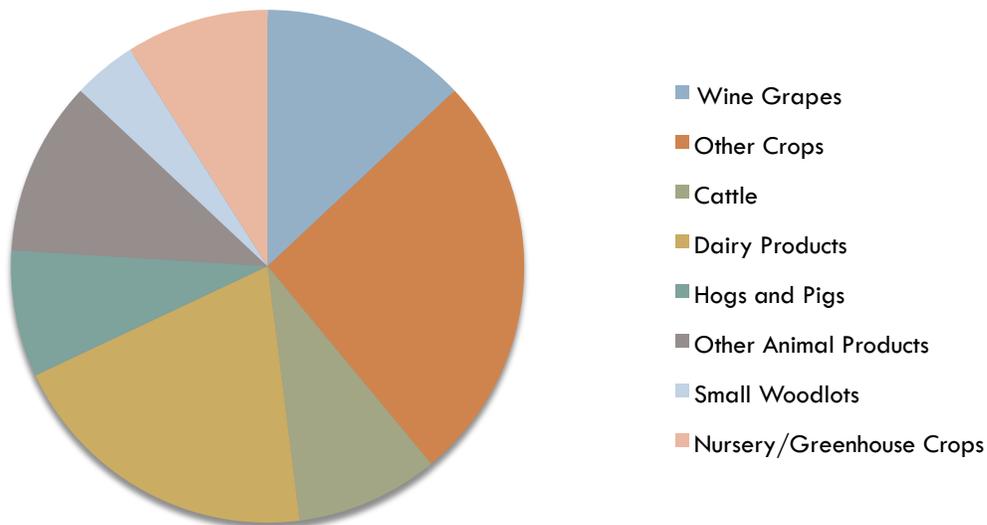
Josephine County Agricultural Commodity sales in 2010 and 2011:

### Agricultural Commodity Sales 2010



6

### Agricultural Commodity Sales 2011



7

<sup>6</sup> From the Extension Economic Information Office, Oregon State University 12/31/2010.

<sup>7</sup> From the Extension Economic Information Office, Oregon State University 3/7/2012

## FARMING IN THE COUNTY

When we think of farming, we have an idea of rolling fields, large tractors, and men in overalls and John Deere® hats. That ingrained image may be true for Iowa, Nebraska or other large mono-crops and

### Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

A CSA is an alternative way to support local agriculture. Individuals or groups of individuals support a farmer and receive a share of the harvest.

A set fee is paid up front at the start of the season or in installments throughout the season and a box of fresh produce is either delivered or picked up weekly.

This form of agriculture not only encourages creative cooking and eating, but also provides a close connection between the farmer

and increasingly for the large agribusiness farms in California, but Oregon's farms don't quite look like that. In fact, they tend to look rather like the image of a New England family farm, perhaps because most of the farming operations are small. Oregon has a reputation for being a place of small, diversified family farming operations, and Josephine County's farms largely conform to this idyllic image. Partly this is a result of geography; it is difficult to have large rolling farms when hills and valleys dominate the land. Another piece is the lack of land, when only one third of the county land is available for use. Lastly, it is a result of lack of access to capital. Land, especially in the highly productive Applegate Valley, is expensive. One farm was working four different parcels of land because a single piece of land with good irrigation was too expensive to afford. Several farmers in Easy Valley, just across the line in Jackson County, specifically mentioned the expense of land in the Applegate as a reason for their location in Evans Valley.

In fact, 37.5% of the farms in Josephine County, according to the 2007 census of agriculture, were smaller than nine acres. Of the farms visited for

the research of this assessment, nearly 50% were smaller than 10 acres and 70% were smaller than 20 acres. These farms are typical of agriculture in the valley. The farms are small family endeavors, not highly mechanized, and engaged in growing a diverse range of crops.

By and large, the farms were not profitable. In fact, of those farms that were toured, only two were profitable. The successful farms had a few common characteristics:

- Both utilized outside labor
  - One had a crew of 7-9 hired farm workers
  - One utilized interns through a collaborative program between Rogue Valley Farm Corps and THRIVE (The Rogue Valley Initiative for a Vital Economy)
- Both were certified organic which increased the price premium that their product was able to command.
- Both had diversified where they marketed their produce



DANCING BEAR FARM

- One sold at both the Grants Pass Growers Market as well as the Ashland Farmers Market; to caterers in Ashland and the Applegate Valley; and to grocery stores in Medford and Ashland
- One sold at the Grants Pass Growers Market and also to walk-in's at the Farm; sold their produce wholesale, and fulfilled 30 seed contracts.
- Both grew for the Siskiyou Sustainable Co-Op CSA (Community Supported Agriculture).
- Both had a multi-state range for at least some of their products:
  - One would only sell fresh produce within a 30-mile radius, but the farm's seeds were sold not only in Oregon, but also in Virginia, Maine, and Missouri.
  - One had a range that encompassed not only the Rogue Valley, but also the Oregon Coast and Northern California all the way down to Shasta (over 100 miles to the South).

While these similarities are by no means that only way to be successful at farming, they do point out some the issues that are present in the local market that prevent the success of local farmers on a greater scale, such as access to land, capital, and a market which can absorb the harvest and pay the price premiums necessary to support local farmers.

