



THE STATE OF OUR LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM

What we know, what we don't, and where we go from here

A Status Report by the Port Townsend Food Co-op Food System Development Committee

<u>Committee Participants</u>	<u>Key Informants Interviewed</u>
Janet Welch, Co-Chair – Board President	Shirley Moss, Port Townsend Food Bank
David Wayne Johnson, Co-Chair - Treasurer	Laura Lewis, WSU Extension
Henry Werch, Board Vice President	Arran Stark, Jefferson Healthcare
Kenna Eaton, Food Co-op General Manager	Micaela Colley, Organic Seed Alliance
Rachel Williams, Board Administrator	Holly O'Neil, North Sound Food System Network
Cindy Scott, Board Administrator	Candice Cosler, Farm to School Program
Brendon O'Shea, Food Co-op Local Cultivator	Crystie Kisler, Finn River Farm
Lisa Crosby, Member	Sarah Speath, Jefferson Land Trust
Rick Doherty, Member	Judy Alexander, Food System Council
Laura Llewelyn, Member - Farmer	Will O'Donnell, Jefferson County Farmer's Market

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Principle Author, David Wayne Johnson

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INTRODUCTION

Our local food system. What is it? What does it look like? Who are the players? Why is it important? How do we build it so it serves us better? What can the Food Co-op do? What can you do? These are some of the questions that the Food System Development Committee (FSDC) of the Port Townsend Food Co-op asked between July 2013 and December 2014. During that period of time the FSDC interviewed a diverse cross section of players in our local food system. What we discovered was enlightening, encouraging, exciting, confounding and confusing all at the same time. This report attempts to answer those questions and come to some sound conclusions and recommendations about what our local food system is, why we should care, and what can we do about it.

So, what is our local food system? In order to answer that, we need to define the term "local." The Food Co-op defines local as that which is produced, manufactured and sold within a five county area to include Jefferson, Clallam, Kitsap, Mason and Island Counties. For the purposes of this report, we will limit that definition to Eastern Jefferson County. The "food system" is that mosaic (quilt, puzzle) of players that results from each playing their specific roles to effectively feed and provide goods to the local community. It is ideally a self-supporting organism that functions to the benefit of the community as a whole by providing healthy, sustainable, wholesome food and products to whomever wishes to buy them. The current state of our local food system, as far as we've been able to determine, will be discussed here, as well as some things we can be doing to make it stronger and more resilient.

Why is this important? Because without a strong, resilient local food system, our community cannot thrive in the long term, and in fact, could be at risk of not surviving at all. Sound impossible? It's not, and we will discuss why in the section on Threats, Barriers and Gaps. It is also important because it has an effect on many areas of our lives – our local economy, environment, natural resources, and our health, which is directly related our quality of life.

Also, the idea that the Co-op would want to work to strengthen the local food system, even if it means we help farmers supply our competitors may seem counter-intuitive, but in fact, it helps everyone, Co-op included. A good example if this is the idea of helping to develop a market for local winter squash, even of that means the local growers are selling it to other markets – the Co-op also gets to provide something it didn't have before, and can pass on to our members and the community at large.

We're all in this together, and the sooner we take that to heart and start acting to build our local food system, the better we will all be. So read on and while you do, keep in mind that you are every bit as integral to this system as the Co-op, the people we interviewed, the ideas we gathered and the recommendations we made – you are the local food system – and our "thrival" depends on you.

THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The Food Co-op Strategic Plan was completed in 2012 as a tool that helps the Co-op focus on its most important functions. Some functions are obvious, some less so. As an example, the advocacy function of the organization would largely go unnoticed by the membership until some particularly charged issue arose. At that point members would weigh in about how the organization should, or should not, engage in advocacy. The process of crafting the Strategic Plan required the Board and Management to take a broader perspective with things like advocacy to establish strategic positions for the organization (and, yes, the decision was clear that we are an advocacy organization).

One of the themes that emerged consistently in the planning process was food security and the function of the organization in optimizing it. While many of the things we do, advocacy for example, are tied to assuring that our future food supply is safe and plentiful, one of the keys to a safe food supply was bringing it closer to home. Food that is produced locally and regionally and by growers that can market their products more directly is less subject to supply interruptions and political and market disturbances. A shorter supply chain is more transparent---knowing the face of 'your farmer' is very different than sourcing from the international commodities market. The shorter the supply chain is the lower the carbon footprint is likely to be for a given food. And, of course, there is the diminished nutritional quality and taste of food that was picked unripe, boxed, and shipped across oceans. Thus, one of the primary strategies we identified in the planning process was strengthening the local food system.

The Food Coop was fostering its local food connections long before 'local' was touted as a marketing strategy. The Strategic Plan placed the importance of the local food system so high that it is secondary only to 'Market Position', e.g. its ability to keep its doors open. And even the Market Position element of the plan references the importance of local food! The relationship between the two is that our market position is highly dependent on our supplying locally and regionally produced food, and our Food System Development element positions us to not simply sell those foods but have a central role in strengthening the entire system from which they originate.

