

Crossroads Resource Center

7415 Humboldt Ave S / Minneapolis, Minnesota 55423 / 612.869.8664
kmeter@crcworks.org www.crcworks.org

Tools for Community Self-determination



Wood River Ranch

Photo by Ken Meter, 2018

Community Food System Strategic Plan

Ken Meter
Crossroads Resource Center
for the
Sun Valley Institute
Local Food Alliance

**Covering the Wood River Valley Region:
Including Blaine County, Camas County, & Magic Valley Stakeholders**

April 15, 2019

(Revisions made to February 12 version at request of The Hunger Coalition; see pp. 18, 30, 33)



Executive Summary

In order to improve the efficacy of ongoing community foods initiatives in the Wood River Valley Region, the Sun Valley Institute for Resilience commissioned this Strategic Plan in 2018.

To develop the Strategic Plan, Crossroads Resource Center compiled economic research covering Blaine County and the Wood River Valley region, and interviewed 61 food system leaders identified by the Local Food Alliance and the Blaine County Food Council. It then analyzed these findings to develop a short list of action priorities, which are described below.

Preliminary data were presented to public meetings at a Blaine County Food Council workshop in May, 2018, and at the Sun Valley Institute's Sun Valley Forum in August, 2018. These meetings also helped to identify key issues to be addressed, and key leaders to be interviewed.

Stakeholder interviews were held in November and December of 2018. Most were held in-person, with a few by telephone as needed. Interviewees were asked to describe their work within the community food system, and also to identify the key strengths and limitations they experienced in community foods work. Further, each was asked to offer their insights into the obstacles preventing community foods work from flourishing, as well as key opportunities they saw for advancing this work.

Purpose of this Strategic Plan

To strengthen community-based food systems in the Wood River Valley Region *(Including Blaine County, Camas County, the Magic Valley, and nearby areas)*.

Definition

A **Community-Based Food System** creates systems of exchange that strive to bring food producers and food consumers into affinity with each other¹ for the purpose of building health, wealth, connection, and capacity in the region.

Geography Covered

Currently, no clear geographical identity exists for the region covered by this report. For lack of a better term, we call this the Wood River Valley Region. We define this to include all of the Wood River Valley, the rest of Blaine County, Camas County, and parts of the Magic Valley.

While this area encompasses most of the farmland that is closest to Wood River Valley consumers, and is of critical importance to supplying them with food, this initiative also seeks to foster production of food on WRVR farms for all consumers in the region, as well as the growth of social and commercial networks that will build financial trade, mutual respect, and trust among all members of the region.

For sake of simplicity, however, since no county boundaries precisely identify this region, much of the economic and health data compiled cover Blaine County alone.

¹ Meter, Ken (2007). "Evaluating Farm and Food Systems in the US." *Systems Concepts in Evaluation: An Expert Anthology*. American Evaluation Association Monograph published by EdgePress of Inverness.

Over time, as this Strategic Plan is implemented and regional branding efforts take root, the Region may take on its own unique identity, perhaps embracing a name that reflects the broader landscape — perhaps using a name such as the “Tri-Valley Region.”

Key goals of the plan:

1. Ensure that all residents of the Wood River Valley Region (WRVR) have access to healthy foods produced on Blaine County (BC), Camas County (CC), and Magic Valley (MV) farms.
2. Ensure that farmers are well compensated for their work, and that food is affordable to all consumers in the region.
3. Engage Wood River Valley, Blaine County, Camas County, and Magic Valley stakeholders in increasingly stronger collaborations that build effective social and commercial networks. In particular, farmers and consumers should build mutual trust and stronger connections with each other.
4. Build the capacities of residents and businesses in the region to grow food, eat in healthy ways, and effectively manage social and commercial networks as conditions change.
5. Create a solid track record of accomplishments.
6. Build infrastructure that creates new efficiencies in community food trade and fosters long-term partnerships.

Key Assets:

- The Wood River Valley Region holds a strong heritage of farming
- The Region’s residents “have the mindset to eat healthier, locally raised food”
- Ketchum/Sun Valley has an exceptional core of donors who have invested in the broader community

Key Weaknesses:

- Prevailing food infrastructure strongly favors food imports and exports over community food trade
- Good people with solid vision are working separately rather than collaboratively
- Although residents know each other and are friendly to each other, genuine collaboration is limited. More needs to be accomplished
- Much of the community foods activity has engaged only higher-income residents

Key Obstacles:

- Inequality
- Lack of collaboration or communication: “Everyone is always doing their own thing”

Key Opportunities:

- Wood River Valley Region has enough land, wealth, and consumer purchasing to build a strong community food system
- Prioritize projects that will strengthen trust and collaboration among Valley stakeholders
- Engage all residents of Wood River Valley Region in community foods efforts

- Work collaboratively to leverage The Hunger Coalition’s expansion
- Build a distribution network appropriate to the level of farm production
- Build cold storage on wholesaling farms (could be built by local farmers)
- Build warehouse space and cold storage in Hailey/Bellevue

Key Elements of this Work Plan

(Each is explained in greater detail in the draft)

- 1. Unify community foods coordination**
- 2. Brand the Wood River Valley Region with an inclusive vision**
- 3. Formalize the WRVR Wholesale Produce Partnership (WPP)**
- 4. Solidify the status of the Wood River Farmers’ Markets**



Kraay’s Market & Garden (Bellevue)

Photo by Ken Meter, 2018

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
LIST OF THOSE INTERVIEWED	6
COMMUNITY FOOD TRADE PERSISTS	8
JUDY, FRED, AND COOPER BROSSY INVEST FOR THE LONG HAUL	8
ATKINSONS’ MARKET INVESTS IN COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS	10
COMMUNITY SCHOOLING SPAWNS NEW FARMING	12
LONG-TERM FARM FAMILY LAUNCHES A NEW GRAIN BUSINESS.....	13
COFFEE GROWS FROM A CULTURAL TAPROOT	15
SETTLING BACK HOME TO GROW FOOD OVER THE LONG WINTERS.....	15
KRAAY’S MARKET & GARDEN DELIVERS DIRECT TO HOUSEHOLDS	17
THE HUNGER COALITION PROVIDES FOOD RELIEF; RAISES AWARENESS	18
CONCLUSIONS FROM OUR RESEARCH	18
ECONOMIC TRENDS ARE WORRISOME	19
KEY CONCERNS RAISED IN INTERVIEWS	21
KEY STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OBSTACLES, AND OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED IN OUR INTERVIEWS.....	23
THE CHOICE THE WOOD RIVER VALLEY REGION FACES.....	24
KEY OPPORTUNITIES.....	27
KEY ELEMENTS OF THIS WORK PLAN	27
1. UNIFY COMMUNITY FOODS COORDINATION	27
2. BRAND THE WOOD RIVER VALLEY REGION (WRVR) WITH AN INCLUSIVE VISION	32
3. WRVR WHOLESALE PRODUCE PARTNERSHIP (WPP).....	37
4. SOLIDIFY THE STATUS OF WOOD RIVER FARMERS’ MARKETS	43
ADDITIONAL INITIATIVES CURRENTLY UNDERWAY:.....	46
APPENDIX A: QUALITIES OF THE EXISTING COMMUNITY-BASED FOOD SYSTEM	54
STRENGTHS & ASSETS OF THE REGION’S COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEM:	54
WEAKNESSES OF THE COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEM:.....	57
OBSTACLES TO STRENGTHENING THE COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEM:	60
OPPORTUNITIES FOR STRENGTHENING THE COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEM:.....	61
APPENDIX B: ECONOMIC DATA	66
BLAINE COUNTY FOOD CONSUMPTION	76
ANNUAL FOOD CONSUMPTION BY PRODUCT	76
CLIMATE IS NOT THE LIMITING FACTOR.....	80

List of Those Interviewed

We are deeply indebted to the following 61 people who donated their time, expertise, and insights to help us understand conditions in the Wood River Valley, Magic Valley, and Blaine and Camas Counties. Each told us about their contributions to the community food system, assessed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and obstacles they encountered, and suggested next steps to take. Our thanks to all.

First Name	Last Name	Position	Organization	Location
Peter	Atkinson	Owner	Atkinsons' Market	Ketchum
Whit	Atkinson	Owner	Atkinsons' Market	Ketchum
Brian	Bean	Owner	Lava Lake Lamb	Hailey
Tammara	Beck	CFO	1,000 Springs Mill	Buhl
Sara	Berman	Owner	Squash Blossom Farm	Bellevue
Scott	Boettger	Executive Director	Wood River Land Trust	Hailey
Cooper	Brossy	Owner	Ernie's Organics	Shoshone
Fred	Brossy	Owner	Ernie's Organics	Shoshone
Alex	Buck	Co-owner	The Warfield	Ketchum
Mark	Caraluzzi	Owner	Intrepid Cuisine	Ketchum
Aimée	Christensen	Executive Director	Sun Valley Institute	Ketchum
Phil	Christensen	Owner	Old Almo Creamery	Almo
Tim	Cornie	Owner	1,000 Springs Mill	Buhl
Mark	Davidson	Director, Conservation Initiatives	The Nature Conservancy	Hailey
Sara	Dorland	Managing Partner	Ceres	Sun Valley
Rich	Feucht	Owner	Prairie Winds Heritage Farm	Fairfield
Bryan	Fletcher	Business Manager	Blaine County School District	Hailey
Jamon	Frostenson	Owner	Loganics	Fairfield
Mark	George	Founder	1% for Blaine	Ketchum
Christina	Giordani	Owner	Dirt Road Productions	Ketchum
Lauren	Golden	Extension Educator	Idaho Extension	Hailey
Harry	Griffith	Executive Director	Sun Valley Economic Development	Ketchum
Josh	Hale	Co-Owner	Elkhorn Ranch South	Mackay
Mike	Heath	Owner	M&M Heath Farm	Buhl
Bryan	Hostetler	Volunteer	Kraay's Market & Garden	Bellevue
Bob	Howard	Coordinator	Desert Mountain Grass Fed Beef	Hammett
Julie	Johnson	Owner	NourishMe	Ketchum
Jeff	Jones	Produce Buyer	Atkinsons' Market	Ketchum
Nate	Jones	Owner	King's Crown Organics	King Hill
Chris	Kastner	Owner	CK's Real Food	Hailey
John	Klimes	Owner	Agrarian Harvest	Buhl
Larry	Kraay	Owner	Kraay's Market & Garden	Bellevue
Sherry	Kraay	Owner	Kraay's Market & Garden	Bellevue
Matt	Luck	Owner	Pride of Bristol Bay	Ketchum

Strategic Plan for Wood River Valley Region Community Food System — Ken Meter 2019

Spence	Mallett	Owner	Neighborhood Nourishment	Twin Falls
Wayne	Marshall	Owner	Pure Waters Organic Farm	Buhl
Amy	Mattias	Co-Director	Local Food Alliance	Hailey
Al	McCord	Owner	Wood River Sustainability Center	Hailey
Brooke	McKenna	Director of Operations	The Hunger Coalition	Bellevue
Lindsay	Mollineaux	Market Manager	Kraay's Market & Garden	Bellevue
Aspen	Moon	Owner	Business Consultant	Buhl
Matt	Moran	Owner	Morningstar Arising Farm	Bellevue
Bill	Pereira	Owner	Big Chief Organics	Bellevue
Gino	Petosa	Assistant General Manager	Charlie's Produce	Boise
Pat	Purdy	Owner	Picabo Livestock Company	Picabo
Callie	Raspberry	Owner	Raspberry's Restaurant	Ketchum
James	Reed	Owner	Onsen Farm	Buhl
Terry	Reynolds	Produce Buyer	Atkinsons' Market	Hailey
Matt	Robinson	Manager	Konditorei Bakery & Café	Sun Valley
Alex	Sanchez	Owner	Oasis Market Farm	Buhl
Larry	Schoen	Commissioner	Blaine County	Hailey
Bruce	Seguin	Produce Buyer	Atkinsons' Market	Bellevue
Duane	Sorensen	Food Service Director	Blaine County School District	Hailey
Brett	Stevenson	Owner	Hillside Ranch Flour & Grain	Bellevue
Sean	Temple	Head Chef	The Warfield & The Elevated Table	Ketchum
Winn	Weaver	Owner	Winn's Compost	Hailey
Harry	Weekes	Executive Director	The Sage School and Quigley Farm	Hailey
Stacy	Whitman	Co-Director	Local Food Alliance	Hailey
Matt	Williams	Owner	Waterwheel Gardens	Emmett
Ed	Zinader	Owner	Squash Blossom Farm	Bellevue
Katie	Zubia	Owner, & Board President	Wood River Ranch Beef, & Wood River Farmers' Market	Bellevue

Community Food Trade persists

For decades, residents of the Wood River Valley Region have been forging a community-based food system against great odds. Although all of the incentives offered by the prevailing food system favor importing of food, and while the Magic Valley has emerged as one of the primary food-exporting regions of the U.S., dogged residents have built food trade that created stronger community cohesion.



Cooper Brossy, Ernie's Organics (Shoshone)

Photo by Ken Meter, 2018

Judy, Fred, and Cooper Brossy invest for the long haul

One of many early pioneers was Judy Brossy, who began growing organic produce for market 25 years ago, long before it became popular. She painstakingly grew vegetables without using synthetic chemicals, while her husband Fred followed organic practices in raising row crops. Their customers valued the superior quality of what they harvested. The Brossys also constructed high tunnels that allowed them to extend their growing season in a challenging climate. They began by hauling their produce to the Wood River Valley themselves, selling directly to restaurants and at the early form of the Hailey Farmers market.

Yet Judy also realized that if more people were to have access to these healthy foods, Ketchum needed a place where farmers and their customers could meet. So she and other growers organized a farmers' market in Ketchum with the collaboration of the Atkinson brothers who provided the space and advertising. She also was a founding member of the South Idaho Land Trust, knowing that farmland, conservation land, and open space must be protected if people were going to be able to enjoy a high quality of life in the future. Ultimately that knowledge resulted in the Brossys placing the farm into a permanent conservation easement using the

NRCS Federal Farm and Ranchland Protection Program. This program ensures the land will be farmland forever.

Judy is no longer farming. When I interviewed Fred Brossy in November, I asked him what got the family started raising organic foods. He chuckled and leaned back in his chair. “For years, I knew we had to do it.” He understood it was important both for the health of the soil and for the family’s personal health. “But I didn’t have the courage.” Even though his employer at the time would have paid him to convert to organic production, Fred felt the tug of remaining true to the farming procedures he grew up with. There was no dramatic moment when he realized he was going to change, he said. “At one point, I just knew it was time.” Fred counts Mike Heath and Nate Jones as important mentors in helping him get organic production established. “The switch to organic crops would not have been nearly as smooth without the help of some really good friends and mentors who helped me get started....Twenty-odd years in, we continue to help each other regularly.”

Today, Fred and his son Cooper raise potatoes, soft white wheat, alfalfa, edible beans, and numerous varieties of bean and other vegetable seed for gardeners at their 300-acre farm near Shoshone. The farm is named Ernie’s Organics after the land’s previous owner. When Judy retired, the produce business took a back seat. Their favored asparagus fields near the Little Wood River now stand idle, in large part because the crop requires considerable labor. Yet Fred and Cooper still raise other seed crops using mechanical planters and harvest equipment. When *Potato Grower* magazine featured their farm in a cover story in November, 2018, the magazine noted that the 20-35 acres of land the family devotes to potatoes can account for as much as one-quarter of the farm’s income.

The Brossys are quick to point out that the success of their farm is due in large part to the support of their neighbors — even those who volunteer to drive trucks during harvest season. “Probably the biggest reason I farm is the chance to work alongside family and friends,” Cooper told *Potato Grower*.

Fred added that sustaining the farm has involved deep challenges. “For people our size, it is easier just to send our products away on a semi-truck. But doing that just contributes to the colonial economy that Idaho is based on. We have to get to where we don’t import so much food.” Yet he also recognized that this poses dilemmas. “We are already stretched with what we do. To shift to smaller scale vegetable production so we can meet local needs is a logistical challenge for us. It is hard to balance the two operations. Market gardening is the toughest business I know. It is hard to hire help. How do we pay them?”

Yet, as Fred told *Potato Grower*, the extra effort has paid off. The family recently decided to modify the farm’s mission statement so that it prioritizes quality of life. “Organic farming is a biological system, much more than just input substitution. We can’t buy more farmland around us; we’re kind of hemmed in by lava fields here. So we’ve got to make the land we farm better. It feels pretty good to know that thanks to the conservation easement, this place will remain a farm forever.”

Fred added, however, that he can envision the farm making an even stronger impact on the community. “It would be nice if the local food distribution wasn’t just for the elite.”²



Atkinsons' Market in Bellevue

Photo by Ken Meter, 2018

Atkinsons' Market invests in community connections

Fred Brossy noted that as soon as the Ketchum farmers' market began operation, it had an impact on neighboring businesses. One of those firms was Atkinsons' Market, located across the street from the Farmers' Market. “People would buy 2-3 items from us, and then walk over to Atkinsons' to continue their shopping.”