## LAND USE ISSUES

Land use is a problematic subject in Southern Oregon generally. It is one of the reliable “hot button” issues in Josephine County and is often tied to the social reasoning behind the counties economic decline. As has been mentioned previously in this assessment, only 33% of Josephine County lands are available for development and count on the tax rolls. The other 67% is split between the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. Combined with the lowest property taxes in the state (or the 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest depending on the source after Curry County), this lack of land ensures that the county is perpetually short of revenue and dependent upon payments from the Federal Government for the loss of timber revenues.

These payments were originally scheduled to end in 2008, but a last minute extension brought a three-year extension. However, this extension expired on September 30, 2011 and at this time, there is no renewal in place. All the members of Oregon's congressional delegation are working to bring about a further five-year extension of payments, but at this time, the measure remains in the House of Representatives and has not yet moved to the Senate.



**BARKING MOON FARM**



**THE FARMING FISH**

While this would seem to be an economic issue, it is deeply tied to issues of county and state sovereignty and land. A recent editorial in the *Oregonian* detailing the issues of Josephine County Law Enforcement following the failure of a recent tax levy quickly brought comments not about viable alternatives, but of competing visions of land use: log it or keep it from being logged.<sup>8</sup>

According to a 2011 Farm Report prepared for the Josephine County Assessor, there were 20,454.85 acres of total farmland in Josephine County. There are few who argue against farming in Josephine County, but the issue of Exclusive Farm Use land came into sharp relief over a purchase and a plan by the City of Grants Pass (see sidebar). The issue of the River Road Reserve as a future park is another flashpoint in the community and is currently remaining uncomfortably in the spotlight with the forward movement of Raptor Creek Farm and the ongoing pressures by citizens and 1000 Friends of Oregon to maintain all agricultural land as such.

## KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS TRANSFERS

Declines in farming as a profession also lead correspondingly to a decline in skills among younger generations of would-be farmers. This knowledge deficit is a major challenge and barrier to those who would enter agriculture as a profession.

Josephine County and Oregon generally benefits from the strong presence of the Oregon State University Extension Service (Extension). As with most things, the Josephine County and Jackson County extension offices share staff and the curriculum. Jackson County also has a research center located just outside Central Point.

Extension has been a part of the fabric of Josephine County since 1916. Its mission to convey research-based knowledge to help residents improve their lives, their homes, and their communities has resulted in a vast array of programs, classes, and print and online materials.

Perhaps the most important of these from the agriculture of view are those directed towards small farmers and master gardeners<sup>9</sup>. Most of the programs and serve those living in both counties.

### A Farm or a Park?

In 2006, the City of Grants Pass purchased a 250-acre parcel from the Naumes Family.

Named the River Road Reserve (RRR), it was acquired by the city with the thought of turning it into a park.

Ordinarily, this would not have been an issue, except that this parcel of land was zoned farmland. Now, a park is an acceptable use of Farmland under ORS.

While the current plan as envisioned by the Parks Advisory Board does have some of the land set aside for farming, most of the land will be used for things which are not farms.

Although the public comment period expired in early 2011, further plans to begin development through a conditional use permit have not materialized.

The RRR is currently being farmed for the City of Grants Pass by Bob Crouse of Fort Vannoy Farms with an additional 18.85 acres leased to the Josephine County Food Bank for Raptor Creek

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.oregonlive.com/opinion/index.ssf/2012/06/josephine\\_county\\_sends\\_a\\_messa.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/opinion/index.ssf/2012/06/josephine_county_sends_a_messa.html)

<sup>9</sup> A full offering of courses can be found at [extension.oregonstate.edu/josephine](http://extension.oregonstate.edu/josephine)

- Small Farms Program:
  - The small farms program focuses on small farmers and small landowners in both Jackson and Josephine counties through consultations, educational resources, classes, and materials to help create more sustainable local farming methods and food systems. The program also aims to improve yields and production techniques as well as enhancing local markets and specialty marketing opportunities. Most classes and resources are offered through the Jackson County Extension office.
- Josephine County Master Gardeners:
  - The Master Gardener program is a classroom and volunteer hour based certification program. After attending 10 class sessions, volunteers are required to volunteer a minimum of 70 hours (25 in plant clinic and 45 at other events and Master Gardener functions). Certification as a Master Gardener is good for one year and recertification must be recompleted annually for each year after.
  - Master Gardeners in Josephine County contribute their time and knowledge to local horticultural projects. They run the Josephine County Plant Clinic (Tuesday and Thursday from 10:00 – 2:00), the annual Plant Fair in the spring, allow students to perfect their knowledge and skills in their greenhouse, and provide their skills during the Josephine County Fair in August.



JOSEPHINE COUNTY EXTENSION OFFICE – COURTESY OF THE EXTENSION WEBSITE

Although the Extension is invaluable, there are many other organizations working to enhance the knowledge and success of local agriculture. One of those serving both Jackson and Josephine Counties is The Rogue Valley Initiative for a Vital Economy (THRIVE). THRIVE is a unique organization based in Ashland focused on deepening the local economy and supporting local agriculture. THRIVE's Rogue Flavor Campaign increases both knowledge and visibility of local products through a "Rogue Flavor" label appearing on local

products in grocery stores as well as their

annual publication of "Rogue Flavor". The "Rogue Flavor" guide details local farms, farmers and growers markets, CSA's, as well as unique restaurants and specialty foods. The guide has more focus on Jackson than Josephine County, but the counties larger farms and events are represented.