The Strategic Plan identifies “actively collaborated in local and regional food system development” as the Long Range Goal for the Food System Development element. See Appendix A for the full Five Year Strategic Plan for more information.

FOOD SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (FSDC)

Formed in July 2013 to advise the Food Co-op's Board of Directors and General Manager on how to implement the Food System Development element #2 of the Strategic Plan, The FSDC's charter and meeting minutes can be reviewed in Appendix B and Appendix C respectively. The charter's goals were taken directly from the Strategic Plan and proved to be too broad and ambitious once the FSDC started to dig in to this work. Initially it was decided that the focus should be on developing a picture or "map" of the local food system so as to better understand what it constituted, how individual sectors were connected and what gaps or roles could the Co-op play or fill to help strengthen it. In order to do this, it was necessary to interview the "players" in the system as a fact finding or information gathering exercise as well as a way to reach out to these players to involve them in the work of the FSDC and to establish understanding and strengthen relationships. FSDC members and those players who came to the meetings to speak are listed on the cover of this report. Subsequent sections of this report will go into more detail on what the players had to say and offer in terms of suggestions or recommendations on building the local food system.

The committee's work continues with this report to the Board, General Management and Members as to the status of the FSDC and as the theme for the 2015 Annual General Members Meeting in May. There is still much to be done, but this report gives us a fairly good idea of what those things are. We welcome your comments and this report will remain in draft status until we are satisfied that those interested have had a change to comment, and those comments are considered in the final version. Recommendations on what the committee's and Co-op's role and work should be going forward will be included in the final section of this report on what we can do to build the local food system.

PRINCIPLES OF A HEALTHY, SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEM

In June 2010, the American Dietetic Association, American Nurses Association, American Planning Association, and the American Public Health Association initiated a collaborative process to develop a set of shared food system principles. The following principles are the result of this process and have been collectively endorsed by these organizations.

“A healthy, sustainable food system is:

HEALTH- PROMOTING

- Supports the physical and mental health of all farmers, workers and eaters
- Accounts for the public health impacts across the entire lifecycle of how food is produced, processed, packaged, labeled, distributed, marketed, consumed and disposed

SUSTAINABLE

- Conserves, protects, and regenerates natural resources, landscapes and biodiversity
- Meets our current food and nutrition needs without compromising the ability of the system to meet the needs of future generations

RESILIENT

- Thrives in the face of challenges, such as unpredictable climate, increased pest resistance, and declining, increasingly expensive water and energy supplies

DIVERSE IN

- Size and scale — includes a diverse range of food production, transformation, distribution, marketing, consumption; and disposal practices, occurring at diverse scales, from local and regional, to national and global
- Geography — considers geographic differences in natural resources, climate, customs, and heritage
- Culture— appreciates and supports a diversity of cultures, socio- demographics, and lifestyles
- Choice — provides a variety of health - promoting food choices for all

FAIR

- Supports fair and just communities and conditions for all farmers, workers and eaters
- Provides equitable physical access to affordable food that is health promoting and culturally appropriate

ECONOMICALLY BALANCED

- Provides economic opportunities that are balanced across geographic regions of the country and at different scales of activity, from local to global, for a diverse range of food system stakeholders
- Affords farmers and workers in all sectors of the system a living wage

TRANSPARENT

- Provides opportunities for farmers, workers and eaters to gain the knowledge necessary to understand how food is produced, transformed, distributed, marketed, consumed and disposed
- Empowers farmers, workers and eaters to actively participate in decision- making in all sectors of the system

A healthy, sustainable food system emphasizes, strengthens, and makes visible the interdependent and inseparable relationships between individual sectors (from production

coordinators, etc. to educate ourselves and try to come to terms with what the system looked and acted like, and what the Co-op could do to help it grow. We termed these Key Informants and others who work in and support the local food system as the “Players.”

THE PLAYERS

This section will cover the various individuals, organizations and entities that play a role in the local food system as informed by the FSDC work. It does not include all the players that exist in that system, just the ones the FSDC interviewed or are aware of through other sources. It does, however, offer a broad enough view of the system to get a good sense of what it looks like, how it functions and what can be done to strengthen it. As such, not all the players fit neatly into one of the categories used here. For example, organizations like WSU (Washington State University) Extension could fit into several of the different categories, being a Government Institution that researches and implements Programs to help research, educate, support and build the food system. The Food Co-op too could be considered a Market, Group and Institution. What’s important is not to force a player into a category, but to realize and understand the scope of the whole system, the myriad roles that are played and how they function together to support that whole. Knowing this, so the theory goes, can help us identify and fill in the gaps, or address needs to strengthen the system overall.

This leads to the realization that there are players and roles that don’t currently exist, have not even been thought of or developed yet. Once we can see how these pieces fit together, we can get a better grasp of the scope and start making connections and seeing needs that are currently unknown.

The FSDC spent the bulk of its time interviewing these key informants and asking a lot of questions. For those of you interested the details of these interviews, you may read the individual meeting minutes in Appendix C.