As an independent grocery owned by a local family, the Atkinsons were quick to discover that they benefitted from this synergy. “Yes, our produce sales dipped a bit” when the farmers' market opened, Whit Atkinson said, “but we made it up in other sales because our traffic increased.” So, when the Ketchum farmers' market moved from its initial location on Fourth Street to Town Square, the Atkinsons gave up some of their parking access.

That spot had actually been critical to the grocer's history. In the summer of 1983, after a fire damaged the store, the family operated a produce tent on the same lot that operated until they could reopen the store in December.

² This section draws upon Marchant, Tyrell (2018). “Little Piece of Heaven: Ernie's Organics in Shoshone, Idaho.” *Potato Grower*. Grower of the Month. Nov 6. Viewed December 24, 2018 at <https://www.potatogrower.com/>

In its current location Atkinsons' Market has dedicated shelf space featuring produce from Idaho farms and locally raised meats. Whit Atkinson told me in November that "I always tried to buy locally. We will commit to you [the grower] if you commit to us." Peter Atkinson added, "When we put local stuff on the shelves, it sells." The grocery purchases potatoes from a farm in the Magic Valley, apples and stone fruits from a farm west of Boise, and features Idaho cantaloupe, watermelon, sweet corn, squash, tomatoes when they can get them. Atkinsons' also regularly purchases greens from Squash Blossom farm (see below), describing the farm's co-owners Sara Berman and Ed Zinader as family friends. Whit added, "Our purchases from Sara doubled in 2018." Atkinsons' also regularly donates surplus produce to The Hunger Coalition.

Still, both the grocery family and the region's farmers agree that more could be done. The Atkinsons wish that farmers could deliver to their three stores in Bellevue, Hailey, and Ketchum more often, while farmers would love to have the grocer order more products. The barriers are complex, involving the scale of production, food safety and/or organic certification, liability insurance, warehousing space, and distribution.

The Atkinsons pointed out that it has been their connection to community that allowed them to sustain their business since 1956, when Chuck Atkinson opened the Ketchum store in a former gambling casino. It was a step the family could not take on its own, so Chuck sought other investors. Primary investors were George and Peggy Kneeland, the *Sun Valley Guide* reported in 2007, as well as the Kilpatrick brothers who had hired Chuck to run their combination grocery store and gas station in Picabo since 1942.

Chuck's grandson Chip told the *Guide* that the store's opening was met with considerable skepticism. "Everybody said, 'Oh, they won't last a year,'" he recalled. Yet Atkinson's has now grown to three locations including stores in Hailey and Bellevue, and has weathered intense competition well.

Whit Atkinson told the *Guide* that one key element of the store's survival is that the family has always owned its store locations. He told the magazine that buying one's property is "critical." "You have to control your destiny. The value of real estate (here) is not based on reality."

Yet even more staunchly, the family protects its relationships with its customers. Chip told the *Guide*, "When it's busy, I don't care what your position is, you're here for the people."

Chip added, "It's real important to be very generous in what we give back to the community." He told the *Sun Valley Guide* that the family donates roughly \$200,000 of cash every year, and tens of thousands more in donated foods. The *Guide* reported that "Local charities, including the Sun Valley Summer Symphony, the Sun Valley Center for the Arts' Wine Auction and numerous children's programs have benefited from the Atkinsons' support."

Whit Atkinson told *Guide* reporter Rebecca Meany, "That's the duty of an independent, family-owned business. "If there's any strength to an independent business, it's that they're connected to their community." Chip added that 70 percent of the firm's customers remain very loyal.

Among the Atkinson family contributions was helping to launch the Community School in collaboration with many other families in the Valley. Whit and Susie's son, Peter, attended this school; he now serves as a fourth-generation manager of the grocery firm. As part of the

interview process for this strategic plan, Peter convened the three produce buyers for the firm’s three stores to discuss what was needed to strengthen the community food system in the Wood River Valley.³



Sara Berman and Ed Zinader, Squash Blossom Farm (Bellevue)

Photo by Ken Meter, 2018

Community schooling spawns new farming

Another graduate of the Community School is Harry Weekes. Weekes notes that he valued his education there, but ultimately decided he wanted to create an even more expansive educational opportunity. He is now executive director of The Sage School located near the Hailey airport.

Among the graduates of Community School is Sara Berman, who found a calling as a farmer during her time there. She managed the Sage School’s greenhouse operation for eight years, and then decided to launch her own one-acre farm, Squash Blossom Farm, with her partner Ed Zinader.

A Wood River Valley native who is well connected to The Sage School, Sara was able to rapidly connect with more than 50 Valley households that purchase CSA shares from Squash Blossom Farm. The couple also sells their produce at the Ketchum farmers’ market, and supplies several restaurants as well as Kraay’s Market & Garden. One of her primary customers is Atkinsons’ Market — bringing a long-term return to the Atkinson family’s investment in schooling. “They have been so flexible with us. They buy our product whenever we have it,” Sara added.

³ This section draws upon Meany, Rebecca (2007). “Fifty Years of Family.” *Sun Valley Guide*. Winter. Viewed December 24, 2018 at www.svguide.com/w07/w07_50yearsoffamily.htm

Carrying this investment forward, Harry Weekes is now part of a team of developers planning to build housing, commercial, and office space as part of the Quigley Farm project. Not surprisingly, Weekes plans to develop a farm as part of the initiative. This will be a working farm that will sell products locally, but also engage students in learning about food and farming, and hopefully also supply food to the school's food service.



Harry Weekes at The Sage School (Hailey)

Photo by Ken Meter, 2018

Long-term farm family launches a new grain business

Another daughter of the Valley is Brett Stevenson. Brett also grew up in a family with deep roots in the region who run a large, prosperous farm in the Bellevue Triangle. After attending college and graduate school, then working five years for Blaine County as a planner, Brett helped launch the Blaine County Food Council.

During meetings with Council, Stevenson discovered “There is a real disconnect between the visionaries and the farmers.” Council members entertained a wealth of great ideas, but none of them seemed to refer to the farmers she grew up with. She looked for ways of “bringing in the traditional producers.” Many have earned decent incomes selling malt barley and alfalfa. Yet in recent years, prices began to slip. Brett wanted to find new options for her family and other farmers and a way to process what is grown locally. “We have awesome grain here. It needs little water,” so it is suited to the local climate.

Ultimately, Brett decided to launch a grain cleaning and milling business. This will mean that families in the Valley have access to freshly milled flour from locally raised grains. Together with outside investors she hired a designer from Denmark to design, source, and install a mid-scale

grain cleaning and milling line—a size that is much more common in Europe, but rare in the USA. Initially it will be capable of milling 800 pounds of grain per hour. Her business planning concluded that because of her short supply chain her prices should be very competitive. Yet Stevenson cautions, “I couldn’t make this investment solely for residents of the Wood River Valley. I will have to reach beyond to markets in Jackson, Salt Lake City, and likely California to make it pencil out.” Once she establishes the flour business, Stevenson is hopeful about expansions that may include more flour, a bakery, and or a malthouse for local brewers. As she expands, she aims to involve more farms and food businesses, keeping more money in the Wood River Valley.

Similar collaborations elsewhere in the U.S. have successfully connected seed growers, grain farmers, mills, bakeries, restaurants, and retail stores into vibrant business networks. All are predicated on building significant trust among the members of the cluster so they can effectively coordinate their work over time. Most have encouraged their farmer members to build soil health along the way. As founder Fred Fleming said of the collaboration Shepherds Grain, launched in the Pacific Northwest, the cluster’s growth from 2,000 bushels of grain in 1985 from a few farms to 600,000 bushels per year from 52 farms in 2014 was based on “investing in relationships — the one we have with you, and the one you have with us.”⁴



The Konditorei (Sun Valley)

Photo by Ken Meter, 2018

⁴ See also Meter, Ken (2014). “Investing In Relationships: How Spokane can best support its emerging local foods industry.” Crossroads Resource Center. Available at www.crcworks.org/waspokeplan14.pdf. See also Meter, K. (2018). “Grain Business Clusters in the US.” PowerPoint presentation by Ken Meter, Crossroads Resource Center, to Just Food Ottawa. March 17. Available at www.crcworks.org/crcppt/on grain 180317.pdf

Coffee grows from a cultural taproot

The food service manager at the Konditorei Restaurant at Sun Valley Resort passed along an interesting history of how a culture of food has taken root in the Valley, amid the tourist economy. Matt Robinson recalled that the founder of the Konditorei was Fred Pendl, an Austrian baker who was brought from Europe in the early days of the Resort by Alpine skiers who sought to instill a sense of Austrian culture into the Resort.

Today the restaurant still features an elaborate selection of baked goods, offered in a festive setting that is reminiscent of an Austrian lodge. Significantly, each of Fred's two daughters also launched food businesses when they grew up. Martha Pendl operated the Pendl Bakery in Driggs from 2003-2016. Her sister Lizzie is the owner of Lizzie's Fresh Coffee in Ketchum. Both firms are a testament to the Austrian tradition of cultivating a culture that supports farmers and tasty food — now woven into the Wood River Valley tradition.



Jamon Frostenson, Loganics (Fairfield)

Photo by Ken Meter, 2018

Settling back home to grow food over the long winters

As Jamon Frostenson grew up on a farm near Fairfield he found himself imagining he would return home to farm someday. Yet he also took time away, attending Williams College where he gained considerable scientific expertise. While he was gone he met Annie Rice, a woman who had grown up just a few miles away. Both of their ancestors had homesteaded on the Camas Prairie about 1900.

They married and rented land to farm near their home places. As Jamon set about planning his farm business, he could rely upon working for his father on an established family operation. Yet

he also knew that the farm he wanted to build would be very different. Certainly, he raises cash crops on his land. Yet he also began experimenting with vegetables, selling them under the trade name Loganics.

One year he planted several acres of carrots. He had arranged with a buyer to purchase them, but the deal fell through, so he had to scramble to find a last-minute buyer. Meanwhile, he applied his technical talents to developing a winter growing chamber that could raise greens year round. In our interview, Frostenson said he had gone through five or more iterations of the chamber. Constructing his own insulated walls using plywood boards that surrounded a thick styrofoam layer, he was able to attain R-factors as high as 21. At first he opened up the buildings to the sunlight for part of the day. As each iteration of the building became more cogent than the previous ones, he ultimately decided that he could control the growing environment more precisely by building a light-tight container, using layers of LED lights to help his plants grow. He now grows greens in soil inside a small, flat room of about 150 square feet. Relying upon gauges, timers, and rollers, he can adjust the lighting to simulate sunshine, and easily move trays of plants into proper position as needed.

Skeptical of commodity prices over the long haul, and limited in what he can currently produce as he tests his production methods, Frostenson has focused on selling his greens at the Fairfield Farmers' Market. And, since his in-laws live in Boise, he finds it easy to deliver his products to the Boise marketplace in conjunction with family visits.

Frostenson says that after all of this experimentation, he feels that he is close to having a working production system that could be replicated by others. He is patenting certain aspects of his technology to protect his inventions. When this interviewer asked him if his experience in building insulated wall panels would mean he could construct on-farm cold storage for farmers in the Wood River Valley, he said, "absolutely."



Sherry and Larry Kraay (Bellevue)

Photo by Ken Meter, 2018

Kraay's Market & Garden delivers direct to households

Sherry Kraay has long grown food in her garden at the Kraays' farm in Bellevue, while her husband Larry raised Arabian horses and started a national firm, DryNest Animal Bedding, even as he worked in the Valley as a teacher. As the output from their garden became more than the couple could use, they began sharing their harvest with friends. As interest in local foods blossomed in the Valley, they enlarged their garden four years ago, hoping to supply even more of their neighbors who had signed up for food deliveries.

Yet in their first year as Kraay's Market & Garden, the garden floundered, Larry recalled. They considered abandoning the effort, but, as Sherry said, "The greens didn't stop growing." So the couple focused more on delivering food raised on nearby farms. Larry added, "We didn't plan on this being a business. And it is not a business yet." The operation runs because Larry and Sherry are able to count on other sources of income, so they can volunteer their time. They pick up foods from their farmer partners in Jerome, Twin Falls, Buhl, and Hagerman every Tuesday without charging a fee for the delivery service except for credit card charges. Their markup on the products they carry is rather small at 25% (compared to 30-40% for many distributors). The Kraays and their staff use their own vehicles to deliver food weekly to some 600 customers' homes. They feel cramped for storage space and washing and packing capacity. Yet all the same, they say they channel \$165,000 to \$200,000 of income per year to the 50 farmers and other vendors who supply them.

With this organically grown business model, the Kraays have built a devoted following, forging mutual trust among farmers, chefs, and consumers alike. They take pride in the fact that they retain the farmers' identities as they deliver foods: each consumer knows which farms are supplying them. While 85% of their business is home delivery, the Kraays also deliver to chefs, schools, and commercial accounts when asked. They also sell retail from their farm, and have tackled a host of educational missions as well, including hosting the Valley's Harvest Fest in 2018. They acknowledge that their deliveries reach only the most prosperous consumers who are able to pay for home delivery.

The Kraays estimate that they are more than halfway to their goal of being able to support themselves through the delivery service. With 21,000 people in Blaine County, they know the business is there. However, Sherry said, "We need more farmers, but no one can buy five or 10 acres today. We would like to expand into new heated greenhouses. We also need more people believing in the concept of local food."

"Our next goal," Sherry added, "is to install a freezer." This would allow them to safely store meats for later distribution. They would also like to build more cold storage space, and someday hope to develop a kitchen and classroom where they can expand their educational offerings. They would prefer to earn this income themselves, since as Larry said, "I am wary of the dependence of taking grants." Yet they also want to bring the business to a more sustainable position so someone younger can take it over several years from now.

The Hunger Coalition provides food relief; raises awareness

As the food pantry for Blaine County, The Hunger Coalition (THC) has reached out to low-income residents since 2003, when a group of volunteers headed by Tom Iselin began distributing food to those in need. Now it has distributed more than one million pounds of food.

THC's food relief efforts far surpass the offerings of its "shopping area," where people can come to select free foods as needed. New parents can get assistance in obtaining infant formula (4,500 bottles were dispersed in 2018). Collaborating with nearby schools, THC offers meals and snacks to students during the academic year, and also delivered more than 5,000 meals to five locations through its 2018 Summer Program. Working in partnership with the Wood River Farmers' Market, The Hunger Coalition raised funds that allow shoppers to double the value of their produce purchases at local farmers' markets: for example, if one spends \$20 at the market using an EBT or SNAP card, they can take home \$40 worth of fresh fruits, vegetables, milk, meat, eggs, cheese, or honey. THC also distributed more than 1,000 pounds of pet food in collaboration with Mountain Humane, an animal shelter. In addition to those named above, THC counts The Papoose Club and St. Luke's Wood River Medical Center as key partners.

THC's 2015 Community Food Assessment made visible the reality that one of every six Blaine County residents was making use of food relief — even policemen, firemen, and resort workers rely upon this assistance. That report helped inspire the creation of the Blaine County Food Council.

Yet THC recognizes that food relief alone will not solve hunger. The issues facing low-income residents are complex and long-term, so broader steps are needed. It now places greater emphasis on capacity-building programs such as cooking classes, nutrition education, money-management training, and growing food.

In 2016, THC opened the Bloom Community Farm (along with its Bloom Food Truck) at the Quigley Farm east of Hailey. Here, along with the Hope Garden located in downtown Hailey, residents can learn more about growing food, perform volunteer work in exchange for fresh produce, or gather as a women's group to work together and support each other to address the challenges of living on limited resources.

Yet the need continues to grow. Today, Blaine County has become the eighth-most expensive county in the U.S. in food costs, and 19% of all Blaine County residents receive some form of food aid from The Hunger Coalition. Moreover, THC constituents experience considerable embarrassment when they are forced to rely upon assistance. So the Coalition is embarking upon a long-term effort to create welcoming gathering spaces, hoping to bring residents together to address the grave social issues that create the need for food relief. As part of that effort, The Hunger Coalition is striving to bring on new board members who are more representative of those they serve.

Conclusions from Our Research

The above, of course, are only a few of the examples of community foods activity that has taken root in the Wood River Valley and Magic Valley over several decades. Many others could be

mentioned. These profiles are not meant to elevate any of these groups above other endeavors, but hopefully will present both the face, and a clear image, of ongoing community foods activity.

Economic trends are worrisome

See also Appendix B for further detail.

These community innovators operate inside a context that has proven exceptionally difficult for farmers and residents alike. The population of Blaine County rose 283% (nearly a four-fold increase) from 5,694 in 1969 to 21,791 in 2016 (Bureau of Economic Analysis 2018; See also Chart 1 in Appendix B of this report). Much of this increase was due to an influx of new residents who came to live near Sun Valley, drawn by its mountains, access to nature, scenery, recreational opportunities, and relative isolation.

Moreover, these newcomers brought in substantial wealth. Overall personal income rose a remarkable 1,275 percent, after adjusting for inflation, from \$22.4 million in 1969 (or \$147 million in 2016 dollars) to \$2 billion in 2016 (Chart 2). This is a nearly 14-fold increase (Bureau of Economic Analysis 2018).