THRIVE also has a unique program, "Southern Oregon Farmer Incubator", a collaborative program with the Extension's Small Farms Program, the Rogue Valley Farm Corps, and Friends of Family Farmers. The program provides comprehensive education not only in farms skills, but business planning as well as providing market access through THRIVE's online farmer's market. Small farmers in their first five years of operation have also benefitted from the New Farmer Subsidy Program, which pays farmers to grow for local food banks and pantries in Jackson and Josephine Counties.



THRIVE'S LOGO

A key to the success of THRIVE's agricultural endeavors, is their partnership with Rogue Farm Corps. Founded in 2003 by a group of concerned Southern Oregon farmers, the organization is the only organization in Oregon to provide a structured, entry-level curriculum and training program for beginning farmers. In Spring 2012 Rogue Farm Corps introduced the only accredited farm internship program in Oregon in partnership with Rogue Community College (RCC). Interns on this track are enrolled in a concurrent program at RCC and receive credits upon successful completion of the internship. A second, limited track involving paid farm work on participating farms is also available. For the 2012 growing season there are 11 farms hosting interns, three of which are located in Josephine County.

## MARKETS AND ACCESS

Even the most productive local farmers won't achieve success without sufficient access to consumers. There are several barriers preventing the full utilization of Josephine County's agricultural productivity.

The most successful farmers had vastly expanded their markets beyond the county lines in search of both markets and customers. Josephine County itself cannot support a vast agricultural sector. There are simply too few people and not enough money to do so. In a community where in 1 in 5 people live in poverty, the idea of spending \$6.50 for a loaf of organic bread is not feasible. While local farmers and entrepreneurs require a certain price premium in order to support their businesses, the same price premium segregates the market into the can and can't affords. This market segregation further prevents small and new farmers from achieving profitability and presents a substantial obstacle for increasing the size and diversity of agriculture in Josephine County.

Along with the segregation in markets, the lack of a defined pipeline to local grocers is problematic for farmers in Josephine County. Those farmers that were able to sell their produce in local grocery stores usually sold in Medford or Ashland. While farmers were occasionally able to sell their produce at Gooseberries or Farmer's Market (the two independent grocers located in Grants Pass), they are effectively locked out of the largest chains that dominate grocery retailing not only in Grants Pass but the rural areas as well. Kroger, Safeway, Albertson's and C&K Markets, Inc. provide eight of the ten grocery stores in Grants Pass and C&K through their Ray's Food Place Markets, serves as the sole Full grocery store in Cave Junction, Selma, and Murphy. No defined pipeline exists for getting locally produced food and products into grocery stores in Josephine County and this all but ensures that these large and defined markets are out of reach for the majority of farmers.

An additional issue is the lack of grocery stores and outlets in the northern part of the county, encompassing Wolf Creek, Sunny Valley, Hugo and extending well into Douglas County. Not only does this disenfranchise consumers living in these more rural areas, but also limits the ability of farmers to sell directly to consumers through markets in these rural areas.

Many of the farmers surveyed expressed interest and opinions in direct marketing, and all sold directly to consumers either through the Grower's Market, CSA's, Medford or Ashland Co-Op's, Farm Stands, and

other small scale methods. One farmer surveyed was in talks to sell to a local restaurant in Grants Pass, while those farming in the Applegate were able to sell on a small scale to restaurants as well. This was done on a farm-to-farm basis and again lacked the infrastructure or a defined pipeline for doing so. Most relationships were personal and ad-hoc rather than established and institutional.

Lastly, nearly all of the farmers surveyed either currently or have sold at the Grants Pass Grower's Market. The Market is the best avenue for farm-to-consumer connection on a casual level and is frequently where most of these relationships begin. A smaller Applegate centric Farmer's Market occurs weekly every Monday at the Williams Grange. The Illinois Valley also has it's own market alternating between Selma and Cave Junction on Fridays. The largest of these markets, the Growers Market in Grants Pass, serves an average of 5,000 people every Saturday. While these markets are an engaging and essential piece of a sustainable food system, they do not have enough capacity to serve both the producers and the consumers in Josephine County. Additionally, only the Grants Pass growers market is able to take SNAP benefits enabling low-income consumers to purchase fresh locally grown food from farmers.

A recent innovation has been the Buy Local Buy Rogue online market developed and managed by THRIVE. This market allows new farmers to market their goods online and reach a new audience. The market takes both standard forms of payment as well as SNAP/EBT. This growing resource may become additionally valuable as it grows and develops a following in Josephine County.

Several farmers pointed out the lack of a co-op in Josephine County as a shortcoming in the local food production and distribution system. When asked how they would like it to be structured, the responses were highly varied and not terribly specific. Answers ranged from a co-op that functioned like the current growers market, utilizing a single label to increase quality recognition and increase access to more lucrative markets, a grocery store environment selling only local products, to a traditional volunteer-run membership association. Interest in this issue is very high and is a viable project to consider pursuing on a community wide scale.

## JOSEPHINE COUNTY EATERS

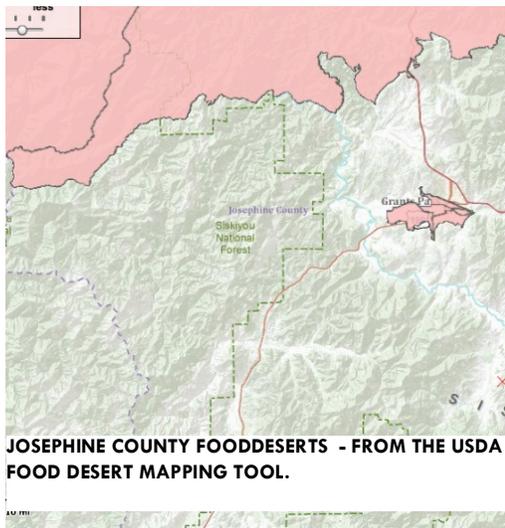
Growing food is an essential part of a food system, but all that food goes to waste if the people, the eaters, cannot access or afford it.

