

FoodHub in the News



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FoodHub Improves Networks

After six months in operation, FoodHub has more than 600 members and is still growing, its sponsor said.

Ecotrust, a nonprofit organization in Portland, Ore., launched the networking website in February to connect food buyers and sellers.

In addition to that, the website can tell members the distance a producer will deliver and if the producer works with a distributor.

Subscribers can also post products they want to purchase or sell. Deborah Kane, vice president of Ecotrust's Food and Farms program, compares the marketplace feature to the Craigslist website.

When the website started there were concerns that more buyers than sellers would subscribe -- or vice versa, Kane said. However, that hasn't been an issue.

Most subscribers have been in the Interstate 5 corridor, but lately membership seems to be moving into rural communities, she said. Many members reside in Oregon and Washington, which is a positive trend since one of the organization's goals is to be a regional tool for buyers and sellers.

FoodHub has also enlisted the help of six organizations to serve as ambassadors. Their job is to get the word out about the services the database offers and to encourage their constituents to use FoodHub.

Friends of French Prairie is one of those ambassadors. Aside from recruiting, ambassadors serve as local representatives, help desk and trouble shooters for their area, Ben Williams, president of Friends of French Prairie, said.

The Oregon Farm Bureau has also signed on as a partner.

"We think they have built a wonderful tool to help connect agricultural producers with non-retail buyers," Dave Dillon, Oregon Farm Bureau's executive vice president, said.

The partnership with FoodHub gives Farm Bureau members a 25 percent discount on their annual subscription fee. The diverse membership will help FoodHub broaden its scope.

This type of outreach helps underscore the fact that FoodHub is scale-neutral as well as production-neutral, he said.

"We are working with a wide variety of organizations that have used formal and informal means to make sure we grow," Kane said. "So, is FoodHub working? Absolutely, positively, yes."

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