The vast majority of this new income is earned from capital investments: interest on savings accounts, dividends from securities, and rental income (Bureau of Economic Analysis 2018). All other sources of personal income grew relatively slowly or declined. This suggests that most of the income increase is due to income sourced outside of Blaine County; new residents brought it with them when they moved in. For the average resident, however, few new sources of income were available — while living costs rose because more prosperous residents, and visitors, were able to spend at higher rates.

As a result, Blaine County ranks 27th in the U.S. for inequality among its residents. This inequality is largely driven by conditions in the Hailey-Ketchum area, which ranks as ninth-highest for inequality of any metropolitan area in the US (Blanchard, 2018, citing Economic Policy Institute data).⁵ “According to the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), the top 1 percent of earners in Blaine County make about \$3.6 million on average. The other 99 percent of the population averages \$77,353 — 46.8 times less.” (Blanchard, 2018)⁶

In fact, Feeding America data shows that the cost of feeding a hungry person in Blaine County is \$4.39 per meal — the eighth highest cost among all US counties. (Those costs range from \$2.04 to \$6.20 per meal.) Further, Feeding America estimates that 10.4% of the Blaine County population (2,230 adults and children) is food insecure, and calculates that it would require \$1.7

⁵ Blanchard, N. (2018). “This Idaho area has one of the most extreme income inequality gaps in the country.” Idaho Statesman, July 22. Viewed January 17, 2019 at <https://www.idahostatesman.com/news/business/personal-finance/article215335440.html#storylink=cpyhttps://www.idahostatesman.com/news/business/personal-finance/article215335440.html>

⁶ Sommeiller, E. & Price, M. (2018). *The New Gilded Age: Income Inequality in the U.S. by State, Metropolitan Area, and County*. Economic Policy Institute, July. Data are for tax units (single adults or married couples), referred to in the report as families, and for 2015, unless otherwise indicated. <https://www.epi.org/multimedia/unequal-states-of-america/#/Idaho>

million each year to provide emergency relief to all residents who require aid (Gundersen, 2018; Blanchard 2018).⁷ This is in addition to the \$1 million of SNAP benefits that Blaine County residents currently receive (Chart 9).

Overall, Blaine County residents currently purchase more than \$63 million of food each year to eat at home. This estimate is low, because it is based upon data covering the Western states, and is not specific to Blaine County.⁸ Based on this tally we estimate that at least \$60 million of these expenditures go for foods sourced outside of the County. For a county with a proud heritage of agriculture, whose farmers sell about \$35 million of food commodities each year, this is a striking loss.

While Blaine County farmers focused on supplying commodity markets, the number of farms in the County fell 17% over the past 48 years, from 224 in 1969 to 186 in 2012. During this period, considerable land was also taken out of farming. In 1969, Blaine County farmers worked 250,249 acres; by 2012 total farm acreage had fallen to 179,130, a decrease of 28 percent (Census of Agriculture, 1969; 2012). Top farm products are forage, barley, and cattle.

Moreover, farmers face substantial uncertainty. While Blaine County farmers enjoyed net cash income of \$7 to \$9 million in 1974, 1990, and 1993, and rode a speculation bubble in 2011, the overall trend of net farm income has been declines. In 19 of the past 48 years, net cash income was negative, and farmers earned \$3 million less by producing crops and livestock in 2016 than they had earned in 1969 (Charts 4-5). During this era, production shifted from livestock to cash crops (Chart 6) (Bureau of Economic Analysis 2018).

Unfortunately, federal farm payments were the largest and most consistent source of farm income from 1977 to 1988, while rental income dominated from 1997 to the present (Chart 8). Thus for landowners, renting out farmland is a more reliable source of income than actually farming the land (Bureau of Economic Analysis 2018).

Meanwhile, hunger increased in Blaine County, despite the rise of personal income noted above. As Chart 9 shows, SNAP recipients collected \$200,000 of benefits in 1970 (no data were recorded for 1969), but benefits rose dramatically during the global housing finance crisis, peaking at \$1.8 million in 2012, and now stand at about \$1 million per year (Bureau of Economic Analysis 2018).

Not only does SNAP data reveal the vulnerability of the Blaine County population, it also shows how much this vulnerability is connected to global events outside of the control of county residents. Also critical, it shows the losses endured under a farm economy that is geared to exporting commodities to distant markets, while local people go hungry.

⁷ Gundersen, C.; Dewey, A.; Crumbaugh, A.; Kato, M; & Engelhard, E. (2018). *Map the Meal Gap 2018: A Report on County and Congressional District Food Insecurity and County Food Cost in the United States in 2016*. Feeding America. Provided by The Hunger Coalition.

⁸ Calculation by Meter using Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Expenditure Survey data for 2015. (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015).

Key Concerns raised in interviews

Wood River Valley Region food leaders also hold bold visions for the future of food in the region. Some of these will be covered below. Although some will move forward on their own momentum, several are likely to require significant support if they are to flourish. Further, our interviews showed that Wood River Valley Region food leaders identify a strong need for greater coordination, and more pragmatic management, of community food activity, if it is to thrive in the future. The key concerns raised by our interviewees are listed below.

Inequality of wealth and income

One of the major challenges the Wood River Valley Region faces today is the tremendous inequality of income and wealth. Studies have documented that Blaine County experiences some of the greatest inequality in the U.S. Much of the wealth was gained outside the Valley.

Such wealth is a tremendous community resource, but also has the consequence of raising prices for those who live here. As a result, staff of The Hunger Coalition report that the organization provides food relief to one of every five residents [interview with Brooke McKenna]. Moreover, food prices in Blaine County are the 8th highest in the US, as noted above. Moreover, one interviewee stated, “40 to 50% of the population is burdened by housing costs.”

Uneven progress in community foods initiatives

One Valley food leader lamented that “Five years ago, I had more choices for buying from local farms than I have today.” Another leader complained that the food work is just “spinning [its] wheels.” As still another pointed out, “We have lots of great meetings about food, but nothing gets accomplished.” Another concluded that well-intended programmatic investments had unintentionally drawn wealth from farmers.

Lack of pragmatic focus

Essentially, with the region’s wealth, vibrant consumer market, and deep farm heritage, there are so many rich opportunities that leaders are paralyzed by choice. As one leader said, “There is an urban idealism here combined with a lack of willingness to do the hard work.” Another added, “Many leaders look for the ‘next new idea’ rather than disciplining themselves to get pragmatic tasks done.”

Partners do not always feel well served

Farmers and chefs who have been involved in recent outreach activities expressed frustration with their roles. One farmer noted that these events “asked a great deal of farmers, but offered little in return.” One chef added events he cooked for were “an elite thing that did not penetrate to most residents’ lives. Farmers donated food, and chefs donated considerable time, but got very little out of it.”

Lingering losses or disputes fuel hopelessness

Many of the people we interviewed offered detailed accounts of traumatic situations that never were resolved. Some of these were unresolved personal conflicts. Some involved organizational breakdowns. Others noted that their opinions had been marginalized. Few felt they hold the power to intervene to cut through a conflicted situation. It seemed there was nowhere to turn to resolve differences.

Individualism often limits collaboration

Idaho’s spirit of individual liberty often prompts people to fall back into their own individual world, especially when conflicts go unresolved. This has worked against building a culture of collaboration. Long-term neighbors and colleagues who enjoy each other and know each other well nevertheless pursue their strategic priorities in isolation from each other, and measure success by gauging their personal income or power, rather than by calculating a community benefit.

Markets have failed the majority of residents

High costs of land, lack of supportive infrastructure, and wealth inequality all conspire to create an immense gap between what farmers need to thrive, and what consumers can pay. Under these conditions, market forces will not create fair pricing. This gap may only be filled through philanthropy or subsidy, if only in the form of lower-income residents paying for health care for food-related conditions, or going without food, or by wealthier residents paying more for food in ways that support access for others. This disconnect is precisely what The Hunger Coalition is organized to address. Building incentives so that more residents invest in the process will also be important.

Even established farm families rely upon off-farm income

While the region hosts several farm families who have built considerable wealth, in general this was gained in an earlier era when farming was more lucrative, or the wealth was built through off-farm activities. While prices for malting barley and alfalfa have been beneficial in recent years, trends show this is declining. As a result, it is extremely difficult for anyone to start a farm without prior wealth, or assistance from someone with wealth. It is even tenuous to manage a well established farm operation without outside sources of income.

Many of the farmers selling food locally are nearing retirement

If the Wood River Valley Region does not have systems in place to support generations of new farmers on an ongoing basis, agriculture itself is vulnerable. In particular, the region could lose to retirement the farms that have sold food to local consumers for decades, without growing new farmers to replace them.



Mike Heath, M&M Heath Farm (Buhl)

Photo by Ken Meter, 2018

Key Strengths, Weaknesses, Obstacles, and Opportunities identified in our interviews

Key Strengths:

- The Wood River Valley and Magic Valley each hold a strong heritage of farming
- Region residents “have the mindset to eat healthier, locally raised food”
- Sun Valley has an exceptional core of donors who have invested in the broader community

Key Weaknesses:

- Prevailing food infrastructure strongly favors food imports and exports over community food trade
- Good people with solid vision are working separately rather than collaboratively
- Although residents know each other and are friendly to each other, genuine collaboration is limited. More needs to be accomplished
- Much of the community foods activity has engaged only higher-income residents

Key Obstacles:

- Inequality
- Lack of collaboration or communication: “Everyone is always doing their own thing”

Key Opportunities:

- Wood River Valley Region has enough land, wealth, and consumer purchasing power to build a strong community food system

- Prioritize projects that will strengthen trust and collaboration among Wood River Valley Region stakeholders
- Engage a diverse and broad range of Wood River Valley Region residents in community foods efforts
- Work collaboratively to leverage The Hunger Coalition’s expansion
- Build a distribution network appropriate to the level of farm production
- Build cold storage on wholesaling farms (could be built by local farmers)
- Build warehouse space and cold storage in Hailey/Bellevue
- Market failure in the prevailing food system creates opportunities for communities

The choice the Wood River Valley Region faces

Essentially, the Wood River Valley Region (WRVR) can prioritize by choosing among several potential paths:

1. WRVR can invest in the concept of individual liberty.
2. WRVR can invest in exporting food to other regions.
3. WRVR can invest in the latest new idea, project, or technology.
4. WRVR can invest in the well-to-do.
5. WRVR can invest in building a culture of collaboration.
6. WRVR can invest in branding itself as a region where everyone eats well.

1. WRVR can invest in the concept of individual liberty

Investing in the concept of individual liberty (that is, “an adult gets to do whatever they want to do”) is wholly consistent with Idaho’s tradition of libertarian individualism. This proud culture helped remote families survive amidst harsh conditions, and hold considerable power at a time when social and political institutions are challenged.

Yet one of the profound results of such an investment is that people appear to feel isolated from each other, unable to resolve conflicts, and unclear how to coordinate. To invest in individual notions of success is to invest in (a) reduced farm income, (b) increased poverty and hunger, (c) limited spending power, and (d) increased isolation and a sense of hopelessness.

2. WRVR can invest in additional farm products that can be exported to outside buyers.

The export strategy is certainly a path that is favored by existing infrastructure, and holds the potential for earning short-term farm and food processing income that could make the region more prosperous.

Indeed, the farming and food-manufacturing sectors of Southern Idaho are among the nationally prominent food sectors of the US. With good soil, ample water, and limited public intervention, the region has prospered in many of the same ways the US farm and food sector has: achieving great economies of scale, it supplies urban markets and foreign consumers with valuable commodities at competitive prices.

Yet farmers in Southern Idaho, like rest of the US, hold little power to negotiate fair terms when markets are so thoroughly owned or dominated by outsiders, as prevailing global markets are.

Farmers, processors, and thus the entire region, are vulnerable because purchasers hold core loyalties that often differ drastically from those of local firms.

Nor do growers face long-term sustainability: The growth of the dairy industry in Idaho, for example, has threatened the survival of family farm areas in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and New England. The same threat is likely to loom over Idaho farmers as new dairy barns and processors come on line in other regions globally, or as spending patterns shift.

Moreover, one of the ironies of the farm and food sector in Southern Idaho is that this region has proven the most difficult for Magic Valley farmers to sell to, because of a limited interest in food grown on nearby farms.

Yet the Wood River Valley itself is even more challenged by its short growing season if it focuses on exporting food. There are multiple competing producers in the US and abroad with either (a) longer growing seasons, (b) lower land costs, (c) lower labor costs, (d) lower input costs, (e) more highly developed farm services such as maintenance or input dealers, or (f) closer access to markets.

Simply put, the main competitive advantage that Wood River Valley farmers and processors could hold economically would be to trade with those who have committed themselves to collaborating over the long term to build a better life for Valley residents.

3. WRVR can invest in the latest new idea, project, or technology

During the past four decades, U.S. farm productivity has more than doubled, but overall net farm income is lower (Economic Research Service 2012⁹, 2013¹⁰). This highlights the fact that technological innovations may offer short-term income, especially to early adopters, but do not always result in long-term financial security.

Even more troubling, many efforts to invest in ways that increase the scale of production — in a well-meaning effort to reduce operating costs — end up promoting outside interests. As one small example, those farmers that have achieved scale often find that they focus attention on urban purchasers in Boise or Salt Lake City, and hold limited interest in selling to Wood River Valley Region consumers.

If a culture of collaboration is not built in the Valley, the benefits of new technological advances are likely to accrue to those who are wealthiest (those who can afford the innovations), and are likely to erode in the matter of a few years. Effective collaboration, through strong social connections and effective business clusters, could create economic benefits that are more

⁹ USDA Economic Research Service, Farm Balance Sheet series. (2012). Part 1: Farm income and balance sheet indicators, 1929 - 2012F, expressed in constant (2005 = 100) dollars.

¹⁰ USDA Economic Research Service, Farm Productivity series. (2013). Table 1. Indices of farm output, input, and total factor productivity for the United States, 1948-2009. Retrieved from <https://academic.oup.com/view-large/122706>

broadly shared, and longer lasting. Such networks will be far more critical to success than any individual enterprise, no matter how innovative it may be.

4. WRVR can invest in the well-to-do

Investors will not take strong interest in initiatives that do not appeal to their individual self-interest. Yet unfortunately, many opt to engage with new projects for the sake of the benefits they may bring among an exclusive set of peers, for reasons of personal and professional prestige. Such investments may be problematic.

Unfortunately, this means that certain investments effectively subsidize those who already have means. Doing so tends to exacerbate income and wealth inequalities, and does little to solve the issues faced by less-prosperous residents. Moreover, investing in making sure the average citizen leads a comfortable life also benefits those who have greater means.

5. WRVR can invest in building a culture of collaboration

Efficiencies can be gained through greater collaboration just as effectively as by producing at a larger scale. Given the prevailing sense of isolation and lack of conflict resolution, accompanied by great inequalities of income and wealth, it seems critical to focus on investments that will build lasting collaborations. This often supporting *processes* that build effective collaboration as much as specific *projects*.

Building collaboration, however, is to swim upstream against powerful currents that reinforce individualism and isolation. This work can be difficult and may bring few short-term rewards, but does bring long-term benefits that reinforce each other over time.

6. WRVR can invest in branding itself as a region where everyone eats well

One way to build more effective collaboration might be to tackle a “big vision” project that has broad support. For example, a potent inclusive local branding could galvanize a wealth of activity and provide a clear framework for collaboration. By embracing the Big Idea that Wood River Valley Region can be a place “Where Everyone Eats Well,” much of the sense of missed opportunity can be redirected into positive activity. This would also help the Valley build a lasting *culture* that fosters individual self-determination, healthier lifestyles and more vibrant communities.

One grower elegantly identified a solid path forward: “The region needs to create a business plan for seeking self-sufficiency as a region.” He suggested that the amount of food that would be needed to feed Valley residents be calculated (See Table 1, Appendix B) and that solid leaders make sure that food is grown, harvested, and distributed to Valley residents.

This approach suggests investing in the “right” scale to feed Valley residents, not larger scale for its own sake. Yet this approach also requires considerable commitment and long-term persistence.

Key Opportunities

As a result of our research and interviews, our strategic focus is to **encourage social and commercial collaborations that reweave a fabric of trust and collaboration over the long term.** This includes effective business clusters.



Alex Sanchez, Oasis Market Farm (Buhl)

Photo by Ken Meter, 2018

Key Elements of this Work Plan

(Each is explained in greater detail below)

- 1. Unify community foods coordination**
- 2. Brand the Wood River Valley Region with an inclusive vision**
- 3. Formalize the WRV Wholesale Produce Partnership (WPP)**
- 4. Solidify the Status of the Wood River Farmers' Markets**

1. Unify community foods coordination

What it is:

Broaden the representation of community food system stakeholders to create a strong consolidated working group to coordinate and oversee food system activity.

Who is involved:

- Sun Valley Institute’s Local Food Alliance (Aimée Christensen, Stacy Whitman, Amy Mattias, and the SVI board of directors and advisory board)
- Blaine County Food Council
- The Hunger Coalition
- Farmers
- Food businesses
- University of Idaho — Blaine County Extension
- Residents of Bellevue and Hailey
- Other partners as needed

Where this will happen:

- Centered upon Hailey and Bellevue
- Connecting to farmers in Carey, Camas County, the Magic Valley and Fairfield areas
- Connecting to Ketchum

When:

This work should begin immediately.

