

OREGON HUNGER TASK FORCE

Creating Policies for a Hunger-Free Oregon

Roadmap to End Hunger 2025-2027



OREGON HUNGER TASK FORCE

Creating Policies for a Hunger-Free Oregon

Roadmap to End Hunger

**All Persons Have the Right to Food.
A bold declaration to meet the moment.**

Prepared by the Oregon Hunger Task Force for the Oregon State
Legislature and Oregon Executive Branch.

Contents

Contents	2
Introductory Remarks	3
Executive Summary	4
Committing to the Right to Food	4
Foundational Conditions: Creating Fertile Soil for Food Security in Oregon	5
Methodology	6
Definitions of Key Terms	7
Section 1: Current Context	8
The State of Hunger in Oregon	8
Covid-19 Impacts: Contextualizing the Data	9
Section 2: The Right to be Free From Hunger	10
Affordable	10
Physically Accessible	14
Inclusive	17
Section 3: The Right to Food	20
Food Justice	20
Food Sovereignty	21
Conclusion and Call to Action	24
Endnotes	25

Introductory Remarks

In 1989, Oregon boldly enshrined the right to be “free from hunger” in state law.¹ At that time, Oregon was facing a severe hunger crisis, with some of the highest rates in the nation. Despite the overwhelming challenges, leaders chose to confront the issue head-on, leading to the creation of the Oregon Hunger Task Force. Their decision to act, rather than succumb to despair, laid the foundation for a unique, state-mandated body dedicated to tackling hunger.

Over the years, the Oregon Hunger Task Force has become a national model for addressing food insecurity. It has worked tirelessly to raise awareness, conduct research, and propose actionable solutions to uphold the right to be free from hunger. Every biennium since 1989, the Task Force has presented a pathway to progress, reaffirming our commitment to meeting every Oregonian’s basic need for food. And for some time, we were making steady progress.

However, today we are facing another crisis in food security in our state. We need the same kind of bold action now that we saw from the legislature and governor’s office back in 1989. That’s why we’re calling on lawmakers to not only reaffirm their commitment to the right to be free from hunger but to push beyond it and commit that **every Oregonian has the right to food**. Over the course of this Roadmap to End Hunger, we will illustrate the difference between the two, and offer practical, actionable steps the legislature can take toward a food-just future.

Our focus extends beyond mere food access to creating a food just and food sovereign future. This system should foster economic prosperity, keep food within our communities, and work sustainably with the land.

We present this Roadmap to End Hunger as both a call to action for the legislature and a tool for collective engagement. Together, let’s strive towards a future where food justice is a reality for all.



Oregon Hunger Task Force Steering Committee

Chris Baker, OHTF Administrator, Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon

Heather Miles, SNAP, CSFP & TEFAP Program Manager, Oregon Department of Human Services

Jessica Morris, Chief People & Strategy Officer, Meals on Wheels

Mark Edwards, Professor of Sociology and Director of Oregon State University Policy Analysis Laboratory

Michelle Weeks, Goodrain Farm, Farm Manager

Sarah Weber-Ogden, Co-Executive Director Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon

Executive Summary

“Food is a human right. Everyone needs food to be healthy and thrive. We all have the right to food that is unrestricted, culturally-relevant, nourishing, dignified and fear-free. When everyone in our community has access to food, we all benefit. Kids do better in school, families stay healthy and our local economy thrives.”

– Oregon Food Bank

Committing to the Right to Food

It is enshrined in Oregon statute that “all persons have the right to be free from hunger.”² Yet year after year we find ourselves in a deepening food insecurity crisis. While enough food has been produced to feed everyone for decades,³ hunger persists because power and resources are concentrated away from local producers, workers, and communities – the backbone of Oregon’s food system.

The path forward lies in recognizing food as a fundamental human right.⁴ By shifting toward a rights-based approach to food and promoting policies rooted in equity, sustainability, and environmental stewardship, and a strengthened localized food system that benefits local producers and workers⁵ – we can address hunger at its roots and create a system that works for Oregonians.

This Roadmap to End Hunger stands apart from past approaches by recognizing that solving Oregon’s food crisis requires more than just addressing immediate access to food—it demands reshaping the systems that govern how food is produced, distributed, and valued. While Oregon’s law guarantees the right to be free from hunger, our ultimate goal is to secure **the right to food**. The right to food goes beyond providing

immediate relief, ensuring that everyone has access to nutritious, culturally appropriate, and sustainably produced food. It also emphasizes that food systems should empower and be controlled by and for communities, and contribute to economic prosperity across Oregon.

This Roadmap also departs from previous editions in that we are not calling out specific bill numbers or time-sensitive policies in this document. The Oregon Hunger Task Force produces a legislative platform of policy endorsements every legislative session and that is where you will find specific policies and bills relevant to the emergent issues of that session. Instead, this Roadmap clarifies a broader and more long-term view of ending hunger in our state.

The Roadmap is divided into three key sections: the first explores the current state of hunger in our communities and how the COVID-19 pandemic has left a lasting mark on food insecurity rates. The second focuses on recommendations to realize Oregon’s commitment to the right to be free from hunger ensuring that everyone has affordable, physically accessible and inclusive nourishment. The third section envisions a future where Oregon commits to all people having the

right to food. In this future, food justice and sovereignty become the norm, empowering communities to reclaim control over their food systems.

This report includes:

- insights from experts, community members, and service providers,
- recommendations,
- success metrics, and
- case studies highlighting real examples of how these strategies have been successfully implemented in our communities.