THE FARMERS AND PRODUCERS

The most fundamental piece of the food system quilt (puzzle) is of course those who produce the food and/or create value added products from that food. These are the individual Farmers and Producers that historically have been the bedrock of American culture. Recently, since the end of World War II, their role in American society as suppliers of food has been challenged by a Corporate/Industrial model of food production based on fossil fuels, chemical fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides and global transportation systems. Some would argue that this industrial model includes the individual farmers in the traditional sense, but only as employees of the parent corporation. And, because of the use of chemicals, the products derived from this model cannot be considered

"organic," or "environmentally responsible" or sustainable, which is essentially what the Food Co-op stands for as stated in the principles and strategic plan goals:

Providing healthful, environmentally responsible and socially accountable food, products, packaging, nutritional information, and education" - Principle #1 of the Food Co-op Mission and Principles

"Strengthen our position as the community's leading source for organic, non-GMO, local, and regional products and make our cooperative even more welcoming, accessible and affordable" - Long Range Goal of the Strategic Plan element #1 Market Position

This is not to say that all local farms are organic or must be organic. But as we shall see, to build and maintain a strong resilient local food system, organic means environmentally responsible and sustainable, and those things are fundamental to our definition of the local food system.

In 2012, the **Citizens for Local Food (CFL)** produced an impressive report based upon a survey they conducted on the Jefferson County Farming community (Appendix D). Of the 87 Jefferson County farms identified, 57 out the 80 contacted participated in the survey. The picture the survey painted of our local farms is interesting and important to understand. For example:

- 81% of our farmers have a college or post graduate degree
- The average farm size is 67 acres, and 45% of those polled wanted to expand those farms
- There is a demand for farm workers and adequate housing for those workers
- 28% of farms produced just food crops, 41% produce just livestock, and 32% produce a combination of crops and livestock
- Almost half the farms produce “value-added” products¹
- 75% of sales are within Jefferson County
- 94% of farmers require supplemental income to continue farming
- 40% made no profit, or had losses in terms of net income
- Lack of Demand for product was the major obstacle in farmers making a decent living

It is estimated that only about 4% of the food consumed here in East Jefferson County is actually produced here.² This reinforces what the farm survey concluded: that there is huge potential for growth of our local farms in terms of market demand for product, expansion in land and workforce, and, according the Washington State Employment Security, agriculture is the one of the fastest growing segments of our local economy.³

¹ Value added means “creating a change in the physical state or form of the product” or the production of a product in a manner that enhances its value.

² Compared to all the food produced outside our area and sold here, even though 73% of product produced here is sold here.

³ Team Jefferson Business Cluster Report (Final Draft November 30, 2010).

The farm survey did a tremendous job of analyzing local Farms and Producers. It also provides recommendations on what it will take to build “a local, secure and just food system that strengthens our community, ecology and economy.” We will incorporate some of these suggested “needs” into the Recommendations section at the end of this report.

The Food Co-op is directly involved with the local farms and producers through our **Local Cultivator, Brendon O’Shea**, whose job it is to build relationships with our local suppliers through good communication and informal agreements so they can provide their product to the Co-op for sale. How do we reach out to new or existing suppliers to provide more and varied product? This is something Brendon will be working on as we move forward. Perhaps it involves extending the growing season? And that would involve building infrastructure like green houses, hoop houses and storage facilities. Supporting Brendon in this work will not just help the Co-op, but the local food system as a whole by helping to expand the market of the local farms and producers – a primary need identified by the CLF Farmer Survey.

When looking to interview a local farmer, the FSDC decided on **Crystie Kisler of Finnriver Farm**, for a number of reasons. Finnriver has worked closely with the Jefferson Land Trust to secure conservation easements to protect Chimacum Creek and the historic Brown Dairy Farm. They have worked hard to find a niche in the local food system and have been successful at producing a quality product (cider) that is being sold locally as well as outside the region. They have worked with the County to get their production and tasting room facilities properly permitted, testing some of the Counties new Ag Land regulations. Currently they are expanding their farm to include the historic Brown Dairy at Chimacum Corners, where they will use the existing farm house as office space for Ag-related non-profits like the WSU extension and the North Olympic Salmon Coalition. The re-development of this historic site also includes organic apple orchards, cider production facility, tasting room, community gathering spaces, on-going educational programs and a commercial community kitchen. As a working farm and production facility with agri-tourism, community and educational components, the Finnriver - Brown Farm project will add exponential energy to a fast emergent agricultural and economic renaissance in Chimacum.

INSTITUTIONS

As part of the local food system, Institutions include schools, hospitals, healthcare facilities, shelters, churches, County Jail, food banks and restaurants in the sense that they are established organizations where food and prepared food is served to its patrons on a regular basis. Getting these institutions to provide more local food is the objective.

There have been several success stories in terms of providing local food through our institutions. One is what’s happened to the food service at the **Jefferson Healthcare Hospital**. **Arran Stark** who heads up the food service was given \$15,000 from the hospital

to purchase vouchers from local farms for what he calls an “institutional CSA⁴ program,” which provide seed money for the farms while committing them to provide product to the hospital. Patients and patrons of the hospital café benefit with fresh locally grown produce and meat – a healthy diet at a low price – a great value overall, and a win/win for everyone. Arran has also been an energetic driving force in the local food system through food preparation education; teaching many simple but effective ways to cook the freshest local produce, and by pushing to get schools to start serving fresh local food.