Purposes:

- To create a working board that is focused on achievements and ensuring that community foods work is inclusive.
- To coordinate community foods activity in the Wood River Valley Region with that in nearby regions including Carey, Camas County, Magic Valley, and Twin Falls.
- To build community food trade, solid collaborations, and effective business clusters.
- To coordinate activities undertaken by participating organizations.

Success Measures:

- Sales by partner farms to Wood River Valley Region household and wholesale customers (value in dollars, as well as sales units such as pounds, bushels, cwt, etc.)
- Purchases by partner buyers from Magic Valley and Wood River Valley Region farms (value in dollars, as well as sales units such as pounds, bushels, cwt, etc.)
- Fresh foods conveyed by sale, barter, or donation to Wood River Valley Region residents living at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Limit (value in dollars, as well as sales units such as pounds, bushels, cwt, etc.)
- Acres of sustainably raised produce harvested for this collaboration.
- Social and commercial networks built that engage farmers, household consumers, and food buyers.
- Partner perceptions of the efficacy of this coordination (annual survey).

Background and Rationale:

The Wood River Valley Region has launched three different groups that have coordinated key elements of community foods activity — the Blaine County Food Council (BCFC), the Local Food Alliance (LFA; now formally a part of the Sun Valley Institute), and The Hunger Coalition, the food bank for Blaine County.

Yet among the people selected for interviews by LFA and BCFC for this strategic planning process, none held a clear sense of exactly where community food systems leadership was vested.

The Blaine County Food Council (BCFC) formed after The Hunger Coalition's Blaine County Food Assessment was published in 2015. That report was instrumental in raising the visibility of hunger as a concern. Several who had been involved in the study decided to continue meeting so they could address hunger and a host of other community foods concerns. They launched the Council. Its prime action focus has been on school and restaurant food procurement. Members also said it plays an effective role by bringing together local food system leaders on a regular basis to keep each other informed of new developments.

Another group that has taken considerable leadership is the Local Food Alliance. LFA intends to play a catalyzing role by helping promising food initiatives to launch, and helping them obtain needed technical and financial resources. LFA also has hosted a number of community events to bring greater visibility to local farmers, chefs, and foods. LFA is led by two part-time contracted workers, leading the food program of the non-profit organization SVI.

Also taking substantial leadership, especially by engaging low-income residents, is The Hunger Coalition. As noted above, it has provided food relief for those in need since 2003, and is also increasing its capacity-building offerings. Its 2015 Community Food Assessment effectively placed hunger issues in front of Blaine County residents. Now that is diversifying its leadership base, THC is well poised to bring new voices into community foods planning.

Additional voices must also be added, and a unified core of leaders built. This leadership group must ensure that a practical focus is kept. While many of those interviewed reported they had built a solid spirit of camaraderie with others, and that considerable information is shared, several participants made comments such as, "We meet all the time, and we like each other, but nothing seems to get done." One food-system leader stated that the Valley supported even stronger food-system activity five years ago than it does now.

The basic gap appears to be a lack of practical focus. As one leader said, "There is an urban idealism here combined with a lack of willingness to do the hard work." Another added, "Many leaders look for the 'next new idea' rather than disciplining themselves to get pragmatic tasks done." Essentially, with the region's wealth, vibrant consumer market, and deep farm heritage, there are so many rich opportunities that leaders are paralyzed by choice.

This interviewer noted that good people with excellent visions are moving forward effectively, pursuing their strategic priorities but seldom directly coordinating with other leaders. The community is small enough that most everyone knows all the other stakeholders. For the most part, people feel good about each other's work. Yet even people who meet with each other fairly often still appear to work as if they were operating on separate paths.

Missing is some person, group, or effective network with the social and political presence to encourage participants to actually get down to pragmatic work and make sure goals are accomplished. While this coordination does not inherently need to be tackled by a single person — if the region develops a stronger culture of collaboration and accomplishment — it may be useful in the short term to vest one person or entity with power to ensure that stakeholders

stay focused on collaborating and following through on commitments. This may be as simple as having regular phone calls and conferences that are focused on action and strategic reflection.

More critical to the concept of branding the region as an inclusive region that feeds itself (see below), the current leadership structure is not diverse. The group that has perhaps accomplished the most in moving toward more inclusive leadership is The Hunger Coalition, which is moving toward making sure that food recipients are represented on their advisory council. They are also the one food organization most effectively rooted with residents of the Hailey and Bellevue communities, even while serving all of Blaine County.

Other leadership circles in Wood River Valley Region have often focused on meeting with people who share affinity, but do not offer broad representation of multiple voices. Much of the strategic thinking has focused on the Ketchum end of the Valley, and much of the food sold has been directed there as well. If the Wood River Valley Region wishes to be more resilient, it will need to broaden the representation to include all residents of the Valley, and include diverse voices in its visioning and implementation.

One issue that bears treatment here is that many of the leaders who have surfaced with strong interest in community foods are also people whose work or vacation time often takes them out of the region. This sporadic presence can make it difficult to participate meaningfully in projects that require coordination. Greater attention should be placed on cultivating leaders who are able to work day-by-day to implement this strategic plan.

Activities:

- Aimée Christensen, Stacy Whitman, and Amy Mattias of SVI meet with The Hunger Coalition early in 2019 to establish common values and strategies.
- Aimée Christensen and Stacy Whitman of SVI meet with Lauren Golden of University of Idaho Blaine Extension early in 2019 to establish common values and strategies. In specific, this meeting should address how BCFC and LFA could form a stronger collaboration by expanding the leadership circle in the ways stated here.
- Christensen/SVI/LFA and Golden frame a strategy for effectively coordinating community foods activity through a larger, more diverse entity that includes groups like The Hunger Coalition, additional farmers, residents of Hailey, Bellevue, or other Blaine County communities, and others as appropriate, joining as members of a leadership circle. Even if these organizations decide to work separately, more diverse leadership would be beneficial, and greater coordination is essential. This strategy would be implemented by Whitman, Mattias, and others.
- This group of key leaders could be immediately formed as a Community Foods Working Group (CFWG) convened to implement elements of this strategic plan. Or this might be accomplished by BCFC expanding its leadership and shifting its focus to fill the role of the Working Group.. The action priority at this time, outside of forming a more inclusive team, is to launch a Wholesale Produce Partnership, as outlined in Section 3. This group may also wish to convene those who were interviewed as part of this process to review and refine this Strategic Plan. Over the long term, the CFWG/BCFC should consider hosting annual farmer meetings in winter. As the CFWG/BCFC develops practical experience together, it can explore how to formalize this as a leadership group / organizational structure based on practical experience in this partnership.

- Amy Mattias, Stacy Whitman, and Lauren Golden could collaborate with this Working Group to host an annual farmers’ meeting during the off-season, beginning in 2019 or 2020. At this meeting, farmers who supply food to Wood River Valley Region would convene to discuss common production issues, evaluate progress in building a community food system to date, strategize how to build the strongest community food system possible, and launch implementation of their plans.
- More frequent meetings among farmers are certainly desirable to the extent that farmers and other community foods partners feel this is productive time. This schedule can be determined by the CFWG/BCFC.
- If the CFWG/BCFC can work with the “1%Blaine” investment effort, or otherwise obtain funding that would allow it to invest in (a) pilot projects; (b) challenge grants; or (c) small research initiatives that help build community foods trade and infrastructure, this will provide a stronger presence to the Working Group.
- The CFWG/BCFC should create a formal, more detailed business plan for implementing this Strategic Plan. One key decision is whether to invest in a specific facility (See Section 2 below). It is assumed that any such facility would be a collaboration among many groups who would raise funds in common, creating an operation that earns operating income and blends this with philanthropic support to achieve its educational and community building purposes.
- The CFWG/BCFC would also take charge of implementing the branding strategy outlined in this document.
- Other elements of this Strategic Plan may be taken up by the CFWG/BCFC at its discretion.
- One general principle that should be followed is to pair older, more experienced leaders with younger emerging leaders, allowing their complementary skills to create lasting leadership capacity in the Wood River Valley Region. One example of this is the proposed partnership of Mike Heath and Amy Mattias to implement the Wholesale Produce Partnership (See Section 3).



Field at Squash Blossom Farm (Bellevue)

Photo by Ken Meter, 2018

2. Brand the Wood River Valley Region (WRVR) with an inclusive vision

What it is:

Reframe the Wood River Valley Region community foods movement as one that benefits all residents of the region and promotes regional resiliency.

Who is involved:

- The Hunger Coalition stands at the center of efforts to create an inclusive community food system in Blaine County. This organization works closely with those who are most marginalized, so it is key to expanding inclusiveness.
- The Blaine County School District also holds considerable power and responsibility in this issue, because Wood River residents all feel they “belong” to the school. Schools are gathering places that are supported by all residents through taxes.
- The Blaine County Food Council was formed as a result of The Hunger Coalition’s efforts to raise the visibility of hunger among marginalized residents through the Blaine County Food System Assessment. This places both partners in a solid position to take leadership moving forward.
- The Sun Valley Institute and its Local Food Alliance may play a strong role if they are able to focus their efforts on lower-income Hailey and Bellevue residents, as well as farmers. Stacy Whitman of SVI, in particular, has built strong connections to Blaine County schools that could play a central role in fostering broader public education. Other SVI staff would participate as appropriate.
- As outlined above in Section 1, a new leadership group should be formed that includes all of these partners as well as many other stakeholders (to be determined).

Where this will happen:

- Efforts should be focused on making direct contact with residents of Hailey and Bellevue, as well as farmers in the Magic Valley and Fairfield who supply Wood River Valley Region households with food.
- Ketchum will play a strong role in purchasing food, and in ensuring these efforts are visible, well coordinated, respected by political leaders, and financially supported.
- Over time, the initiative will also extend to the whole of Blaine County.

When:

- The foundation for this work should be laid immediately.
- This is long-term work and should be pursued in a careful and inclusive manner.

Purposes:

- To reframe the Community Foods discussion so it embraces all Wood River Valley Region residents, not simply those who are well off.
- To engage residents at all income levels, and of all ethnicities, in creating solutions to hunger, affordability of food, and food-related illness.
- To create a “big picture” vision that will animate more successful activity and greater inclusivity, as well as creating a public image that captures wider attention.

Success Measures:

- Percent of members of Community Foods leadership group who are working farmers.
- Percent of members of The Hunger Coalition advisory council who are food recipients.
- Percent of Blaine County population who receive food aid through SNAP, WIC, and Hunger Coalition programs.
- Dollar value of SNAP benefits compared to net cash farm income, 1969 to the present (Bureau of Economic Analysis regional economic accounts data).
- Percent of food recipients who report (in an annual survey) that they can easily access a community gathering space where they feel a sense of belonging.
- Percent of food recipients who report that they have formed a personal connection with at least one farmer who supplies food to Valley households.
- Percent of food recipients who report that they have attended some community building program (community kitchen events, community meals, nutrition/cooking training classes, etc.)
- Percent of food recipients who report they purchase \$5 of food from Wood River Valley Region farms each week, and the amounts of food purchased.
- Percent of food recipients who report they are satisfied with their interactions with the Community Foods Collaboration.
- Number of residents who invest in or donate toward hunger relief or this Community Foods Collaboration.

Background and Rationale:

In addition to pointing out that Wood River Valley Region community foods work needs to accomplish clear results, our interviews highlighted that only one small segment of the Wood River Valley Region population has been well served. Those who are best served today are those who least need assistance: those who are well off. While The Hunger Coalition has made strong

connections with low-income residents, they recognize there is still much work to do, and their constituents have far less access than residents with means.

It is important to reframe this activity so that the community food system of the future is built around those of more modest means. If the food system works for this population, it will work for wealthier residents as well. But the opposite is not true.

This can best be accomplished by creating a brand for the Wood River Valley Region that expresses this sense of inclusivity and resilience. While branding experts (and local residents) should be brought into the definition of this branding campaign so it is as rooted in community and as effective as possible, it should convey the spirit of the tagline, “Wood River Valley: Where Everyone Eats Well.”

Taking this step is critical to maintaining the legitimacy and integrity of community foods activity, but it also is crucial for inclusivity. Currently, The Hunger Coalition (THC) serves 19% of the Blaine County population. They count among their constituents those who work in the hospitality industry, as well as public servants like policemen and firemen. Yet THC staff report that recipients often feel considerable shame when they come to pick up food items. Many do not have time, the skills, or the utensils, to prepare healthy food at home.

In response to this, THC is ramping up efforts to grow more food at its community farm, and to purchase food from local farms. They also seek to create a community gathering point where all residents will feel comfortable, and where residents can work together to create healthy meals and educate themselves about better nutrition, and about local farms and food businesses. This expanded facility is likely to include additional warehouse, cooler, and freezer space: precisely the kinds of space that Magic Valley and Fairfield farmers require to store their products in the Hailey/Bellevue area.

The physical opportunity, then, is to create a multi-purpose, multi-stakeholder community gathering point. The exact nature of this facility must be decided by the leadership group in concert with local constituents and must involve careful business planning. This might be labeled as a Food Center, or considered a Valley Resilience Center, or be modeled after a Folk School.¹¹ Several of our interviewees suggested that this facility might combine several complementary elements, depending on financial feasibility:

- Warehouse space for storing dry foods
- Cooler space for storing perishable foods
- Freezer space
- Staging areas and loading docks
- Refrigerated trucks for transporting food safely
- Community kitchen / Training kitchen / Production kitchen
- Retail grocery store
- Restaurant
- Classrooms

¹¹ As one example, see the North House Folk School in Grand Marais, Minnesota (www.northhouse.org). Like the Sun Valley region, this region is both a tourist draw and a place where a significant number of residents experience poverty.

- Community gathering space that welcomes all residents
- Offices for food businesses and nonprofits serving low-income

See also page 36, Evaluating to Purpose and Evaluating to Pragmatics.

Developing such a facility will involve considerable expense. The activities that take place inside will require subsidy, just as food relief efforts have required subsidy in the past. Yet in a community that boasts a brand-new dog shelter and a new arts and performance space, a model has already been well established: the region will invest in buildings that will both earn operating income and require subsidy, to serve as symbols of the region's high quality of life. Certainly, as a farm community, the Wood River Valley Region should do no less for its food system.

Yet a physical facility will do no more than provide a location for activity; specific activities themselves must also be undertaken, and resident engagement must be built. Many effective programs are already being implemented by local groups such as The Hunger Coalition, local farmers' markets, chefs, and by farmers themselves. Bringing some of these into a common space should add to their ability to coordinate efforts, and may reduce costs.

To increase participation, we also recommend that the Wood River Valley Region mount an "Eat 5, Buy 5" campaign that challenges residents to eat better while strengthening the local economy. This messaging asks each resident to eat 5 fruits and vegetables each day for health, and to purchase \$5 of food each week from a farm in the Wood River Valley Region. The impact of such a campaign could be significant. If each Blaine County resident did purchase \$5 of food each week from a WRVR farmer, these farmers would earn \$5.7 million per year.

Similar campaigns have been launched by rural counties in Southwest Colorado, and became the central theme of a State of Alaska promotion. It could also be used by local groups to mobilize their own constituencies: something along the lines of "Let's turn out our neighborhood/church/organization to Eat 5, Buy 5."

Activities:

Critical to developing such a physical space will be engaging those whom the Center hopes to serve. This means creating an inclusive dialogue among diverse residents, focused at first on Hailey and Bellevue, connecting them with farmers, creating a vision that most residents can support and invest in, animating broad public support (including individual and household donations so residents feel invested in the Center), and outreach campaigns that publicize the branding of the region as a place where all residents eat well.

To accomplish this, we recommend hosting events at The Hunger Coalition, Blaine County schools, the Community Center, churches, and other gathering points where residents feel some sense of belonging. Schools, in particular, are often places where low-income residents feel some sense of ownership because their children have attended schools, and the families pay taxes to support them.

Moreover, the Blaine County school district food service director offered to host such events, and offered free use of their kitchens and cafeterias (though there may well be janitorial or other fees).

One model for such events would be this:

- Host meetings at several different schools to engage residents in all parts of the County.
- Ask the Blaine County School District food service director to co-host.
- Invite 2-3 chefs from the community to prepare each of the meals, with the food service director assisting, and learning more about sourcing food from local farms in the process.
- Purchase food from farms supplying the Wood River Valley Region to serve at the meal.
- Invite the farmers who supplied this food to participate by showcasing their farm, their farming practices. From this, each participating farm may build stronger connections with local families.
- Highlight seasonal crops as they are harvested in the two valleys.
- Invite selected community members to join in the food preparation and serving.¹²
- Raise money to subsidize ticket prices so a working family can afford to come to the meal – perhaps priced at \$5 a person / \$15 for a family.
- During each gathering, solicit input from those who attend regarding what they would most value in a food center, and how they would use it.
- At the end of the event, The Hunger Coalition could donate food boxes to each person who attended, containing food from the same farms, with recipes for preparation, and information about how to become involved in shaping and using the food facility.
- During the week of each event, teachers at each school could feature these same foods in curricular activities, Atkinsons' Market could invite farmers to offer food samples, and local media would run stories, so that even those residents who could not attend are able to participate in the process.
- This event could be combined with the “Eat 5, Buy 5” campaign.
- Evaluate success by handing out a simple 3-question survey to participants, asking if they met someone they did not know before, and if they intend to make contact with anyone who attended in the near future. Also solicit resident perceptions of the meal and the meeting.
- In the long term, it is hoped that events such as these would help lead to the creation of community gathering spaces where all feel welcome, and where people work together to help build a more inclusive community food system.

