

# **Barriers and Opportunities to the Use of Regional and Sustainable Food Products by Local Institutions**

## **A Report to Community Food Matters and the Portland/Multnomah Food Policy Council**

Prepared by Teri Pierson

In collaboration with Janet Hammer, Director, Community Food Matters

Input by the following members of Institutional Purchasing Committee of the  
Portland/Multnomah Food Policy Council:

Shannon Stember, Director of Communications, Training and Nutrition Education  
for Portland Public Schools; Laura Barton, Oregon Department of Agriculture;  
Scott Exo, Director of Northwest Programs for the Food Alliance; Matt Emlen, Portland Office for  
Sustainable Development; and Amy Joslin,  
Multnomah County Sustainability Manager.



**Community Food Matters**

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## Executive Summary

### Overview

Community Food Matters and the Portland/Multnomah Food Policy Council jointly undertook this study of barriers and opportunities to the use of regional and sustainable food products in local institutional food service programs. Sustainable practices in institutional purchasing were defined as including:

- ⇒ Purchasing regionally produced products to promote economic vitality.
- ⇒ Considering environmental stewardship in production, processing, distribution, and disposal.
- ⇒ Promoting social justice through living wages and fair trade, and access to nutritious and culturally appropriate food; enhancing community understanding of the impact of food choices.

The research included interviews with key industry leaders as well as examination of related programs in neighboring Washington State.

### Description of Study

Twenty-seven telephone interviews were completed between January and April, 2003. Interviews were conducted with representatives of four "sectors" and included 16 institutional purchasers, six growers, three processors, and two produce distributors. The sample size was limited by resources available for the research. Thus, this research is exploratory in nature; results cannot be generalized to the larger population. At the same time, the research is useful for identifying preliminary themes pertinent to institutional purchases of regional and sustainable food products and directions for further research.

### Findings

Institutional purchasers interviewed estimate that, of the food they are currently purchasing, an average of about 25% is grown or processed in the Oregon-Washington region. The regional products purchased by a majority of the interviewees are milk, produce, meat, eggs, bread, and beer.

A high degree of interest in increasing purchases of regional product was expressed by interviewees. On a scale of 0 to 5, with 0 representing "no interest" and

5 representing "very interested," the average was 4.5 for institutional purchasers, 4.8 for growers, 5.0 for processors, and 3.75 for produce distributors.

As the various interviewees discussed barriers and opportunities to increasing the purchase of regional and sustainable food products by institutional purchasers, six common themes emerged:

#### 1. Demand

Demand emerged in the interviews as a powerful factor for change. Interviewees from all four sectors reflect that if customers ask for regional and/or sustainable foods--and follow through by buying those products--the industry will be able to respond. The "customer" may be the end consumer, the contracting institution, or the distributor. Some interviewees share the perspective that if a company is not seeing demand there is no incentive to provide regional and sustainable products; however it is clear that movement also can occur when an individual within an organization has a strong interest in and commitment to making this change.

#### 2. Connections through Distributors

Institutions rely heavily on produce and grocery distributors for accessing product: by their nature, institutions operate on a large scale and consolidation in the food service industry has restructured their capacity to receive, process, and store foods. Both purchasers and producers cited efficiency of the distributor model. Thus, working with distributors emerged as a key factor for increasing sales of regional products to institutions. Issues associated with this strategy were mentioned as well including distributors potentially paying lower prices to producers and not carrying a range of regional products.

#### 3. Connections with Producers

Interviewees from all four sectors discussed direct connections between producers and buyers as an opportunity to increase institutional purchases of regional and sustainable products. The Food Alliance was identified as a valuable resource for successfully making such connections. Other identified strategies for enhancing connections between producers and institutional purchasers included support for producers

in meeting institutional purchasers' requirements and dissemination of information regarding producers and their available product.

#### 4. Contracts, Bidding Specifications, and Prime Vendor Agreements

Contracts, bidding specifications, and prime vendor agreements often provide guidelines, requirements, or restrictions on purchasing decisions. In some cases this presents a barrier to the purchase of regionally or sustainably produced foods. For example, a distributor may stipulate that a minimum amount of product (e.g., 85%) be sourced from the distributor. On the other hand, there are also opportunities to use bidding specifications and contracts to encourage or require the purchase of regional and/or sustainable food. For example, an institution may require that its food service contractor source a certain amount or type of product.

#### 5. Lack of Information about Sustainability

Sustainability issues, including environmental stewardship and labor and fair trade concerns, were a factor in some purchasing decisions for about half of the purchasers surveyed. Distributors attend to some sustainability issues in their purchasing, and they state that they are able respond to additional concerns at the request of their customers. Interviewees from both groups (producers were not asked to address these issues) expressed a desire for more information to help them assess producers' sustainability practices. They also discussed time constraints in obtaining information and difficulty in validating information. Some participants are using third-party certification programs as a source of information, including the Food Alliance, organic certifiers, and fair trade certifiers of coffee products. None of the interviewees mentioned a tracking system for their purchases of regional or sustainable products. At the community level, more exploration and definition is needed regarding terms and goals related to sustainable food systems.

#### 6. Price

Price was listed as one of the most important factors in purchasing decisions by most institutions and distributors. However, few interviewees mentioned it as a barrier or opportunity to purchasing regional or sustainable products. Among the purchasers, producers, and distributors who did mention price, perspectives were split as to whether regional products were more expensive or less expensive than other products. Additional research is needed to clarify the role of price as a barrier or opportunity to the purchase of regional and sustainable foods by institutions.

#### Recommendations

Preliminary recommendations addressing themes that emerged consistently in the interviews are offered below. However, as this research is exploratory in nature, the first recommended action is to confirm and enhance these findings. Further, an important next step would be to prioritize the recommended objectives and action steps and identify lead and partner organizations responsible for implementing each.

#### **Goal: Increase institutional purchases of regional and sustainable food products.**

**Objective:** Confirm and enhance these findings.

- Action Step: Host panel or round-table discussions with industry leaders.

**Objective:** Create models of success for the purchase of regional and sustainable foods by institutions.

- Action Step: Create team of stakeholders to collaborate in addressing the particular barriers and opportunities facing one or more individual institutions. Interpret and disseminate these "case study" findings.

**Objective:** Model regional and sustainable purchases in city and county food service programs, including programs operated by contractors.

- Action Step 1: Develop list of options for purchasers in all current programs to purchase regional and sustainable foods.
- Action Step 2: Develop and implement language for new and renewed contracts and bid requests

to address regional and sustainable food purchases.

**Objective:** Promote regional and sustainable food purchases by local institutions.

- Action Step 1: Pass city and county resolutions encouraging the purchase of regional food products.
- Action Step 2: Make template materials available in the community (e.g., list of options, contract and bid language).

**Objective:** Facilitate connections between regional producers and local institutional purchasers.

- Action Step 1: Include institutional purchasers and their potential suppliers in existing and emerging resources for facilitating connections between regional producers and buyers (web-based and non-web resources).
- Action Step 2: Incorporate institutional purchasing into Farmer-Chef Connection program activities.
- Action Step 3: Increase participation of regional producers in trade shows attended by institutional purchasers.
- Action Step 4: Facilitate regional processors' commodity processing without negating other sustainability goals.
- Action Step 5: Utilize the resources developed by the Washington Department of Agriculture and partner as appropriate.

**Objective:** Assist producers in meeting institutional purchasers' requirements.

- Action Step: Offer consultation and training on food safety and quality, delivery and packaging, contracts/bidding, and value-added production to regional growers and processors

**Objective:** Build demand by educating students and the general public about the value of regional and sustainable food.

- Action Step: Work with CFM, Portland/Multnomah Food Policy Council, and other organizations in identifying effective action step(s).

**Objective:** Increase understanding of and support for sustainable food practices among food service staff.

- Action Step 1: Recognize the efforts of food service workers who contribute to sustainability projects (composting, donating leftover food,

recycling, consulting on culturally specific menu items, etc.).

- Action Step 2: Provide education and training on sustainability to food service staff.

**Objective:** Clarify food system sustainability goals

- Action Step: Define sustainability terms and goals, including "regional," "nutritious," and "culturally appropriate."

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## I. Overview

Communities around the United States and throughout the world are exploring ways to enhance the sustainability of their local food systems. There is increasing interest in the purchase of local and sustainable food products as a way of supporting economic development, environmental stewardship, and human and cultural health. Institutions, by the very nature of their size, could play an important role in enhancing and expanding the markets for local and sustainable food products.

Community Food Matters and the Portland/Multnomah Food Policy Council jointly undertook this study to assess barriers and opportunities to the use of regional and sustainable food products in local institutions' food service programs. Community Food Matters (CFM) is a community partnership hosted by Ecotrust, whose mission is to improve economic, environmental, and human health in rural and urban communities through the development of sustainable food systems. The advisory board and membership includes representatives from public, private, and non-governmental organizations representing food production, food access, and community development. The Portland/Multnomah Food Policy Council is a joint city-county council that was established in 2002 by unanimous resolution. The council, comprised of 11 appointed members representing diverse facets of the food system, was formed in response to citizen requests for government to consider and respond to the many ways that community health and food systems are interconnected. This report conveys the research design, findings, and recommendations.

## II. Research Design

### Objectives

The objective of this research was to identify strategies, including program and policy recommendations, that address barriers and opportunities to the use of regional and sustainable food products in local institutional food service programs. Criteria<sup>1</sup> used to determine sustainable practices in institutional purchasing included:

- ⇒ Purchasing regionally produced products to promote economic vitality.
- ⇒ Considering environmental stewardship in production, processing, distribution and disposal.
- ⇒ Promoting social justice through living wages and fair trade, and access to nutritious and culturally appropriate food; enhancing community understanding of the impact of food choices.

### Methods

The research included interviews with institutional food purchasers, growers, processors, and distributors, as well as examination of related programs in neighboring Washington State.

