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Photo by Lynn Ketchum, OSU Extension Experiment Station Communications
In our first year, the Center for Small Farms & Community Food Systems:

Built on our successful Extension Small Farms program by:
• Rolling out Growing Farms Online, a cutting-edge beginning farmer education training program combining online and in-person learning.
• Launching new initiatives focused on advanced education in business management, marketing, sustainable farming methods, and food safety;
• Bringing a successful, national extension program – the Niche Meat Processor Assistance Network – under our tent.

Initiated a new working relationship with the College of Public Health and Human Sciences and its Extension Family and Community Health program to connect OSU’s dots across the food system, educating each other’s clientele and collaborating on research, extension, and teaching.

Expanded our partnerships with statewide and community-based nonprofit food system organizations through research and extension programming, further enhancing OSU’s role as a valuable resource in building local and community food systems.

Developed four college courses addressing food systems and sustainable agriculture. Advised small farm-related research projects by two graduate students and a summer intern.

Began crafting a team-based staffing plan to meet demand for small farm programming in rural Oregon, including the North Coast and Eastern Oregon.

 Recruited and convened an initial advisory committee with broad representation across our audiences and partners inside and outside OSU.

Established an endowment, launched a small donor campaign, and began approaching major donors, foundations, and corporations, while continuing to write competitive grants. Raised $230,000 for specific projects through grants, gifts, foundations, and private donations.
INTRODUCTION

The Center for Small Farms & Community Food Systems was established within the Oregon State University College of Agricultural Sciences (CAS) in September, 2013, with support from CAS and the OSU Extension Service. The Center uses education, research, and collaborative relationships to achieve our vision:

- **Successful small farms**: profitable, biologically resilient, and satisfying consumer demand for food that is local, sustainably produced, healthy, and humane.

- **Strong community food systems**: local food systems that provide equitable access to healthy food, reward environmental stewardship, support local businesses, and are engines of community economic development.

- **Students with high “Food IQ”**: ready to take on critical food system issues as the next generation of farmers, scientists, policymakers, and community leaders.

The Center is based on OSU’s Corvallis campus and “houses” the Extension Small Farms Program, which currently has faculty in four regions of the state.

The Center is committed to innovation and synthesis and has four highly integrated strategies to achieve our vision:

1. Expand the Extension Small Farms program with new initiatives that respond to the evolving small farm and local food system landscape, and additional faculty that bring valuable technical expertise to all regions of Oregon;

2. Collaborate with OSU colleagues in other colleges and extension programs to catalyze research and education on local and community food systems;

3. Collaborate with nonprofit, for-profit, and public agency partners outside OSU;

4. Teach food systems courses for OSU students.

To work on all four fronts requires that we:

5. Build a 21st Century Center: innovative, entrepreneurial, and resilient.

This report discusses progress in all five areas, highlighting key accomplishments in our first year. Because of the integrated nature of the Center’s work, our research, extension, teaching, and collaborative relationships are woven together, influencing and benefiting each other.
STRA TEGY 1: EXP AND THE EXTENSION SMALL FARMS PROGRAM

The Extension Small Farms Program is the heart of the Center.

A top priority for the Center is to expand the Small Farms Program with (1) new initiatives that help farmers navigate the evolving local and regional food system landscape and (2) additional faculty to add technical expertise to the team and deliver programs to all regions of the state.

For 18 years, the Small Farms Program has combined instructional, experiential, and community building approaches to teaching and research. Our flagship programs include:

- Beginning Farmer and Rancher Education
- Women’s Farming Networks
- Local Meat and Poultry Processing
- Organic Farming Research
- Farm Direct Marketing Research
- Food Safety and Small Farms

Here are highlights of four of these programs:

**Beginning Farmer and Rancher Education**

The United States is facing a transformation in farm ownership as “baby boom” farmers retire. Although most succession will occur within families, experts predict a shortage of farmers. Simultaneously, young people across the U.S. are interested in farming as a career. We address both trends by developing instructional and experiential curricula, and support networks for beginning farmers. Our goal is not only to help new farms launch but to keep farmers farming into the future. Our two primary programs for beginning farmers are *Growing Farms: Successful Whole Farm Management* and *Growing Agripreneurs*.