Other possible venues for such events would be:

- The Hunger Coalition Bloom Community Farm
- Sun Valley Resorts Employee Cafeteria (reopening in 2019 after remodeling)
- Churches
- Other businesses, farms, and restaurants that wish to participate

¹² In one Vermont community where we have worked, a community meal program invites civic leaders to form their own kitchen crew to work with a certified chef to prepare the meal. For example, the fire chief assembles a group of friends who cook together.



*Bryan Hostetler & Lindsay Mollineaux at Kraay's Market & Garden (Bellevue)
Photo: Ken Meter, 2018*

3. WRVR Wholesale Produce Partnership (WPP)

What it is:

An initiative to build upon, and increase the impact of, the collaborations already undertaken by Magic Valley farmers to convey their products to wholesale markets in the Wood River Valley Region.

Who is Involved:

Four to five farms in the Magic Valley region that sell wholesale to Wood River Valley markets, with Amy Mattias of Local Food Alliance, Atkinsons' Market, The Hunger Coalition, and other partners. Stacy Whitman and Aimée Christensen of SVI would support.

Where this will happen:

Magic Valley region farms; Wood River Valley Region wholesale buyers; and Wood River Valley Region residents.

When:

Begin immediately to ensure forward progress for the 2019 growing season.

Purposes:

- To expand distribution capacity by building on existing collaborations.
- To increase coordination of these delivery efforts.
- To increase sales and purchases of wholesale produce items.

- To build networks of mutual loyalty engaging farmers, wholesale buyers, and household consumers.
- To build a resilient foundation that will ensure efficient wholesale food trade for generations to come, including expanded business opportunities.

Success Measures:

- Sales by partner farms to Wood River Valley Region household and wholesale customers (value in dollars, as well as sales units such as pounds, bushels, cwt, etc.)
- Purchases by partner buyers from Magic Valley and Wood River Valley Region farms (value in dollars, as well as sales units such as pounds, bushels, cwt, etc.)
- Fresh foods conveyed by sale, barter, or donation to Wood River Valley Region residents living at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Limit (value in dollars, as well as sales units such as pounds, bushels, cwt, etc.)
- Acres of sustainably raised produce harvested for this collaboration.
- Social and commercial connections built that engage farmers, household consumers, and wholesale buyers.
- Farmer and buyer perceptions of efficiency of logistics operations.

Background and Rationale:

Several initiatives have been mounted in recent years to develop a reliable distribution network that would link Wood River Valley Region wholesalers to Magic Valley farmers. Initial efforts were founded on volunteer energy, and this led participants to opt for a more commercial approach that could pay salaries. Yet the vehicle that was chosen, Idaho's Bounty, eventually collapsed from mismanagement, breakdowns in communication, and a lack of integrity from staff. As a result, participating farmers lost as much as \$500,000, both through their investments in the business and in products delivered to Idaho's Bounty that were not paid for (Source: farmer interviews). Since the collapse of Idaho's Bounty, farmers have carried out informal collaborations to deliver products to Wood River Valley markets. One farm that has cold storage capacity invites a partner farm to store products there prior to delivery. Farmers with extra truck space offer to deliver for a nearby farm partner. One farm has a regular route, bringing products from its partner farm to Ketchum and Hailey.

These collaborations work because they are built on solid trust farmers have built with each other, and because they do not require significant investment in staffing or new equipment. This makes them somewhat resilient, but also vulnerable – a truck may break down, or a farmer may not be available to make a delivery on a given week. In addition, buyers seek more frequent deliveries.

Farmer interviews revealed that lack of distribution is their number one concern. They also said this involves not just the logistics of delivering food, but also solid communications and coordination.

While Idaho's Bounty maintained a common web platform that facilitated ordering, there was no one who made sure that farmers kept postings up to date, and deliveries were not always made in a timely fashion by the firm. Often there is simply a need for a coordinator to keep talking to all partners, because the produce industry generally runs on oral commitments, and

people must respond to rapidly changing conditions. Direct discussion would also help anticipate future developments, and make plans that adapt over time.

Another issue raised was that Idaho's Bounty became viewed as something separate from farmers. Many farmers – even though they may have served on the board or were active in the collaboration – considered Idaho's Bounty an *outside* entity – a “they” – rather than farmer collaboration – a “we.” Retaining solid farmer power over the collaboration is critical.

One observer who wrote a case study of Idaho's Bounty in 2015, Adam Diamond, was enthusiastic about the firm but also noted that it had attempted to reach too many markets at once. In trying to gain sales in Boise, Wood River Valley, and Salt Lake City all at the same time, sales staff appear to have spread the initiative too thin.

This appears to be backed up by farmers' experience. I was told that often, more effort went into tracking down new accounts than to fulfilling existing orders reliably. Larger buyers were identified at times when farmers could not supply the quantity desired. Farmers delivered product that was never paid for. Staff spent funds that were not being earned.

My sense of all this is that the next phase of this work should build upon the distribution techniques that farmers already use, and then make them stronger by increasing communications and logistical coordination. This work should be focused solely on wholesale trade to Wood River Valley Region markets.

This is not, however, to suggest that those farmers who focus on direct marketing be excluded. The Community Foods network in the Wood River Valley Region must also help coordinate the direct trade if effective strategies can be devised, through this or separate initiatives. Certainly, those farmers who focus on direct sales may harvest surplus products that can be moved through wholesale trade. Yet the priority of the WPP initiative is to make sure that the wholesale trade to Wood River Valley Region consumers can be sustained on a consistent basis.

Importantly, sales to more distant or larger wholesale buyers are very problematic to sustain over time, unless clear mutual loyalty is built with those buyers. This is very challenging to build with distantly owned firms that are focused solely on the bottom line.

While this is a collaboration among farmers, it is critical that the identity of each farm supplying produce be made known to both wholesale buyers and household consumers. This is required both for the visibility and loyalty that farmers need in order to have Wood River Valley Region customers continue to support them over time, and also so farmers obtain maximum value for their products.

Coordination is not a full-time job at this point, nor can the costs of staffing this role be covered solely by selling produce. Yet without better coordination of logistics, farmers cannot sell more. Without stronger commitment from buyers, farmers often find it easier to sell to markets in Boise or even California. This means that the Wood River Valley Region must invest in effective collaboration to ensure that it can reliably receive foods from Magic Valley farms over time, budgeting for staffing costs as sales rise.

Increasing food sales is also likely to depend upon investments in supportive infrastructure, such as cold storage on each farm, and at a warehouse in the Hailey/Bellevue region. Additional trucks are likely to be required to complement those already owned by participating farmers. Taking any such steps requires solid business planning.

Activities:

1. Establish basic understandings governing the collaboration.

- Mike Heath and Amy Mattias will take the lead. Stacy Whitman will support as needed.
- Mike and Amy will convene other Magic Valley growers early in 2019 to establish working understandings for the 2019 season.
 - John and Becky Klimes, Agrarian Harvest
 - Cooper & Fred Brossy, Ernie's Organics
 - Nate Jones, King's Crown Organics
 - Others that may be desired
- It is suggested that Aimée Christenson of the Sun Valley Institute/Local Food Alliance attend a convening of the growers early in the process.
- Early in the process, Amy Mattias should meet individually with Wood River Valley Region partners to ascertain their level of interest in serving as partners:
 - Larry and Sherry Kraay, Kraay's Market & Garden
 - The Hunger Coalition'
 - Whit and Peter Atkinson, Atkinsons' Markets
 - Gino Petosa or others at Charlie's Produce
 - Sun Valley Resort food services
 - Others that may be desired

Suggested starting point:

- This collaboration is intended to support wholesale trade from Magic Valley farms to Wood River Valley Region markets.
- This collaboration initially will focus upon a small number of farms that currently engage in this trade.
- Farmers will play the strongest role in coordinating this collaboration.
- This collaboration is intended to strengthen existing partnerships among the growers and buyers, building a foundation for further expansion as conditions allow.
- While participating farms are free to sell to other market regions (e.g. Boise or Salt Lake City) and may independently sell directly to Wood River Valley customers, resources dedicated to this collaborative will focus on wholesale trade to Wood River Valley Region buyers.
- Once this has been established as a solid operation, other farmers in the area may participate in this wholesale trade by invitation from founding partners.
- Founding partners will adopt clear criteria for joining as a new member of this collaboration before inviting new members.
- Members will adopt a formal statement covering what the WPP is committed to:
 - Transparency among all partners and the general public
 - Fairness among all partners, especially with regard to pricing

- Working in partnership to build strong mutual trust and accountability
- One-person, one-vote (power is not based on how much is sold/purchased)
- Collaborate with other community partners based on mutual interests in strengthening community-based food trade
- Pursue regenerative farming practices
- Continue to build soil health and organic matter content
- Household consumers should know the name of each farm supplying specific products to them through wholesalers
- Other agreements the partners wish to make

2. Compile Information

- Mike Heath and Amy Mattias will compile business records from Idaho's Bounty (contact lists, internet ordering platform, experience with buyers, etc.) and draw from these to establish data sets for the WPP.
- Mike Heath and Amy Mattias will compile a spreadsheet listing which products the participating farmers grow; how many acres each is willing to set aside to harvest for Wood River Valley Region buyers; anticipated 2019 deliveries; how these products are currently delivered to buyers; preferred dates of delivery; preferred prices; etc.
- This collaboration is likely to focus on a small number of products (<10) at first (potatoes, onions, squash, etc.)
- These products are already grown for wholesale by participating farmers; it is unlikely that new products would be added to the list in 2019, but may be in later years.
- Each farm would sell its own products under its own farm name; the collaborative would not take ownership of the product. A common brand might be explored once the collaborative has established a firm footing, but this branding should include the names of each farm on each product.
- Amy Mattias and Stacy Whitman should take this list to wholesale buyers (or a meeting should be held with farmers and buyers together) to learn what commitments buyers are willing to make to purchase these items, both in terms of quantity and price. They should then populate their spreadsheet with these items, including preferred delivery dates, storage available, minimum and maximum prices, additional quantities that may be sought, forward-contracting options, etc.)
- Amy Mattias may wish to produce a map showing the farmers involved and distribution networks that already bring produce into the Wood River Valley Region markets. This would be useful in showing strengths and gaps in logistics and market channels.
- Amy Mattias and Stacy Whitman should develop a record-keeping system, perhaps on a password-protected web site, that allows the WPP collaborative to track what has been committed, ordered, sold, and delivered. This may involve updating the ordering platform used by Idaho's Bounty, or it may be a different information system.
- Amy Mattias should work with each farmer to account for all delivery costs associated with each vehicle, accounting for vehicle operation costs, fuel required, maintenance, driver time, length of journey, etc. This should be distilled down to a cost per mile (and cost per pound) for each vehicle. This information will allow the collaborative to better understand which vehicles should carry which products, and will also help to understand whether additional capacity is required.

3. Create a Business Plan

- Amy Mattias and Mike Heath should draw upon the above material to create a simple business plan (Stacy Whitman will support this work) that will include:
 - Minimum and maximum prices for each product to be sold
 - Anticipated quantities to be sold to each buyer
 - Tentative schedule of delivery dates based on anticipated harvest and available storage
 - Projected income from these sales for 2019
 - Projected expenses for achieving these sales for 2019
- All growers should review, revise, and approve this business plan.

4. Implement the Plan

- Amy Mattias should call each grower (or vice versa) at least once each week during the growing season to check in about growing conditions, any surprises that may affect delivery dates, how growers feel about how well the partnership is working, etc.
- Each grower will be responsible for putting each delivery together and conveying it to the appropriate delivery point; Amy will keep conversing to each grower and buyer to make sure all flows smoothly, and that news of any interruptions can be conveyed to each buyer as early as possible.
- Amy Mattias and Stacy Whitman will compile evaluation data (as shown above; to be modified by growers) that will help farmers assess the progress of the collaboration over time. These data will be shared with all growers.

5. Anticipate future needs

- Growers say that one strong limiting factor is the availability of personnel to drive a truck, handle food safely, and make consistent deliveries. Finding or training a reliable part-time driver will be a priority.
- Amy Mattias and Mike Heath should meet periodically through the growing season to evaluate how the distribution system is working, anticipate changing conditions, consider additions in infrastructure, etc.
- All growers should meet together at least once each year to assess how well the system is working, discuss changes with buyers, consider future needs, etc.
- In the long term, it would be desirable to have dry and cold storage on each farm, as well as a larger dry storage warehouse and cold storage in the Hailey/Bellevue area. This would provide greater resiliency in shipping and receiving. Jamon Frostenson of Loganics in Fairfield offered to build such storage facilities using his insulated panel construction, and of course other local craftsmen might be engaged.
- In the long term, it is assumed that additional refrigerated trucks of various sizes may be needed.

- The collaboration should explore raising funds to allow forward contracting for specific food items that may be desired by buyers, or to pursue other ways of reducing and sharing risk.
- Each year during winter meetings, changes to the partnership may be addressed as needed. The Business Plan will then be formally revised to account for new approaches taken.
- Any new infrastructure purchases should be taken in coordination with other community partners (i.e., could a larger warehouse be shared with Kraay’s Market & Garden, The Hunger Coalition, or Atkinsons, etc.)



Katie Zubia, Wood River Farmers’ Market board president (Bellevue) Photo: Ken Meter, 2018

4. Solidify the status of Wood River Farmers’ Markets

Background and Rationale:

The future of the Wood River Farmers’ Market in Ketchum became somewhat precarious in 2018 after several businesses complained to City officials that market shoppers at its Town Square location were creating difficulties by competing with other shoppers for parking spaces and placing big demands on restroom facilities. One firm even closed for business on market days, saying it was too difficult to conduct business. As a result, the Mayor has suggested moving the market in Ketchum to a different location near the Forest Service Park.

These moves brought considerable consternation to farmers and food leaders alike. The proposed new market location is not as centrally located as Town Square nor as visible, so farmers feel this will harm their sales. Farmers also warned that moving the market away from downtown would harm downtown businesses even more, because many market shoppers also patronize downtown stores. One reminded that, after all, the farmers’ market was originally

invited to occupy Town Square precisely to create foot traffic on a commercial day that was often relatively slow — and is not viewed as an ideal market day by farmers.

Moreover, the City's process for making decisions about the market is causing deep concern. Food leaders said that the announcement of the proposed move was made at a City Council meeting with no advance notice, so Market leaders were not able to attend. Many said they were not clear what the Council's discussion entailed, or if formal action was taken. The Mayor told farmers that he would take charge of the decision, but his authority to do so was not clear to some food leaders. Several of the farmers who tried to contact the Mayor felt he was not responsive to their concerns.

It is beyond the scope of this study to fully understand the steps taken in this decision process, but this discussion does indicate that the farmers' market requires much stronger political support in Ketchum.

There are also concerns about strengthening the farmers' market in Hailey. Certainly a vibrant farmers' market in Hailey could be an important attractor in branding the region as a place where all residents eat well. On the other hand, some have suggested that the Ketchum and Hailey farmers' markets should be consolidated, and moved to a location somewhere between the two cities, so that farmers and consumers could congregate in a single location on one day of the week.

All this suggests that Sun Valley Institute's Local Food Alliance and its partners have an important role to play in making sure that civic leaders understand and act upon the importance that farmers and the foods they grow have to the Ketchum community. It will be important to build a long-term vision for the Farmers' Market to serve as a critical part of the Ketchum economy, as well as to the Hailey/Bellevue area.

Sun Valley Institute has expressed interest in working with community partners to mount such an effort, described below.

What it is:

Strengthen the status of the Wood River Valley Farmers' Market in both Ketchum and Hailey.

Who is involved:

- Wood River Farmers' Market board of directors
- Farmers who sell at either the Ketchum or Hailey markets
- Consumers who value purchasing food directly from farmers
- Chefs who purchase at the farmers' market
- Sun Valley Institute / Local Food Alliance
- Blaine County Food Council
- Other key partners as identified

Where will this happen:

Ketchum. Over time the discussion should also encompass planning for strengthening the Hailey Farmers' Market as well.

When:

Immediately.

Purposes:

- Build political support for Wood River Farmers' Markets in both Ketchum and Hailey
- Ensure these are viewed as important economic engines and community gathering points in the Valley.

Success Measures:

- Value of food sold at Wood River Farmers' Market each year
- Survey responses from farmers indicating they are satisfied with market location, rental rates, customer base, outreach, etc.