This comprehensive approach offers guidelines for targeted investments when assessing both immediate relief and long-term, systemic change.

The road is not a short trip, it's long and winding and full of challenges. Tackling this issue demands more than a single burst of energy for

short-term solutions; it requires ongoing, durable collaboration and the maintenance of foundational conditions to ensure long-term success.

So what must we do to create those foundational conditions for lasting change?



Foundational Conditions: Creating Fertile Soil for Food Security in Oregon

“The problem is not lack of solutions [...] The international community has a good sense of how to tackle the food crisis; what we need now is coordinated government action.”¹⁶

– Michael Fakhri, Professor at the University of Oregon and United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food

The Oregon Hunger Task Force is dedicated to nurturing the foundational conditions for sustained collaboration in several ways:

- 1. Community-Led Movements for Change:** We focus on empowering communities by engaging them directly through listening sessions and integrating community members into the task force. By providing resources and support, we help communities lead the way in identifying needs and solutions, ensuring that policies are informed by those who experience hunger firsthand.
- 2. Strong Representative Democracy:** We enhance the feedback loop between individuals affected by hunger and elected officials. By

facilitating this dialogue, we ensure that government actions and policies are responsive to the real needs of the community, fostering a more effective and representative democratic process.

- 3. Strong Public and Community Partnerships:** We convene a diverse group of stakeholders—including impacted community members, direct service providers, tribal representatives, faith leaders, advocates, elected officials, and state agencies—on a monthly basis. This collaborative environment allows for a comprehensive approach to addressing food insecurity, leveraging the strengths and perspectives of various partners.
- 4. Federal and State Collaboration:** We orga-

nize quarterly discussions with federal delegates to align state and federal efforts. This collaboration helps address systemic barriers to food security and ensures that both levels of government are working together to provide the necessary resources and support.

- 5. Shared Goals, Metrics for Success, and Clear Roles:** The Roadmap to End Hunger in Oregon outlines our shared goals and success metrics. This clear framework helps coordinate efforts and ensures that all participants are aligned in their commitment to ending hunger.

By focusing on these strategic areas, the Oregon Hunger Task Force is working to build the capacity needed to effectively tackle the complex issue of food insecurity in Oregon and accomplish the goals we set out in this Roadmap to End Hunger.



Methodology

To develop this Roadmap, we employed a comprehensive methodology that combined rigorous research with the leadership of impacted communities.

- 1. Research and Data Analysis:** Our initial framework was based on research and data from Mark Edwards at the OSU Policy Analysis Laboratory. This provided a solid foundation for understanding the scope and scale of food insecurity.
- 2. Expert Consultation:** We enhanced our analysis by consulting with experts who work directly with communities, including regional and local food banks, and outreach staff from Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon. Additionally, we invited partners in this work to contribute directly to the content. Their practical insights help contextualize the data and ensure it reflects real-world conditions.
- 3. Community Input and Leadership:** We incorporated many years of extensive community feedback collected through state-wide listening sessions and surveys. Combining historical data with new, timely data offered valuable perspectives on the challenges faced by those affected by food insecurity.
- 4. Issue-Specific Listening Sessions:** In the fall of 2024, we held targeted listening sessions in Salem, Tillamook, and Malheur County to address specific local issues. A separate report on these sessions is available on the Oregon Hunger Task Force website.

This approach allowed us to integrate empirical research with hands-on expertise and community voices, leading to a well-rounded understanding of food insecurity and informing our strategies and recommendations.

Definitions of Key Terms

Hunger

Hunger is the physical discomfort from not having enough food. It can be acute (short-term) or chronic (long-term), leading to malnutrition and health issues.⁷ We will sometimes use the word “hunger” interchangeably with the term “food insecurity” to reflect colloquial usage.

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is when people lack reliable access to sufficient, nutritious food. It ranges from occasional concerns about food to persistent deprivation.⁸

The Right to be Free From Hunger/Food Access

Food access is the ability to obtain enough affordable and nutritious food. It depends on factors like income, transportation, and availability of food sources.⁹

The Right to Food/Food Justice

Food justice focuses on ensuring equitable access to healthy food for all, particularly marginalized communities. It addresses systemic inequalities and promotes fair food distribution.¹⁰

The Right to Food/Food Sovereignty

Food sovereignty is the right of communities to control their own food systems, prioritizing local needs, sustainable practices, and the production of culturally appropriate foods over global market forces.¹¹



Section 1: Current Context

The State of Hunger in Oregon

A Winding Path and Time for A Roadmap

Authored by Dr. Mark Edwards, Director of the Policy Analysis Laboratory at Oregon State University for the Oregon Hunger Task Force in August 2024

In the late 1990s, Oregon leaders were appalled and ashamed to learn that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) regarded Oregon as one of the hungriest states in the country. Even the USDA didn't believe their own numbers, asking Oregon State University (OSU) researchers to check their math. But the problem was real and members of the Oregon Hunger Task Force rallied to improve emergency food availability and access to the then relatively new Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as "food stamps".

Modest improvements were achieved in reducing food insecurity but the low-income families of Oregon did not benefit much during the heated economic run-up to the bursting of the housing bubble and the resulting in the 2007-09 Great Recession. The ripple effects of that bursting bubble were far-reaching during a very slow economic recovery with ever-rising rates of food insecurity that were significantly higher than that of the US as a whole.