The research was guided by an advisory team of policy and food system experts including staff to the Portland/Multnomah Food Policy Council; Director of Communications, Training and Nutrition Education for Portland Public Schools; staff of the Oregon Department of Agriculture; Director of Community Food Matters; and Director of Northwest Programs for the Food Alliance.<sup>2</sup>

The advisory team developed an interview instrument that could be administered by telephone or in person (see Appendices 2-5). Interview questions were designed to elicit information on current regional and sustainable food purchase behaviors as well as barriers and opportunities to the use of more regional and sustainable food products in institutional food programs. Sustainability factors included environmental stewardship, labor or fair trade issues, and culturally appropriate and dietary restricted foods. Questions were tailored to each of four groups: growers, processors, distributors, and institutional food purchasers. Oregon State University extension service faculty and other community partners provided feedback on the interview protocol.

The advisory team identified thirty-one interviewees, aiming for a diversity of geographic location, size of operation, type of product, and production method (conventional, organic, or Food Alliance certified). Further, the team chose some interviewees who were

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<sup>2</sup> The Food Alliance provides third-party certification to producers who satisfy conditions for natural resource stewardship, safe and fair working conditions, and healthy and humane livestock care.

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<sup>1</sup> Definitions can be found in Appendix 1.

thought to have achieved successes in the use of regional and sustainable products so that lessons learned from industry leaders could be included. Twenty-seven of the 31 interviews were completed. Four were not completed due to time constraints or lack of response from the interviewee: one purchaser, one processor, and two grocery distributors. Interview length was 15-30 minutes for growers, processors, and distributors, and 20-60 minutes for purchasers.

The interviews, conducted between January and April, 2003, included the following:

Fourteen food purchasers from institutions in Multnomah County and two from neighboring Washington County. This included three K-12 school districts, three colleges or universities, two corporate cafeterias, five hotels or public venues, one correctional institution, and two hospitals. The hotel/public venue category includes a hotel banquet facility, a church/synagogue caterer, and three government-operated public venues. Six growers in the Oregon-Washington region within 100 miles of Portland: three row-crop growers of such products as broccoli, lettuce, and carrots; two tree-fruit growers; and one herb grower. Three processors in the Oregon-Washington region within 100 miles of Portland. The two produce distributors who were most often mentioned in the interviews with purchasers.

With one exception, the interviews were conducted by telephone. Confidentiality was assured. A single researcher conducted all interviews in order to achieve consistency. Each interviewee was offered a copy of this report when it was completed; all but one requested a copy.

The advisory team jointly reviewed the interview transcripts to identify key themes and findings. Findings are presented by interviewee type (purchasers, growers, processors, and distributors), concluding with a general synthesis.

### Limitations

The sample size was limited by resources available for the research. Thus, this research is exploratory in nature; results cannot be generalized to the larger population. At the same time, the research is useful

for identifying preliminary themes pertinent to institutional purchases of regional and sustainable food products and potential directions for further research.

A second limitation is that some aspects of the research design were based on concepts or terms that the Food Policy Council had not yet defined. Therefore, the results may not match the goals of the Council once those definitions have been chosen. This is particularly true for the term "regional." The Council's Guiding Principles discuss a "regional food system" and "regional farms."<sup>3</sup> However, the interview responses for this project and the recommendations based on them might look different if a buy-Oregon definition, a driving-distance definition, or a foodshed definition were used.

## **III. Interview Findings - Purchasers**

### General Characteristics of Institutions Interviewed

Sixteen institutional purchasers were interviewed: seven private entities, five public schools (K-12 or college/university), and four non-school government programs or government-run public venues. Each of the institutions serves food to a thousand or more eaters at a time. Twelve of the sixteen have daily meal service; for these, the average number of meals served per day is about 7,000, with a range from 1,000 to 43,000<sup>4</sup>. For institutions without daily meal service, an average per event is not available.

Seven institutions provide their own food service and nine use a contract company to provide the food service. Six of the nine public institutions and three of the seven private institutions use a contract company. Five different contract companies are represented in this study.

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<sup>3</sup>

[Http://www.sustainableportland.org/stp\\_food\\_principles.html](http://www.sustainableportland.org/stp_food_principles.html).

<sup>4</sup> One interviewee in this category did not disclose the number of meals his institution serves per day.

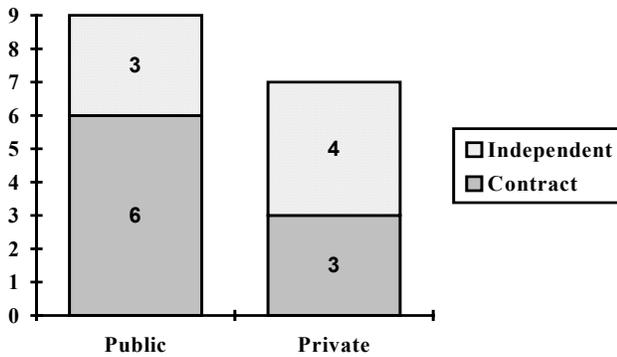


Table 1: Use of contract companies and independent food service by public institutions (including public schools and non-school government programs) and private institutions.

Each institution was asked to recommend the person who was most knowledgeable about purchasing practices and policies for their food service. The interview was conducted with the person recommended. For institutions with contracted food services, contract company staff were interviewed. For the others, an employee of the institution was interviewed.

Current Purchasing Behaviors – Buying Direct from Growers or Processors

Eleven of the sixteen institutional food purchasers are currently buying some food products direct from regional producers: five purchase direct from growers, eight direct from processors, and two from both. This purchase behavior does not appear to correspond to the size of the program. Public and private institutions differ slightly in that all but one of the seven private programs buy direct, whereas only five of the nine public programs do. Three of the five institutions who do not buy direct are run by the same contract company, though that contract company also runs one of the programs that does buy direct. Four of the five contract companies do purchase some food product direct from growers or processors, though this can vary by contract site.

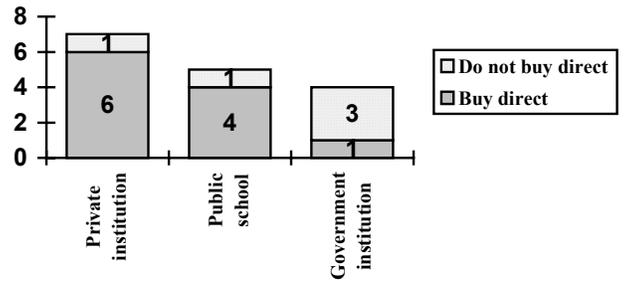


Table 2: Direct food purchase from regional producers by private institutions, public schools, and non-school government-run institutions.

Current Purchasing Behaviors – Distributors Sourcing Regionally

All sixteen purchasers interviewed currently buy food product from distributors. Half receive no information from any of their distributors regarding the origin of food products they buy. The other eight purchasers work with distributors that do indicate the source: five purchasers receive a response when they ask the distributor for information on the source; one gets the information on the hot sheet<sup>5</sup>; and one requires in its bidding specifications that the origin be printed on the product’s packaging. A purchaser who says his produce distributors find all the regional products he asks for states:

*"I am gently insistent with my distributors for produce. I get a weekly produce report including where the produce is from. They do this at my request."*<sup>6</sup>

Another states:

*"We go to the distributors [and ask for the regional products we want]. It takes a few more minutes, but it is worthwhile. The distributor knows that we are interested in purchasing from certain growers. It works out OK?"*<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> This industry term refers to a list provided to the purchaser by the distributor or broker detailing products that are available for purchase in a given time period.

<sup>6</sup> Hotel/Public Venue 1.

<sup>7</sup> College/University 1.

Current Purchasing Behaviors – Regionally Purchased Products

As noted above, institutions are buying food products from the region, whether they buy direct or from a distributor; however, it was difficult for most purchasers to estimate the percentage of regional products they buy as most do not keep track of these numbers. The purchasers’ rough estimates indicate that institutions obtain about a quarter of their foods from the region. The percentage of government-run institutions buying direct may not be as high as the percentage for other types of institutions, however government-run institutions gave the highest estimates of regionally purchased products, averaging more than a third of their total food purchases.

Table 3 (below) denotes the types of regional food products currently being purchased by institutional purchasers. More than half of the interviewees are purchasing regional milk (12 interviewees), produce (12), meat (10), eggs (10), bread (10), and/or beer (9). The institution does not necessarily source all of their foods from a category regionally, but at least some of the purchases come from Oregon or Washington.

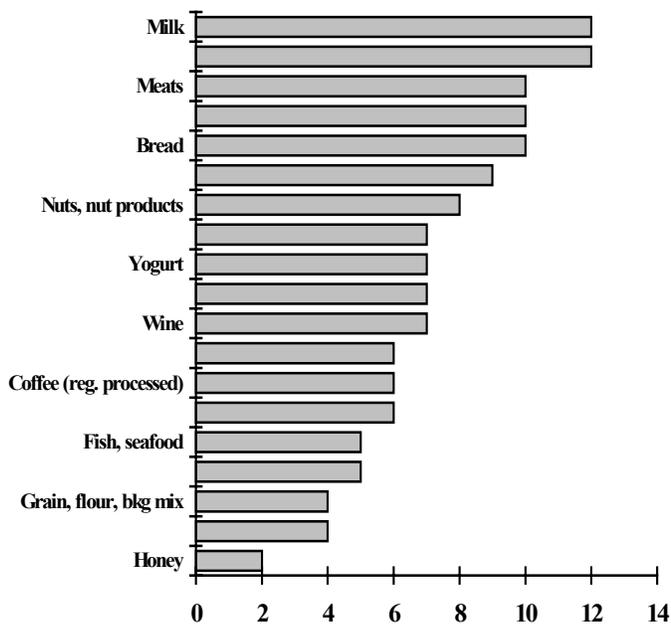


Table 3: Purchase of regionally produced foods by institutions.

Interviewees mentioned several sources for these regional products besides buying direct from producers. Some purchasers use a specialized regional distributor for produce, meats, and/or fish; some use grocery distributors.

Kosher or Halal meats were mentioned by three purchasers. One, who operates a kosher food service, has not found a regional source for kosher meats; he expressed an interest in purchasing his meat regionally. The other two do buy kosher or Halal meats from the region.