Activities:

- Community partners meet with the board of directors of the Wood River Farmers' Market and strategize how best to support the Board as it negotiates terms with the City of Ketchum for the 2019 market season.
- Sympathetic members of the Ketchum City Council should be enlisted to represent the interest of farmers.
- Farmers may well require legal support to ensure that due process is followed.
- SVI / LFA could play a role, if requested, of gathering public support in the Ketchum community for making sure farmers' needs are met.
- Outreach campaigns might involve flyers, posters, social media announcements, special events, etc.
- As the status of the Market for 2019 is stabilized, Wood River Farmers' Market and its partners should open a discussion about the long-term future of the Market.
 - Is the Market in its best possible location?
 - Can traffic and parking concerns be ameliorated?
 - Is Tuesday the optimal day for the Market to be held (it is built into many schedules, but also difficult for some farmers to attend)?
 - If not, set a better day (Boise market is Saturday which makes it difficult for farmers to come to Ketchum).
 - What role could the Hailey market play in the new branding of the Wood River Valley Region as a place where everyone eats well?
 - What critical roles can farmers' markets play in ensuring open access to lower-cost fresh foods to all Hailey and Bellevue residents?
 - Would it be advisable to merge the Hailey market with the Ketchum market?
 - How might the farmers' markets be combined with cold storage or vegetable processing initiatives also being contemplated?



Nate Jones, King's Crown Organics (King Hill)

Photo by Ken Meter, 2018

Additional initiatives currently underway:

Evaluate these promising initiatives (and others that are still to come forward) based on their efficacy in strengthening Community Food Trade:

Evaluating the Purposes

- Have residents expressed a clear interest in, and need for, the initiative?
- Is this initiative likely to provide food for any resident at any income level?
- Will this work bring people together across social divides?
- How will this help build business clusters, collaborations, and networks?
- How will it build mutual loyalty among farmers and consumers?

Evaluating the Pragmatics

- Has a qualified and dedicated leader committed to running this initiative?
- Is sufficient capital available to launch or expand this operation?
- How widespread is resident investment in the effort?
- Is there a clear, practical strategic / business plan in place?
- What are the projected operating costs?
- Where will raw materials come from, and what percentage will be grown inside the community?
- Will the proper mix of earned income (through sales) and philanthropic support (if any) be available to cover these operating costs?

The following are not listed in any specific order of priority.

1. Initiatives that provide strong opportunities for collaboration

The Hunger Coalition Expansion

- THC has expanded its board and seeks to make it even more diverse, with stronger representation of the customers it serves
- This food relief organization has well established connections to lower-income residents and to donors
- Noting that many constituents feel ashamed of needed food aid, THC aims to create a welcoming and inclusive community gathering space
- Limited in its warehouse and storage capacity, THC wishes to expand into larger facility (warehouse, classrooms, community kitchen, gathering space)
- Staff expressed strong willingness to expand in collaboration with community partners

Grain Collaborative

- As noted above, Brett Stevenson is launching Hillside Ranch Flour & Grain in 2019
- In the future, this may include a malt house
- Milling holds strong potential for creating collaborations among farmers, bakers, restaurants, and stores (for example, artisanal bread using grain from a single named farm that is served by local chefs and available at stores)
- Stevenson envisions this effort launching a Grain Lab in the Valley, modeled after The Bread Lab at Washington State, that would be a place where research, development, and education can occur

Protein Collaborative

- Matt Luck, owner of Pride of Bristol Bay, has developed a concept for joint direct marketing of locally raised proteins and seafood
- Currently, salmon, beef, pork, and lamb are direct marketed to consumers, but by each entity or farm separately
- Luck envisions the creation of a common internet ordering platform
- Household customers would place orders at this site, selecting protein products from any participating producer they select
- Each of these producers would deliver these orders to a single location on a single day (Luck suggested perhaps October 1 each year)
- Customers would come to this location on that day to pick up orders to take home
- Luck would prefer that someone younger launch and run this operation

Increase milk distribution

- Phil Christensen of Old Almo Creamery produces organic milk and bottles it on the farm
- He says Old Almo's retail prices are lower than prevailing retail prices for organic milk
- Growth of the farm operation is limited by distribution capacity
- Christensen often delivers milk himself
- He has joined with vegetable growers in the Magic Valley to ship milk collaboratively
- Christensen would prefer to hire a delivery service

Blaine 1% Fund:

- Financial planner and investor Mark George is launching a local investment fund in Ketchum
- George is currently assembling a group of initial investors who would invest about \$5,000 each
- Focus of the fund will be on food, homelessness, and renewable energy
- George wants to start small but sees great potential

Sun Valley Resort employee cafeteria

- The employee cafeteria is being remodeled and will re-open early in 2019
- This facility is part of Sun Valley Resorts (SVR) branding itself as a sustainable center
- SVR serves 400 meals per day here and charges employees only the cost of the food served
- Matt Robinson of the Konditerei expressed a willingness to explore with the cafeteria food service director whether this facility could feature food from local farms on its new menu.
- The Hunger Coalition expressed interest in doing outreach here, since many employees are also customers of THC.
- As the Wholesale Produce Partnership builds its business, it should be able to supply SVR, should SVR wish to purchase through WPP.
- SVR also relies upon a Salt Lake City distribution service

Extend direct marketing

- Farmers in WRV, Hagerman, Buhl, Fairfield, Emmett, etc. are effectively selling directly to household customers, but also find this consumes considerable time and money.
- Idaho's Bounty was formed in 2007 in an effort to facilitate deliveries to household customers, but moved to a wholesale model, and then floundered
- Once a solid coordinating entity has been built through the Wholesale Produce Partnership, the Community Foods Working Group should explore ways to better connect farmers to residents of Hailey, Bellevue, Twin Falls, Fairfield, Buhl, etc.
- Branding campaigns, unified ordering platforms, and community events can help create greater visibility and stronger consumer loyalty for these farmers
- Supportive infrastructure will be required, such as on-farm cold storage, Bellevue/Hailey cold storage facilities, freezer space, warehouse space, refrigerated delivery trucks, drivers trained for safe food handling, farm labor, and more
- There is likely to be a need to subsidize sales to lower-income residents through The Hunger Coalition
- Kraay's Market & Garden has developed a great deal of trust with farmers, and wants to expand its cold storage and warehouse capacity to serve more farmers and household consumers
- As The Hunger Coalition expands its storage and delivery capacity, community food leaders should explore whether there could be synergy in building shared storage spaces and delivery routes
- For example, one food storage facility in Bellevue or Hailey would serve as a convenient drop-off point for farmers, could expand the capacity of Kraay's Market & Garden, and

could strengthen the work of The Hunger Coalition, and perhaps help local retailers, all with a single investment

The Wood River Land Trust:

- Wood River Land Trust already holds ownership of farmland that it protects for agricultural use
- WRLT says it is wide open to further collaborations
- WRLT also has an ongoing partnership with the South Idaho Land Trust

The Nature Conservancy:

- The Nature Conservancy also wants to protect farmland
- Conducting a five-year pilot in the Snake River area to transition a ranch from conventional to sustainable ag
- Also working with a Bellevue land owner to move toward regenerative ag and measure soil health
- Implementing a water strategy across the state
- TNC owns a plot of land near the airport and is exploring the creation of an orchard on the site
- Its outreach priority is to host events that are “fun and bring people together”

The Quigley Farm

- The Sage School will get permanent home in the Quigley Farm development
- Harry Weekes, school director, is also one of the developers of the entire property, which will include new housing as well as farmland
- The development is intended to protect farmland and open recreation space while also funding future community improvement efforts as new homes are sold
- Developers embrace the concept of growing food for local residents on the farm
- The Sage School seeks to partner with other community groups as it builds its new facility

Educate students about crops that grow well in Region

- If there is going to be a strong community food system in the Valley region, residents will over time have to make a priority of purchasing and eating the foods that can easily be grown here – onions, potatoes, squash, cabbage, kale/greens, meats, berries, apples, beans, grains, tomatoes, peppers, etc.
- Education toward this end is already underway in the schools; this is one critical place for fostering a culture that appreciates farmers and what is grown locally
- One key element of this is understanding which foods are harvested in which season
- Another key element is making sure students know and support farmers in the region
- Community events can raise visibility and bring people together to cook and enjoy these foods
- Building a culture of food centered around the foods that grow well in WRV will be crucial to long-term resilience of the community food system



1,000 Springs Mill (Buhl)

Photo by Ken Meter, 2018

2. Initiatives that are likely to move forward on their own

Meat slaughterhouse

- Josh Hale of Elkhorn Ranch South plans to build a meat slaughter and processing facility in Mackay.
- This location is remote from most producers, but very close to Elkhorn Ranch South on land the family currently owns.
- Hale says he has investment capital available.
- Hale says that there are enough farm laborers near that location to provide a suitable workforce for the plant.
- The final size and scale of the plant is yet to be determined.
- Hale works quite independently, yet is also open to insights from others.
- Local food leaders may potentially play an important role in bringing professional expertise to facilitate this process, and ensuring that it augments other activity performed under this Strategic Plan.

1,000 Springs Mill

- Tim Cornie of Buhl was able to purchase one-half of the former Seneca vegetable packing plant in Buhl on very favorable terms.
- Tammara Beck serves as CFO.
- They have formed 1,000 Springs Mill inside the building.
- Their section of the campus includes only dry storage.
- They have installed milling and cleaning equipment in the facility.
- Observers note that they have some of the most advanced grain cleaning equipment available.

- 1,000 Springs is already cleaning grain for several nearby farms, and hopes to partner with more growers over time.
- Primary focus is on large-scale processing of grains and seeds grown in immediate area and sold to distant customers
- While Tim and Tammara are happy to be helpful, they did not view their operation as having a close connection with community foods efforts.

Culinary Institute

- Harry Griffith and Sun Valley Economic Development have teamed up with several Investors hoping to build a facility that can train food preparation workers who hopefully will land jobs in the Sun Valley hospitality and resort industry.
- This is further viewed as a way to create a “food destination” in Ketchum that would attract visitors and celebrity chefs.
- Griffith reports that about one-third of the \$750,000 required to open the Institute has been committed.
- One promising downtown site recently became unfeasible. As of January, 2019, the Institute will be temporarily housed in the former Elkhorn Springs Restaurant in Sun Valley for 12 to 18 months. The goal is to eventually move the Institute to downtown Ketchum.
- Recognizing that the many culinary schools have closed because students were left saddled with debt and trained only for lower-level jobs, the Sun Valley Culinary Institute plans to offer scholarships to students who require aid so they will not need to take on debt.
- Such an institute could serve as a resource for community foods activities, but the primary focus of the initiative is on the resort industry of Sun Valley.
- Local Food Alliance and The Hunger Coalition might play a role in coordinating this initiative with the College of Southern Idaho’s culinary program to minimize duplication of efforts or competition for funds.

Grow more produce in greenhouses/hoophouses

- While the short growing season in the Wood River Valley is not a severe limiting factor (even regions in the US with four growing seasons experience similar difficulties ensuring that food from local farms gets to local consumers),¹³ it is still desirable to extend the growing season as possible to allow more residents to access fresh foods.
- One severe limitation of greenhouse or hoop house production is paying for the energy required to heat each building.
- This makes those greenhouses and hoop houses that run on renewable energy more competitive.
- Several people mentioned they would like to see growers take advantage of thermal heat from hot springs
- Advanced technology (efficient construction, electronic controls, etc.) may help ensure reliability

¹³ See *Making Small Farms Into Big Business* (www.crcworks.org/scfood.pdf); *Hawai’i Food For All* (www.crcworks.org/hifood.pdf); and *Building Community Networks Through Community Food* (www.crcworks.org/azmaricopa18.pdf).

- James Reed raises biodynamic produce in hoop houses in Hagerman; the late Matt Moran grew food inside a newly built greenhouse making considerable use of passive solar heat and electronic controls; Mark Caraluzzi hopes to construct a vertical greenhouse in Ketchum; and Jamon Frostenson raises greens and other produce in enclosed, insulated, and LED-lit buildings he has constructed himself near Fairfield.
- See Appendix C[XX] for a review of recent literature comparing nutritional value of foods grown in soil with those raised hydroponically; there is significant controversy around these issues.

4. Other opportunities

Wood River Sustainability Center

- Wood River Sustainability Center operates in a former Forest Service building in Hailey.
- Primary business is catering for events; also provides daily lunches for Community School.
- The building has refrigerated food storage, a commercial kitchen, and retail space.
- The store sells a small number of foods raised on local farms, and also sells sourdough bread baked in house.
- Several interviewees suggested that this combination of storage space, kitchen, and store serves as an example of what a larger facility might offer.

Rent “corners” of center pivot fields

- For several years, there have been informal discussions of making land at the “corners” of fields irrigated with center pivots (those sections of each field that are not covered by the rotating sprinkler systems) available for use by emerging farmers who need land.
- Pat Purdy is willing to make land available to farmers who might wish to rent land on his farm. His motivation is that he often can earn more renting out this land than by trying to farm it. He says he would have multiple sites on land he owns, and that neighbors would have others.
- Some of these “corners” have access to irrigation water, if pipes are tapped.
- Some of these sites lack water.
- Because these sites are scattered, some coordination may be needed to connect farmers with land, to connect each plot with water, to build tool sheds and/or food storage facilities that do not interfere with center pivots, and to coordinate distribution to markets.

Expand composting

- Composting in the Valley appears to be limited by the extent that municipal and private haulers collect organic materials for compost.
- Working with municipal officials to ensure that all organic waste materials are composted could be important, if only to adequately recycle organic wastes and keep it from landfills.
- The primary market for current compost material is household gardeners and small farms; there is insufficient supply for (and limited demand from) commercial growers.

- Many commercial growers who wish to use compost are capable of producing their own.
- Some area landscapers are purchasing compost as well



Greenhouse at Morningstar Arising Farms (Bellevue)

Photo by Ken Meter, 2018

Appendix A: Qualities of the Existing Community-Based Food System

All comments below are taken from interviews with food system leaders identified by the Local Food Alliance and the Blaine County Food Council. Some have been paraphrased for clarity, or to protect a person's identity. Some are inconsistent with each other. We cannot guarantee the accuracy of all statements.

The list below may be expanded by local stakeholders as needed. This is only a starting point in identifying assets, weaknesses, opportunities, and obstacles, and reflects comments made in our interviews of 61 food leaders

Ranking of "key" qualities made by Consultant.

Strengths & Assets of the Region's Community Food System:

Key Assets:

- The Wood River Valley Region holds a strong heritage of farming
- Region residents "have the mindset to eat healthier, locally raised food"
- Ketchum/Sun Valley has an exceptional core of donors who have invested in the broader community

Additional Assets and Strengths:

Favorable conditions for farming

- Good soil
- Soil-health improvement initiatives are already underway
- Considerable land has been certified organic¹⁴
- We grow a diversity of crops
- Dry climate reduces pest and disease pressure on farmers
- "Ample water in several places including both artesian and traditional irrigation"
- "For a desert area, water resources are good" (though there are concerns about water quality)
- "Farmers have already made an \$18-million investment in water infrastructure"
- "The region has excellent ground for grazing cattle" and a long tradition of animal husbandry
- "Farms grow high-quality forage on a year-round basis"
- "500,000 cattle graze in the Wood River Valley"
- The top four agricultural counties in Idaho (ranked by sales) are in Southern Idaho – Cassia, Gooding, Jerome, and Twin Falls Counties
- Southern Idaho has been recognized nationally as a food processing center
- Several state-certified meat processors offer services that are well liked by farmers
- The Valley holds wildlife habitat, especially in river floodplains and in remote mountain areas

¹⁴ The USDA Census of Agriculture shows 16 farms with 10,960 acres of organic production in Blaine County as of 2007; similar data were not compiled for 2012.

Consumer interest in purchasing from local farms is expanding

- “Interest in healthy food has spread from Sun Valley to the rest of the county”
- Residents who have had cancer know the benefits of eating healthier foods
- Many residents who care about healthy food grow their own gardens
- A number of residents hold “considerable enthusiasm to create” community food trade
- Consumers are looking for food from local farms (though these are mostly consumers with financial means, and most residents seem to shop only on price)
- Farmers’ markets help farmers and small processors to build direct connections with consumers, which is especially important for a startup
- The Fairfield Farmers’ Market reports rising sales

Several farms already produce food for Wood River Valley Region residents

- A core of farms produce food for direct sale to households
- Several experienced farms grow food at the wholesale level

The Wood River Valley Region has a long history of ensuring food access

- The Hunger Coalition serves one of every five people in Blaine County, and has built considerable connection with low-income residents
- The Hunger Coalition also holds extensive experience in warehousing, shipping, and distributing food safely
- The Hunger Coalition is praised for its ability to mobilize volunteers
- The Blaine County Food System Assessment (2015) highlighted issues of poverty and inequality in the County¹⁵

The region holds practical experience in food distribution

- Several farmers partner effectively with each other
- Farmers and buyers have all learned from prior successes and failures, notably the collapse of Idaho’s Bounty

A network of community food system leaders is in place

- Several farmers report that Atkinsons’ Market has gone out of their way to purchase food from their farms
- Much of the ongoing collaboration is informal
- The Blaine County Food Council has been organized since 2015, and its monthly meetings provide a regular forum for shared ideas and collaboration
- The Hunger Coalition effectively addresses issues of poverty
- Local Food Alliance was founded in 2013 and has worked to increase demand for local foods, promote local farms and food businesses, and educate consumers about food. . In 2016, LFA began a process of integrating with the Sun Valley Institute for Resilience; during the summer of 2018 LFA formally began to operate as the SVI food program.