But then began a steady improvement from 2015 to 2020, when a combination of effective generous coordinated efforts by anti-hunger organizations and an improving economy yielded the lowest food insecurity rates on record. Oregon's Department of Human Services achieved nearly 100% enrollment rate for SNAP, the highest in

the country, making sure that all who were eligible received this support. Yet, the improvement in food insecurity was short-lived with a reversal precipitated by the COVID pandemic.

The food insecurity rate grew, although it did not skyrocket during COVID as some of us researchers predicted, the rate apparently held in check by the unprecedented anti-poverty investments of federal agencies, as well as impressive coordination of Oregon nonprofits and state agencies. Now with the winding down of pandemic-era benefits, families and individuals are facing a new set of challenges with historic levels of food and housing cost inflation and the elimination of supports that assisted them during the public health emergency.

The newest USDA report (September 2024) confirms that food insecurity continued to rise not only as the pandemic progressed, but also as it ended, with about 530,000 individuals per year experiencing food insecurity at some point in the year (2021-2023). OSU's annual investigations into our state's food insecurity have repeatedly identified which households are most vulnerable — single parents, persons of color, less educated, unemployed. The recent rise in food insecurity among these groups was predictable but there have been surprises too — for example food insecurity surged 80% in rural communities¹² during the pandemic and outpaced the problem in urban Oregon. Any good roadmap will take into account the unique needs of these constituents and places, recognizing that some solutions will help some and other solutions will help others.

Earlier plans to end hunger by the Oregon Hunger Task Force mostly called for efforts to improve access to federal programs (e.g., SNAP, WIC) and strengthen the emergency

food system while addressing the unique needs of oft-marginalized groups. Oregon did that. But more needs to be done. These priorities of making food available to low-income households remain important elements of any roadmap to end hunger, but twenty-five years of modest gains, reversed at least twice by financial and health crises, suggest that new broader reaching approaches must be part of the plan, addressing root causes of insufficient incomes for families, uneven regional economic development, and impossibly high housing costs, to name just a few.

The reader will find in this Roadmap new and fresh, sometimes provocative ideas that lead to potentially unprecedented low levels of food insecurity and greater levels of well-being among those struggling to make ends meet in Oregon.

Covid-19 Impacts: Contextualizing the Data

**Food assistance requests are at an all-time high
– even higher than during the pandemic**

Authored by Oregon Food Bank for the Oregon Hunger Task Force in August 2024

Today, we face a hunger crisis that is affecting a record number of people in rural, urban and suburban communities across the state. Last year, Oregon Food Bank saw 1.9 million visits to food assistance sites through the Oregon Food Bank Network — a 14% increase from the previous year.

Losing direct financial support from the federal government — such as increased SNAP dollars and stimulus checks — means our communities continue to face the economic fallout of the pandemic, along with the rising cost of food and housing. With extended SNAP benefits ending in March 2023, more and more families across Oregon rely on food banks to fill the gaps. And food banks are not immune to rising costs of food and fuel.

- From Oregon Food Bank's 1,400+ partner

agencies spanning the state of Oregon and Southwest Washington, staff and volunteers distributing food reported staggering increases in the need for food assistance after pandemic emergency assistance sunsetted.

- Free food markets in the Portland metro area experienced a 25% to 50% increase in demand.
- By the end of the Spring 2023 term, the PSU Food Pantry served more students than it ever had in a full year.
- Linn-Benton Food Share reported its highest number of patrons across its network of 68 food pantries and food banks since 2019.
- In March 2023, SnowCap Community Charities in East Portland provided services to over 400 families who had never visited before, doubling the number of new families from March of the previous year.

Hunger and its root causes most affect marginalized communities — BIPOC, gender expansive, single mothers and caregivers, and immigrants and refugees.

The striking increase in families and individuals accessing food assistance for the first time underscores that anyone can experience hunger, regardless of identity. Yet we also know that systemic injustices like racism, sexism, inaccessible child care and xenophobia create and perpetuate poverty and hunger. Stigma, discrimination and fear make people less likely to access food benefits such as SNAP and food pantries. And we know that those of us who are gender expansive, single mothers, immigrants and people of color, face unique barriers to accessing food and making ends meet.

Gender, race, immigration status and single parenthood should not determine someone's ability to access food — yet those of us in marginalized communities face systemic injustices and discrimination that prevent us from accessing food.

Food justice is the path forward to end hunger.

Section 2: The Right to be Free From Hunger

Equitable, Culture-Affirming Access

The right to be free from hunger is fundamentally synonymous with ensuring food access for all individuals. This right encompasses several key pillars: **affordability**, which guarantees that nutritious food is within financial reach; **accessibility**, which ensures that food is physically obtainable and available; and **inclusivity**, which ensures that diverse food options reflect the needs of all community members. Together, these pillars form the foundation of equitable access, affirming that everyone deserves the means to secure the nourishment necessary for a healthy life.



“Seeing this rise in food insecurity now, after pandemic era supports have ended, shows us that the government programs in place during the pandemic were truly effective in combating food insecurity, and that can give us a roadmap for moving forward in this next chapter as a state.”

– Angelita Morillo, SNAP Policy Advocate,
Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon

Affordable

Many Oregonians are feeling the sharp rise in food prices, with many noticing their grocery bills skyrocketing. This increase is driven by a complex mix of factors, including national and global market conditions, supply chain issues, price gouging, and competition among retailers — factors that are difficult to tackle at the state level. However, there are some key steps Oregon can take to help bridge the gap between high food costs and the resources available to impacted communities. Here are our recommendations.