## FOOD DESERTS

According to the USDA Website:

Food deserts are defined as urban neighborhoods and rural towns without ready access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food. Instead of supermarkets and grocery stores, these communities may have no food access or are served only by fast food restaurants and convenience stores that offer few healthy, affordable food options. The lack of access contributes to a poor diet and can lead to higher levels of obesity and other diet-related diseases, such as diabetes and heart disease.

The USDA website provides a food desert location tool pinpointing the locations of food deserts by census tracts. Surprisingly given the challenges identified by farmers and the high rates of poverty, only two food deserts exist in Josephine County. However, that number is a bit deceiving. While there are



only two, one of these food deserts is quite large, encompassing the entire northern third of Josephine County and a large portion of Southern Douglas County as well. The Josephine portion of this northern desert contains nearly 2,000 people of which 843 or 43.5% are considered to lack access to fresh, healthy, affordable food. This tract encompasses those living in Wolf Creek, Sunny Valley, Hugo and the surrounding areas.

The other food desert is within Grants Pass, itself with 10.1% of the people lacking access to fresh, healthy, affordable food. While certainly better than 43.5%, one has to wonder what the issues are that result in the county seat with its several grocery stores and supermarkets, thriving growers market, and independent grocers. Is it location, access, affordability?

## SUPERMARKETS, GROCERY STORES, AND CONVENIENCE STORES

Like most, the residents of Josephine County largely obtain their daily bread from the grocery store. While there are a few local retailers, most of the market is dominated by the chain grocery stores. Ray's, Albertson's, and Safeway each have two locations in Grants Pass (conveniently one on either side of the Rogue River which effectively bisects the city), while Wal-Mart, Fred Meyer, and Grocery Outlet manage with just a single location on the Parkway. If you are seeking a local, independent grocer in Grants Pass, you may shop at Gooseberries located near Fred Meyer or the Farmer's Market (which despite the name is in fact a brick and mortar store) across the river. If you are in the Northwest Part of town, there is only grocery store that is even remotely conveniently located near you: Ray's Food Place on NE 7<sup>th</sup> street. It is the only store that largely breaks away from a location on the Parkway (HWY 199 or Redwood Highway).

If you are looking for something within walking distance of most homes in Grants Pass or the surrounding rural areas, you will be relegated to shopping a convenience store. Not that one cannot find the absolute basics at a convenience store, but you are likely to pay more, be purchasing highly processed food, and have limited access to fruits, vegetables, or organic items. If you live in Grants Pass north of the Rogue River, all of the major grocery stores (except Ray's on 7<sup>th</sup>) are located in one single geographic area, the Parkway. This is highly convenient and arguably within walking distance for those living in the Southeastern and Northeastern parts of the city, but leaves those on the Northwestern and Southwestern portions of the city with no access to a major grocery store within walking distance. These Parkway stores are served by public transportation, however, the shelters for the stops are not covered, and when it is 90 degrees out or a rainy day, those who cannot drive themselves are exposed to the elements. So while these stores are accessible on the surface, in practice, it can be a miserable experience to utilize public transport during the rainy winter and spring and the uncomfortably hot summers. The stores located South of the river, are walk able for even fewer people and suffer from the same public transportation issues of the Parkway stores.

**"I could buy whiskey, cigarettes, and gamble within walking distance of my house, but I cannot buy foodstuffs." – Mike E., rural resident**

Perhaps, however, you prefer to shop an independent, local retailer with an eye towards a more locally and organically based shopping experience. Gooseberries and the Farmers Market are the only two in town. The Farmers Market has a wide selection of organic and fresh produce, but doesn't provide a meat counter. Gooseberries' provides a full service grocery as well as carrying a substantial bulk foods section and many vegetarian/vegan products. Many of the other grocers carry products for vegetarians and vegans, particularly Fred Meyer. However, those seeking to buy local will soon have to do all of their shopping south of the river as Gooseberries is currently building a new facility on Redwood Avenue.

In the rural areas, those small towns fortunate enough to have a grocery store all have a Ray's except for one. The William's Community Store has been an independent grocer and community fixture for many years. The original building is well over 100 years old and stocks organic food, fresh produce, and a wide selection of dairy products. This store has the distinction of being the only independent grocery store in rural Josephine County. Williams is additionally served by a smaller convenience store, but the Community store provides both food and a community-meeting place. Murphy, Cave Junction, Merlin, and Selma are all fortunate to have a Ray's in their communities. This prevents them from having to drive the long distance to Grants Pass to purchase food, but also means that they are limited in the selection provided by a single retail outlet as well as the higher prices that the rural stores charge, mainly to offset the increased delivery and fuel surcharges. However, these rural communities are the fortunate ones, once one moves north of Merlin, there is not a full grocery store in northern Josephine County. Wolf Creek, Sunny Valley, and Hugo are served by convenience stores, but anyone needed to do a full shop or seeking fresh foods will have to drive to Grants Pass or rely on the twice-a-day bus route between Grants Pass and its northern rural areas. The grocery stores in Merlin are located closer to the I-5 thoroughway than residences.

