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## **ECOTRUST'S FOODHUB AND OR FOODEX ANNOUNCE NEW JOINT VENTURE**

### ***Tech-savvy partnership aims to solve distribution challenges of local food movement***

PORTLAND, OR, and BOSTON, MA (October 3, 2012) – Portland-based nonprofit [Ecotrust](#), creator of local food online marketplace [FoodHub](#), and Boston-based social venture [OR FoodEx](#) announced today their intention to partner on a new joint venture designed to overcome the single biggest barrier to building robust regional food economies: distribution.

The new venture will integrate the technology, teams, and expertise of the two entities to create an online matchmaking and on-the-ground logistics solution that helps wholesale food buyers overcome a host of obstacles to sourcing food from local producers.

Beginning in 2013, the combined platform will build connections and online transactions between wholesale buyers — including universities, corporate cafeterias, hospitals, schools, and retailers — and local producers, and it will leverage FoodEx's existing trucking and logistics infrastructure to deliver products from multiple producers on a consolidated delivery and invoicing system.

The integrated FoodHub + FoodEx system will retain the source identity throughout the value chain, while online profiles will provide stories and pictures from the producers for chefs and grocers to share with

eaters.

Once the new group refines the combined model in New England, the joint venture will seek to replicate it in FoodHub's home region on the West Coast.

Most importantly, the innovative model will put more of the value created in the wholesale food supply chain into the pockets of farmers, fishermen, and ranchers. This will allow them to stay on their land and in their boats, and make food production more attractive to the next generation, all of which will be imperative in the years to come as demand for local food continues to grow.

Founder and CEO of OR FoodEx, JD Kemp, and Amanda Osborne, director of FoodHub, announced the partnership while presenting on a [panel](#) at the SXSW Eco conference in Austin, TX today. Along with Ecotrust's executive vice president and panel moderator Astrid Scholz, Osborne and Kemp used an infographic recently released by FoodHub called the [Local Food Technology Landscape](#) as a platform for both envisioning an alternative food system and calling attention to the newly formed partnership.

The vision of the yet-to-be-named joint venture is to create an alternative, regionally-based and transparent food value chain across the nation. As Spencer Beebe, founder of Ecotrust, explained, "Ecotrust and FoodEx are in perfect alignment on the goal of this new company – we're going to change the food system."

FoodEx CEO Kemp said, "To change the system, we have to create an economically viable, workable alternative. Independent, family-scale farmers, ranchers, fishermen, dairies, and specialty producers are making an enormous amount of good, fresh, healthy food in this country. There are also millions of people who care about where their food comes from and how it was produced. The system doesn't work for any of them right now."

## **Background**

Kemp launched FoodEx in 2009 out of warehouses in Boston and Athol, MA, distributing products for independent producers primarily to specialty retailers and grocery co-ops. A systems-optimization engineer by trade, Kemp had a vision for what systemic change in the food supply chain could look like, and he knew it required a much bigger scale. In the fall of 2011, FoodEx launched a pilot distribution project to aggregate supply from local farmers and deliver the products to the foodservice contractor at two area universities.

In early 2012, FoodHub's Osborne was surveying innovations in the local food and technology sector and called Kemp to learn about his business. The two hit it off immediately. "I remember proposing the partnership that we're now executing the very first time I spoke to JD. We shared the same mission, but were coming at it from opposite ends," she explained. "With FoodHub we had built a very user-friendly platform for helping local food buyers and sellers find each other and connect, but we couldn't solve their distribution challenges. FoodEx had pioneered a disruptive model for regional-scale fulfillment, but their platform was missing the producers' stories and all the relationship-building tools we had developed. It felt like peanut butter and jelly."

Merging technologies and teams is a lot harder than making a sandwich, however. FoodHub is based in Portland and FoodEx in Boston, so the new venture will take some time to build. Osborne emphasized that

FoodHub is committed to maintaining and enhancing its existing networks. “There are more than 4,000 food producers, wholesale buyers, and industry suppliers who are actively using FoodHub to connect, and we are 100% committed to facilitating those connections,” she said. “FoodHub members will also be the first to know about and have access to the new integrated solution when it’s launched here, so now is a great time to join.”

Kemp added, “We have the wheels on the ground in Boston. With this partnership and our combined platforms, our producers will have one more tool in their kit to help market their products to an ever-increasing array of buyers hungry for local food. We couldn’t have asked for a better solution to both enhance and streamline our offerings.”

Ecotrust’s Scholz told audiences at SXSW Eco that “this is just the kind of unusual alliance and 21<sup>st</sup>-century solution we are constantly seeking at Ecotrust. It seems a natural evolution of the work we’ve been doing to build robust regional food systems for the past 20 years. We couldn’t be more excited about the potential for this partnership to reshape the food system for greater good.”

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**About OR FoodEx** – Organic Renaissance (OR) FoodEx was launched as a for-profit social venture in late 2009 to revolutionize the food system by facilitating distribution for regional, family-scale, socially responsible producers. With a warehouse in Athol, MA and distribution center in Boston, MA, FoodEx works with producers around New England to get their products into the wholesale food supply chain. [www.orfoodex.com](http://www.orfoodex.com)

**About FoodHub** –Launched in 2010, the FoodHub platform helps local food producers, wholesale buyers, and supporters of regional food economies find each other, connect, and do business. A project of the nonprofit Ecotrust, the tool was developed with private foundation, nonprofit and government resources, and intended for broad use throughout the food and agricultural communities. Now in its second year, FoodHub has welcomed more than 4,000 farmers, ranchers, dairies, fishermen, restaurants, schools, hospitals, and chefs to connect with each other and create a more robust regional food economy. [www.food-hub.org](http://www.food-hub.org)

#### **About Ecotrust**

Ecotrust's mission is to foster a natural model of development that creates more resilient communities, economies, and ecosystems here and around the world. Over more than 20 years, Ecotrust has converted \$80 million in grants into more than \$500 million in capital for local people, businesses, and organizations from Alaska to California. Learn more at [www.ecotrust.org](http://www.ecotrust.org)