Many community groups support agriculture

- “The Blaine County plan is pro-agriculture”

¹⁵ The Hunger Coalition (2015). *Blaine County Community Food Assessment*.

- Several agencies and nonprofits, including Wood River Land Trust, South Idaho Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, and Quigley Farm project, have taken critical steps to protect farmland
- The Wood River Land Trust has pursued a “community conservation” approach by forming partnerships with other community groups

The region draws new residents each year

- The Wood River Valley has a “desirable quality of place”
- Sun Valley is an international tourist destination
- Many residents came here from somewhere else

Renewable energy is available

- The region has considerable potential for renewable energy, especially through solar collectors
- Hot springs provide heat that might be harnessed for season extension
- Geothermal energy is available (though expensive to harness)

Collaborations are actively at work

- The Wood River Valley has a fairly compact and distinct geography
- “The community is somewhat close-knit”
- “The recent fires helped unite the community”
- “Ketchum has 130 active nonprofits”
- Community trust drives local commerce

Several commercial networks are functioning *[Note that this section is especially limited by the fact that only 61 people could be interviewed; this is not a complete list]*

- Kraay’s Market & Garden collaborates with 50 vendors including 15-20 growers to deliver their products directly to households
- Kraay’s Market & Garden sends a driver to Twin Falls, Buhl, and Hagerman each Tuesday during the growing season
- Mike Heath and Nate Jones collaborate on storage and distribution
- John and Becky Klimes collaborate with Mike Heath
- Onsen Farm Winter and Summer CSAs involve collaboration with neighboring farms and businesses including Agrarian Harvest, Oasis Market, and 1,000 Springs Mill
- Waterwheel Gardens distributes products for Prairie Sun Farms, Vogel Farms, and Double Springs Ranch
- Elkhorn Farms sells pork to several restaurants in Ketchum
- Hillside Ranch Flour and Grain collaborates with nearby grain growers to produce grains for household use
- Richard Feucht in Fairfield collaborates with other farmers who sell at the market (which he manages)
- The Ketchum Farmers’ Market brings farmers to one place to sell products and engages several in policy setting through the board of directors
- Wood River Land Trust seeks to build collaborations through “Community Conservation”
- Wood River Land Trust collaborates with South Idaho Land Trust and the Nature Conservancy
- The Nature Conservancy collaborates with NRCS and several community groups

- The Nature Conservancy collaborates with Ernie’s Organics and Brett Stevenson
- Quigley Farm project is a collaboration involving developers, The Sage School, Nature Conservancy, Wood River Land Trust, and many other partners
- The Hunger Coalition works closely with lower-income residents
- Lava Lake Lamb is itself a cluster of businesses, including Lava Lake Land and Livestock, and Lava Lake Institute. This cluster collaborates with (and are part owners of) Mountain States Co-op (processing in Colorado) and a storage facility in Boise
- Local Food Alliance and Blaine County Food Council have overlapping members
- 1,000 Springs Mill collaborates with scores of Buhl area growers to bring their products to export markets

Weaknesses of the Community Food System:

Key Weaknesses:

- Prevailing food infrastructure strongly favors food imports and exports over community food trade
- Good people with solid vision are working separately rather than collaboratively
- Although residents know each other and are friendly to each other, genuine collaboration is limited. More needs to be accomplished
- Much of the community foods activity has engaged only higher-income residents

Other Areas of Concern:

Inequality

- Income inequality in Blaine County is among the highest in the US
- One of every five Blaine County residents relies upon the Hunger Coalition
- “This is the 8th most expensive region in the US for food” but many residents have low incomes
- “38% of the Blaine County population is vulnerable” [to lack of food access]
- “40 to 50% of the population is burdened by housing costs”
- Working people — including resort workers, firemen, and policemen — rely upon food shelves
- Although prosperous residents are increasingly paying for food to be delivered to their door, most residents cannot afford such a service
- Farmers, chefs, and distributors are donating considerable time and money to supply wealthier customers with locally raised food – this is not sustainable over the long haul

Lack of supportive infrastructure

- One consumer said, “I do not have anywhere I can purchase the foods that I want”
- Warehouse space and cold storage is lacking, both at the farm level and in population centers
- Located at the north end of the Wood River Valley, Ketchum and Sun Valley customers are somewhat isolated. In particular, delivery trucks have only one road, and have little

they can backhaul — that is, to ship products back to where the trucks started from [which would reduce shipping costs]

- “We lack a single wholesale entity”
- Several produce distribution initiatives have closed
 - Sawtooth Garden Project
 - Idaho’s Bounty
 - Northwest Produce
- One larger produce broker (from California) stopped serving Valley growers, leaving farmers with fewer options
- The region has few small logistics firms that could carry locally raised products
- Delivery drivers do not always adequately protect the safety of the foods they deliver
- Skilled labor is often lacking for farm work or food distribution
- Farmers lack access to USDA-certified meat processing. This limits their ability to sell to institutional accounts (Elkhorn South Ranch now intends to open a slaughter operation)
- Lenders are typically unwilling to loan money to farmers
- “Cost of land is too high to be paid by farming”
- “Land is \$10,000-\$20,000 per acre”
- “Farming to pay the mortgage means you’re more limited in what you can grow”
- “Farming in general has low economic viability”
- Can’t start to farm without prior wealth: “People have to work off the farm to pay for the farm”
- Population is neither large nor compact
- “We don’t have enough venues where people can gather”

Lack of action

- There are so many good opportunities that people are paralyzed by choice
- “The food systems work has been spinning wheels”
- “We have lots of great meetings about food, but nothing gets accomplished”
- One consumer: “Five years ago, I had more choices for buying from local farms than I have today”
- Well-intended investments have ended up costing farmers money
- Many leaders look for the “next new idea” rather than disciplining themselves to get pragmatic tasks done
- “There is an urban idealism combined with a lack of willingness to do the hard work”
- “The region lacks a strong manufacturing or farming workforce”
- “Entrepreneurship is lacking” [in the community food trade]

Leaders feel isolated or hurt

- “People have to care. They act like they do, but they often don’t.”
- Several deep interpersonal wounds or organizational conflicts have yet to be healed
- Local groups often operate in “silos” separate from each other
- “We’re not a collaborative community – we don’t share resources”
- Some farmers and chefs reported that they had donated considerable food and time to support community meals, but received little in return
- Many of the community meals featuring local farms were an “elite thing that did not penetrate to most residents’ lives.”

- Many Valley residents are unwilling to engage with people they perceive as “different”
- “You have to be a bit crazy to do this [food work]”
- “Everyone who has tried local [produce] processing has failed”

Leadership is not clear

- Local food leaders did not understand why there are two separate entities [BCFC and LFA]
- The roles of the two groups are not clear, and many interviewees had limited knowledge of either group

Proactive leadership is needed

- “Many initiatives are reactive rather than planful”
- “It is rare that political or economic leaders take the long view”

Growers and buyers need better communications

- “Chefs don’t meet with each other; farmers don’t meet with each other”
- “It is often difficult for farmers and chefs to communicate with each other”
- One farmer said consumer interest in locally raised food is limited: “You can’t guarantee that anyone will buy your product” if you grow it
- One farmer lamented that he gets very little communication from chefs about what they are looking for, so he is trapped in a “guessing game. One year I decided not to plant [a specific produce item], and suddenly everybody wanted them.”
- “Restaurants use the names of farmers [on their menus], but do not actually buy from them”
- “One chef placed a big order on Tuesday, and by Thursday he had quit his job, so I didn’t get paid”
- Several chefs want a simpler process for ordering from nearby farms
- One chef said, “Too many farmers grow exactly the same crops. They are too small-scale to deal with restaurants”

Greater consistency is needed

- Consistent food production and distribution to Valley consumers has been elusive
- Wholesale and restaurant buyers purchase in relatively small quantities
- “Both growers or buyers could act more professionally”

Farmers’ markets are critical to new growers, but some farmers want other options

- Many long-term farmers find that selling at farmers’ markets is too limiting, yet the infrastructure for wholesale trade is limited

Uncertainty has plagued the Ketchum Farmers’ Market

- The Ketchum Farmers’ Market meets on Tuesday, which may not be an optimal day for consumers
- “It is ridiculous that the farmers’ market is on Tuesday”
- Several businesses in Ketchum have complained that parking is difficult for their customers on farmers’ market days
- The City of Ketchum seeks to relocate the market to a less visible location at Forest Service Park while charging the same high fees as the Town Square location

- Decisions about the Wood River Farmers' Market have not been transparent

Institutional purchases are limited

- Institutional food purchasers such as the school district and hospital have limited budgets
- Few take the lead to connect with farmers

Economies of scale are not clear

- "Many farms have not attained economies of scale so their production and marketing costs are high"
- Yet many farms and businesses that have achieved economies of scale sell primarily to external markets

Energy alternatives have yet to be tapped

- "NIMBYs have stalled food production efforts near hot springs"
- "Geothermal energy is possible but expensive"

Wood River Valley Region lacks a clear and unified vision for community foods

- "Who is managing the vision of building a stable and consistent supply of food?"
- "The City of Ketchum does not promote local foods enough"
- "The Wood River Valley lacks a clear identity"
- Much of the population comes from "away"
- Valley leaders "have not yet developed a consistent messaging around soil health"
- "It's difficult to convey to consumers the idea that local farms raise food that is more nutritious and fresher than what is available at the supermarkets"
- "Consumers don't always realize what it takes to grow food"
- "Consumers are not aware of the seasonality of food production"
- "Consumers want convenience;" locally raised foods take additional attention

Natural and environmental constraints

- We have a limited growing season
- "Several of the established farmers will retire soon. There are not enough young farmers to replace them"
- Bees are threatened

Obstacles to strengthening the Community Food System:

Key Obstacles:

- Inequality
- Lack of collaboration or communication: "Everyone is always doing their own thing"

Other Barriers:

Limited interest in food and farming

- “Most people just don’t care” about accessing healthier food
- “Everyone wants local food, but hesitates to pay the price”
- Many residents travel a great deal, limiting their ability to focus on local implementation
- Consumers and activists alike lack interest in learning about farming
- “We are just not going to reach low or moderate income consumers” [they don’t have enough money]
- “Donors are losing interest in addressing poverty or long-term change”
- “If you’re going to be a rancher you have to burn with a desire to ranch”
- “You have to have a passion to grow crops”
- (As a farmer), “sometimes it is just easier to place it on the truck” [sell it to a commodity stream]

Regulatory obstacles

- “Environmental and health regulations are not appropriate to the scale at which many farmers farm”

Environmental constraints

- “Local food systems may be unrealistic in the Valley, because of the limited crops we can grow with a short season”
- There is a “limit to calories we can produce locally”
- Climate change
- Soil Health

Opportunities for strengthening the Community Food System:

Key Opportunities:

- Wood River Valley Region has enough land, wealth, and consumer purchasing to build a strong community food system
- Prioritize projects that will strengthen trust and collaboration among Region stakeholders
- Engage all residents of Wood River Valley Region in community foods efforts
- Work collaboratively to leverage The Hunger Coalition’s expansion
- Build a distribution network appropriate to the level of farm production
- Build cold storage on wholesaling farms (could be built by local farmers)
- Build warehouse space and cold storage in Hailey/Bellevue

Other Opportunities:

Greater coordination

- “Elements could be put together to make the system work better”
- “Start small and take pragmatic and practical steps”
- “Take out the idealism”

Leverage community wealth

- “With the money this Valley has, we could:
 - Pay farmers above their costs of production
 - Grow the foods we want to eat
 - Process food for ourselves
 - Distribute food ourselves”
- “If we can spend \$16 million on an animal shelter, and \$18 million on an ice skating arena, we can afford a facility that promotes healthy eating with food raised on local farms”

Build a Community Resilience Center focused on food for all residents

- Many interviewees seek to have additional food storage, commercial kitchen, or community gathering space. [There is strong risk of these efforts competing with each other for funding, or duplicating energies. Compiling the concepts brought forward by our interviewees, there may be a strong possibility that groups could collaborate on one “Big Idea” project that would create efficiencies in community food trade and help foster collaboration.
- [Perhaps one single facility could be built in Hailey/Bellevue that combines *any of the following elements that can be supported either through sales or donations. Some spaces might be shared by several groups*]:
 - expanded warehouse space
 - cooler space
 - freezer space
 - staging area and loading docks
 - community kitchen
 - retail store
 - community gathering space
 - classrooms
 - fruit & vegetable processing
 - rapid cooling equipment for fresh produce
 - grain lab
 - mobile market
 - food trucks
- [This list is meant to suggest possibilities, but careful business planning should be completed before launching any such initiative; several of these capacities are likely to be placed on the back burner until partnerships are in place and resources available.]
- [This facility could be built in partnership involving the Hunger Coalition, Sun Valley Institute/Local Food Alliance, Blaine County Food Council, Kraay’s Market & Garden, the Wholesale Produce Partnership, Hillside Ranch Flour & Grain, other farmers and food initiatives, Atkinsons’ Market, and others who may be invited]
- [Alternatively, if groups collaborate on developing individual spaces, and avoid duplication of energies and facilities, an effective and trusting network could coordinate activity through separate sites]
- “State money may be available to build a vegetable processing facility”

Develop a knowledge base

- *It would include:*
 - Lists of farms growing for community markets
 - How many acres each farms
 - Which products each farm grows
 - Which products each would like to add
 - Existing trucks & delivery routes
 - Make sure we know the true costs of growing and distributing food
 - How much food would be needed to feed everyone in the Valley?
 - and more...

Spark Innovation

- “Raise money to offer Community Challenge Grants of \$10,000 to \$20,000 – invite anyone who applies to create a new way of meeting our goals for a community food system”

Grow new growers

- “We need young people who will start farming with regenerative practices”
- “We could engage young farmers in raising cattle so they can build wealth”
- Cultivate FFA membership: “nobody wants to farm these days”
- Land at center-pivot corners is available, but may require considerable coordination
- Educate residents through kids
- Inspire young farmers

Sell local food at price points that residents can afford

- “We need to look at the price people are willing to pay growers for their produce”
- “Subsidize farm and food labor so workers get a living wage”

Differentiated products may appeal to prosperous consumers

- “Grow niche products that are differentiated in the market”
- “The market tells me we should be growing more of the following:
 - Greens & Lettuce
 - Microgreens
 - Chard, Kale, Spinach, etc
 - Stone fruits”
- “Expand cheese production. Americans eat 34 pounds of cheese each year”
- “Ketchum could be the laboratory for food processors in Southern Idaho”

Expand local offerings

- “Farmers should grow more diverse products”
- “We have to overcome the scale question”

Transparently plan for a permanent location for the Ketchum Farmers’ Market planning

- Meetings about the future of the Market should be held in public forums and considerable public input is required.
- “Consider a location between Hailey and Ketchum”

- “Change the day of the Ketchum Farmers’ Market (or add a second day)”

Coordinate community foods work more effectively

- “Translate our vision into action quickly”
- “Food is an equalizer. We need events that are fun and build community connections”
- “Create a business plan for seeking food self-sufficiency”
- “Figure out how much food we need” [and grow it]
- Create innovative food-access models (involving more capacity-building than food shelves)
- “Build reciprocal relationships”
- Build “places for self-reliance”
- “Mount educational campaigns that engage the broader population”
- “Educate residents about where their food comes from”
- “Think outside the box”

Convene Valley stakeholders on a regular basis

- Build capacities of residents to grow, purchase, prepare, and eat healthy foods
- Hold an annual working conference on building community food trade
- Hold annual farmer-to-farmer meetings
- “In other regions, farmers have worked together.”
- Hold annual chef-to-chef meetings

Expand season extension efforts

- Develop more greenhouses to extend growing season
- “Build infrastructure for bending metal so we could manufacture our own greenhouses”
- Build capacity of residents
- “Farmers have to produce more consistently, and buyers have to buy more consistently”
- “We need to build reciprocal relationships”

Create community gathering spaces around food that appeal to all residents

- The Hunger Coalition seeks to create gathering spaces for its constituents
- “We need community gathering spaces

Encourage wholesale food trade

- “Encourage forward contracting by wholesale buyers” [where a buyer commits to purchasing a certain amount of product if the farmer grows it]
- “Combine seasonal farm labor with the winter lodges”

Farmers and chefs both seek better logistics

- “We need logistics and transportation”
- “Things would work better if people communicate”
- “We need a nonprofit with a mission to get food to consumers”
- “Hire sales staff on a base wage of about \$20,000 plus a commission of a percentage of sales”
- “Unify the units sold and prices offered among farmers”
- “Farmers have to produce more consistently, and buyers have to buy more consistently”

- “Central location with coolers in both Wood River Valley and in Twin Falls”
- “Place refrigerated units (possibly in trucks or old shipping containers) on farms”
- “I looked over our costs and it is often cheaper for us as farmers to deliver ourselves than to hire a distribution firm to do it” [even taking labor into account]
- “We need a system of distribution in Twin Falls”
- “We need a pool of sprinter vans to carry products in small quantities”
- Atkinsons’ Market is looking for more beef, chickens, turkeys, and value-added products from local producers