## FARMERS/GROWERS MARKETS

In 1979, there were no farmers or growers markets.

There were supermarkets and that was that.

However, a small group of people who wanted better access to fresh, locally grown food banded together and created what would become a Grants Pass institution, the Saturday Growers Market.

Currently in its 32<sup>nd</sup> season, the Growers Market runs from March to November every Saturday from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. Originally located at the Fairgrounds Parking lot, the market currently has a long-term agreement with the city allowing it to use a public parking lot in the heart of downtown. A heavy market day may see as many as 5,000

people (for reference, that is between 1/6<sup>th</sup> and 1/7<sup>th</sup> of the population of Grants Pass) walking its aisles. The market brings in farmers and retailers not just from Josephine, but also Jackson and Coos Counties. It is possible for one to purchase nearly all the food required to live without visiting a supermarket or grocer, if one was so inclined. The market began accepting SNAP/EBT benefits in 2011, and has a wireless machine for people to use their benefits card to purchase produce, dairy products, meat, etc. at the market.



While it thrives at its current location and the downtown areas surrounding it benefit from the added foot traffic, the market does have issues. Its current location doesn't provide for adequate parking near the market and makes it difficult for those who are handicapped or otherwise challenged find adequate parking. The market has reached its capacity in terms of vendors and foot traffic. The market cannot add any additional vendors and would be hard pressed to accommodate additional foot traffic. In fact, crafters are moved from the market to increase the space available for farm vendors. The market is currently considering alternative locations that would allow both for increased foot traffic and vendors as well as potentially serving as a year-round market location.

Grants Pass is not the only Josephine County location with a market; Williams hosts a Farmers Market from May to November in the Grange along Williams HWY and Cave Junction and Selma share a farmers market that swaps locations every other Friday. At this writing, neither of these markets was able to accept SNAP/EBT benefits, but hopefully that will become a reality in the future. Once one moves north of Grants Pass, there are no growers or farmers markets.



The most unique market in the country is the Rogue Valley Local Foods Online Farmers Market. A program of THRIVE, the market retails a wide selection of produce from local growers in both Josephine and Jackson Counties in an easily accessible online format. The market opens Friday morning and takes orders through Tuesday for delivery to locations throughout Jackson and Josephine Counties including Grants Pass. Home delivery is also available for a small fee (\$10.00 at last check). The market accepts SNAP as payment as well as traditional

VISA/MasterCard and other credit/debit cards. The market provides crucial access for new farmers into Josephine County markets and is helping to build a different consumer base for fresh local produce in the county. At the moment, the majority of the markets business comes during the winter months when the established Growers Market is no longer in season.

## FEEDING STUDENTS – IN SCHOOL AND OUT

Few things reliably generate controversy as what children are eating in schools. From Super Size Me to the daily national headlines regarding the removal of soft drinks and vending machines; schools are the latest food battleground. Josephine County Schools are no different, though the approach taken is somewhat different.

Grants Pass District 7 (District 7), has taken the independent route. It does not contract out its food service. That means that the district is responsible for its own purchases and has a large degree of control of what goes out to students through the kitchens. The food is sourced from many different locations including but not limited to the Applegate Co-op, FSA (Food Service of America), Sysco, and Pacific Produce, but what makes the district unique is the amount of food that it sources from local farmers. Thompson Creek Organics, Blue Fox Farm, Naumes, Fort Vannoy Farms, Quail Run Farms and others have all provided fresh local seasonal produce to the schools of District 7. Additionally, many of the schools have gardens and that produce can be prepared in the school cafeterias and fed to the students. A crucial partner for the schools in these endeavors is Rogue Valley Farm to School.