Interest in Purchasing More Regional Product

Purchasers were asked to note, on a scale from 0-5, with 0 being “no interest” and 5 being “very interested,” how interested they would be in purchasing more regional food product. Answers ranged from 3 to 5, with the average level being 4.5. However, as one interviewee put it, “It’s a ‘cleaner Chicago’ issue... A surveyor calls and asks if you want a cleaner Chicago. Who’s going to say no?”<sup>8</sup>

Factors Influencing Purchasing Decisions

Purchasers were asked in an open-ended question to describe the top 3-5 factors that influence their purchasing. Consistent responses include price (14 mentions), quality (14 mentions), and availability (10 mentions). Quality included factors such as appearance, taste, and nutrition. Availability included delivery schedules, year-round supply, availability under the existing contract, and volume. Other factors that surfaced were consistency of the supplier, packaging concerns, food safety, student acceptance, and customer service (two mentions each). Relationship with the vendor was mentioned once.

Barriers and Opportunities to Purchasing Regional Food Products

Purchasers were asked to identify barriers and opportunities to buying more regional food products. Their issues, detailed below, are grouped into nine main categories: options with existing distributors, connections to producers, contracts and prime vendor agreements, price, demand, volume, food quality and safety, other issues, and policy and program recommendations. Often, a factor that was a challenge to one institution had been overcome by another--or the same interviewee might have proposed both a barrier and a solution. There were few differences in the factors identified by large or

<sup>8</sup> Hotel/Public Venue 2.

small institutions, public or private venues, contracted or independent food services, or existing utilization of direct purchases.

### 1. Options With Existing Distributors

Eleven interviewees brought up the potential for working with existing distributors; all of them, including all four non-school government programs, see it as an area of opportunity for increasing their purchases of regional foods. The benefits would include maintaining existing contracts, working with fewer vendors, matching the capacity of their storage facilities, and utilizing the distributors' ability to control for food safety and to fill gaps in availability. At the same time, two of the eleven purchasers see sourcing regional products from distributors or brokers as a challenge, either because the distributor is not carrying any regional products or because the grower does not receive as much for the product. According to one purchaser:

*"My challenge is that I have to use [the grocery distributor] and go through [my contract company] to do so. It's up to them. This is good because they check the quality, but it's also bad because I have no control over buying local. If they wanted to have a program to do that, they could."<sup>9</sup>*

Some purchasers commented that while produce and meat suppliers source from the region, the large grocery distributors carry few regional products. Some of the national grocery distributors focus on national brand-name products however, some seem to be able to accommodate regional brands as well. For example, one contract company purchaser recently switched national distributors and found it much more difficult to buy regional foods:

*"[Our previous supplier] was close enough that we could make special orders of local products like Desserts of Distinction cheesecakes. Now I have to go direct or else make a huge order."<sup>10</sup>*

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<sup>9</sup> College/University 3.

<sup>10</sup> Corporate Cafeteria 1.

### 2. Connections to Purchasers

Six purchasers mentioned challenges to finding out what products are available from regional producers. Eight interviewees shared ideas or current success stories for connecting producers and purchasers: these included developing a list or clearinghouse of growers and their products (5); encouraging producers to market their goods directly to purchasers (4); utilizing existing networks such as the Chefs' Collaborative<sup>11</sup>, the Food Alliance, farmers' markets, and local trade shows (4); developing relationships with growers (2); and hosting a regional sustainability fair (1). This topic was particularly addressed by interviewees who buy direct, including all five who buy direct from growers. Said one:

*"If you guys are promoting this, you need to be the hub. If a grower comes on with a product, you need to let us know about it. Maybe send an e-mail and get it to us. Other purveyors use hot sheets to tell us what's there today, this week. What's going to be available next month is OK too, but we need to know the immediate availability, how to get it, and the price."<sup>12</sup>*

### 3. Contracts, Specs, and Prime Vendor Agreements

Nine interviewees mentioned that corporate contracts or prime vendor agreements are a challenge to obtaining regional product. For example, one purchaser works for an institution with a prime vendor agreement that requires him to buy 85% of his food from one distributor. Another interviewee, who is part of a contract company with national purchasing agreements, found he was not able to develop regional contracts for products that are not carried nationally. One purchaser found a way around these limitations by turning to his produce distributor instead of his grocery distributor, while two purchasers took the risk of bending the rules to buy more regional products.

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<sup>11</sup> One Chefs' Collaborative program assists chefs and regional producers to identify each other and build effective working relationships.

<sup>12</sup> Corporate Cafeteria 1. Note: Some industry experts urge caution in sharing producer price information as this can put a downward pressure on prices, commodify food, and diminish the value of the producer-purchaser relationship.

#### 4. Price Factors

Price factors were mentioned by eight purchasers as a barrier or opportunity to sourcing more regional food product. Three interviewees were concerned about losing the economies of scale that they gain by participating in large purchasing groups; however, one of these said the contract company he works for chose to give up economies of scale to allow each site to operate more independently:

*"[We have] no corporate specs. We're like an independent restaurant, which makes us able to buy more flexibly, but we don't have the buying power of all of us."*<sup>13</sup>

Three other purchasers stated that regional products are cheaper due to reduced shipping costs and the lack of an intermediary. Three speculated that decreasing taxes for producers would lower the cost of their products; one of these had seen this succeed in his home state but thought Portland was "pretty lenient already."<sup>14</sup> One school district interviewee described success in bringing down the cost of regionally processed foods through using commodity products in processing.<sup>15</sup>

#### 5. Demand

Seven interviewees – including six purchasers employed by four different contract companies – noted the importance of demand for stimulating the purchase of regional products. Without demand, "there's no reason to jump out in the street"<sup>16</sup> and take on the risks and labor of changing purchasing priorities. As another person said, "There's no future in this unless people get excited. Down to the retail level they have to be excited."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Corporate Cafeteria 1.

<sup>14</sup> Hotel/Public Venue 4.

<sup>15</sup> The federal government purchases surplus commodities such as meat and cheese from producers and offers the products to certain programs, including schools, at a reduced price. This interviewee purchased commodity cheese and then arranged for a regional processor to make pizzas with the cheese, thus allowing the district to serve pizza at a lower cost. While there are sustainability issues regarding the USDA commodity program, as long as districts are receiving these products commodity processing could offer the opportunity to pursue other sustainability goals.

<sup>16</sup> College/University 1.

<sup>17</sup> Corporate Cafeteria 1.

Purchasers describe varying amounts of interest in regional or sustainable products. One of the contract companies represented in these interviews has created a market niche that highlights regional, sustainable, and fresh food. The purchasers for this contract company report buying 35-40% of their foods regionally, compared to the average of 25%; they obtain regional products direct as well as through distributors, and they partner with the Food Alliance to source foods. Another interviewee works for a contract company that does not have a focus on regional or sustainable foods; however, the client company for whom he runs the food service does hold this value and has created contracts that require purchases of regional and sustainable foods. The client's specifications give the purchaser leeway that is otherwise not available in that contract company. At the other end of the demand continuum is a purchaser for a public venue that offers mostly fast food and who sees little avenue to market regional products to his customers. In the quote below he is talking about demand for healthy foods, but he referred to similar challenges when he discussed regional products:

*"Twelve years ago, Disneyland did a survey about what people wanted to eat when they came. They said salad. Then no one bought it. We try to offer alternatives, but the proportion of people who choose that when they have an alternative is minuscule... We are only doing a small amount [of healthy alternatives] because that's all we get positive feedback from the public for."*<sup>18</sup>

Finally, tone is described by one interviewee as an important consideration in communicating demand. In his setting at a college/university, groups that were more adversarial were unable to be effective while a student with a pleasant demeanor was able to build rapport with him and encourage change.

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<sup>18</sup> Hotel/Public Venue 2.

## 6. Volume

Five interviewees mentioned volume as a barrier to purchasing regional food products. For everyone who mentioned volume it represents a challenge, but for different reasons. Two smaller venues do not order enough to make direct delivery efficient for growers; a larger one requires too much volume to be able to buy direct from a single producer. Three purchasers mentioned that a distributor will not carry a regional product unless they can sell a large volume.

## 7. Food Quality and Safety

Seven interviewees discussed the freshness, taste, and quality of regional products. One purchaser stated, "To be honest, a lot of the local suppliers/vendors have sub-par quality. It's hard to go with those."<sup>19</sup> Another stated the opposite asserting that quality is higher when the product does not have to travel so far. Five purchasers, particularly the larger ones and the ones employed by contract companies, expressed concern for food safety. For three of them, it was a worry not based on a specific incident in their operation, but it is one that could have dire consequences on the large scale at which they operate. The other two have had bad experiences, including a problem with a regional processor. Interestingly, even though one purchaser represented a sizable contract (large school district), she was unable to influence the operation to address the problem. Finally, one purchaser expressed concern with the labor and cost involved in inspecting multiple regional suppliers:

Most of our products are manufactured for us. We send a team to inspect those sites. If we were to have a lot of local meat suppliers, the inspections would be cost-prohibitive.<sup>20</sup>

## 8. Other Issues

Other challenges to purchasing regional food products noted in the purchaser interviews include: Limited availability – there are fewer growers and processors in the region than there used to be (5); the regional growing season does not allow for most produce to be purchased year-round (3); and there is a lack of Kosher supply (1).

Difficulties for producers in dealing with institutions and/or distributors – appropriate match of supply and demand (3), packaging requirements (1), bid requirements (1), "slotting fees" (1), trade show costs (1), or lack of "proven track record" (1). Time and labor costs are an issue in buying direct (3).

Other ideas for expanding sales of regional product included new combinations of products and services -- e.g., vertical integration of production and distribution by regional producers or small-scale distributors (1); institutional purchasing cooperative (1); and a specialized grower co-op that could sell, for example, potatoes to hospitals (1).