The Disproportionate Impact of Hunger on Women

Authored by Libra Forde, Executive Director, the Women's Foundation of Oregon for the Oregon Hunger Task Force in October 2024



The Women's Foundation of Oregon stands in solidarity with the Oregon Hunger Task Force in its mission to end hunger and food insecurity across our state. Hunger is not just an issue of food access; it is a deeply gendered crisis. Women, particularly single mothers and women of color, are disproportionately affected by food insecurity. In Oregon, women make up a significant portion of the population living at or below the poverty line, and many must make impossible choices between feeding their families and meeting other basic needs.

The impacts of hunger on women are far-reaching, affecting their healthy, mental well-being, and their ability to provide stable, nurturing environments for their children. The Oregon Hunger Task Force's work to develop equitable solutions to hunger addresses a fundamental need for the women and families of Oregon.

At the Women's Foundation, we know that when women thrive, communities thrive.

Invest in Food Assistance Programs like SNAP and WIC

During the pandemic, we anticipated a historic rise in food insecurity in Oregon, but the increase was relatively modest due to strategic enhancements to the federal safety net such as Pandemic-EBT, universal school meal vouchers, and lifted restrictions on SNAP. These measures effectively mitigated the impact of the pandemic on food security, illustrating that targeted government programs are crucial in preventing widespread hunger. Still, women and single mothers are overrepresented in the data and expanding the reach of these programs is vital to solving hunger in the state.

Recommendation: Increase state funding and expand program services and access to federal nutrition assistance programs such as SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) to provide immediate relief to families struggling with food costs.

Success Metric: Measure the growth in program services, enrollment, and track improvements in food security among participants.

Expand Anti-Poverty Programs, Including Affordable Childcare and Housing

Affordable childcare and other anti-poverty programs are essential in supporting food security by reducing the financial strain on low-income families. When families have access to affordable childcare, they can allocate more of their income to essential needs like groceries, ensuring their children have nutritious meals. Programs such as housing assistance, income support, and affordable healthcare work in tandem, helping families meet their basic needs without sacrificing food quality or quantity. By alleviating these financial pressures, anti-poverty initiatives play a critical role in creating stability and reducing hunger for vulnerable populations.

Recommendation: Invest in anti-poverty initiatives such as affordable employment-related daycare (ERDC), housing assistance, assistance to houseless communities, and income support programs to reduce the overall financial burden on low-income families, freeing up more resources for food purchases.

Success Metric: Track increases in access to affordable childcare and other support programs, and measure improvements in household financial stability and food security.

Support Local Food Systems and Community Initiatives

Strengthening local food systems is key to increasing access to fresh and affordable food, especially in areas where global supply chains fall short. Community-based food initiatives, such as farmers' markets, community gardens, and food cooperatives, help reduce reliance on mass-produced, processed foods and foster food resilience. These systems promote sustainable farming practices and support local economies by providing farmers direct access to consumers. Moreover, by investing in local food networks, communities can better control food prices and availability, ensuring that fresh, nutritious options are accessible to all, particularly in underserved areas. Investing in BIPOC owned, run, and serving community-based initiatives is key to expanding access to culturally affirming foods as well.

Recommendation: Invest in local food systems, such as community gardens, farmers' markets, and food cooperatives, to increase access to affordable and fresh food options outside the global supply chain, especially in BIPOC communities and other highly impacted groups.

Success Metric: Evaluate the growth in the number of community food initiatives and farmers' markets, and measure the impact on food prices and availability in local areas and the increase in access to highly impacted communities.

Successful Case Study:

The Oregon Farm to School Program is designed to connect schools with local farms to improve students' access to fresh, healthy, and locally sourced food while supporting local agriculture. This initiative aims to enhance educational opportunities about food systems, promote healthier eating habits, and strengthen the local economy.



Invest in Agricultural Subsidies for Local Food Production

Agricultural subsidies and support programs are vital for reducing the cost of locally sourced food and enhancing the resilience of local food producers, especially those producers from communities impacted by food insecurity like rural and BIPOC folks. Existing federal subsidies focus on commodity crops and almost entirely exclude local producers. By increasing funding for small- and medium-scale

farms, as well as urban agriculture, governments can help mitigate the financial challenges faced by local farmers, allowing them to produce more affordable, high-quality food. Strengthening these systems not only benefits consumers through lower prices but also helps ensure a stable and diverse food supply. Supporting local producers also promotes sustainable agricultural practices and fortifies food supply chains, reducing the dependency on global imports that can be volatile in times of crisis.

Recommendation: Increase funding for agricultural subsidies and support programs for local food producers to lower the costs of locally sourced food and strengthen local food producers and supply chains.

Success Metric: Monitor the reduction in the cost of locally produced food and track increases in the percentage of local food purchases within the state.

Adjust Minimum Wages and Cost-of-Living Standards

Low wages and stagnant cost-of-living adjustments contribute significantly to food insecurity, as families struggle to afford basic necessities on insufficient incomes. When wages do not keep pace with inflation or the rising costs of essential goods, households are forced to make difficult choices, often sacrificing the quality or quantity of food they can purchase. By regularly adjusting minimum wages and aligning cost-of-living standards with current economic realities, governments can enhance the purchasing power of low-income families, ensuring they have the financial capacity to meet their food needs without cutting corners on nutrition.

Recommendation: Regularly adjust minimum wages and cost-of-living standards to enhance consumer purchasing power and improve access to affordable food.

Success Metric: Monitor changes in food affordability relative to income levels and assess the impact on household food security and purchasing power.