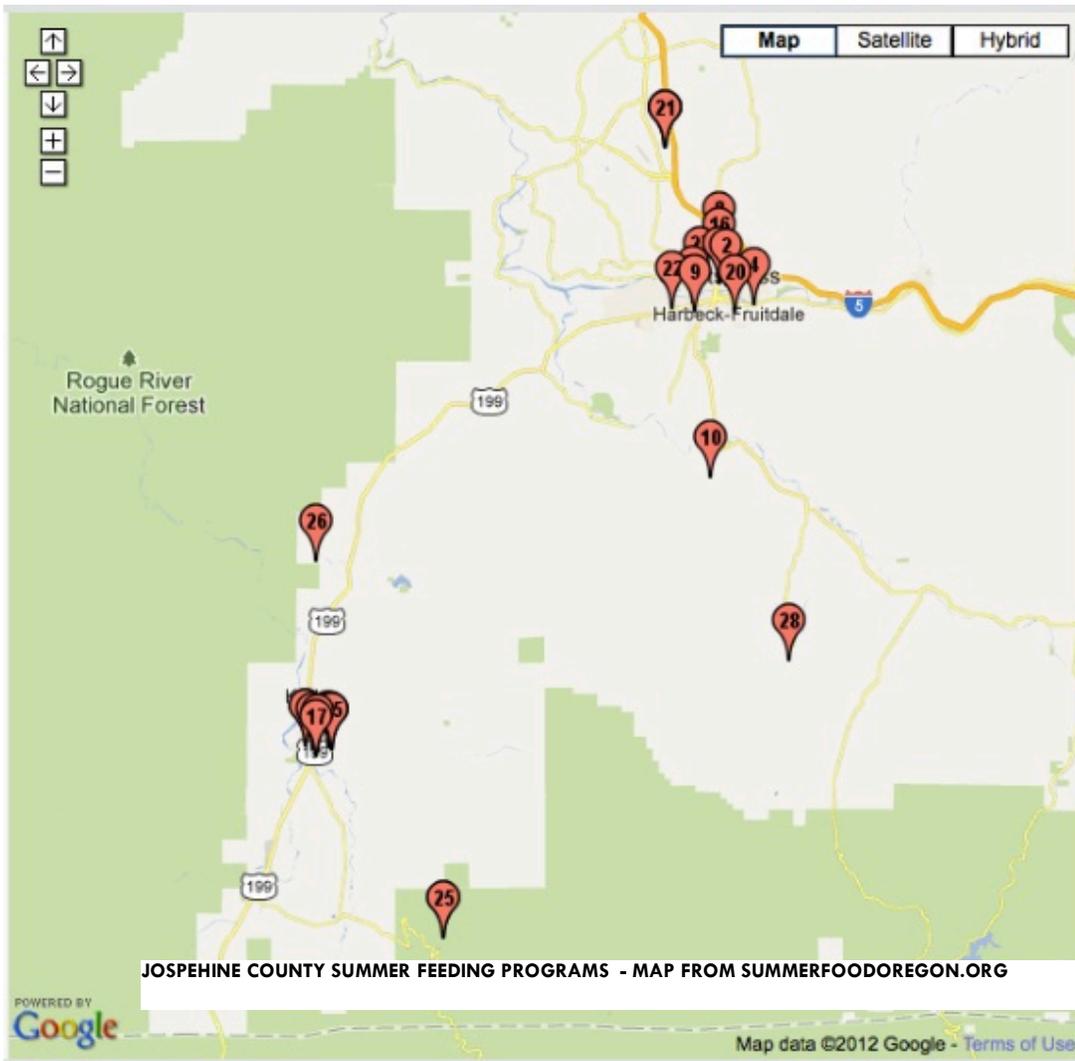
Rogue Valley Farm to School (RVF), a non-profit based in Ashland, OR, provides many crucial links in this growing local food system. Although they currently do not have any dedicated money for these efforts,

RVF serves as a pipeline of sorts for local food. They facilitate between food service staff and farmers, ensuring that farmers are able to get their produce into schools and that local schoolchildren are able to know where their food comes from. To further this effort they have provided each cafeteria in District 7 with a farm to school display as well as white board posters that detail what on that day's menu is local, and which farm it came from. They also aid food service staff in tracking food purchases and such in order to better define outcomes.

But RVF doesn't only work with District 7 in the cafeteria; they also participate in Farm Fields Days where elementary school kids take trips to local working farms. The trips are guided by the teacher's needs and interests and have a set curriculum to ensure that the kids are learning as well as experiencing. They have also begun to work with the school gardens in facilitating more participation. They are also

developing a program, which would provide an annual stipend for garden coordinators that would provide some coverage of garden fees and provide a structure for garden maintenance.

While local food efforts are thriving in District 7, they are not as advanced in the Three Rivers School District. This is not a reflection of local interest or local desire, but rather a reflection on the binding contracts with Sodexo. District 7, Central Point, and Ashland Schools are the



only three in Jackson and Josephine Counties that do not have contracts with Sodexo. These contracts prevent the large movement of local foods into cafeterias as well as produce from school gardens.

While the emergency food system in general was discussed in great detail above, one of the key missing pieces was the feeding of schoolchildren during the summer months. Every Josephine County public school

has at least 50% of the student body eligible for free or reduced lunch and breakfast (see sidebar). Where do these kids eat during the summer?

Luckily, school feeding programs exist for both District 7 and Three Rivers School District. The program in 2011 served nearly 6,700 free lunches to local kids aged 1-18 at four different parks in Grants Pass over 38 days. The program in 2012 is expected to be open for 47 days and serve 11,000 meals at seven local parks. The program was so successful and has such community support, that the school board not only approved its continuation but also unanimously approved its expansion. A similar program exists in the Three Rivers School districts. The map shows the locations for the programs in the summer of 2012.

## COMMUNITY EFFORTS

### COMMUNITY GARDENS

The wonderful Rogue Valley growing season doesn't just benefit the agricultural community, it also makes it a prime spot for gardeners. The Plant-A-Row program benefiting the Josephine County Food Bank was mentioned above, but what about community gardens? Community gardening as a public endeavor has not really taken off in Grants Pass or in Josephine County.

Community gardening has always been a bit of a tough sell in a location where even those who rent often have the space necessary to do their own gardening, if only on a small scale. The Josephine County Food Bank attempted a community garden project at their current location on SE M Street. They found that while initial enthusiasm was high, it was difficult to maintain the momentum necessary over the course of the growing and harvest season. Other community garden projects, such as OHMS (Oregon Health Management Systems) Garden-2-Table Project also faced similar issues in maintaining interest in the gardening programs. These programs are currently defunct.

One community garden project that has continued is overseen by Options of Southern Oregon. This grant-funded community garden has 32 plots that are rented out annually for \$25.00. Some of the plots are given out as "scholarship" plots for those willing to donate a percentage of their harvest to the Josephine County Food Bank or any of the local food pantries. The "scholarship" plots do not have an annual fee.

Local media often refer to the Raptor Creek Garden as a community garden, and while the garden is harvested and maintained by volunteers, it is in fact a concept high-production garden with all produce going to the Food Bank for distribution through the pantry network.