**Growing Farms Workshop Series**

*Growing Farms: Successful Whole Farm Management* is an 8-week workshop series that integrates biological, physical, financial, and family aspects of the farm business. Since 2007, Growing Farms has trained more than 400 new and aspiring farmers at seven geographically dispersed sites from the Coast to Northeast Oregon; an urban agriculture version serves the Portland metro area.

The program is effective. More than 90% of graduates feel better prepared for a number of facets of establishing a farm business, and 82% plan to start a farm.

**Growing Farms Online**

In a 21st Century leap, we have transformed *Growing Farms* into a sophisticated online course, providing more than 30 hours of instruction in six modules that include text, video, and interactive multi-media. Videos of six
case study farms enhance course content. The primary mode of delivery is a hybrid: independent, online learning paired with face-to-face discussions and farm visits. The course is setting a new standard for non-credit online education. By replacing an exclusively face-to-face approach, it assures a consistent curriculum while retaining participant interaction.

To develop the online course, we partnered with the OSU Austin Family Business Program, Mercy Corps Northwest, and Oregon Tilth, Inc. The course is housed by OSU’s Professional and Continuing Education (PACE). Our facilitator guide extends the reach of Growing Farms nationally.

“The Growing Farms workshop series provided a comprehensive survey of all aspects of starting and running a small farm: from finding land to growing practices and marketing techniques. The program also provided a clear-eyed view of the challenges of such an enterprise and helped us set realistic goals.”

– Growing Farms Participant

Screen clips from the online version of Growing Farms show the visual interface. The course is graphically rich and highly interactive. The modules consist of:

- **Dream It**—Strategic Planning
- **Do It**—Farm Equipment and Infrastructure
- **Grow It**—Sustainable Production Systems
- **Sell It**—Marketing
- **Manage It**—Business and Accounting Systems
- **Keep It**—Entrepreneurship, Family Business Dynamics and Managing Risk
Growing Agripreneurs

In 2011, we piloted Growing Agripreneurs: locating teaching farms on Oregon State University research farms and developing an associated curriculum to provide beginning farmers with hands-on, season-long education. The pilot program, at the Southern Oregon Research and Extension Center, has been operating for three growing seasons. The program is in high demand but maintains a low student-teacher ratio and consists of weekly in-field work as well as classes, skill-building sessions, and one-on-one mentoring. Over the season, students are exposed to all aspects of sustainable, small-scale farming including production of annuals, perennials, grains, and cover crops.

The results are impressive: 75% of graduates are now farming commercially as farm managers or on their own farms.

Based on this success, we created a toolkit for establishing teaching farms and implementing the Growing Agripreneurs curriculum at other OSU research farms. Two additional teaching farms are planned for the North and South Willamette Valley.
Women’s Farming Networks

According to the 2012 U.S. Census of Agriculture, thirty percent of all farmers are women, yet women farmers continue to be underserved in agricultural education and technical assistance. We currently facilitate four regional women’s farmer networks, established between 2007 and 2011, which foster peer mentorship and educational opportunities for members (tours, discussions, workshops, skill building classes) and provide an environment of support and solidarity. More than 350 women farmers participate. Documented outcomes include the creation of mentoring relationships between new and seasoned farmers; increased exposure to niche and alternative marketing and production systems; and collaborative relationships among members in marketing, production, equipment-sharing, and distribution.

The OSU Small Farms Program is nationally recognized for its work in this area. Our team has trained extension staff in four northwest states in the use of farmer networks and published a handbook and toolkit for developing farmer networks (Creating Farmer Networks: A Toolkit for Promoting Vibrant Farm Communities, PNW 638. Matthewson, Fery, and Powell, 2013).

Next Steps

We will build on our established beginning farmer education programs by adding essential advanced education in business management, marketing, and sustainable farming methods. Together, our basic and advanced programs will offer an instructional and experiential education pathway that targets key developmental stages for farmers and farms (Figure 1).

![Diagram showing the current and proposed programs – basic and advanced, instructional and experiential – fit together, underpinned by support from farming networks.](image-url)
Local Meat and Poultry Processing
The Center is now the official home for the Niche Meat Processor Assistance Network (NMPAN), a national organization with an international reputation for its leadership and expertise, created and led by Center Associate Director Lauren Gwin. NMPAN is a network and info hub for processors, producers, universities, public agencies, and nonprofit organizations building and supporting the meat and poultry processing infrastructure essential to local and regional niche meat markets. Its mission is long-term stability and profitability for both processors and the producers who depend on them to market sustainably raised meats.