## 9. Policies and Programs to Support Regional Purchasing

When asked whether there were any policies or programs that could support the purchase of more regional product, purchasers were split (6 yes, 8 no). Interviewees focused on one function of government – red tape," or regulation – to the exclusion of other things government can do, including education, incentivization, demonstration, or funding. Smaller institutions and government agencies were more positive about the role for government policies or programs; larger institutions and public schools/colleges/universities tended to be opposed. Two purchasers suggested incentives. Another, from a corporate hotel chain, said a quota would make it easier for him to purchase regional foods. One school district purchaser suggested:

*"I'm not sure we need more policies! I'm not sure. It's hard because every district is different in spite of having the same guidelines for school lunch...Maybe government should recommend only. Or government could say what items they want to increase purchases of, and then we could suggest ways to do so."<sup>21</sup>*

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<sup>19</sup> Hotel/Public Venue 3.

<sup>20</sup> Corrections.

Environmental Stewardship and Purchasing Decisions

Purchasers were asked how, if at all, environmental stewardship factors impact their purchasing. Seven of the sixteen purchasers either did not consider the environmental practices of producers or they did not know whether those practices were considered by the corporate buyers. Six buyers, including one of the above, wished for more information about the producers from whom they buy. Another six utilize third-party information to evaluate some products; sources include the Food Alliance, Monterey Bay Seafood Watch, and organic certifiers. A few purchasers pointed out their own sustainable practices, including composting, making biodiesel, and donating leftover food. Several purchasers said they place a high value on stewardship but are not equipped to follow through. For example:

*"Generally speaking, we don't have that information available. I would probably put that well ahead of regional. It's a real frustration: What do you do? I guess if there was government regulation – well, that's not the word, maybe force or impact – I'd be more concerned that they put their oath behind that. If I could get information for certain on one thing, then I can exercise my responsibility. If not, I can't. I'm lost."*<sup>22</sup>

Labor and Fair Trade Issues and Purchasing Decisions

Purchasers were asked how, if at all, labor or fair trade issues impact their purchasing. Eight purchasers did not consider labor or fair trade issues or did not know if their corporate office did so. Five wished for information, including two that wondered where unbiased information might come from. Five utilize Food Alliance certifications or information from their coffee company in their decisions. Three have the option of using minority vendor agreements that allow them to give a portion of their business to small or emerging companies or businesses run by women or minorities.

One purchaser made a point about considering the food service workers in the equation. He wondered if consumers who try to create change in farm labor through boycotts may be protecting farm workers at the expense of food service workers (i.e., jobs may be cut if the boycott leads to sales losses). He also talked about the daily contributions the workers make to sustainability:

I can say that sustainability is the easiest, most positive, and most inexpensive team-building that a large food service can do. Most people I work with are the working poor. When it comes time for United Way and so on to collect, my employees don't have any extra. They can't contribute. However, they contribute through their work, such as making sure things are better separated [for reclaiming food waste]. We repackage all our left over food for St. Vincent de Paul. Folks take great pride in their contribution.<sup>23</sup>

Culturally Appropriate and Dietary Restricted Foods and Purchasing Decisions

Purchasers were asked how, if at all, cultural appropriateness or dietary restrictions impact their purchasing. As shown in the Table 4 (below), only three purchasers responded to this open-ended question by reporting no approach to providing culturally appropriate foods or foods for restricted diets. Of the thirteen purchasers that said their institution does address these concerns in some way, six address religious needs, six serve vegetarian and/or vegan foods, and twelve address non-religious cultural issues. One purchaser is developing an idea for offering authentic foods for the school district's Latino children since he believes that the pre-made burritos many districts serve are not culturally appropriate. Five purchasers stated that they go to local ethnic markets to buy culturally appropriate ingredients. While most purchasers are attending to cultural appropriateness and dietary restrictions to some degree, it is clear from the interviews that this is not occurring in a thorough or systematic approach.

Table 4: Institutions that address some aspects of customers' culturally specific and/or dietary restricted food needs

Change mealtimes for religious fasts .....	1
Serve Hallal foods .....	1
Serve kosher foods.....	5
Offer vegetarian or vegan menu item(s) .....	6
Offer other cultural or dietary item(s) .....	4
Respond only if customer asks .....	3
Tailor menu to ethnic breakdown of eaters .....	3
Highlight cultural foods at special events .....	4

Take one or more of the above actions.....	13
Do not take any action .....	3

Customer Education

Ten institutions report offering some kind of education to their customers, typically using signs and menu information to educate about nutrition. One educates about the connection between the grower and the food, and one educates about hunger. Three use signs or post certifications for sustainable items. As with the school district purchaser quoted below, few purchasers offer information about the origins of the food they serve:

<sup>22</sup> Hotel/Public Venue 2.  
<sup>23</sup> College/University 1.

Well, I do all kinds of nutrition summaries and classes on nutrition, and we have posters in all the schools. Where the food comes from? I guess they see the SYSCO trucks!<sup>24</sup>

#### Other Sustainability Factors

As purchasers discussed sustainability factors, several of them brought up tradeoffs that must be negotiated. One interviewee voiced caution against viewing global corporations as regional simply because they process food in the region. He also worried about markets outside the region that might be important for regional producers:

*"As you said, this category is broad. It's a two-edged sword. It's like me, I [have] a small business, and I'd like to deal with other small businesses and support them. On the other hand, if it gets too provincial, if I went to Idaho or California, and if everybody had that idea, [it would limit my business]. It's a balancing thing."<sup>25</sup>*

This purchaser and others discussed tradeoffs they face when making decisions about sustainability. For example, what if a recyclable paper product is made by a company that pollutes the environment? What if one producer badly mistreats workers and another producer only mistreats them a little bit? What if a regional milk producer has the best customer service, but it becomes too expensive because their delivery drivers unionize?

### **IV. Interview Findings - Growers**

#### General Characteristics of Growers Interviewed

Six growers were interviewed: three row-crop growers, two tree-fruit growers, and one herb grower. Two are conventional growers, three are Food Alliance-certified, and one is Food Alliance-certified with a portion of the operation organic.<sup>26</sup> Questions about sustainable practices were not asked of growers

or processors except to inquire about their certifications. There was a balance of smaller and larger operations.

#### Current Marketing Behaviors – Selling Direct to Institutional Purchasers

While all six growers of the interviewed growers sell some product direct, only two of them sell direct to institutional purchasers, and only at a very low rate. One sells to a local college/university, and the other sells to a mental health facility whose purchaser comes out to the farm stand. A third grower used to sell a value-added product direct to institutions but stopped making the product after other producers experienced food safety problems with a similar product.

#### Current Marketing Behaviors – Distributors Sourcing Regionally

Four of the six growers interviewed are selling product to distributors. Three of those believe that some of that product is being sold to institutions in the region, and the other thinks that institutions do not receive their product. None of the growers knows what percentage of their product sold to distributors is going to institutions, or to which institutions it is sold.

#### Interest in Selling More Product to Institutional Purchasers

On a scale of 0-5, where 0 is "no interest" and 5 is "very interested," growers' interest in selling more products direct to institutions ranges from 0 to 5 with an average of 3.2. However, if certain barriers were removed for two of the growers, the average interest level would rise to 4.8. One of these growers, who sells only direct from a farm stand, feels his products would be a good match for institutions who could send someone out to pick up the product and who could process whole product. The second grower is preparing to sell his operation and is not looking for new markets, but he said:

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<sup>24</sup> K-12 School 2.

<sup>25</sup> Hotel/Public Venue 2.

<sup>26</sup> Food Alliance-certified growers are represented in these interviews at a higher rate than in the general population as they were purposively sampled to represent industry leaders in sustainability.

*"It would be very good for [someone who bought the operation]. You need lots of opportunities...[I]f I were younger and had more energy, I'd go after it. Lots of these retirement homes and districts consume a lot of goods."<sup>1</sup>*

### Barriers and Opportunities to Selling Regional Food Products to Institutional Purchasers

Growers interested in increasing their sales to institutions are very clear about the barriers they face. Four main issues were identified: demand, connecting with purchasers for direct sales, volume/delivery, and working with distributors to carry more regional products. These concerns are similar to those voiced by purchasers. The issues seem to affect growers of all three crops, but the interviews reveal that the issues may affect larger and smaller growers differently.

#### 1. Demand

Demand was touched on by five of the six growers. One grower, as cited above, points out that large institutions consume a lot of goods and represent a large market for regional products. Another suggests that the State should get involved with promotion of regional products and should create an Oregon-grown product designation. Three growers talk about the freshness and quality of their products as a selling point:

*"Well, I think it's more worth it for the user! Our product is really fresh, fresh from the garden. It's not from California where it's been sitting in a warehouse. I like to have people use my product!"<sup>2</sup>*

#### 2. Connecting with Purchasers for Direct Sales

Four growers discussed ways they could connect with institutional buyers. One suggested attending trade fairs. Two have recently been contacted by institutional purchasers wanting to buy their products direct (both purchasers were from colleges or universities), while another wishes buyers would contact her and wonders how to find out contact information for institutional purchasers.

#### 3. Volume and Delivery

The three largest growers in the group discussed the inefficiency of low-volume sales for their operations. They are aware that many institutions are not built to accommodate large deliveries or to store large amounts of food: they have stairs, small coolers, and congested traffic rather than dedicated loading docks and pallet jacks.

Four growers are concerned about delivery. One larger grower has an arrangement to deliver small amounts of product to an institution; he is excited about the opportunity, but he is uncertain whether it is too labor-intensive to be successful in the long term. Two smaller growers felt direct sales to institutions could work for them if they did not have to deliver to each site individually:

*"If I'm able to deliver it, not to each institution...It's a lot easier to bring it to one or two distributors instead of each establishment. That's what would be really helpful."<sup>3</sup>*

#### 4. Working with Distributors to Carry More Regional Products

The two largest growers, like many of the purchasers, suggested that the distributor is in the best position to connect regional products with local institutions. For one grower, this is appealing since it takes his operation out of competition with the distributor. Both growers also see more efficiency. One states, "They have the credibility to get in and out and the means to distribute, and it makes it easier for me."<sup>4</sup> The other says:

*"[Regional producers could sell more products to institutions if] distributors, large distributors, had a real focus or created a focus on distribution of local products. Not new structures, that is too expensive. Give them an incentive to feature local products, such as Buy Oregon or Brand Oregon. It goes along with what the legislature is thinking about, with the government as a large food service buyer. Give them [the distributor] an incentive on the market side...They have trucks that do that all day, that drive to restaurants and institutions. It would be inefficient for us to replicate that...We need to back up to the last step of connecting local supply to the distribution and get local promotion."<sup>5</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Tree-Fruit Grower 2.

