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New Farm to School and School Garden grants transform Oregon school lunch
Eleven school districts use \$189,000 in state funding for local food and education
Boon for farmers and kids

Portland, Ore., January 24, 2013 – This semester, school lunch for nearly 60,000 Oregon students is transforming thanks to an infusion of local food and food education. The Oregon Department of Education has announced that eleven school districts are the recipients of competitive Farm to School and School Garden grants totaling \$189,140. The majority of the funds (87.5%) will be spent on purchasing Oregon food products, with a smaller portion (12.5%) dedicated to food-, agriculture-, and garden-based education activities. The funding goes to diverse districts and schools across the state, from the tiny rural community of Joseph nestled in the Willamette Mountains, to Oregon’s second largest city, Eugene, in the heart of the Willamette Valley.

Representative Sherrie Sprenger (R-Scio) states, “As a former school board member, and a State Representative, I am excited about how these grants can help both kids and farmers. In Lebanon, this grant will help students learn about growing and eating healthy food, including beef and pork from our very own high school FFA program.”

The grant program is the product of House Bill 2800—the Farm to School & School Garden Bill—passed by the Oregon State Legislature with unanimous support in 2011.

Districts receiving funding are: Bend-La Pine, Bethel, Centennial, Eugene, Gladstone, Joseph, Lebanon, North Powder, Ontario, Roseburg and Sherman. **(See below for details.)**

The districts are building partnerships with diverse Oregon food producers and processors. In the Bend-La Pine School District in central Oregon, the grant funding will launch a Boat to School program, connecting school food buyers with coastal fishermen to bring Oregon shrimp and fish into lunch at all

27 district schools. In Ontario, next to the Idaho border, grain farmer Rene Corn will not only begin selling her whole grains to a local mill to grind and make breads, rolls, pizza dough and buns for school meals, she'll also teach students about her farm and how to mill flour. At the Lebanon High School Land Lab, FFA students will raise cattle and pork. Thanks to the grant funding, the students will build a business module for processing the meat and a sales and marketing program to sell to the Lebanon School District, which is excited to support student ingenuity and to bring this hyper-local protein into its meals.

Emerging research shows that Farm to School programs generate local economic growth. When schools strengthen connections with Oregon food producers and processors, they create and maintain jobs for Oregonians. In fact, a study by Oregon State University economist Bruce Sorte shows that for every Oregon job directly created by school districts purchasing local food, additional economic activity creates 1.67 more jobs. "Everybody wins with Farm to School," says Kasandra Griffin of Upstream Public Health, "from farmers and ranchers to the folks working at the diners, farm supply stores, and supermarkets in rural Oregon."

Research also shows that children who spend time in the garden are more likely to eat and enjoy fruits and vegetables. The legislation and grant program intentionally pair local purchasing with education. Students who spend time in school gardens learn better, behave better in the classroom, and get physical activity, which is significant at a time when one in four Oregon adolescents are overweight or obese. "Gardens provide an opportunity to integrate lessons in science, math, reading, environmental studies, nutrition, and health," adds Oregon Department of Education Farm to School and School Garden coordinator Rick Sherman.

The Farm to School and School Garden grants support more equitable access to healthy food for lower income families. In 2011, 49.1 percent of Oregon students received free and reduced lunch, determined based on their family income. "This investment not only shows the state's commitment to food justice for our youngest citizens, but also to supporting Oregon's great food producers, many of whom also struggle to stay afloat without viable markets for their goods," Stacey Sobell, Farm to School Manager at the nonprofit Ecotrust says.

The eleven districts' pilot programs are paving the way for school districts around the state to implement effective, proven Farm to School and School Garden programming in the future. Reflecting on their goal to establish and strengthen relationships with Oregon coastal fishers, Bend-La Pine Nutrition Services director Katrina Wiest notes, "We want to share lessons learned and ultimately lessen the learning curve for other districts."

All the districts must spend their grant funding by the end of the school year and report back to the Department of Education on how their projects unfolded. Representative Brian Clem (D-Salem) and House Speaker Tina Kotek (D-North/NE Portland) are pushing to expand Farm to School funding with a new \$5 million bill during the 2013 Oregon legislative session to expand the benefits of these programs to more kids, farmers, and other food producers and processors throughout Oregon.