NMPAN spreads innovation and best practices for this critical sector of the local food movement through a dynamic listserve, newsletter, webinars, website (www.nichemeatprocessing.org), applied research, and direct technical assistance. NMPAN is also an eXtension Community of Practice. Processors and producers benefit from sharing challenges and solutions with their peers around the country. Extension faculty and university researchers, agency personnel, and nonprofit staff value NMPAN as a unique source of information and expertise.

“We are frequently queried by ranchers and entrepreneurs about the many challenges associated with starting a meat processing business. Such a business is very complicated, highly regulated, and difficult to establish and successfully operate. Fortunately for Oregonians, we can turn to Dr. Lauren Gwin at OSU and NMPAN for timely, accurate, and hands-on problem solving information.”

– Jerry Gardner, Business Development Manager Oregon Department of Agriculture

“NMPAN plays a vital role in the niche meat sector by creating a platform for networking and resource sharing throughout the industry. We are extremely lucky to have an organization like NMPAN focusing on niche meat processing on a national level. It’s a well-run, practical, science- and business-based organization that allows small-scale processors to find and share essential information.”

– Local meat processor

Food Safety and Small Farms
All farms and food businesses – including small farms selling locally – are under increased regulatory and market-based scrutiny related to food safety. We provide information, analysis, and education to farmers, in
collaboration with other OSU faculty (Food Science and Technology (FST), Food Innovation Center (FIC), Extension Family and Community Health (FCH)) and outside partners (e.g., Oregon Department of Agriculture, Oregon Tilth, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition). We also provide Oregon’s food system nonprofits with technical expertise on state-level policy. Our three main efforts in this area are:

- **Policy analysis and translation:** We educate farmers about state and federal laws and regulations, with a major focus currently on the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). Our work is useful to other growers, e.g., the Oregon Fresh Market Growers Association, and also to OSU’s Extension Agriculture Program, to prepare extension agents statewide.

- **Farm Direct, Value-Added:** Working with FIC, FST, and FCH, we are mapping and enhancing OSU resources for farms making and selling farm-direct, value added foods.

- **Safer Local Chicken:** Small, local, poultry processors need information about scale-appropriate techniques to prevent bacterial contamination. We are collaborating with FST and small processors on research and practical guidance to reduce food safety risk.

“*Their analysis of FSMA and the knowledge and encouragement they offered us enabled us to submit meaningful, focused, and science-based comments ourselves.*”

— Anne Berblinger, farmer
New Faculty

We aim to add faculty to our team who bring new technical expertise to the Extension Small Farms Program and meet demand for our programs across Oregon. We are making progress:

- With OSU Extension Service Regional Administrators, we are developing an innovative staffing plan that meets regional needs through our team-based approach. The plan will inform our fundraising;
- We have raised funds from foundations and corporate donors to support:
  - A Program Manager position for NMPAN (0.8 FTE);
  - A summer internship focused on practical metrics for small farm financial viability.
- We are also devising ingenious, short-term ways to “patch” statewide holes, including an innovative educational program assistant position in Hood River County that bridges agriculture and community nutrition extension programs.

I appreciate the way that Oregon State University has organized and developed the OSU Extension Small Farms Program. The Program has accomplished enviable growth over the last six to seven years through successful grant writing, curriculum development, educational programming, website, and newsletter. All these efforts have combined to rank OSU among the top Small Farm Programs in the country. Your model to engage small farm program educators who can focus efforts on one geographic area and share synergies across the team has great potential as a model for other extension programming. Bravo for your ingenuity in thinking outside the box!

– Extension Small Farms Coordinator, University of Idaho
STRATEGY 2: COLLABORATE ACROSS OSU COLLEGES

A key role for the Center is collaborating with other OSU colleges on issues related to small farms and local and community food systems. Our highest priority in our first year was reaching out to the College of Public Health and Human Sciences (CPHHS) and its Extension Family and Community Health (FCH) program. Linking the Extension Agriculture Program—with its focus on food production, processing and marketing—and the Extension FCH Program—with its focus on community nutrition and healthy food access—connects Extension’s dots across the food system.

We have made impressive progress: we are educating each other’s audiences and collaborating on research and extension projects. For example,

- We worked with Extension Agriculture and FCH faculty in Hood River County to create an innovative educational program assistant position supporting master gardener, tree fruit, and small farms programs. The EPA, supervised by the FCH faculty member and advised by local non-profit Gorge Grown Food Network, works at the nexus of food production and community nutrition.