Prevent Price Gouging and Regulate Essential Goods Pricing

During times of crisis or economic instability, price gouging on essential goods like food disproportionately affects low-income families, exacerbating food insecurity. Unchecked price increases on staple items can push basic groceries out of reach, creating unnecessary financial strain on households already struggling to make ends meet. By implementing stronger regulations on the pricing of essential goods during emergencies, governments can ensure that all families have access to affordable food without fear of exploitation.

Recommendation: Strengthen state-level protections against price gouging on essential goods, particularly food, during emergencies and periods of economic hardship, to safeguard families from predatory pricing practices.

Success Metric: Track incidents of reported price gouging and monitor changes in the cost of essential food items during crises, ensuring price stability and affordability.



Physically Accessible

Addressing Food Deserts

Creating a physically accessible food system is essential for ensuring food security in both urban and rural areas. In many underserved communities, physical barriers such as transportation challenges, inadequate infrastructure, and limited affordable housing units in proximity to food retailers contribute to food insecurity. By addressing these issues and intentionally designing built environments that prioritize accessibility, we can better ensure equitable access to healthy, affordable food for all. This includes considering how urban planning, zoning, and infrastructure investments can address disparities in food access across diverse regions and populations.

Recommendation: Invest in urban planning, zoning reforms, and infrastructure that improve physical access to food sources in both urban and rural communities. Prioritize the creation of food hubs, markets, and retail stores in areas where access is currently limited.

Success Metric: Measure the increase in the number of food outlets within underserved areas and track the reduction in travel time or distance to food sources for residents in rural and low-income urban communities.

Invest in Accessible and Affordable Housing

Housing stability is a foundational component of food security. When families are burdened by unaffordable housing costs, they are often forced to make difficult trade-offs between rent and other necessities, including food. Ensuring access to affordable housing allows families to allocate more of their income toward meeting essential needs, including nutritious meals. Moreover, accessible housing—designed with universal design principles and placed in proximity to key resources—can greatly reduce the stressors that contribute to food insecurity, particularly for low-income households and individuals with disabilities.

Recommendation: Increase investment in affordable housing developments and ensure that new projects are located near essential services such as grocery stores and public transportation.

Success Metric: Track the percentage of households spending more than 30% of their income on housing and monitor improvements in food security among residents of affordable housing projects. Track the number of people experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity in Oregon.

Expand Access to Affordable Public Transit and Transportation Infrastructure

Access to reliable transportation is a critical but often overlooked element of food justice, particularly for individuals with disabilities and low-income communities. Many residents face significant barriers to reaching grocery stores, farmers' markets, and other food sources due to inadequate transportation infrastructure. Investing in public transportation networks, accessible ridesharing programs, and infrastructure improvements can bridge this gap, ensuring equitable access to healthy, affordable food.

Recommendation: Invest in public transportation networks, ridesharing programs, and infrastructure improvements to connect low-income neighborhoods to food sources like grocery stores and farmers' markets.

Built-in Justice: Fighting for Food Security in Urban and Rural Communities Through Built Environment

Authored by Cassie Wilson, Disability Justice Advocate and Transportation Policy Manager 1000 Friends of Oregon for the Oregon Hunger Task Force, August 2024



Transportation is critical to our food system, moving people to jobs and food to markets. However, transportation challenges are a major barrier to accessing food. A 2018 Oregon Hunger Task Force survey found 16% of Oregonians struggle with transportation when accessing food. Mobility justice means ensuring people have reliable, safe, and affordable transit options, while also addressing broader issues such as racial profiling, xenophobia, and traffic violence.

Transportation options impact how frequently and efficiently people can access food. Short trips allow for more frequent visits, while long bus rides limit how much people can carry. Disabled individuals face even greater challenges due to inaccessible infrastructure, housing, and grocery stores. Limited public transit and costly delivery services further compound these barriers.

To address these issues, communities need more accessible housing and compact, walkable neighborhoods with nearby food sources. Transit systems should be designed to accommodate grocery trips, while programs to make e-bikes and mobility devices affordable must be expanded. Local leaders should also resist grocery store closures in low-income areas. Ensuring transportation access is key to food justice, and more sustainable transit options will help bridge these gaps and combat hunger in Oregon.



Success Metric: Measure the increase in access to affordable transportation options for food-related trips and track changes in food access and consumption patterns among residents of low-access areas.

Enhancing Food Access Through Home Delivery Programs

Transportation challenges significantly affect individuals' ability to access nutritious food. To address these barriers and improve food security in Oregon, we propose expanding programs that support home delivery options.

Recommendations: Expand direct reimbursement payment programs for Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) offerings that include home delivery services. This will incentivize local farms to provide delivery options, making fresh produce more accessible to those who may lack transportation. Broaden SNAP benefits to cover costs associated with delivery services, such as DoorDash fees.

Success Metrics: Measure the increase in the number of CSAs participating in the reimbursement program. Track the percentage of CSA members utilizing home delivery services. Assess changes in the percentage of households reporting improved access to fresh produce through surveys before and after implementing the program. Monitor the number of SNAP recipients taking advantage of the expanded delivery benefit. Conduct surveys to evaluate changes in food access and dietary quality among SNAP participants before and after the expansion.

Solid Infrastructure During Natural Disasters and Other Pressures

Natural disasters, pandemics, and other crises can disrupt food supply chains and exacerbate food insecurity, particularly in vulnerable communities. Building resilient infrastructure that can withstand these pressures is critical for maintaining consistent food access during emergencies. This includes not only strengthening physical infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and utilities but also developing emergency food distribution systems that can rapidly respond to crises. By investing in robust infrastructure and planning for disaster scenarios, we can ensure that food security remains intact during times of disruption and stress, protecting vulnerable populations from the worst effects of crises like COVID-19.

