

Planting Prosperity and Harvesting Health: Trade-offs and Sustainability in Our Regional Food System

Speaker Biographies:

Gail Feenstra is the Food Systems Analyst at the University of California Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SAREP), based in Davis, California. SAREP's Food Systems Program encourages sustainable community development and local food systems that link farmers, consumers and communities. Gail's research and education efforts include: direct marketing, farm-to-school and farm-to-institution evaluation, regional food system distribution models, food systems indicators, urban agriculture, food security, food policy, food system assessments and most recently, carbon footprint analysis in the food system. Her career has been dedicated to integrating human, environmental and community health through sustainable food systems.

Chris Schreiner is currently Oregon Tilth's Quality Control Director, whose responsibilities include policy analysis, managing accreditation with the USDA National Organic Program, and overseeing Oregon Tilth's quality systems. Chris grew up working on his family's farm, Schreiner's Iris Gardens, a third generation 200-acre iris nursery in Oregon's Willamette Valley. After completing his degree at the University of Oregon, Chris worked on a small organic farm which grew diverse specialty crops, selling direct to local restaurants and natural food stores. Since 1998, Chris has worked for Oregon Tilth. As the Farm Program Coordinator, he coordinated the certification process for over 400 farms participating in the Oregon Tilth Certified Organic program.

Wendy Rankin currently works at Community Health Partnership: Oregon's Public Health Institute where she coordinates the Metro Fruit and Veggie Coalition. She retired from the Multnomah County Health Department in 2005 where she served as Chronic Disease Prevention manager for over five years. Wendy's efforts focused on developing policy and environmental approaches to both food and physical activity. She was a founding member of the Portland Multnomah County Food Policy Council and served as Health Department staff to the Council from its inception to her retirement in '05. In collaboration with other community partners, Wendy helped write the successful 2002 Robert Wood Johnson, Active Living by Design application and has worked on the implementation of its complementary work Healthy Eating by Design.

Anne Berblinger and her husband René began farming in the Gales Creek Valley in western Washington County in 1999. With a crew of five full and part-time employees, they work 9 acres at Gales Meadow Farm. Anne is integrally involved in the fresh, local, seasonal food industry cluster in the Portland region through the Farmer-Chef Connection, Oregon Tilth, and the farmers market community. Anne was also the Oregon representative for the U.S. Economic Development Administration from July 1983 until spring of 2007. She was a founding member and the second Chair of the Oregon Rural Development Council, an organization of federal and state officials and representatives of local and tribal government, business, and non-profits.

Karl Kupers is the marketing director for a co-op of 28 producers within the Pacific Northwest raising products grown in a production system called Direct Seed and certified sustainable by the Food Alliance. Their products, primarily three flour lines, are sold under the brand of Shepherd's Grain. Karl farmed for 30 years in Eastern Washington and made the transition to marketing 5 years ago. He is currently the chairman of the Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (WSARE) administrative council.

Ken Meter, president of Crossroads Resource Center in Minneapolis, holds 37 years of experience in community capacity building as a journalist, researcher, educator, and administrator. He has analyzed food systems of 34 locales in 17 states at the request of local partners, including the Willamette Valley, the Columbia River Gorge, Vancouver, Washington, the Northern Olympic Peninsula, and the State of California (for the Vivid Picture Project). Meter taught economics and journalism at the University of Minnesota and economics at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard - where he also served under a mid-career Public Service Fellowship.

Suzanne Briggs is currently a consultant for Kaiser Permanente's Community Health Initiative. She fostered relationships for 15 years with businesses across the US, Southeast Asia, and Europe within the apparel industry at Nike, Danner Boots and Hanna Anderson. In 1997 Suzanne began directing her business ingenuity and community building skills toward the local food system. Suzanne helped organize the Hollywood Farmers Market in Northeast Portland and served as the Oregon Farmers Markets Association President from 2000 to 2005. In addition she was a marketing consultant to Oregon Fresh Market Growers. Suzanne served four years on the Portland Multnomah County Food Policy Council, and most recently was an advisor to the formation of the Clark County Food System Council.

Thank you, speakers, for your time and expertise!