- Small Farms and FCH faculty are jointly offering basic food preservation training to farmers so they may safely and legally produce and sell value-added products under Oregon’s Farm Direct law.

- FCH faculty organized a community food systems track at the 2014 OSU Small Farms Conference, featuring FCH and other speakers, which included “Community Food Systems 101” and “Selling Direct to SNAP Recipients: Strategies for Success.”

- FCH faculty publish articles in the quarterly magazine Oregon Small Farm News.

- FCH and College of Public Health and Human Science faculty serve as guest speakers for college food systems courses offered by the Center.

- Based on our food systems expertise and connections, the Center was invited to be a co-PI on the College of Public Health and Human Sciences research and extension project, “GROW Healthy Kids & Communities” focused on preventing childhood obesity, for its $5 million, 5 year next phase (PI: Deborah John).
STRATEGY 3: COLLABORATE WITH STATEWIDE AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

From the beginning, the Extension Small Farms Program has worked collaboratively with nonprofit and public agency partners across Oregon, the Pacific Northwest, and nationally to develop and deliver high-quality, leading edge extension programming. Expanding the breadth and depth of these collaborations is a high priority for the Center: our partnerships allow us to expand our reach and relevance even in times of contracting state funding.

Many local, community-based nonprofits focused on food systems have emerged to satisfy needs unmet by traditional Extension programming. Through our interactions, these groups have come to regard OSU as a valuable resource in their efforts to grow local food systems. They look to us for technical expertise; we collaborate on grants and are included as subawardees; and we are a valued partner that supports and enhances their collective impact.

Oregon Partnership Highlights

We have programmatic relationships with community-based organizations in Central Oregon, Northeast Oregon, Southern Oregon, and the Columbia Gorge. For example, we have provided technical expertise to the Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council (Deschutes, Crook, and Jefferson counties) on small-scale meat processing and local meats marketing, and we are collaborating with them on a new project to enhance small farm access to wholesale markets. In Southern Oregon, we have worked closely for many years with the region’s food system nonprofits; recent examples include a “local to retail” pilot project and training for small farms on value-added, farm direct food production and sales. Rogue Farm Corps, based in Southern Oregon and expanding to other sites, uses our beginning farmer curriculum in their farm internship program and collaborates with us on program delivery.

In Northeast Oregon, we recently partnered with Oregon Rural Action to bring Growing Farms to their region, which has long lobbied for more small farms programming. We also work with Willamette Valley-based Adelante Mujeres to assure that the Small Farms Conference meets the needs of Spanish-speaking farmers and farmworkers, through workshop content and simultaneous translation.

We have strong relationships with statewide nonprofit organizations. Examples include our financial partnership with Oregon Tilth to provide research and education supporting the organic sector; our strategic work with Oregon Food Bank to link small farm sustainability with community nutrition and health; our longstanding research and advisory relationship with the Oregon Farmers Market Association; our educational collaborations with Friends of Family Farmers; and our partnership with Ecotrust to strengthen our bioregional food system.

The Center also has effective working relationships with state agencies. For example, we provide technical expertise to the Oregon Department of Agriculture on policy and regulations that affect small farms and local food systems, and we collaborate on education and outreach efforts.

“As Oregon’s food system and economy grows, it is important to have a statewide organization that provides not only technical support for our projects but also a method of staying connected with other projects in our state. The success of our region and others statewide depends on organizations like the Center to connect the dots and weave a web that puts Oregon on the map for sustainable community food system work.”

– Katrina Van Dis, Program Administrator, COIC
STRATEGY 4: TEACH FOOD SYSTEM COURSES FOR OSU STUDENTS

Our for-credit courses expose OSU students to a wide variety of food system issues, attracting students not only from CAS but other colleges and schools, including the School of Public Policy, the School of Language, Culture, and Society’s Food in Culture and Social Justice program; and the College of Public Health and Human Sciences. Our courses integrate our research and extension activities and connect students with farmers and other food system practitioners. In addition, we advise and support two graduate students with research focused on small farm issues and a summer intern focused on small farm profitability.

We currently offer three courses; a fourth will begin in the 2015-2016 academic year.