As another example, The **Port Townsend School District** recently embarked on a new culinary program that has “revolutionized” their school food service. This is what local chef **Hope Borsato**, Director of Kitchen Operations for the Port Townsend School District had to say about the new program: “The Port Townsend School District has acknowledged the need to align itself with its wellness policy to deliver highly nutritious, wholesome foods for our students on a consistent basis. This goal is supported by the USDA findings of high childhood obesity rates and the need for better nutrition in our schools. We have analyzed all aspects of our food service program. Out of that review, we've developed a comprehensive kitchen plan. We have visited exemplar programs, such as Vashon Island's program, in our efforts to learn more. We know that we must take small, steady, and persistent steps to be successful. These steps include building a strong kitchen team, connecting with students, families, staff, and community members. We will streamline our menus by utilizing less processed food and by preparing more wholesome, local foods by in-house, scratch cooking. For the future, we see pilot projects utilizing school gardens and school instructional kitchens that promote vocational and life-long skills.” From what we have heard, the results so far have been nothing short of “amazing” and delicious!

The **Clallam County Jail** has a vocational program in professional baking and pastry, giving inmates the chance to give back to their community through the local food system by providing baked goods and learning a job skill to boot. Programs such as this could be expanded to include all aspects of the food system, as well as provide the inmates themselves with fresh, healthy, local food from their own kitchens.

Recently, **Shirley Moss** with the **Port Townsend Food Bank** was recognized by the Governor for her outstanding volunteer contribution as a Food Bank volunteer since 1997 and the Manager since 2011. The Food Bank serves approximately 350 people and rising, with about 17 pounds of food per person per visit on average from a variety of sources such as government programs, restaurants, markets, local gardens and individual donations. In a country where annually 40% of our food goes to waste, the Food Banks are an essential safety valve for some of that food getting to people who really need it. The PT Food Bank even has its own small green house and outdoor garden that you can visit at the Mountain View Commons, 1925 Blaine St., where the PT Food Bank is also located. Drop in and give your donation to Shirley and also plenty of thanks for all the hard work and dedication!

⁴ CSA stands for Community Supported Agriculture – community members purchase a share of a farm’s produce at the beginning of the growing season, then reap the benefit each week as their selections are delivered or available at the farm for pickup.

Probably the biggest potential to expand the market for local food is in the sector of local **Restaurants**. With the exception of the **Fireside Restaurant at Port Ludlow** with its “farm to table” offering, and a few others, most local restaurants do not buy, prepare or serve local food. The reasons seem to be consistency, availability and reliability. In order to have a consistent supply of food for their regular menus, most restaurants need to have a reliable source of food that is delivered on a regular basis. That means they are buying their product from larger markets rather than from what’s available locally. What’s different about the “farm to table” menu is that what’s available from the local farms at any given time of year is what will be on the menu that day, not the other way around. If all our local restaurants started buying local produce, or had at least one “farm to table” menu item the positive impact to the local producer would be enormous. The problem is in the coordination between the producer and restaurant. How do we insure that the restaurant gets what it needs when it needs it, and how do we communicate that and get a commitment from the producer to provide that when it’s needed? This appears to be one of the major “gaps” in the local food system that we will touch on later in this report. There also seems to be a “marketing” opportunity here with regards to Port Townsend being recognized as the best place to sample local fare, just about anywhere – or perhaps as the “Farm to Table” capital of the Northwest?

GROUPS

Groups essentially include non-profit organizations that function to support the food system in some way, such as Jefferson Land Trust, Citizens for Local Food, The Chimacum and Quimper Granges, Local 20/20, LandWorks Collaborative, Farm to School Coalition or the Food Policy Council. Helping these groups do what they do best through donations, volunteering and connecting them to those who need them is the objective.

The **Jefferson Land Trust** has played a significant role in securing agricultural and other important open space land in perpetuity through the use of conservation easements. These easements can be used by property owners to gain tax benefits or conservation futures funding through Jefferson County government, as well as keeping the land in trust from further development that could impact our local food system. The Land Trust is looking to play even more of a role in not only securing land for farming, but providing the land and housing for “start-up” farmers, farm interns or a farm “incubator” project near the Chimacum Corners area they are calling the Chimacum Commons.

North Sound Network is a group of food hubs that are trying to establish a network of hubs along the model of the Puget Sound Food Hub. What is a food hub? A food hub is a facility for the aggregation of produce from farms and ranches, where product is cut, cleaned and packaged for redistribution. There are efforts to create food hubs across the US, with the goal of reclaiming the mechanics of food distribution. Benefits include cost savings, efficiency in packaging, transportation, etc. Food hubs help small farmers serve large customers by aggregating produce from multiple small farms. The Puget Sound Food Hub has been conceived of as a farmer/producer owned co-op. The organization

behind this project is the Northwest Ag Business Center (NABC), a non-profit. Many hubs are still forming and growing, and find it hard to break even. Often Food Hubs have a benefactor who subsidizes operation in order to get them established. The USDA is now recognizing the value of food hubs and providing support. Food Co-ops can apply for USDA funding to support food hub development. More analysis needs to be done to determine whether a food hub can be viable in Jefferson County as there seems to be a certain threshold at which they can operate effectively, but the idea is integral to the very nature of the local food system itself.