<sup>2</sup> Row-Crop Grower 2.

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<sup>3</sup> Row-Crop Grower 2.

<sup>4</sup> Tree-Fruit Grower 1.

<sup>5</sup> Row-Crop Grower 1.

## 5. Other Issues

Other challenges growers identified regarding sales to institutions include the following:

Institutions are not set up to use whole, uncut produce (1 mention) or irregularly sized field-run produce (1).

Institutions' agreements with contract companies exclude new suppliers (1).

Growers do not have the staff to be able to jump through food safety hoops (1) or to complete the paperwork to certify their operation as organic (1).

## 6. Policies and Programs

Growers were asked how, if at all, government could help them sell more product to institutions. They did not offer any suggestions at the city or county level. However, one grower was positive about activity on the state level:

*"I think some good things are starting to happen in the legislature. I don't know if they'll go through. The concept is right. If we want to support local products, we need to start at the state and have those purchasing agents buy local. You can't mandate private companies, but you can with public, if you want to encourage local production. That's a sustainable thought."<sup>6</sup>*

## V. Interview Findings - Processors

### General Characteristics Of Processors Interviewed

Three processors were interviewed. They all use regional produce in their products, and one also uses regional dairy products. One grows some of its own ingredients. One processor distributes on the West Coast; the other two have national distribution.

All three companies have the HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) certification for food safety. Each of them has one or more additional certifications, including organic (2), Salmon Safe (2), and kosher (1).

### Current Marketing Behaviors – Selling to Institutional Purchasers and/or Distributors Sourcing Regionally

All three operations sell to distributors. One sells to small, specialized distributors; the other two sell to a variety of regional and national grocery distributors. Two were able to estimate how much of their product the distributor sells to institutions: about 4% and less than 10%. None currently sells direct to institutions.

### Interest in Selling More Product to Institutional Purchasers

All three processors would be interested in increasing sales to institutions. One was not able to rate the company's interest on a scale from 0-5; the other two processors chose 5 for "very interested." Like the interviewed growers, the processors said they would like to sell any of their products to institutions. One company had a particular line they would like to focus on, and another expressed a willingness to create products to the institution's specifications.

### Barriers and Opportunities to Selling Regional Food Products to Institutional Purchasers

Processors echoed the barriers and opportunities discussed by growers and processors. The processors' main themes were working with distributors, connecting with purchasers, building demand, and price.

#### 1. Working with Distributors

One of the three processors feels that distributors are in the best position to sell regional products to institutions. She stated that restructuring in the food service industry has meant that many food service sites no longer have the facilities and labor to accept the large deliveries that processors would need for efficiency. Another processor has had difficulty working with distributors. His product has a short shelf life, so he must use a small distributor who can move the product quickly. However, smaller distributors are sometimes closed out of the institutional market by prime vendor agreements. Also, exclusivity contracts may close out some products even when a site is ordering from a national distributor (e.g., a school may have an exclusive beverage contract with Pepsi or Coke that precludes purchase of products not owned by Pepsi or Coke).

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<sup>6</sup> Row-Crop Grower 1.

## 2. Connecting with Institutional Purchasers for Direct Sales

Two of the three processors are looking for better connections for selling direct to institutions. One processor suggests that tours of the operation by buyers may help to build important working relationships. The other processor said that when making connections, follow-up is sometimes lacking, both by the processor and the purchaser.

## 3. Building Demand

One processor is seeing new markets for her product emerge and is not sure whether expanded sales to institutions will be one of the company's priorities. Another processor is looking for marketing resources to build demand. This processor also places a high value on educating the customer:

*"Popular demand: you've got to get [the buyer] to see movement [of the product]. You've got to first break that barrier and get the chance to have them see that...Education: you've got to encourage the people...all the way down to the server to say, "Gee, this morning we have a [local product]," and to know your story."*<sup>7</sup>

## 4. Price

It is the observation of one processor that, due to industry consolidation, institutional food service programs are under pressure to account for every penny. She feels that this pressure makes it difficult for them to pay any premium for regional products. Another processor has had a problem with his distributor selling his product to an institution and then later offering the buyer the chance to switch to a less expensive – and less sustainable – product. He has also found that sometimes an institution will be interested in his product, but their contract company will not work with him since they want a wider profit margin.

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<sup>7</sup> Processor 2.

## VI. Interview Findings - Distributors

### General Characteristics of Distributors Interviewed

Two produce distributors were interviewed. Both companies sell only within the region, and both sell to local institutions. The produce distributors interviewed are the two that were most frequently mentioned by interviewed purchasers and growers.

### Current Purchasing Behaviors and Interest in Purchasing More Regional Product

The two distributors both buy regional products. About one third of the produce they sell over the course of a year is grown in the region. During the regional growing season, this figure rises to one half or two thirds of their produce sales. They cited their interest in carrying more regional produce at 3 and 4.5 on a scale of 0 to 5, with 5 being the highest interest.

### Factors Influencing Purchasing Decisions

Price and availability are among the most important purchasing factors to both produce distributors. Quality was also mentioned as important by one distributor. To the other, it is important that the producer be located on or near the company's regular shipping routes.

### Barriers and Opportunities to Purchasing Regional Food Products

One distributor has solved the problem of connecting to regional growers by utilizing the Food Alliance to help make those connections. He feels he has access to all of the regional products he wants. The other distributor brought up price, suggesting that regional produce is less expensive.

One interviewee said his company could respond if government agencies included requests for regional produce in their bidding specs. He also said, "Oregon and Washington love to support and promote local growers. It's great!"<sup>8</sup>

### Sustainability Issues and Purchasing Decisions

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<sup>8</sup> Produce Distributor 1.

The Food Alliance is a source of information for one distributor regarding environmental stewardship and labor issues. Otherwise, his company evaluates labor grievances against producers on a case-by-case basis and looks for any justification to the allegation. The second interviewee said that environmental stewardship is important to the company: they consider pesticide use and HACCP certification as stewardship indicators. He said the producer's labor/fair trade issues are "absolutely" important as well, though he said it would be difficult to respond to customer requests in this area.<sup>9</sup>

Both distributors are oriented to customer demand. They have responded to customer requests for sustainably produced foods, culturally specific foods, and foods for people with dietary restrictions. They state that they are able to pay a higher price for a product if the customer has requested it.

#### Customer Education

Both companies do some education for customers. One distributes "Five-a-Day" brochures about the nutrition of vegetables and fruits. The company's buyers meet regularly with the sales staff to give them information to pass on to customers. The other distributor uses nutrition labels on some products and responds to customer questions. They do not promote their relationship with the Food Alliance since the customers who were asking for it already know about it.

### VII. Synthesis of Key Interview Findings

The following quote captures much of the interviewees' perspective:

*"I think it's a good idea. There's less fuel demanded. There's no reason not to utilize [regional growers]. It's a good use of resources. You can have a fresh product. As long as it's good, safe, and fresh, it makes sense to buy regional. I think it's important for institutions to consider. We're unfortunately not able to fully take advantage [of the market because] we're not structured for it. But it seems like a good opportunity."<sup>10</sup>*

<sup>9</sup> Produce Distributor 1.

<sup>10</sup> Tree-Fruit Grower 1.

Interviewees expressed an interest in increasing institutional use of regional food products; the average level of interest is 4.6 on a scale of 0-5, where 0 represents "no interest" and 5 represents "very interested."<sup>11</sup>

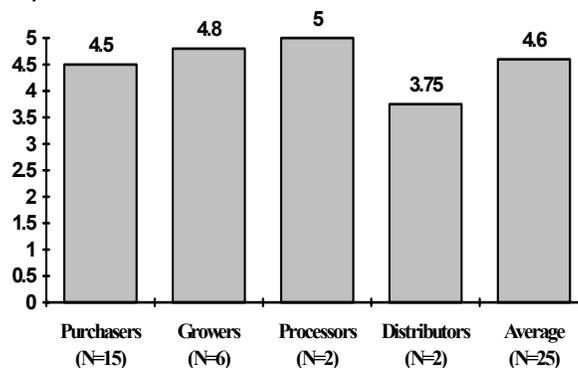


Table 5: Average interest in increasing purchase of regional products (purchasers, distributors) or sales to institutional purchasers (growers, processors) on a scale of 0 (no interest) to 5 (very interested).

As the various interviewees discussed barriers and opportunities to increasing the purchase of regional and sustainable food products by institutional purchasers, seven common themes emerged. Detailed below, these include demand; purchases through distributors; connections with producers; price; contracts, bidding specifications, and prime vendor agreements; lack of information about sustainability; and customer education.

#### Demand

Demand comes through in the interviews as a powerful factor influencing institutional purchase of regional and sustainable food products. Interviewees from all four sectors reflect that if customers ask for regional and/or sustainable foods – and follow through by buying those products – the industry will be able to respond. The "customer" may be the end consumer, the contracting institution, or the distributor. While some interviewees share the perspective that if a company is not seeing demand there is no incentive to provide regional and sustainable products, it is clear that movement can also occur when an individual within an organization has a strong interest in and commitment to making such change.

<sup>11</sup> As discussed above, two growers expressed their interest conditionally: if certain barriers are not addressed, their interest level would fall from 5 to 0. This would decrease the average interest level of the group from 4.6 to 4.2.

### Connections Through Distributors

Institutions rely heavily on produce and grocery distributors for accessing product: by their nature, institutions operate on a large scale, and consolidation in the food service industry has restructured their capacity to receive, process, and store foods. Efficiency of the distributor model was cited by both purchasers and producers. Thus, working with distributors emerged as a key factor for increasing sales of regional products to institutions. Issues associated with this strategy were mentioned as well including distributors potentially paying lower prices to producers and not carrying a range of regional products.