Recommendation: Strengthen physical infrastructure, such as roads and utilities, in vulnerable areas and create emergency food distribution systems that can be deployed rapidly during crises. Look to resiliency hubs and food hubs as models.

Success Metric: Monitor reductions in food access disruptions during natural disasters and other emergencies, and track the time required to restore food distribution systems in affected communities.

Successful Case Study:

The Resiliency Hub pilot program, passed by the Oregon Legislature, is a key success in ensuring food security during natural disasters. By establishing community-centered hubs, it enhances local capacity to store and distribute food during emergencies, offering a critical safety net for vulnerable populations. This program is a forward-thinking solution, addressing both immediate food access needs and long-term disaster resilience in the state.¹³

Inclusive

Availability of Culturally Affirming Food

Access to culturally affirming food begins with ensuring availability in local food systems. Food that reflects the traditions and preferences of diverse communities must be readily stocked at retail outlets, farmers' markets, and through community food programs. This pillar focuses on the inclusion of culturally significant produce, spices, and ingredients within local food systems, which is essential for maintaining cultural identity and health.

Recommendation: Partner with local farmers, culturally specific food suppliers, and community-based organizations to diversify food offerings, prioritizing culturally relevant ingredients.

Success Metric: Track the variety and availability of culturally affirming foods at grocery stores and local markets, and measure the increase in consumer access to these items in diverse communities.

Affordability of Culturally Affirming Food

Affordability is crucial for making culturally significant food accessible to all, especially low-income communities. Often, food that aligns with cultural traditions may be more expensive or difficult to source. Reducing the financial barriers to these foods ensures that communities are not priced out of their traditional diets, which is vital for both cultural identity and nutrition.

Recommendation: Implement subsidies for culturally significant foods and expand assistance programs like SNAP to include a wider variety of culturally affirming foods.

Success Metric: Measure reductions in the cost of culturally relevant foods and track the increase in purchases of these items among low-income households.

Cultural Relevance of Food Systems

Food systems should reflect the diversity of cultural practices, dietary restrictions, and traditions. Culturally relevant food not only nourishes the body but also affirms a community's identity and social cohesion. Ensuring that food aligns with religious practices, historical traditions, and culinary preferences is a key component of food justice.

Recommendation: Engage with cultural leaders and community members to shape food policies and sourcing, ensuring that local food options meet the dietary needs of diverse populations.

Success Metric: Conduct community surveys and focus groups to measure satisfaction with the cultural relevance of local food options, and track the increase in culturally specific food offerings.

Accessibility of Culturally Affirming Food

Physical access to culturally affirming foods is critical, especially in underserved areas. Ensuring proximity to food sources that offer culturally relevant products and having transportation options for those living in food deserts will reduce barriers to accessing traditional diets.

Recommendation: Invest in public transportation routes and mobile food markets that serve low-income and marginalized neighborhoods, focusing on locations that provide culturally relevant foods.

Success Metric: Track the expansion of transportation services to food deserts and measure the decrease in distance residents must travel to access culturally affirming foods.

Sustainability of Culturally Affirming Food Systems

Sustainable food practices are often embedded in traditional cultures. Supporting environmentally sustainable food systems that respect traditional knowledge ensures long-term access to culturally significant foods, while also aligning with global efforts to combat climate change.

Recommendation: Promote farming practices and community-based agricultural programs that prioritize traditional, sustainable methods of food production, focusing on crops and methods that are culturally relevant.

Success Metric: Track the implementation of sustainable farming practices in culturally specific food production and measure the increase in locally grown, culturally relevant foods within food systems.





Feeding Oregon: Empowering Indigenous Farmworkers and Diverse Communities to Overcome Food Insecurity and Access Culturally Specific Foods

*Authored by Joaquín Lara Midkiff, Grants & Government Affairs
Coordinator at Capaces Leadership Institute for the Oregon Hunger Task
Force in August 2024*



For many communities, arriving in Oregon can mean the loss of traditional foods, breaking a sacred relationship that has been passed from generation to generation since time immemorial. This is especially true for our farmworker communities—about 70 percent of whom come from Indigenous communities in Mexico and Latin America, a population which has ballooned in recent decades.

It's easy to forget the speed with which Oregon has transformed over the last century. In 1900 there were as few as a couple hundred Mexicanos in the state—a fact made even more outstanding when you remember that California, our southern neighbor, was Mexico until 1848. By 2000 the number of Mexicanos living in Oregon had surpassed 250,000. Today, the population has reached well over half a million, with over 14 percent of the state's population predominantly of Mexican origin, and nearly one-quarter of Oregonians under eighteen identifying as Latino. Meanwhile, the number of Indígenas, or Indigenous Mexicanos, living in Oregon has soared from as few as 2,864 in 1980 to as many as 60,000 within forty years.

For Oregonians across the state, those sacred and enduring relationships with food and harvest, integral to their communities' experience of life and culture let alone subsistence, have been stressed if not broken. In a terrible irony, Oregon's migrant Indigenous communities—the folks who, in large part, feed our state and nation—are going hungry. More than 14 percent of Farmworker Housing Development Corporation residents, for example, experience hunger. More than half reportedly remain food insecure. For Zapotec, Mixtec, P'urhépecha, and other Indigenous peoples, often linguistically and culturally isolated, these figures worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic, and still have not recovered. Today, as younger generations are born and raised in Oregon, our Indigenous community's poverty rates remain significantly higher than the state's overall.