A new group that has recently formed that evolved out of the **Citizens for Local Food** is the **Food System Council**. Spearhead by **Judy Alexander**, their goal is to have representation from as broad a spectrum of the food system as possible, including farms, restaurants, retailers, institutional buyers, value added producers, regulatory agencies, etc., each member representing their specific sector of the food system. Their task is to share information to make the overall food system as healthy and as effective as it can be, and it's about progress, not perfection, which means connections are being formed and strengthened on an on-going basis. The Food Co-op's Local Cultivator **Brendon O'Shea** and FSDC member **Lisa Crosby** are members of the Council, insuring the Co-op has a presence on the council that can translate into direct action through our market.

MARKETS

Markets are where the food is taken to be sold and distributed to the local population. **The Food Co-op, Safeway, QFC, Chimacum Corner Store and the Farmer's Market** all fit into this category. Next to the Farmers and Producers, the Markets are the most important component in the local food system. Without them, the distribution of food would be problematic at best.

One of the most distinguishing characteristics of our local markets in relation to our local food system, is how much local food is being sold by these markets. It is estimated that only 3 – 4 % of food consumed locally is grown locally. We know the Food Co-op and the Farmer's Markets are selling the bulk of local product, and both had their biggest years yet in sales. How important is it to keep that edge over the conventional corporate markets? Doesn't selling more local product in all the markets benefit the local food system overall and keep that money close to home? (need to elaborate)

Since competition is a factor, perhaps a good strategy is for the Food Co-op to actively partner with The Farmer's Market and work together to increase the share of local food by coordinating on a "mid-week market" at the Co-op.

PROGRAMS

Governmental, institutional or non-profit programs help food to get to where it is needed – they fill the gaps in the food system due to economic, systemic or societal deficiencies. Here is what the FSDC learned about these programs:

A local County sponsored program that has been a big help to local producers is the **Conservation Futures Fund**. Created in 2002 by the Jefferson County Board of Commissions to help acquire and protect open space land for fish & wildlife habitat, greenbelts, conservation easements, agriculture and timberland, the program requires a 50% matching fund to conserve these lands in perpetuity, using money from a special tax levy. Each year a committee reviews applications for this funding and awards them to proposals that best meet the approval criteria. See the link in the resources section at the end of this report for more information and how to apply.

Another County program that helps farmers and owners of agricultural land is the **Open Space Tax Program**. The program is administered by the Assessor, affects how your property tax is calculated and could lead to a tax break whether or not your land is zoned for agriculture. See Appendix E Agriculture in Jefferson County page 5 for more information.

The **Washington State University Extension (WSU)** being an institution of higher learning with a focus on agriculture has many programs available, it even maintains the Twin Visit Ranch on Marrowstone Island that operates under the **Land Legacy Program** focusing primarily on animal husbandry and livestock management. Sustainable farming, introduction to farming and a **field internship program** with classes in agricultural entrepreneurial and farm business are also available. Jefferson County has one of the largest farm education programs in the State, which is surprising considering the size of the agriculture community and local farms compared to other counties. WSU acknowledges that most of the interns come from out of state to study here.

50% of kids in Jefferson County get free or reduced meals from school lunch programs, and a large portion of kids eat 2 to 3 of their meals at school. How healthy is the food those kids are eating? **The Farm to School Coalition** under the guidance of **Candice Cosler** started a school garden program in 2009 with 36 students and a grant from the Jefferson County Solid Waste Division. The program has taught over 500 kids about where food comes from, how to grow it and take pride in what they've grown. Some of the food grown goes to the school lunch program. Soups and salad bars are a good way for schools to start incorporating local, fresh food. Through the Wellness Committee at the Port Townsend School District, the program has been working toward the goal of simply reducing the amount of processed foods and increasing the use of whole fresh foods while also supporting the school garden program. This has led to the success of the School District lunch program noted in the Institutions section above.

GOVERNMENT

Government plays a role in the local food system in a number of ways, from land use regulations, product inspection and certification, to farm and crop subsidies, to food stamps. Below is a list of those government agencies – Federal, State and Local – and what they do and how they affect the local food system:

