

FoodHub in the News



Food Safety News

March 24, 2010

By Michelle Greenhalgh

FoodHub Connects Growers, Buyers Online

Portland, OR – [FoodHub](#) is a brand new searchable online database of food producers and food buyers of all scales in Oregon, Washington, California, Alaska, Idaho, and Montana. The site was launched in February 2010 by [Ecotrust](#), a nonprofit “think tank” and “do tank” based in Portland, OR that creates and funds economic, social justice, and environmental programs.

The idea behind FoodHub, according to Deborah Kane, VP of food and farms at Ecotrust, is like a Match.com for the Northwest locavore movement. The website connects small and regional producers with food buyers for restaurants, corporate cafeterias, public schools, and even state prisons.

“FoodHub makes it possible for a food buyer of any kind—whether it’s for a restaurant or a school or a hospital—to sit down at a computer, type in the word ‘broccoli’ and get a list of all the local broccoli producers who might be interested in selling to them,” Kane told [fastcompany.com](#).

When you type “broccoli” into FoodHub’s search box, it “immediately starts autopopulating for you—specific variety, all about the farmer, what the minimum order amount is, whether they deliver on the Sysco truck,” Kane explained.

Ecotrust used to print a paper guide for growers and buyers, but it was obsolete the day it was printed because of the uncertainty of crops. With FoodHub, buyers can search for their producers and print out their query to make updated, customized guides 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Undersecretary of Marketing, Ann Wright, praised the Northwest’s embrace of locally grown food and called it an element of economic recovery. “Regional and local food systems are a big part of it,” Wright said. She explained that a thriving local food system improves children’s health, reconnects us to the land, allows farmers to thrive, and attracts new farmers to agriculture.

Wright cited statistics claiming that the consumer demand for fresh, local food has been growing for the past 15 to 20 years and shows no sign of fading. Americans spend an estimated \$4 billion annually on local food and “place-based purchases” are projected to increase to \$7 billion by 2010, [Oregonlive.com](#) reported.

“At the heart of it is consumer awareness about food choices, they want their purchase to mean something,” Wright said.

According to FoodHub’s website, “Never before have Northwest food producers been so highly visible to the region’s wholesale food buyers....and never before have food buyers had it so easy.”

FoodHub has taken off in recent weeks. "It's not just chefs and not just fruit and vegetable farmers, but hospitals, food carts, the Oregon State Prison, universities, the state organic agency, which is a roster of 1,400 producers," Kane told Fast Company.

Maybe the most unique quality of FoodHub is that, "farmers and their counterparts on FoodHub get to tell their stories. FoodHub makes it possible to share the rich stories behind our food: the names of the farmers' kids, what lead the farm family to switch to organic practices, how they knew when to harvest the cherries for maximum sweetness, which cow took the blue ribbon at the country fair. These, in turn, provide a crucial competitive advantage to all those who merchandise local food," wrote Kane.

Membership to FoodHub costs \$100 per year and is open to food buyers and sellers of all kinds throughout OR, WA, AK, ID, MT, CA. Members create online profiles that include pertinent information including contact information, products they buy or sell, preferred methods for doing business, and other useful details.

At present time, FoodHub has more than 3,000 items in its pantry. The Website supports direct market relationships and leverages existing distribution channels to encourage growth in regional food sales writes Kane.

URL: <http://www.foodsafetynews.com/2010/03/foodhub-connects-growers-and-buyers-online/>