Section 3: The Right to Food

The right to food justice and sovereignty involves distinct but complementary principles that build on the foundational concepts of the preceding section, with added nuance. Food justice focuses on ensuring equitable access to healthy and nutritious food for all, particularly marginalized communities, by addressing systemic inequalities and promoting fair distribution. Food sovereignty, on the other hand, emphasizes the right of communities to control their own food systems, prioritizing local needs and sustainable practices over global market forces. While food justice addresses imbalances in food access, food sovereignty empowers communities to make decisions about their food systems, reflecting their values and priorities. Together, these principles incorporate and expand upon the core concepts of affordability, accessibility, and inclusivity, affirming that everyone deserves both equitable nourishment and the autonomy to shape their own food systems.

Food Justice

Promote Racial Equity in Food Systems

Systemic racism has historically marginalized communities of color in the food system, resulting in unequal access to resources and opportunities. By dismantling racist policies and creating equitable opportunities, we can address these disparities. Supporting BIPOC farmers and food entrepreneurs through grants, land access, and leadership positions in food policy organizations is crucial. This approach will ensure that historically excluded communities have fair access to the resources necessary for thriving in the food system.

Recommendation: Invest in grants and land access programs for BIPOC farmers, offer business loans to food entrepreneurs of color, and ensure diversity in leadership within food policy organizations to promote racial equity in the food system.

Success Metric: Measure the increase in grants, loans, and land access provided to BIPOC farmers and entrepreneurs, and track improvements in leadership diversity within food policy organizations.

Advance Economic Justice and Living Wages

Economic inequality is a significant driver of food insecurity, with many food system workers earning insufficient wages to meet basic needs. By ensuring that all workers in the food system, from farmworkers to retail employees, receive fair wages and job security, we can alleviate some of the economic pressures that contribute to food insecurity. Raising the minimum wage and implementing fair labor practices are key steps toward economic justice.

Recommendation: Advocate for higher minimum wages, ensure labor protections for farmworkers,

“Food justice is about creating equitable food systems that not only nourish communities but also empower them to thrive and take control of their health and well-being.”

– Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon

and implement policies that secure fair wages and job security for all food industry employees to support economic justice.

Success Metric: Track changes in minimum wage levels, labor protections, and overall improvements in wage equity and job security within the food industry.

Expand Healthcare Access and Support for Culturally Affirming Foods

Access to healthcare, including nutrition counseling, is vital for addressing disparities in marginalized communities. Expanding coverage to include support for culturally significant foods is crucial, as comfort foods contribute to cultural identity and personal well-being. Ensure that nutrition counseling respects diverse dietary practices and avoids anti-fat bias.

Recommendation: Expand Medicaid and other healthcare programs to cover both nutrition counseling and culturally significant foods, integrating food assistance with a focus on body diversity and cultural respect.

Success Metric: Monitor the expansion of Medicaid coverage and integration of culturally affirming food support, and measure improvements in food security and community satisfaction.

Enhance Environmental Justice in Food Systems

Environmental hazards disproportionately affect low-income and marginalized communities, impacting food quality and access. By enforcing environmental regulations and investing in community-driven environmental monitoring, we can address these injustices. Promoting urban agriculture and ensuring safe, clean environments for growing food will contribute to a more equitable food system.

Recommendation: Enforce environmental regulations that protect marginalized communities from pollution, invest in community-driven environmental monitoring, and support urban agriculture initiatives to promote environmental justice and safe food access.

Success Metric: Assess improvements in environmental regulations, track investments in environmental monitoring and urban agriculture, and measure the reduction in environmental hazards affecting food quality and access.

Food Sovereignty

Promote Local Control of Food Systems

Local control is a cornerstone of food sovereignty, enabling communities to make decisions about their food systems based on their unique needs and values. By empowering local entities to oversee

food production, processing, and distribution, communities can better align their food systems with local priorities and practices.

Recommendation: Support policies and initiatives that facilitate local governance over food systems, including community-led food councils and cooperatives. Advocate for legislative changes that grant local authorities greater control over food regulations and land use for food production.

Success Metric: Track the establishment and effectiveness of local food councils and cooperatives. Measure the extent of local governance in food system decision-making and assess community satisfaction with their level of control over food systems.

Address Local Needs Through Tailored Food Systems

Meeting local needs involves customizing food systems to reflect the specific preferences, cultural practices, and dietary requirements of the community. This approach ensures that food systems are responsive and relevant to the people they serve.

Recommendation: Invest in programs that assess and address local food needs, including culturally appropriate foods and traditional dietary practices. Support research and community engagement initiatives to identify and respond to local food preferences and requirements.

Success Metric: Evaluate the effectiveness of programs designed to address local food needs by measuring community feedback and dietary satisfaction. Track improvements in the availability of culturally relevant and preferred food options within the community.

Farmland Access: A Pillar for First Foods

Authored by Michelle Week, Farmer, Good Rain Farms for the Oregon Hunger Task Force in October 2024



As the founder of Good Rain Farm and a first-generation Indigenous farmer, my work is deeply connected to my heritage as a member of the Arrow Lakes (Sinixt) Peoples. Our people were once declared extinct, but have since been re-recognized. The story of reclamation influences my mission to restore access to culturally significant Indigenous First Foods, which are vital to our communities' health and identity. I began farming in acknowledgement of the lack of Indigenous-owned farms and the limited access to these traditional crops that hold deep cultural importance.