- Jefferson County Department of Community Development – regulates Agricultural Uses and Critical Areas (wetlands, streams, creeks, shorelines). DCD won the 2006 Governor’s Smart Communities Award for its new Agricultural code section that supports agriculture while protecting fish and wildlife. The Farmers Survey indicated that many Farmers want better regulations but weren’t even aware of the new code and what could actually be done under it. Better outreach is called for.
- Jefferson County Planning Commission – makes land use policy through the comprehensive plan, recommends comprehensive plan amendments which in turn inform development regulations and site specific re-zones. Agriculture is a protected use under the Comp Plan and new sections will be written for the 2016 update (with an extension to 2018) that will focus on Local Food System Security through policies, goals and strategies
- Jefferson County Health Department – regulates potable water use, septic systems, food service, solid waste and other health and environmental health issues
- Jefferson County Conservation District – assists farmers in conserving soil and farm land through education, special projects and Best Management Practices
- Washington State University Extension – assists farmers and promotes agricultural activities through research and education
- Washington State Department of Ecology – regulates water use for irrigation
- Washington State Department of Agriculture –
 - Protects and reduces the risk to public health by assuring the safety of the state's food supply.
 - Ensures the safe and legal distribution, use, and disposal of pesticides and fertilizers in Washington State.
 - Protects Washington State's natural resources, agriculture industry, and the public from selected plant and animal pests and diseases.
 - Facilitates the movement of Washington agricultural products in domestic and international markets.
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration - The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is an agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It consists of the Office of the Commissioner and four directorates overseeing the core functions of the agency: Medical Products and Tobacco, Foods and Veterinary Medicine, Global Regulatory Operations and Policy, and Operations. The FDA:
 - Protects the public health by assuring that foods (except for meat from livestock, poultry and some egg products which are regulated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture) are safe, wholesome, sanitary and properly labeled

- Ensuring that human and veterinary drugs, and vaccines and other biological products and medical devices intended for human use are safe and effective
- Protects the public from electronic product radiation
- Assures cosmetics and dietary supplements are safe and properly labeled
- Regulates tobacco products
- Advances the public health by helping to speed product innovations
- U.S. Department of Agriculture – USDA has created a strategic plan to implement its vision. The framework of this plan depends on these key activities:
 - Expanding markets for agricultural products and supporting international economic development, further developing alternative markets for agricultural products and activities
 - Providing financing needed to help expand job opportunities and improve housing, utilities and infrastructure in rural America
 - Enhancing food safety by taking steps to reduce the prevalence of foodborne hazards from farm to table, improving nutrition and health by providing food assistance and nutrition education and promotion
 - Managing and protecting America's public and private lands
 - Working cooperatively with other levels of government and the private sector.

THREATS, BARRIERS AND GAPS

In order to have a complete understanding and appreciation of the local food system, we must understand those things that can, will and do adversely affect it. This understanding can then lead toward actions to address and mitigate those things, helping the system be more resilient. The list below contains those things that could have a negative impact on, and also for some of the items, be reasons for building a vibrant, resilient local food system.

CASCADIA SUBDUCTION ZONE RUPTURE

Probably the most devastating natural event in scope and impact that we face, it is also so in the fact of its inevitability. It is not a question of if, but when. And when this natural geologic event occurs again, the impacts will be staggering in scale and duration. If we are not prepared for this event – and it is very hard to prepare for something that is so far beyond the comprehension of most people - we will have a hard time just surviving, let alone rebuilding.

The Cascadia Subduction zone is a long fault line that runs just off the Washington Coast where the North American tectonic plate rides over and “subdues” the Pacific plate. This zone has created some of the greatest magnitude (average 9 on the Richter scale) megathrust earthquakes in geologic history that seem to occur on a 300 to 600 year time scale. The last mega quake of this type is said to have occurred in the year 1700. We know this from Japanese records of a major Tsunami at that time, as well as recent seismic studies undertaken in Washington State. We are now within the 300 to 600 year time frame.

Recently, as a local government planner, I attended a briefing on this subject by the Washington Military Department Emergency Management Division, in which they presented the “FEMA Response Plan” for just such an event. Millions of people in Western Washington who survive the event and subsequent after-shocks will be without potable water, food, electricity, communications, medical treatment, transportation – basically all the everyday “necessities” we take for granted on a daily basis – for weeks and likely months on end. This is not an exaggeration. This is what our own government has concluded.

A critical piece in surviving a natural disaster is having sufficient supplies when cut off from the outside world. Though the Army and FEMA will certainly respond to this event when it happens, their efforts will likely be overwhelmed by the scale of the event and many people will be without, even if they have prepared, for some unknown period of time. Having a strong local food system in place that can feed most of us when this happens will surely help.

ECONOMIC COLLAPSE

By now we’ve all experienced the effects of an economy in recession, and some would even say, “depression.” It basically means less money to buy things – food being one of them. Since food is a necessity instead of a luxury, we simply can’t do without it, unlike that new car or trip to Spain. That’s why when times are tough economically, we tend to see more people growing their own food, and actually, growing your own food in your own home garden is part of the local food system. This may be one of the reasons why we have seen an increased interest in local agriculture since the recession began. More people are turning back to long held wholesome values that aren’t subject to the instability of financial markets. Not that long ago during WWII, the government had to institute rationing of basic goods and many people responded by growing “victory gardens” to help with the war effort and supplement those rations. We recommend that everyone either start a vegetable garden or join a community garden. You can’t get any fresher than home grown and it’s fun to share what you’ve grown with others – besides, it could make a huge difference in resiliency when times get tough.