### SCHOOL GARDENS

One of the unique factors in the local food system in Josephine County is the use of produce grown in school gardens in the cafeterias of District 7 schools.

The Master Gardeners are heavily involved in school gardens and have helped plant and maintain gardens at Lincoln Elementary School, St. Annes School, Parkside Elementary School, Highland Elementary School, Fruitdale Elementary School, Madrona

Elementary School, Allendale Elementary School, and Gladiola High School.

Aside from planting and maintenance, the Master Gardeners also provide gardening education, outreach topics that follow established school curriculum, and combine science and gardening in age appropriate hands on presentations. These gardens are crucial for passing on gardening knowledge to the next generation, allowing the kids to get their hands dirty, and teaching other valuable skills.

## CONCLUSIONS

Every county and every food system is different. The basic building blocks that make them successful remain the same. There must be farms, there must be eaters, there must be markets to sell and provide a place for the purchasing of food, there must be ways to process and preserve the food, and there must be an infrastructure to sustain it.

## ASSETS

Josephine County is doing well on a few fronts of the food system:

- There is a diverse community of farms providing a variety of produce, meat, and dairy products
- There are plenty of people needing to eat
- Grants Pass has a thriving Grower's Market accepting EBT/SNAP and the markets in Cave Junction, Selma, and Williams are growing
- Grants Pass District 7 and Rogue Valley Farm to School are working together to bring fresh local food into schools, integrate gardening and the produce of the gardens into their cafeteria menus and fostering a culture of local food knowledge in the next generation
- The Josephine County Extension Service, Rogue Farm Corps, and THRIVE are providing the next generation and new farmers with knowledge, experience, and skills courses to help them succeed and rebuilding the lost knowledge base of agriculture in our community
- THRIVE's online market place for providing an alternative way to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables as well as providing a market foothold for new farmers seeking to break into the local market
- Ray's Food Markets in the rural areas of Southern Josephine County ensuring that those living in the rural areas are not required to drive to Grants Pass to achieve adequate nutrition
- A strong and thriving summer lunch program so the most vulnerable in our community continue to receive food during the summer months
- The emergency food system is able to reach most areas through the work of the Josephine County Food Bank and its network of pantries and agencies
- Raptor Creek Farm – the Josephine County Food Bank Farm's concept garden is changing the makeup of emergency food boxes by raising the percentage of locally grown market quality produce available to low and no income families in our communities.
- Very high rates of SNAP benefit utilization and usage
- Siskiyou Sustainable Co-Op offering a CSA membership that can be paid for with SNAP benefits in installments putting this previously inaccessible way to get fresh produce in the reach of low income families in our community

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## OPPORTUNITIES/CHALLENGES

It would be wonderful if this column wasn't needed, but as many things as Josephine County does well with regards to it's food system, there are many challenges standing in the way of a sustainable local food system in Josephine County and opportunities to strengthen the system.

- Lack of co-ops for selling products or procuring equipment
- The local market is too small to allow all local farmers to achieve prosperity
- Land-use issues around farmland and Governor Kitzhaber's executive order potentially allowing Jackson, Josephine, and Douglas counties to redefine agricultural and farm land
- Although the Grower's Market is thriving and a community institution, it needs to expand and seek a location that will allow it to operate year-round, in all weather conditions.
- Lack of a community USDA certified processing facility
- Overconcentration of grocery stores near the Grants Pass Parkway making it difficult for those without reliable transportation to obtain affordable nutritious food
- The lack of a grocery store or supermarket in any northern Josephine County rural populated area
- Rising poverty and emergency food box utilization are stretching emergency food resources in a time of decreasing funding
- While there is a diverse farming community, the crops, especially among vegetable growers have a high overlap with limited opportunities for niche marketing
- Many CSA's remain expensive and beyond the reach of many families in the community
- A lack of a pipeline to get local produce into local and chain grocery stores either through aggregation or contract
- Lack of knowledge among low and no-income families about utilizing fresh, frozen, or unprocessed produce in their daily cooking (anecdotal reports from pantry staff and volunteers)
- The Rogue Valley Food System Planning Process is a joint Josephine-Jackson Counties initiative funded by the Meyer Memorial Trust seeking to build additional infrastructure and develop stronger food systems across both counties
- The general lack of overarching infrastructure tying the many valuable and essential efforts to improve the food system in Josephine County.

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## APPENDIX I – PRODUCER SURVEY

### Farm Producers Survey Questions

1. What is the history of your farm/ranch?

2. Is farming/ranching your fulltime profession

Yes       No

3. Do you work off the farm/ranch?

Yes       No

4. How many acres do you farm/ranch?

5. What farming/ranching methods does your farm use? (Please select all applicable)

- Conventional
- Certified Organic
- Non-Certified Organic
- Transitioning to Organic
- Biodynamic
- Other (Please Specify)

6. What do you produce?

Raw Products:

Finished Products:

7. Does your farm generate a profit?

Yes       No

8. Do you utilize any subsidies?

Yes       No

9. Whom do you sell your product to?

10. How much do you grow/produce in an average year?

11. Do you donate product to the Josephine County Food Bank, Access, or a local food pantry?

Yes       No

12. Where do you sell your product?

Growers Market/Farmers Market

Retailer

Farm Stand

Other (Please Specify)