### Connections with Producers

Despite the heavy favor for expressed for working with distributors, interviewees from all four sectors discussed direct connections between producers and buyers as an opportunity to increase institutional purchases of regional and sustainable products. Both institutional purchasers and producers expressed an interest in improving direct sales connections. The Food Alliance was identified as a valuable resource for successfully making such connections. Other identified strategies for enhancing connections between producers and institutional purchasers included support for producers in meeting institutional purchasers' requirements and dissemination of information regarding producers and their available product.

### Price

Price was listed as one of the most important factors in purchasing decisions by most institutions and distributors. However, few interviewees mentioned it as a barrier or opportunity to purchasing regional or sustainable products. Among the purchasers, producers, and distributors who mentioned the issue, perspectives were split as to whether regional products were more or less expensive than other products. More research is needed to clarify the role of price as a barrier or opportunity to the purchase of regional and sustainable foods by institutions.

### Contracts, Bidding Specifications, and Prime Vendor Agreements

Contracts, bidding specifications, and prime vendor agreements were mentioned by interviewees in all sectors. Some participants discussed the difficulty of purchasers building new business relationships with regional producers when they are required to purchase most of their food from one distributor. Some discussed the tradeoff between the economy of scale offered by large-scale contracts compared to the flexibility inherent in independent purchasing. New bidding specifications and contracts that encourage the purchase of regional and/or sustainable foods were identified as opportunities for increasing sales to institutions.

### Lack of Information About Sustainability

Sustainability issues, including environmental stewardship and labor and fair trade concerns, were a factor in *some* purchasing decisions for about half the purchasers surveyed. Distributors attend to some sustainability issues in their purchasing, and they state that they are able respond to additional concerns at the request of their customers. Interviewees from both groups (producers were not asked to address these issues) expressed a desire for more information to help them assess producers' sustainability practices. They also discussed time constraints in obtaining information and difficulty in validating information. Some participants are using third-party certification programs as a source of information, including the Food Alliance, organic certifiers, and fair trade certifiers of coffee products. None of the interviewees mentioned a tracking system for their purchases of regional or sustainable products. At the community level, more exploration and definition is needed regarding terms and goals related to sustainable food systems.

## **VIII. Washington Department of Agriculture Findings**

The Washington Department of Agriculture has taken significant steps to research and promote the use of regional food products by institutions. The following summarizes the results of their survey of K-12 food service purchasers and information about their recent projects and lessons learned.

## Survey Results

In 2002, the Washington Department of Agriculture (WDA) conducted research about institutional purchasing.<sup>12</sup> Their objective was to learn whether farm-to-school programs<sup>13</sup> could be successful in the state and which K-12 school food service purchasers would be interested in buying more products from Washington farmers.

The WDA surveyed 299 K-12 school food purchasers and received 139 responses (46% response rate). Less than one half of respondents had been purchasing any Washington products, but three quarters were interested in doing so in the future. About one third of the purchasers thought they could pay a higher price for local produce, whether or not the produce was of higher quality than their usual supply. Three quarters agreed that they would buy local if the price difference were subsidized.

The most frequent concerns that purchasers expressed about local produce were safety, reliability of supply, and cost. Their biggest barriers to buying direct from Washington growers were a lack of growers in the area and a lack of produce available during the school year. Most Washington schools reported having the equipment to process raw produce, but many did not have enough staff to do so.

Survey respondents identified several benefits to buying food direct from Washington producers, including support for the local economy and community, improved image for the school food service, and health benefits for the children. They discussed what would be most helpful to them in buying more products direct from Washington growers. Those who had bought from local growers in the past said they would like to have a list of local suppliers and their prices; those who had not bought direct from local growers made the same request and

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<sup>12</sup> Sanger, Kelli. "Washington Schools Purchasing Washington Grown Products: Where is the Connection? Report on K-12 School Food Service Survey," May 31, 2002.

<sup>13</sup> A growing national movement, with support from the USDA and the Community Food Security Coalition, aims to increase schools' use of locally grown food products. For more information, please see [www.foodsecurity.org/farm\\_to\\_school.html](http://www.foodsecurity.org/farm_to_school.html) or [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov).

also asked for health and safety information about the products.

The researchers concluded that Washington would benefit from a Farm-to-School program. They also made several recommendations, including two that might be applicable in the Portland metropolitan region. First, they suggested either working with growers on value-added products that require minimal processing or assisting the schools in obtaining additional labor to process whole foods. Second, they suggested entering a dialogue with food service purchasers that focuses on the benefits regional products bring to their program.

## Recent Projects, Lessons Learned

Kelli Sanger, Program Coordinator for the WDA's Small Farm and Truck Program, offered further insights.<sup>14</sup> The WDA has offered technical support to farm-to-school programs, including two salad bar programs in Olympia, one in the K-12 school district and the other at Evergreen University. They also co-sponsored a conference in 2002 for colleges and universities throughout the Northwest who want to buy regional products. The conference was attended by students, some farmers, local food system organizers, and some purchasers "who had seen a lot of demand and wanted to find out how to do it." Finally, they have been writing a farm-to-cafeteria handbook that will offer advice to purchasers, growers, and community members who would like to increase the purchase of regional products by cafeterias. They plan to offer four outreach forums in the fall and winter (2003) as part of the dissemination plan for the handbooks.

If a community would like to encourage the purchase of regional foods by institutions, Ms. Sanger makes three recommendations. One is to host an event that brings together the key players, including purchasers, producers, and community members. Another is for the government to pass a resolution encouraging the purchase of regional products. The third suggestion is to assist institutional purchasers in developing language for their contracts that gives them more options for purchasing local products.

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<sup>14</sup> Conversation with Kelli Sanger, May 21, 2003.

She states that the Washington legislature considered mandating a quota of local products to be purchased by state agencies, but they abandoned the idea because of reciprocity agreements and possible WTO challenges. They did pass legislation that encourages the purchase of Washington-grown products. *"It didn't re-vamp anything, but that [legislation] pushed a local purchaser over to doing it. He felt supported."* She thinks this type of encouragement could be effective on a city or county level.

Ms. Sanger states that, in her experience, purchasers who are committed to buying from regional producers can find ways to do so despite the constraints of prime vendor agreements. She suggests, as a first step, that purchasers explore all possible avenues under their current contracts. Then they can develop new contract language to be applied when the contracts are renewed. She believes that purchasers may feel pressure from their suppliers to continue purchasing from them at the same level, but the suppliers will eventually accept the new arrangement if the purchaser perseveres.

Ms. Sanger makes two further points about outreach to key players. Regarding purchasers, she suggests that universities may be easier to work with than K-12 schools. Universities may have more flexibility in their food budgets, and they may feel that a focus on regional foods could keep students eating on campus. When providing outreach to growers, Ms. Sanger cautions that growers may be slow to "jump on this as an opportunity." Growers may not see sales to institutions as a marketing priority.

## **IX. Recommendations**

Sustainable food products are made with attention to natural resource stewardship, human and community well-being, and economic viability. De-centralized local and regional markets are often suggested as part of a sustainable food system due to the potential to reduce environmental impacts of shipping and packing, promote local economic development, and reduce vulnerability of food supply. Trade remains an important component – both imports to satisfy needs and demands and exports of surplus or specialty crops – however, trade is considered within a framework of sustainability goals for the home community and the trade communities.

Preliminary recommendations addressing themes that emerged consistently in the interviews are offered below. However, as this research is exploratory in nature, the first recommended action is to confirm and enhance these findings. Further, an important next step would be to prioritize the recommended objectives and action steps and identify lead and partner organizations responsible for implementing each.

### **Goal: Increase institutional purchases of regional and sustainable food products.**

**Objective:** Confirm and enhance these findings.

- Action Step: Host panel or round-table discussions with industry leaders.

**Objective:** Create models of success for the purchase of regional and sustainable foods by institutions.

- Action Step: Create team of stakeholders to collaborate in addressing the particular barriers and opportunities facing one or more individual institutions. Interpret and disseminate these "case study" findings.

**Objective:** Model regional and sustainable purchases in city and county food service programs, including programs operated by contractors.

- Action Step 1: Develop list of options for purchasers in all current programs to purchase regional and sustainable foods.
- Action Step 2: Develop and implement language for new and renewed contracts and bid requests to address regional and sustainable food purchases.

**Objective:** Promote regional and sustainable food purchases by local institutions.

- Action Step 1: Pass city and county resolutions encouraging the purchase of regional food products.
- Action Step 2: Make template materials available in the community (e.g., list of options, contract and bid language).

**Objective:** Facilitate connections between regional producers and local institutional purchasers.

- Action Step 1: Include institutional purchasers and their potential suppliers in existing and emerging resources for facilitating connections between regional producers and buyers (web-based and non-web resources).

- Action Step 2: Incorporate institutional purchasing into Farmer-Chef Connection program activities.
- Action Step 3: Increase participation of regional producers in trade shows attended by institutional purchasers.
- Action Step 4: Facilitate regional processors' commodity processing without negating other sustainability goals.
- Action Step 5: Utilize the resources developed by the Washington Department of Agriculture and partner as appropriate.

**Objective:** Assist producers in meeting institutional purchasers' requirements.

- Action Step: Offer consultation and training on food safety and quality, delivery and packaging, contracts/bidding, and value-added production to regional growers and processors

**Objective:** Build demand by educating students and the general public about the value of regional and sustainable food.

- Action Step: Work with CFM, Portland/Multnomah Food Policy Council, and other organizations in identifying effective action step(s).

**Objective:** Increase understanding of and support for sustainable food practices among food service staff.

- Action Step 1: Recognize the efforts of food service workers who contribute to sustainability projects (composting, donating leftover food, recycling, consulting on culturally specific menu items, etc.).
- Action Step 2: Provide education and training on sustainability to food service staff.

**Objective:** Clarify food system sustainability goals

- Action Step: Define sustainability terms and goals, including "regional," "nutritious," and "culturally appropriate."

**Objective:** Build demand by educating students and the general public about the value of regional and sustainable food.

- Action Step: Work with CFM, Portland/Multnomah Food Policy Council, and other organizations in identifying effective action step(s).

**Objective:** Increase understanding of and support for sustainable food practices among food service staff.

- Action Step 1: Recognize the efforts of food service workers who contribute to sustainability projects (composting, donating leftover food, recycling, consulting on culturally specific menu items, etc.).
- Action Step 2: Provide education and training on sustainability to food service staff.

**Objective:** Clarify food system sustainability goals

- Action Step: Define sustainability terms and goals, including "regional," "nutritious," and "culturally appropriate."

## **Appendix 1: Definitions**

The following are definitions used by the advisory team for the purposes of this research.

Culturally appropriate – Although this term is widely used in connection with sustainable food systems, a standard definition was not identified. Thus, the advisory team left the term undefined but agreed on examples of the term that could be used as a prompt if interviewees asked what this meant.

Institutions – Large “feeders,” both governmental and non-governmental. Includes K-12 schools, colleges/universities, corporate cafeterias, hotels/public venues, correctional institutions, and hospitals/nursing homes. Does not include restaurants.

Local – Operating in Portland and/or Multnomah County.

Nutritious – This term was left undefined as the Food Policy Council had not yet agreed on a definition and the concept was not central to the interviews.

Producer – Grower or processor.

Regional – Operating in Oregon and/or Washington. Several definitions were considered by the advisory team. A foodshed model was preferred for the way it describes the geographic relationship between producers and purchasers, but was discarded due to methodological imprecision and lack of familiarity with the term. A geographic radius was considered, including a maximum-driving-distance radius; however, it was assumed that purchasers were unlikely to know the exact location of each producer whose products they used. Oregon and Washington were included because the Portland/Multnomah Metropolitan Statistical Area includes both states.

## **Appendix 2: Purchaser Interview Questions**

1. For this survey, we are defining “regional products” as foods that are produced in Oregon or Washington. Does your food service purchase any regional products direct from growers?
2. Does your food service purchase any regional products direct from processors?
3. When you purchase food from a distributor, does the distributor indicate where the products were grown or processed? [May need to tease out growing vs. processing vs. source of ingredients.]
  - A. When or how do they indicate this?
  - B. As far as you know, are any of the foods you purchase from a distributor grown or processed in the region?
4. On a scale of 0 to 5, with 0 being “no interest” and 5 being “very interested,” how interested are you in purchasing more regional products for your food service?
5. Have you encountered any challenges purchasing regional products? [Prompt for “why did you stop,” etc.; tease out details.]
6. What ideas do you have, if any, that would make it easier for institutions like yours to buy more regional products?

A. [If they do not mention government programs/policies] If the City, County, or State were to create new programs or policies, what kinds of programs or policies could they implement that would encourage institutions like yours to buy more regional products?

B. [If they discussed challenges] What about the challenges you mentioned? Can you suggest any programs or policies that would address those?

Besides regional products, we are also interested in other factors that may impact your purchasing decisions.

7. What are the top 3-5 factors you consider when purchasing food?

I'm going to ask about other factors that might or might not have a place in your purchasing decisions. These are sustainability factors, which means they consider environmental and social concerns in addition to economic concerns.

8. In what ways, if any, does your company consider the producer's environmental practices when you make your food purchasing decisions? (Can prompt such as organic, less packaging, energy conservation.)

9. In what ways, if any, does your company consider labor or fair trade issues when making your food purchasing decisions?

10. In what ways, if any, does your company consider culturally appropriate food or dietary restrictions when making its food purchasing decisions? (Can prompt religious concerns including kosher, Halal, or vegetarian; health needs including diabetes, lactose intolerance, etc.; familiar foods or processes from a particular ethnic group.)

A. Does your program get requests from specific groups that want specific menu guidelines or practices based on cultural or religious concerns?

[If yes] In what ways, if any, does that affect your purchasing decisions?

11. In what ways, if any, does your company educate your customers about nutrition, where the food comes from, or how it is produced? (This might include labels, brochures, classes, activities.)

12. (If they have purchased regional products) I understand you have purchased some regional products. What types of regional products do you purchase?

A. [If time allows] I'm going to name a couple of other products that are common in food service. Would you tell me whether you ever buy these products regionally?

B. [If time too short for A] Any others that might be in there--say, nuts, tea, or wine?

- Meats, poultry, seafood products: Poultry; Beef/lamb/pork/other meats; Fish/seafood; Processed meat, poultry, seafood products
- Dairy products: Milk; Eggs; Processed dairy (yogurt, cheese, butter, etc.)
- Vegetables: Fresh whole; Fresh pre-cut; Processed
- Fruits: Fresh whole; Fresh pre-cut; Processed

- Nuts or nut products: Nuts; Processed nut products
- Grains/baked goods: Whole grains; Flour; Baking mixes; Baked goods
- Soy products: Tofu; Tempeh; Soy milk
- Beverages: Wine; Beer; Coffee; Tea; Soy [duplicate] or rice milk
- Other: Honey; Herbs; Herbal preparations; Other raw; Other processed

C. What specific regional products, if any, would you like to increase your purchases of?<sup>15</sup>

13. Approximately what percent of your total food purchases are regional products?

I have a couple of brief, general questions about your operation.

14. How many meals do you serve per day?

15. Is this number consistent throughout the year, or does it fluctuate?

A. [If it fluctuates] How so?

That about wraps it up.

16. Do you have any final thoughts that you would like to share regarding barriers and opportunities to the use of regional and sustainable food products in the food service sector?

I would like to thank you for your time. Your input is extremely valuable. A report that includes the results of these interviews will be completed in June.

17. Would you like to receive a copy?

In the meantime, if you need to reach me, here is my contact information (phone and e-mail).

### **Appendix 3: Grower Interview Questions**

1. Do you sell your products direct, through a distributor, or both?

A. (If through a distributor or both) Do you know whether any of the product you sell to distributors is ultimately sold to institutions in Oregon or Washington? By institutions we mean schools and colleges, hospitals, nursing homes, corporate cafeterias, jails, government agencies, conference and convention centers, and other large public venues.

(If yes)

i. Do you have any idea what percentage of the product you sell to a distributor goes to Oregon or Washington institutions?

ii. Which distributor or distributors do you sell to?

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<sup>15</sup> This question was added 3/17/03, midway through the purchaser interviews.

- B. (If direct or both) Do you sell any of your products direct to institutions? By institutions we mean schools and colleges, hospitals, nursing homes, corporate cafeterias, jails, government agencies, conference and convention centers, and other large public venues.

(If yes)

- i. Approximately what percentage of your total sales are sales to institutions?
- ii. Which, if any, institutions do you sell to in Oregon or Washington?

2a. (If they sell direct to institutions)

- A. On a scale of 0 to 5, with 0 being "no interest" and 5 being "very interested," how interested are you in increasing your direct sales to institutions?
- B. Have you encountered any challenges that made it difficult for you to sell to institutional purchasers? If yes, please describe/elaborate.
- C. What things, if any, would make it easier for you to sell your products to institutions?
  - i. (If they do not discuss government policies/programs) If the City, County, or State were to create new programs or policies, what kinds of programs or policies could they implement that would make it easier for you to sell your products to institutions?
- D1. (If time allows) What products do you sell to institutions and in what volume? For example, 5,000 pounds of apples per year. Please note if those are raw or processed. Product--Volume--Raw/processed--Where sold if they can answer (If you're comfortable sharing this information, which institutions do you sell that product to?)
- D2. (If time is too short) What products do you sell to institutions? (If time) ...and in what volume? [Priority: 1. Products; 2. Volume; 3. Other.]
- E. In what ways, if any, do your sales to institutional purchasers fluctuate?

2b. (If they do not sell direct to institutions)

- A. Have you sold to institutions in the past?

B1. (If yes)

- i. Why did you decide to stop selling to institutions?
- ii. On a scale of 0 to 5, with 0 being "no interest" and 5 being "very interested," how interested are you in again making sales to institutions?
  - a. (If greater than 0)
    - What things, if any, would make it easier for you to sell your products to institutions?
    - What types of products would you be interested in selling to institutional purchasers?

B2. (If no)

On a scale of 0 to 5, with 0 being "no interest" and 5 being "very interested," how interested are you in making sales to institutions?

i. (If greater than 0)

- a. What things, if any, would make it easier for you to sell your products to local institutional purchasers?
- b. What types of products would you be interested in selling to institutional purchasers?

ii. (If 0) Tell me about that.

3. The following information is for summary statistics only. I want to remind you that our reports will not contain any identifying information about you or your operation.

A. (If a farm)

i. How many total acres is your operation? [Can offer USDA categories: less than 10, 10-50, 50-180, 180-500, 500-1000, or over 1000.]

ii. What time of year do you have products available?

iii. Again, for summary statistics only, what are your approximate gross sales? [Can offer USDA categories: up to \$2500, \$2500-5000, \$5000-10,000, \$10,000-\$25,000, \$25,000-\$50,000, \$50,000-\$100,000, \$100,000-\$500,000, or over \$500,000.]

4. In this last question, I will list various descriptors that may or may not describe your operation. Please let me know if any of these apply. Is your operation:

- Certified organic
- Not certified, but using organic methods
- Using Integrated Pest Management or IPM
- Food Alliance certified
- Kosher certified
- Halal certified
- ISO 14001 certified
- Salmon Safe
- Other (specify)

5. That about wraps it up. Do you have any final thoughts that you would like to share regarding barriers and opportunities to the use of regional and sustainable food products in the food service sector?

6. I would like to thank you for your time. Your input is extremely valuable. A report that includes the results of these interviews will be completed in June. Would you like to receive a copy? In the meantime, if you need to reach me, here is my contact information.

## Appendix 4: Processor Interview Questions

1. Do you sell your products direct, through a distributor, or both?
  - A. (If through a distributor or both) Do you know whether any of the product you sell to distributors is ultimately sold to institutions in Oregon or Washington? By institutions we mean schools and colleges, hospitals, nursing homes, corporate cafeterias, jails, government agencies, conference and convention centers, and other large public venues.
    - i. (If yes)
      - a. Which distributor or distributors do you sell to?
      - b. Do you have any idea what percentage of the product you sell to a distributor goes to Oregon or Washington institutions?
    - B. (If direct or both) Do you sell any of your products direct to institutions? By institutions we mean schools and colleges, hospitals, nursing homes, corporate cafeterias, jails, government agencies, conference and convention centers, and other large public venues.
      - i. (If yes)
        - a. Approximately what percentage of your total sales are sales to institutions?
        - b. Which, if any, institutions do you sell to in Oregon or Washington?
  - 2a. (If they sell direct to institutions)
    - A. On a scale of 0 to 5, with 0 being "no interest" and 5 being "very interested," how interested are you in increasing your direct sales to institutions?
    - B. Have you encountered any challenges that made it difficult for you to sell to institutional purchasers? If yes, please describe/elaborate.
    - C. What things, if any, would make it easier for you to sell your products to institutions?
      - i. (If they do not discuss government policies/programs) If the City, County, or State were to create new programs or policies, what kinds of programs or policies could they implement that would make it easier for you to sell your products to institutions?
    - D. What products do you sell to institutions?
      - i. (If time allows) How much of that product do you sell to institutions?
      - ii. (If time allows) If you're comfortable sharing this information, which institutions do you sell that product to?
    - E. In what ways, if any, do your sales to institutions fluctuate?
  - 2b. (If they do not sell direct to institutions)

A. Have you sold to institutions in the past?

B1. (If yes)

- i. Why did you decide to stop selling to institutions?
- ii. On a scale of 0 to 5, with 0 being "no interest" and 5 being "very interested," how interested are you in again making sales to institutions?
  - a. (If greater than 0)
    - What things, if any, would make it easier for you to sell your products to institutions?
    - What types of products would you be interested in selling to institutional purchasers?

B2. (If no)

- i. On a scale of 0 to 5, with 0 being "no interest" and 5 being "very interested," how interested are you in making sales to institutions?
  - a. (If greater than 0)
    - What things, if any, would make it easier for you to sell your products to local institutional purchasers?
    - What types of products would you be interested in selling to institutional purchasers?
  - b. (If 0) Tell me about that.

3. The following information is for summary statistics only. I want to remind you that our reports will not contain any identifying information about you or your operation.

A. Other than the products we have discussed, what food products does your company produce?

B. Can you give me an idea of the volume you produce for each of those products?

C. Are any of your ingredients regionally-produced products? Again, by regional we mean produced in Oregon or Washington.

i. (If yes)

a. What regional products do you purchase? (Note: depending on the processor, the products might be grown by them.)

b. Approximately what percentage of your ingredients come from this region?

D. What are your approximate gross sales? [Can offer USDA categories: under \$100,000; \$100,000-\$500,000; [from here not USDA] \$500,000-\$1 million; \$1-2 million; over \$2 million.

i. (If under \$100,000): up to \$2500, \$2500-5000, \$5000-10,000, \$10,000-\$25,000, \$25,000-\$50,000, \$50,000-\$100,000

4. In this last question, I will list various descriptors that may or may not describe your operation. Please let me know if any of these apply. Is your operation:
  - Certified organic
  - Food Alliance certified
  - Kosher certified
  - Halal certified
  - HACCP certified
  - ISO 9000 certified
  - ISO 14000 certified
  - Salmon Safe certified
  - Other (specify)
5. That about wraps it up. Do you have any final thoughts that you would like to share regarding barriers and opportunities to the use of regional and sustainable food products in the food service sector?
6. I would like to thank you for your time. Your input is extremely valuable. A report that includes the results of these interviews will be completed in June. Would you like to receive a copy? In the meantime, if you need to reach me, here is my contact information.

#### **Appendix 5: Distributor Interview Questions**

1. (If the answer is not already known) First I'd like to clarify your role in purchasing. What types of food products do you purchase for the company?
2. For this survey, we are defining "regional products" as foods that are produced in Oregon or Washington. Do you buy any regional products?
  - A. (If yes)
    - i. On a scale of 0 to 5, with 0 being "no interest" and 5 being "very interested," how interested are you in increasing your purchases from regional growers and processors?
    - ii. Have you encountered any challenges purchasing regional products?
    - iii. What ideas do you have, if any, that would make it easier for distributors in Oregon or Washington to carry more regional products?
      - a. (If they do not mention government policies/programs) If the City, County, or State were to create new programs or policies, what kinds of programs or policies could they implement that would make it easier for distributors to carry more regional products or for institutions to buy regional products?
      - b. What about the challenges you mentioned? What ideas do you have, if any, that would address those challenges?
    - iv. For the regional products you purchase, is the volume consistent throughout the year, or does it fluctuate a lot?

- a. (If it fluctuates) How so?
- v. Approximately what percent of your total food purchases come from this region?
  - a. (If greater than 0) Of the regional products you buy, approximately what percentage does the company then sell in the region?
- B. (If no) Have you purchased from regional growers or processors in the past?
  - i. (If yes)
    - a. Why did you decide to stop carrying regional products?
    - b. On a scale of 0 to 5, with 0 being "no interest" and 5 being "very interested," how interested are you in again sourcing regional products?
    - c. What ideas do you have, if any, that would make it easier for distributors to carry more regional products?
      - (If they do not mention government policies/programs) If the City, County, or State were to create new programs or policies, what kinds of programs or policies could they implement that would make it easier for distributors to carry more regional products or for institutions to buy regional products?
      - What about the reasons you mentioned for stopping? What ideas do you have, if any, that would address those challenges?
  - ii. (If no)
    - a. On a scale of 0 to 5, with 0 being "no interest" and 5 being "very interested," how interested are you in purchasing from local growers and processors?
      - (If 0)
        - Tell me about that.
        - (If applicable) What ideas do you have, if any, that would alleviate those concerns?
        - (If they do not mention government policies/programs) If the City, County, or State were to create new programs or policies, what kinds of programs or policies could they implement that would alleviate those concerns?
      - (If greater than 0)
        - Have you encountered any challenges purchasing regional products?
        - What ideas do you have, if any, that would make it easier for distributors to carry more regional products?

- (If they do not mention government policies/programs) If the City, County, or State were to create new programs or policies, what kinds of programs or policies could they implement that would make it easier for distributors to carry more regional products or for institutions to buy regional products?
  - What about the challenges you mentioned? What ideas do you have, if any, that would address those challenges?
3. Besides regional products, we are also interested in other factors that may impact your purchasing decisions. What are the top 3-5 factors you consider when purchasing food products?
  4. I'm going to ask about other factors that might or might not have a place in your operations. These are sustainability factors, which means they consider environmental and social concerns in addition to economic concerns.
    - A. In what ways, if any, does your company consider the producer's environmental practices when purchasing and distributing food? (Can prompt such as organic, less packaging, energy conservation.)
    - B. In what ways, if any, does your company consider labor or fair trade issues when purchasing and distributing food?
    - C. In what ways, if any, does your company consider culturally appropriate food or dietary restrictions when purchasing and distributing food? (Can prompt religious concerns including kosher, Halal, or vegetarian; health needs including diabetes, lactose intolerance, etc.; familiar foods or processes from a particular group's culture.)
    - D. In what ways, if any, does your company educate your customers about nutrition, where the food comes from, or how it is produced? (This might include labels, brochures, classes, activities.)
  5. Have your company's customers ever requested any of the following:
    - A. Regionally grown or produced foods?
    - B. Foods produced with particular environmental practices?
    - C. Foods purchased with consideration of labor or fair trade issues?
    - D. Foods for particular dietary restrictions, or culturally specific foods? (Can prompt religious concerns including kosher, Halal, or vegetarian; health needs including diabetes, lactose intolerance, etc.; or familiar foods or processes from a particular group's culture.)
  6. If your customers were to make requests like these, would your company have the capacity to respond?
    - A. (If it has not been addressed) How much autonomy do you and other buyers in the company have in purchasing? (Can prompt: For example, would you be able to pay more for a product that met these sorts of goals?)
  7. What would make it easier to respond to such requests from your customers?

8. We've been talking about your perspective as a buyer for particular products. What can you tell me, if anything, about the experiences other buyers in the company might have had with regional or sustainable products?
9. (If they buy regional products) You mentioned that you buy some regional products. I'm going to name some food categories and for each category ask whether you buy any of that product regionally.

[Phrase as follows: Do you purchase any of your poultry regionally? (If yes) Approximately what % of your total poultry purchases are regionally produced?]

Buy regionally--% of total volume

- Meats, poultry, seafood products: Poultry; Beef/lamb/pork/other meats; Fish/seafood; Processed meat, poultry, seafood products
- Dairy products: Milk; Eggs; Processed dairy (yogurt, cheese, butter, etc.)
- Vegetables: Fresh whole; Fresh pre-cut; Processed
- Fruits: Fresh whole; Fresh pre-cut; Processed
- Nuts or nut products: Nuts; Processed nut products
- Grains/baked goods: Whole grains; Flour; Baking mixes; Baked goods
- Soy products: Tofu; Tempeh; Soy milk
- Beverages: Wine; Beer; Coffee; Tea; Soy [duplicate] or rice milk
- Other: Honey; Herbs; Herbal preparations; Other raw; Other processed

10. For what product or products, if any, would you like to increase your regional purchases?
11. I have a couple of brief, general questions about your operation for our summary statistics.
  - A. What is the geographic area that the local facility distributes to?
  - B. Approximately how many purchasers work out of the local facility?
  - C. How many other purchasers in the local facility also buy the products you buy? [I would tailor this question to the interviewee.]
12. That about wraps it up. Do you have any final thoughts that you would like to share regarding barriers and opportunities to the use of regional and sustainable food products in food distribution?
13. I would like to thank you for your time. Your input is extremely valuable. A report that includes the results of these interviews will be completed in June. Would you like to receive a copy?

In the meantime, if you need to reach me, here is my contact information.