CLIMATE CHANGE

We believe any “debate” about whether human beings are having an effect on earth’s climate is simply being manufactured by those with a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. Because you cannot believe in the science that produces technology like cell phones, and computers and automobiles, and reject that same science that tells us the inconvenient truth about climate change. In other words, if you believe in your cell phone, then you must also believe that human beings are having an effect on climate by releasing large amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere – because the same science has produced both. It’s simple middle school earth science. But what’s not so simple is understanding, and planning for, the effects it will have on our ability to live the lives we’re accustomed to now and into the future. It is likely we will be forced to adjust

radically to our changing climate in many ways we cannot conceive of today. The climate change model we are now seeing doesn't rule out a crop-killing frost in July. How do we respond and protect our food system from that? More green and hoop houses – more food storage facilities. What about less snow pack in the Olympics that leads to less water for streams, salmon, irrigation and potable water? Rain catchment systems to store the increase in winter rains for year around use. We must prepare for this inevitability instead of sticking our collective heads in the sand and hoping it goes away. The only debate of any value now is what we do to prepare and when we do it. We recommend having that conversation, doing as much as possible, and doing it now.

PEAK OIL⁵

Not too long ago there was no such talk of a “local” food system. That’s because all the food you ate you either grew yourself or someone close by produced and sold at the local market. With the advent of cheap oil to power road and air transportation, that all changed to the point where most of the food we consume comes from somewhere else not local, and in most cases, thousands of miles away. This has worked just fine – for a while, until you realize two things: cheap oil will stop being so cheap once we pass “peak oil,” and an unaccounted for price we pay to transport that produce contributes to the climate change problem (burning fossil fuel to transport food releases more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere). Also, to be so reliant on this remote source of food is definitely a threat to our survival, because if the semi-trucks stop coming to town with food, we will have only a few hours/days supply in the stores. Even if an alternative fuel to oil could be developed, should we still use it to transport our food from half a world away? Isn't be better to produce most of what we need here, locally, rather than rely on an uncertain outside source? What about all the tropical fruit we love so much? Couldn't that be grown here in greenhouses where we have control over product with a reduced environmental impact? Again, these are questions we need to discuss sooner rather than later.

BARRIERS

Below are some of the barriers to building our local food system we heard about from our interviews.

- Farmers are very busy and don't have time to cultivate contracts or market themselves.
- There seems to be a disconnect between great ideas about infrastructure improvements and food system visioning and what some farmers are willing or interested in doing.

⁵ Peak oil, an event based on M. King Hubbert's theory, is the point in time when the maximum rate of extraction of petroleum is reached, after which the rate of production is expected to enter terminal decline. There will come a point when the cost to extract what oil remains will be more than the energy derived from that oil. At that point, the Petroleum Age will come to an end.

- Getting restaurants to contract with local farms. It's hard because restaurants need to have a reliable source and usually only want salad mix.
- Getting institutions to change the way they've done things due to budgets, union contracts or other factors. The Hospital and School District have proven that it can be done – but only with the committed support of the Administration.
- GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) certified/Food Safety regulations are a problem for small growers to be able to sell to larger stores. Some say it's impossible to comply with and still remain sustainable.

GAPS

Gaps in the system are those areas of disconnect where a task or function that needs to be performed for the system to function properly or optimally, does not, because there is no one or thing there to perform that function. In October 2014, the FSDC did some brainstorming during the meeting and produced the list below. Keep in mind that this list is rough and incomplete and some of the items may have been addressed by now, but it does give us an idea of the many potential areas that need to be filled for the system to be more secure. One of the things the FSDC needs to do in the future is refine this list and decide how to address these gaps:

- Eggs – co-op is losing some egg producers
- Mobile Slaughter Unit
- Community kitchen for teaching purposes, teaching how to cook local food
- Outreach to people who don't have pots or pans, cook or are homeless
- Working opportunities in the food production sector
- Culinary arts education/training program
- Getting more local food into schools, hospital, restaurants
- Organic Seed breeder/seed production
- Industrial Hemp
- Underutilized lands
- Static Market
- Common understanding of what local means
- Seasonal Affordable housing
- Fertilizer – alternative to Tyson Chicken Parts
- Composting system – quality
- WATER
- Access to land for new farmers
- Need to increase the market
- Price point / Perception of Price point
- Time costs
- Willingness to pay
- Processing capacity
- Ready-made quality frozen food
- Insect foods

- Food entrepreneurship
- Ability to freeze/seasonal mitigation
- More winter production
- Human health and lifestyle education
- Burnout factor of farmers – sustainability of farming as an occupation
- Physically strenuous, better pay would reduce pressure to work harder than is sustainable.
- Community education about what it means to be a farmer.

Supply gaps:

- Grains
- Dairy/milk
- Value added – frozen berries, jams, etc
- Insects

We encourage everyone to identify gaps not listed here and pass them on to us, or simply work to fill them and let us know if we can help. .