Farmland access and ownership is essential for me, not only for growing First Foods but as part of the larger LandBack movement. For us, land access is food sovereignty is Tribal sovereignty. It allows us to preserve traditional farming methods that nurture both ecological sustainability and cultural connection. Good Rain Farm creates a space for Indigenous peoples to reconnect with the land, reclaim ancestral knowledge, and reinvigorate our relationship with the earth. This work is about more than farming—it's about healing historical wounds, building resilience within my community, and ensuring future generations have access to the foods and traditions that sustain us spiritually, physically, and culturally.



Improve Locally Controlled Food Processing Infrastructure

Developing local food processing infrastructure enhances the capacity of communities to process and distribute their own food products. This infrastructure supports local economies and reduces reliance on external processing facilities.

Recommendation: Fund the construction and enhancement of local food processing facilities, such as community kitchens and small-scale processing plants. Encourage the development of infrastructure that supports local farmers and food producers in adding value to their products.

Success Metric: Measure the number of new or improved local food processing facilities and assess their impact on local food production and distribution. Track the growth in value-added products produced locally and their contribution to the local economy.

Strengthen Local Food Distribution

Robust local food distribution networks are crucial for ensuring that locally produced food reaches consumers efficiently. Strengthening these networks enhances food security and supports local economies by keeping food within the community.

Recommendation: Invest in local distribution networks, including farmers' markets, food hubs, and direct-to-consumer delivery systems. Support initiatives that connect local producers with local markets and consumers, improving the efficiency and reach of food distribution.

Success Metric: Assess the expansion and effectiveness of local food distribution networks by tracking the number of distribution points and the volume of local food distributed. Measure the impact on community access to fresh, local food and the economic benefits for local producers.

Support Community-Based Food Preservation Practices

Food preservation practices, such as canning and fermenting, play a vital role in extending the availability of local food and reducing waste. Supporting these practices helps communities maintain food security throughout the year.

Recommendation: Provide resources and training for community-based food preservation techniques. Fund workshops and programs that teach skills such as canning, fermenting, and other preservation methods.

Success Metric: Monitor the participation in food preservation workshops and the quantity of food preserved locally. Evaluate the impact on community food security and the reduction of food waste..

Conclusion and Call to Action

As we advance toward a more just and sovereign food system, it is imperative that individuals, organizations, and local governments come together to support and implement the principles outlined in this Roadmap to End Hunger. Each pillar of this Roadmap offers actionable strategies for creating a fairer and more resilient food system, rooted in equity, local control, and community empowerment. We call upon everyone — whether you are a concerned citizen, a dedicated organization, or a forward-thinking local government — to align your efforts with the goals of this Roadmap. By investing in local food systems, promoting food justice, and upholding the right to food sovereignty, we can collectively build a future where everyone has access to healthy, culturally relevant food and the power to shape their own food systems.

Join us in this critical movement by adopting the recommendations and practices outlined in the Roadmap. Share your success stories, innovations, and progress with us to inspire and inform our collective journey toward ending hunger. Together, let's forge a path that not only addresses immediate needs but also lays the groundwork for lasting change and food justice for all.

We look forward to collaborating with you and celebrating our shared achievements as we work towards a more equitable and sovereign food system.



Endnotes

- 1 Oregon Legislative Assembly. Oregon Revised Statutes, Chapter 459A, “Right to Be Free from Hunger.” Oregon.gov, 2024, www.oregon.gov/legislature/oregon-revised-statutes.
- 2 Oregon Legislative Assembly. Oregon Revised Statutes, Chapter 459A, “Right to Be Free from Hunger.” Oregon.gov, 2024, www.oregon.gov/legislature/oregon-revised-statutes.
- 3 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. “The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023.” FAO, 2023, www.fao.org/publications/sofi.
- 4 Fakhri, Mikal. “Recommit to the Right to Food, UN Expert Urges.” Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 18 Nov. 2022, www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2022/11/recommit-right-food-un-expert.
- 5 Global Hunger Index. Global Hunger Index 2023: The Challenge of Hunger and Food Insecurity. 2023. Global Hunger Index, <https://www.globalhungerindex.org/report.html>.
- 6 Time for Coordinated Action to Address Food Crisis and Create Global Plan – UN Expert.” United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 12 Oct. 2022, www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/10/time-coordinated-action-address-food-crisis-and-create-global-plan-un-expert. Accessed 5 Sept. 2024.
- 7 World Health Organization. Hunger and Food Security. WHO, 2023, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/hunger-and-food-security>.
- 8 United States Department of Agriculture. Economic Research Report: Food Security in the U.S. USDA, 2023, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/104656/err-298.pdf>.
- 9 Coleman-Jensen, Alisha, et al. Household Food Security in the United States in 2022. USDA, 2023, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/108488/err-315.pdf>.
- 10 Alkon, Alison Hope, and Julian Agyeman, editors. The Food Justice Movement: Equity and Food Sovereignty. MIT Press, 2011.
- 11 Via Campesina. Declaration of Nyéléni. La Via Campesina, 2007, <https://viacampesina.org/en/declaration-of-nyeleni/>.
- 12 https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/2023-12/oregon_food_insecurity_rates_2020-2022.pdf
- 13 Oregon State Legislature, HB 2990 (2023), “Establishes Resiliency Hub Grant Program to address local food security and disaster preparedness.” Accessed September 11, 2024.

OREGON HUNGER TASK FORCE

Creating Policies for a Hunger-Free Oregon