

PRESENTATION SNAPSHOT

Out of our silos, into the movement: Community food systems and Cooperative Extension in Oregon



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Presentation Abstract

Oregon has a vibrant community food systems (CFS) movement, which has grown from a few key actors and organizations two decades ago to an increasingly organized, statewide network of more than 50 organizations working on the full span of food system challenges. These diverse organizations have endorsed a common vision: “All Oregonians thrive with healthy, affordable foods from an environmentally and economically resilient, regional food system.” The CFS movement aims to expand Oregon’s sustainable agriculture and local and regional food sectors in ways that address the state’s chronic challenges with food insecurity and inequitable access to healthy food. Analysts have described Cooperative Extension’s potential and actual contributions to local, regional, and community food system development. Because many Extension personnel feel limited in their ability to work toward transforming the food system, researchers suggest partnering with external organizations with a similar understanding of food system problems and possible solutions. As those partners develop their own theories of food system change and strategic paths forward, Extension can use these to organize its own CFS goals and strategies. I demonstrate that this is well underway in Oregon.

Keywords: Community Food Systems, Cooperative Extension, Oregon

Key Points

- Oregon’s CFS movement has evolved over two decades and is now embodied by the Oregon Community Food Systems Network (OCFSN), a statewide entity with 52 member organizations spanning the full range of CFS challenges and approaches. Over the same period, a small team of OSU Extension agents focused on sustainable agriculture and local food system development has grown into the OSU Center for Small Farms & Community Food Systems, which integrates with public health and community nutrition via an integrated CFS Working Group.
- These two increasingly connected statewide institutions bring together actors with a diverse set of expertise and experience relevant to food systems change. Information exchange, shared learning, and cross-cutting research and education projects have built relationships, trust, and shared purpose within and between these institutions.

continued


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Conclusion

The CFS working group is learning to use OCFSN's framework for food systems transformation to inform not only our projects and programs, but also how we operate as Extension agents. This means remaking our community-engagement strategies and centering equity. It also means increased engagement with public policy, as well as pushing for change within our own institution. In this way, we are better able to support the food systems transformation led by Oregon's CFS movement. 

Resource

Oregon Community Food Systems Network: <http://ocfsn.net/>