CONCLUSION

At this point we have covered a fair amount of ground from when the FSDC first started on its journey down the local food system road. You will probably be able to come to some conclusions of your own about it, but let's just list a few of the more obvious ones. Our local food system is:

- Complex with a lot of players and moving parts, some of which have not been identified, and is continually in-flux
- Important to our health, economy, ecology, emergency preparedness, natural resources and our overall quality of life
- Has enormous potential for growth
- In need of connection building and community awareness
- Too important not to build so it's strong and resilient
- Belongs to everyone whether you are a producer, distributor or end-user (eater)
- Needs more gaps filled to be sustained without non-local input
- A popular destination for aspiring farmers to learn and try farming without buying the farm (pun intended)
- Good for the economy - buying local keeps the money here where we need it most

And we could list more, but the important question now is: where do we go from here? The FSDC has made a good start, but we still have lots of work to do. More analysis is called for, but we need to be careful not to let that analysis lead to paralysis. We know enough now that we can start taking some action, both direct and indirect. By doing so we will uncover more that needs to be done. As a friend of mine once advised when I was considering what I was going to do with my life, he said “find a need in your community and fill it.”

Finally, we would like to give our heartfelt thanks to all of you who participated in the interviews and helped make this report a reality. And we owe a great debt of gratitude to the Citizens for Local Food for their Farmer Survey 2012 Report, which has had a direct impact on this report. Building on each other's work and working together, there's nothing we can't do.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Below are some suggested recommendations on what we can do to help build a strong, resilient, secure local food system. These lists are by no means complete, and more work needs to be done, but they are things we can take action on now.

WHAT CAN THE CO-OP DO?

- Commit to “growing the appetite” for crops that are well adapted to this area, particularly winter crops not currently popular
- Develop programs to expand low cost access to local food
- Expand programs of innovative sourcing and marketing options such as direct sourcing from local and regional growers
- Develop programs that enable growers to expand production, such as organizing pre-season sign-ups for winter vegetables that the eaters would process and store for winter use
- Educate eaters in ways to buy and store foods for winter months
- Support programs that enhance the growing, processing, and storage of crops
- Provide greater education for eaters, especially on the benefits of local production and the true cost of food
- Continue and expand the Voluntary Surcharge Program where shoppers can choose to pay a percentage surcharge on sales where those funds go to support projects or organizations like the Jefferson Land Trust
- Expand produce display areas at the store, potentially outside like Sunny Farms
- Refine the FSDC Charter to focus its efforts on the most effective things the Co-op can do operationally
- Establish the FSDC as a “safe place” for farmers, producers and entrepreneurs to build trust and relationships, express concerns and make suggestions
- FSDC should refine the list of Gaps in the system as listed on page 17 and make recommendations on how to address them.
- Develop a “Food System Connector” in conjunction with the Local Cultivator to analyze gaps in the system and make connections between those gaps

WHAT CAN THE COMMUNITY DO?

- Support home, community or “pea-patch” gardens

- Identify gaps in the system and fill them
- Spread awareness of food vulnerability
- Invest in building infrastructure such as food storage facilities, green and hoop houses
- Support or Invest in a USDA mobile slaughter unit to be able to offload, cut and pack meat at multiple locations, thus saving the transportation costs of shipping livestock out of the area to be processed.
- Plant Food Forests like the one on Beacon Hill in Seattle and cultivate public open space like the orchard at Blue Heron School
- Explore and support the creation of a Food Aggregation/Processing Center or “Hub” where farmers bring their product and it gets cleaned, cut, packaged and re-distributed to markets and institutions
- Attend or sponsor Community “events” that focus on the local food system and its suppliers
- Create a Community Food Assessment that quantifies the assets, challenges and opportunities within various sectors of the food economy
- Participate in the Jefferson County Planning Commissions Comprehensive Plan Update process to include new sections of Food System Security, and revisions to the Critical Areas regulations that affect farming (see link below for schedule)

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Buy local
- Sign up for a CSA at a local farm
- Plant your own garden
- Shop at the Food Co-op, Farmer’s Market and Chimacum Market
- Identify gaps in the system and fill them
- Donate to the local Food Banks (Jefferson County and Port Townsend)
- Participate in the Jefferson County Planning Commissions Comprehensive Plan Update process to include new sections of Food System Security, and revisions to the Critical Areas regulations that affect farming (see link below for schedule)
- Write to your County Commissioners and ask them to support local Agriculture and our local food system through new funding sources like the Conservation Futures Fund
- When dining at a local restaurant, ask them where the food comes from. If they don’t know, question whether or not you want to eat there. If they know, but it’s not local, ask them to buy and serve local food. Refer them to the FSDC on how to do that.
- Instill in your family and friends the value of local organic food and gardening

RESOURCES

Puget Sound Regional Council – Food System Reports and Resources by Topic:
<http://www.psrc.org/growth/foodpolicy/resources-topic/>

Jefferson County Conservation Futures Fund:
<http://www.co.jefferson.wa.us/commissioners/Conservation/conservation.asp>

Jefferson County Planning Commission:
<http://www.co.jefferson.wa.us/commdevelopment/PlanningCommission.htm>

Local 20/20, a local all-volunteer grassroots organization dedicated to promoting self-reliance, sustainability and resiliency at a community level: <http://l2020.org/>

21 Acres – what the future of Human Living looks like: <http://www.21acres.org/>

U.S. Department of Agriculture: <http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome>