

Goal 2: Invest in a thriving local food and farm economy

Regional farm production is a key economic driver in our region. Pears put the Rogue Valley on the map 100 years ago and for thousands of years, the natural abundance of the region has been tended by and provided for the Takelma, Shasta and many other peoples. Investing in a thriving food and farm economy means supporting the range of food ways and food production that is possible in the Rogue Valley.

There are many benefits to a thriving local food and farm economy: Farms and local food businesses provide meaningful employment, boost income through wages, increase economic activity by buying from other local businesses, and build the local tax base that supports community infrastructure and services.

The Rogue Valley Community Food Assessment highlighted key needs and opportunities voiced by the community when it comes to building a strong local food and farm economy:

- **Agricultural sales have surged 62 percent since 2017**, led by small-scale producers who generate over \$12.3 million in direct-to-consumer sales - showing the vibrant connection between farmers and their communities.
- **Infrastructure barriers limit potential:** Critical gaps in processing facilities, cold storage, and commercial kitchens constrain growth.

Which of the following food system infrastructure components would you need to scale up?

On farm coolers / storage

44%

Additional sales outlets for local food

44%

A food hub that handles aggregation and distribution

40%

Irrigation and/or water conservation infrastructure improvements

33%

USDA large animal processing facility

27%

Other (please specify)

24%

USDA poultry processing facility

24%

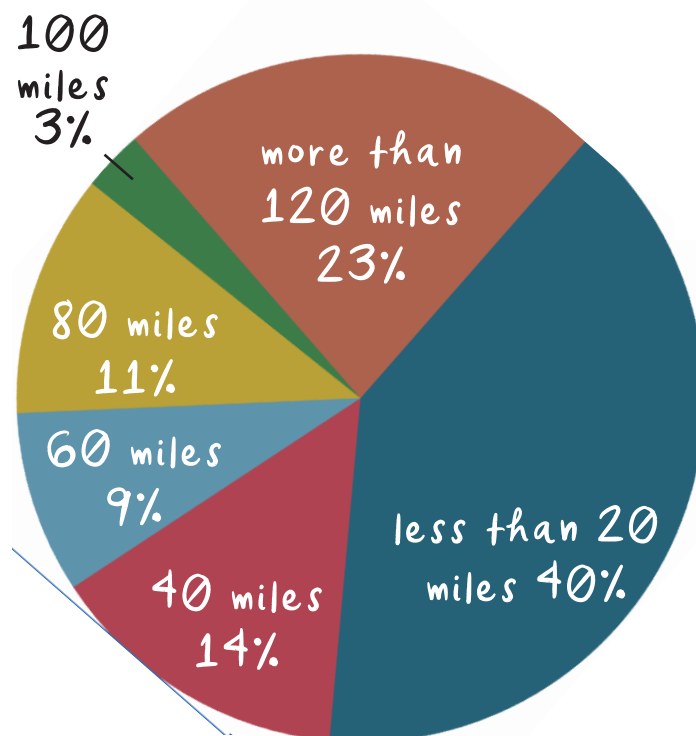
Agritourism support

22%

Co-packing facility or small food manufacturer

13%

On average, how far do you drive to your preferred slaughter/processor facility (one way)?



- **Climate challenges threaten stability:** Our farmers face mounting pressures from heat waves, drought, pests, and wildfires, highlighting the urgent need for regional climate adaptation programs that protect both crops and livelihoods.
- **Land and labor shortages constrain growth:** Limited access to affordable farmland and reliable workers continues to challenge both new and established farmers looking to expand, despite strong market demand for local products.
- **Market access shows promise but needs expansion:** While our region benefits from diverse food outlets - from farmers markets to CSAs - many remain out of reach for low-income and rural residents.
- **Infrastructure funding lags behind needs:** Despite increased grant programs, the demand for infrastructure investment far exceeds available resources, particularly affecting small and mid-sized producers eager to expand but lacking capital.
- **Collaboration offers solutions:** Emerging models of shared resources and infrastructure demonstrate how working together can help small producers thrive while building a more resilient local food system.

Objectives and Actions

The objectives and actions in this goal are aimed at strategies to grow the local food and farm economy by supporting farmers, growing the supply of local food, growing consumer demand for local food, and building a robust career pipeline for workers in agriculture and food businesses.

Objective 1. Support farmers and ranchers

Actions: Facilitate land access for new and next-generation farmers; ensure access to statewide farm disaster relief funds; increase available funding and transition focus from recovery to resilience; improve farm workforce conditions with additional training, enhanced wages, housing, and access to essential services; invest in infrastructure, equipment, and distribution support for producers; develop regionalized collective disaster response funding to support farmers and businesses in the face of drought and other environmental crises or challenges; use locally adapted seeds for food production; re-establish the Josephine County OSU Extension Service; advocate for a state beginning farmer tax credit; compensate farmers for the ecosystem services their regenerative production practices provide.



Objective 2. Build the supply of local food

Actions: Provide education and technical assistance to producers to scale production; strengthen partnerships to scale successful farm models and provide mentorship opportunities; facilitate growth by enhancing access to wholesale and institutional markets for local producers; conduct an assessment of meat processing infrastructure to identify existing resources; develop a public resource guide and address gaps not covered by the current system.

Objective 3. Build demand for foods produced in the Rogue Valley

Actions: Expand participation and circulation of the Rogue Flavor Guide; launch a local food branding campaign to raise awareness and promote the identity of Rogue Valley's locally produced food; facilitate procurement gatherings that connect farmers with buyers; reduce barriers in school procurement policies to support schools sourcing local food; increase support for and reach of farm to school education; increase the procurement of locally sourced products in grocery stores and expand programs that support affordability of local food in these outlets (e.g. Double Up Food Bucks); leverage the success of the Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) program, which funds food pantry programs to buy food directly from local producers; explore feasibility of adopting local food purchasing guidelines and policies within local governments and institutions.

Objective 4. Support food system entrepreneurs and create careers in agriculture and food

Actions: Develop comprehensive workforce training programs in food manufacturing, culinary arts, and agriculture; expand food system business support services by enhancing financial education programs and providing producers with diverse financing options; conduct a comprehensive review of existing resources for food-based entrepreneurs and develop targeted tools to address gaps in business development, access to capital, infrastructure, and technical assistance; enhance business support for producers by building capacity within existing technical assistance organizations to provide specialized farm-related education in business planning, disaster resilience, and agricultural accounting.