Introduction to Food Systems: Local to Global (3 CR)
What is a food system, what are its parts, and how does it work? This multi-disciplinary, cross-listed course introduces the complex topic of food systems, at multiple scales and from multiple perspectives, considering social, economic, and environmental influences and consequences.

Food IQ Honors College Colloquium (2 CR)
Students engage with complex and controversial aspects of food systems in the U.S., exploring the role of social values, economics, and public policy in influencing food systems and choices.

Cities and Food: How Great Cities are Fed (3 CR)
This course uses an ecological approach to examine the agronomic and social processes that create the national, regional and local food systems that feed cities. The course includes a multi-day field outing focusing on Portland as a case study. A category II proposal is in progress.

Growing Farms: Successful Whole Farm Management (3 CR)
This capstone-style course is an enhanced version of the Small Farms Program’s online curriculum for beginning farmers and ranchers that integrates the physical, biological, business, marketing and family dimensions of a farm. A category II proposal is in progress.
STRATEGY 5: BUILD A 21ST CENTURY CENTER: INNOVATIVE, ENTREPRENEURIAL, AND RESILIENT

To accomplish our ambitious agenda, we need to build a Center that is innovative, entrepreneurial, and resilient – in it for the long haul. To this end, we have focused on staffing, advisory committee, marketing, and fundraising.

**Staffing**

Garry Stephenson and Lauren Gwin are the Center’s first Director and Associate Director. Stephenson is the Extension Small Farms Specialist, while Gwin is the Extension Food Systems Specialist; this balance reflects the Center’s mission and approach. We aim to keep on-campus staffing minimal, while adding new extension faculty across Oregon. We also aim to have both campus-based positions funded on a recurring basis, with state or endowment funds.

**Advisory Committee**

In our first year, we recruited and held the first meeting of our interim Advisory Committee, made up of farmers, academics, and food system nonprofits. They advise us on the Center’s planned agenda and initiatives, how to position the Center statewide, and how to create an effective, long-term advisory structure.

**Marketing**

The Extension Small Farms program is already nationally known and looked to as one of the top such programs in the country. To improve our ability to tell our story and attract new partners and funders, we have recruited an advisory committee member with marketing expertise to help us “audit” our current marketing materials and develop a new plan going forward.

**Fundraising Campaign**

The Extension Small Farms Program has a history of entrepreneurial fundraising, doubling our program’s size with outside funding. The Center has expanded on this by launching a multi-pronged fundraising campaign, with the OSU Foundation (OSUF) and independently. In our first year, we raised $230,000 for specific projects through grants, gifts, foundations, and private donations. Our long-term fundraising goal is to endow several small farms faculty positions.

We launched a small donor campaign to demonstrate ownership of the Center by its clientele, regardless of financial status. More than forty small donors (including the entire Small Farms faculty) contributed nearly $26,000 to the Center endowment.

With OSUF, we developed fundraising materials, established an endowment account, and began to identify and approach potential major donors, foundations, and corporations; we successfully raised $40,000 for a new initiative in the coming year.

We continue to write competitive grants to support our programs and have had success with private foundations. In this first year, Gwin brought in $46,500 in grants and $90,000 from five public and family foundations to support the Niche Meat Processor Assistance Network. We were written into grant proposals led by nonprofit partners, amounting to more than $15,000 from three organizations. Partnerships with Oregon Tilth and Organically Grown Company raised $12,500 for research and extension efforts. Finally, we have more than $800,000 in pending grant proposals for programming over the next three to five years.
“The Center plays a vital role in Oregon’s struggle to build true food security for all of its citizens and success for a growing sector of the economy. It is essential and appropriate that our land grant university be the center of academic excellence for community food systems work and research. This Center is proving to be an excellent partner to the private nonprofits, farmers and entrepreneurs that have been doing this work in Oregon for decades. Together we will build a stronger, more resilient food system for our state.”

– Sharon Thornberry, Community Food Systems Manager, Oregon Food Bank

To learn more about the Center, visit our website or contact:

**Garry Stephenson**  
Director  
Garry.Stephenson@oregonstate.edu  
541-737-5833

**Lauren Gwin**  
Associate Director  
Lauren.Gwin@oregonstate.edu  
541-737-1569

Center for Small Farms and Community Food Systems  
Oregon State University  
107 Crop and Soil Science Building  
Corvallis, OR 97331  
http://centerforsmallfarms.oregonstate.edu/