13. How would you define your local market?

14. Do you sell directly to consumers?

Yes       No

15. Do you have any interest in selling directly to consumers?

Yes       No

16. If yes, are you aware of any direct sales opportunities?

17. Do you have any interest in selling your product locally?

Yes       No

18. Do you sell your product locally?

Yes       No

19. Do you market your product locally?

Yes       No

20. Do you sell your product outside of the Rogue Valley?

Yes       No

21. If yes, where do you sell?

22. Is there any form of assistance that would help you market or sell your product locally? (Please Specify)

23. What barriers prevent you from selling directly to consumers? (Please Specify)

24. What laws or policies affect you in terms of food production, distribution, or consumption?

25. Do you have any transportation issues affecting your farm/ranch?

Yes       No

26. Are you aware of any farmland preservation efforts in your area?

Yes       No

27. What is the future of your farm or ranch?

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## APPENDIX II – PROCESSING FACILITY QUESTIONS

### Kitchen Questions

1. Do you have any interest in preserving all or part of your crop?  
Yes      No
2. Do you have any interest in creating value added processed products with part of your crop?  
Yes      No
3. What type of value added products would you like to create?
4. What types of processing/kitchen equipment would be most beneficial to your farm? (Please be specific)
5. How much capacity (estimated) would you consider processing in any given year?
6. What would you estimate to be your heaviest period of usage for processing?
7. What is your growing season?
8. What type of products would you process if a facility were available?
9. What is the biggest processing deficiency affecting your farm?
10. Do you have multiple growing seasons during the year?  
Yes      No
11. Would you be interested in joining a processing cooperative or a farmers' cooperative to collectively market or sell your processed goods?

Yes       No

12. If yes, what would you like that cooperative to look and function like?

13. Would you prefer the kitchen to be ODA or USDA certified?

USDA       ODA       Other (Please specify)

14. Would you utilize any of the following if they were available?

Dry Storage     Refrigeration Storage       Freezer Storage  
 Processing Equipment Storage       Labeling/Misc. Storage

15. How much storage would you need to effectively process your crop or create value added products?

16. Would successful processing of crops or the creation of value added goods require additional infrastructure?

Yes       No

17. If yes, what type of infrastructure would be required (please be as specific as possible)?

18. What else do you require in order to process your crop?

19. What questions or concerns do you have about community food processing?

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## APPENDIX III – DIRECT MARKETING QUESTIONS

### Direct Sales Questions

Using the scale of 1 to 5 (1 being low and 5 being high), please indicate the degree to which the following factors limit your direct local sales.

1. Difficult to find, interact, or correspond with retailers or consumers.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

2. Unable to produce sufficient quantity to meet demand.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

3. Lack of distribution system for local products.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

4. Lack of local processing facilities.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

5. Too time intensive.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

6. Price premiums paid to farmer.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

7. Insufficient demand for local products.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

8. Cost of labor.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

9. Insufficient access to labor.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

10. Government regulations and policies.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

## APPENDIX IV – PANTRY CLIENT SURVEY

Have you filled out this survey before?  Yes  No

### Food Security

1. How often do you or your family use food boxes?
 

Weekly     Monthly     A Few Times a Year     Once a Year
2. Do you visit a Food Pantry more than once a month?
 

Yes     No
3. If yes, how many times per month do you visit a pantry?
 

Two     Three     Four     More than Four
4. Do you visit multiple food pantries to get enough food for the month?
 

Yes     No
5. If yes, which pantries do you visit?
 

ROC     IV Open Door     Lifelines     NV Dorcas     GP Dorcas  
 Williams     Wolf Creek     FISH     CJ Dorcas     The Salvation Army
6. Do you or your family receive SNAP benefits (Food Stamps)?
 

Yes     No
7. If yes, how long do your benefits usually last?
 

1 Week     2 Weeks     3 Weeks     All Month     Over 1 Month
8. Do you use Soup Kitchens or other meal sites?
 

Yes     No
9. If yes, how often do you get food from these other locations?
 

Once a Week     Twice a Week     Three Times a Week  
 Less than once a Week     More than 3x a week     Daily
10. Where else do you and your family go to get food?

### Household

1. How many children under 18 live in your household?
 

None     One     Two     Three     Four or more
2. Does anyone in the household work?
 

Yes     No  
 Full-time     Part-time     Temporary     Seasonal     Day Labor
3. Are you currently living with another family, relatives, or friends?
 

Yes     No

4. What do you use to cook your food?  
 Stove       Oven       Microwave       Crockpot       No appliances
5. Can you refrigerate or freeze food?  
 Yes       No
6. In 2011, did you not pay a utility bill so you could afford to buy food?  
 Yes       No
7. In 2011, did you not buy food to be able to pay a bill?  
 Yes       No
8. Do you or your spouse/partner skip or reduce the size of your meals to feed children?  
 Yes       No
9. Do you or your spouse/partner skip or reduce the size of meals to feed other family members?  
 Yes       No

#### Transportation

1. How do you get to the pantry?  
 Own Car       Friends/Relatives Car       Bicycle       Bus/Public Transport  
 Walk       Other (please tell us how)
2. From 1 to 10, with 10 being impossible, does your way of getting to the pantry make it hard to get enough food?  
1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10
3. Does the time when the pantries are open impact your ability to get enough food?  
 Yes       No

#### Education

1. Would it be helpful for you if the pantries offered cooking classes/demonstrations?  
 Yes       No
2. Do you have knowledge or experience with any of the following (please check all that apply)  
 Canning       Drying       Freezing       Dehydrating       Other
3. Would you like classes or education on any of the choices from Question 2?  
 Yes       No
4. If yes, which choices?