Highlights from the Winning Districts' Farm to School Grant Proposals

Bend-La Pine School District

Awarded: \$27,327 (16,326 students)

This semester, Bend-La Pine's "boat to school" program will set sail to procure fish from Oregon aquaculture for school lunch, strengthening the district's relationship with Oregon's coastal economy.

Bethel School District (Eugene)

Awarded: \$26,420 (5,654 students)

Oregon-grown items will take center stage at the center of the plate, and comprehensive Farm to School education and supplemental food and resources to families will encourage rousing student approval.

Centennial School District

Awarded: \$29,033 (6,159 students)

Scratching the pre-packaged foods, this district will create locally sourced lunches, served every Wednesday, and enhance innovative promotional efforts that encourage students to dig into healthy local foods.

Lane County School District No. 4J (Eugene)

Awarded: \$29,033 (16,030 students)

The district has plans to buy tofu from Surata Soy Foods and tortillas and corn chips from Northwest Mexican Foods (Carmen's), adding even more local flavor to a lunch that includes fresh produce from the school garden.

Gladstone School District

Awarded: \$11,223 (2,120 students)

For the first time, the district will purchase food directly from a local vegetable farmer (who will also sell to a school for the first time!), laying the groundwork for an intentional, long-term relationship.

Joseph School District

Awarded: \$2,334 (248 students)

The school garden will become a better-utilized outdoor learning environment, and grass-fed beef from nearby ranchers will appear in school lunch to fuel the active garden learners.

Lebanon School District

Awarded: \$23,742 (4,200 students)

Agricultural education will go into hyper drive as FFA students build a business module for processing the beef and pork they raise and a sales and marketing program for selling to the food services department.

North Powder Charter School

Awarded: \$2,764 (283 students)

A host of activities, from maintaining the school garden to attending farm field trips, inviting chefs to classrooms to hosting community dinners, will expand the horizons of students' food and farming knowledge.

Ontario School District

Awarded: \$7,143 (2,417 students)

Ontario farmer Rene Corn will teach students about grain and how to mill it, and work with a local bakery to mill her harvests and make whole grain breads, rolls, pizza dough, and buns for the district.

Douglas County School District 4 (Roseburg)

Awarded: \$29,033 (6,344 student)

The construction of a new learning garden will give teachers a supplemental classroom, engage students



in activity out of doors, and give meaning and context to the new local items on the school menu.

Sherman County School District*

Awarded: \$1,087 (241 students)

A school district green house will become the home of a hydroponics system providing vegetables for school meals.

*Sherman was the only recipient to receive funding exclusively for garden-based programs rather than procurement, due to the district's extremely remote location and lack of distribution options.

To learn more about the individual grant proposals and grant program details, please visit www.ode.state.or.us/go/f2sgardens, or contact Rick Sherman, Oregon Department of Education, Farm to School and School Garden Coordinator, 503-947-5863 (desk), Rick.Sherman@state.or.us.

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About

Ecotrust and Upstream Public Health have been working together to advance Farm to School programs in Oregon since 2006.

Ecotrust's mission is to foster a natural model of development that creates more resilient communities, economies, and ecosystems here and around the world. Over more than 20 years, Ecotrust has converted \$80 million in grants into more than \$800 million in capital for local people, businesses, and organizations from Alaska to California. The Ecotrust Farm to School program supports and promotes farm to school programming at local, state, and regional levels, acting as the Lead Agency for the 8-state western region of the National Farm to School Network, co-leading a national farm to preschool initiative, and exploring ways to connect low-income and minority producers and consumers in the food system. www.ecotrust.org

Upstream Public Health acts as a catalyst to drive healthy changes, making Oregon a better place to live, work, study, and play. All Oregonians – whether urban or rural – should have access to healthy food and opportunities for physical activity. We envision an Oregon where people are living happy healthy active lives and reaching their full potential. www.upstreampublichealth.org