Build protein direct marketing collaborative

- “Change the way people buy protein – if they can buy a quarter or a half animal, the cost comes down”
- “Growers could offer seafood, beef, lamb, and chicken for direct sale on a single day each year, October 1. Consumers could order on the internet from each farm, and all of the producers would deliver on a single day.”
- “People will need freezer storage space to store these foods”

Collaborate to found a USDA meat processing plant

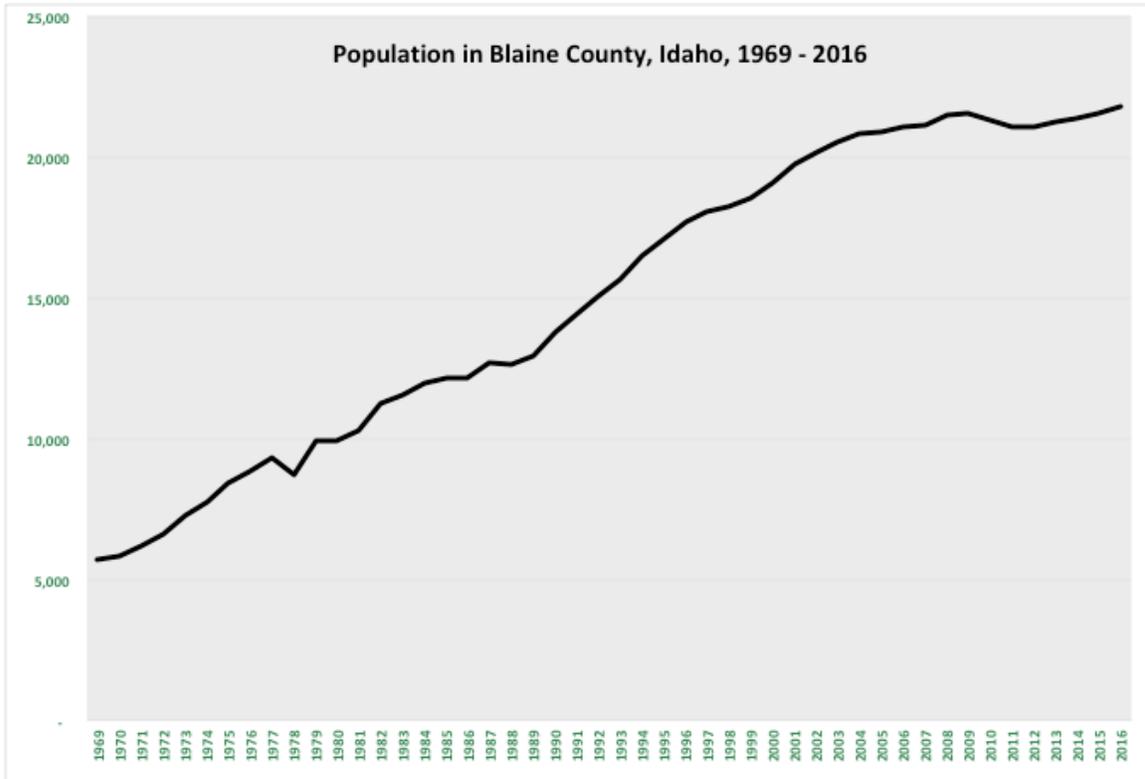
- “We need a centrally located meat processing facility”
- Josh Hale of Elkhorn Ranch South is considering opening a slaughter operation in Mackay

Other suggestions

- “We could develop a community orchard on land owned by the Land Trust near the airport”
- “We need a CPA who knows farming” [accountants we have approached do not understand farm businesses]
- Zoning might have to be modified
- Grow food at Quigley Farm

Appendix B: Economic Data

Chart 1: Population of Blaine County, Idaho

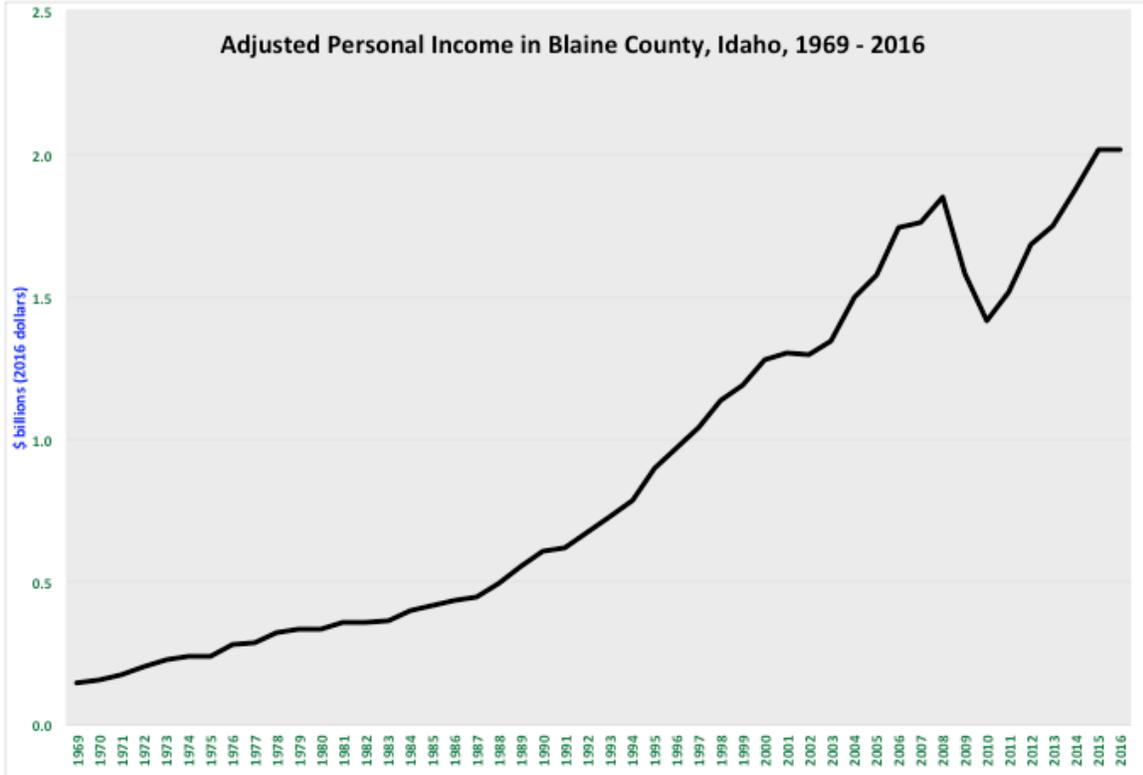


Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis. Viewed October 4, 2018.

Note: BEA data covering 1969-2000 was not available on its web site in January, 2019 during the government shutdown.

The population of Blaine County rose 283% (nearly a four-fold increase) from 5,694 in 1969 to 21,791 in 2016, as Chart 1 shows.

Chart 2: Adjusted Personal Income for Blaine County residents, 1969 – 2016

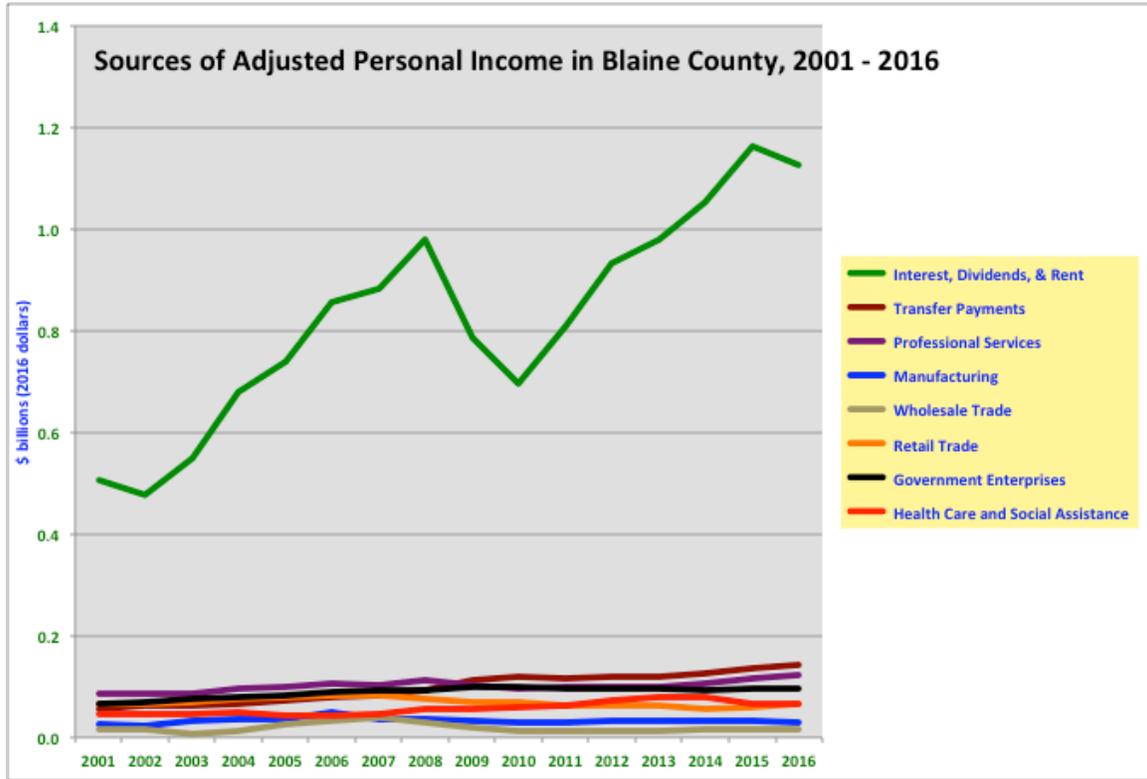


Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis. Viewed October 4, 2018.

Note: BEA data covering 1969-2000 was not available on its web site in January, 2019 during the government shutdown.

Personal income rose even faster, from \$22.4 million in 1969 (or \$147 million in 2016 dollars) to \$2 billion in 2016. This is an increase of 1,275 percent, after adjusting for inflation, or a nearly 14-fold increase. This is shown on Chart 2. The global housing finance crisis of 2008 took a significant toll on personal income, but considerable recovery has occurred.

Chart 3: Sources of Adjusted Personal Income in Blaine County, 1969 - 2016

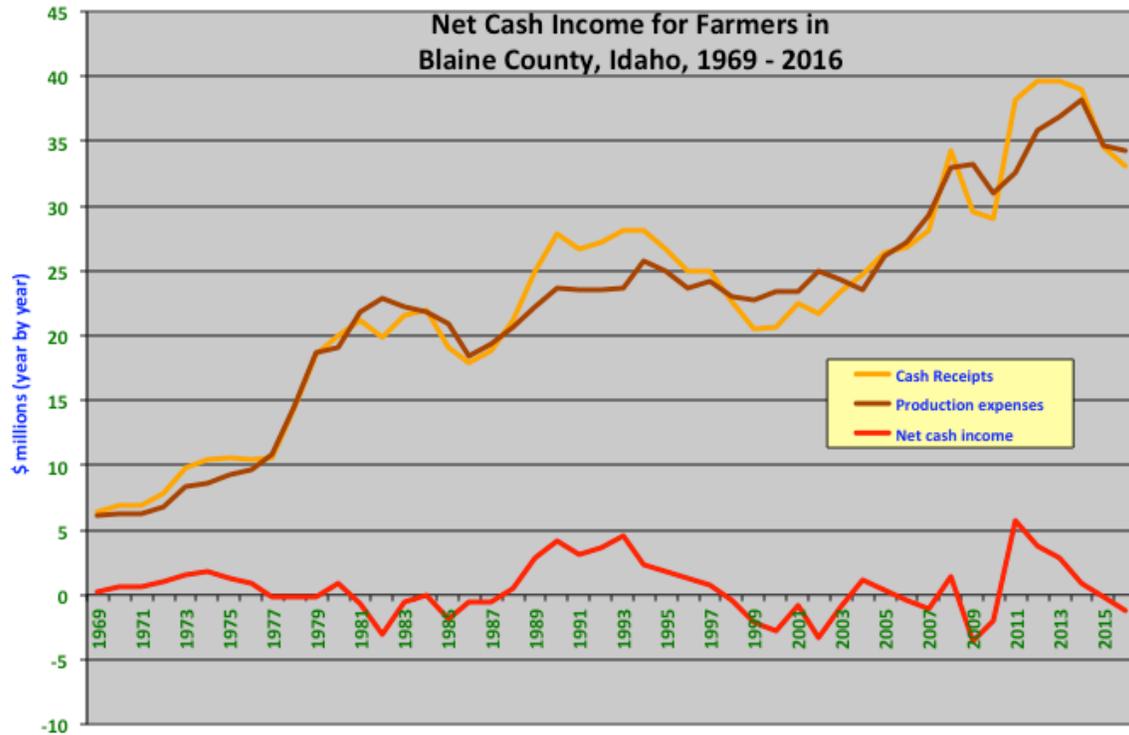


Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis. Viewed October 4, 2018.

Note: BEA data covering 1969-2000 was not available on its web site in January, 2019 during the government shutdown.

The vast majority of this new income is income earned from capital investments: interest on savings accounts, dividends from securities, and rental income, as Chart 3 shows. All other sources of personal income grew relatively slowly or declined. This suggests that most of the income increase is due to income sourced outside of Blaine County; new residents brought it with them when they moved in. For the average resident, however, few new sources of income were available — while living costs rose because more prosperous residents, and visitors, were able to spend at higher rates.

Chart 4: Net Cash Income for Farmers in Blaine County, 1969 - 2016



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis. Viewed October 4, 2018.

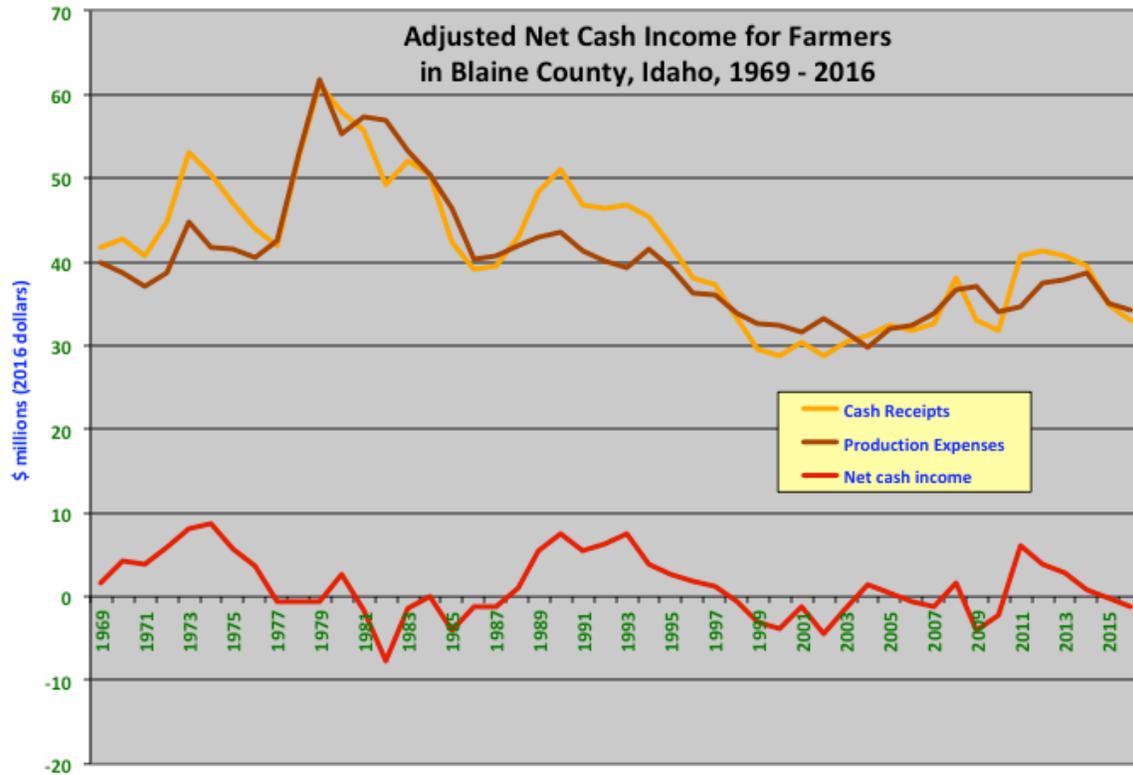
Note: BEA data covering 1969-2000 was not available on its web site in January, 2019 during the government shutdown.

Chart 4 shows personal income for all farmers in Blaine County from 1969 – 2016. Cash receipts for Blaine County farmers rose from \$6.4 million in 1969 to \$33 million in 2016, a five-fold increase.

Yet during this time period, production costs rose at a slightly higher rate, from \$6.1 million to \$34 million. Farmers more than doubled their productivity (as measured by Total Factor Productivity by the Economic Research Service) but returns stayed more or less the same. In 19 of those 48 years, production expenses exceeded cash receipts.

These data show that new markets continued to be available, even as the number of farms fell 17%, from 224 in 1969 to 186 in 2012. During this period, considerable land was also taken out of farming. In 1969, Blaine County farmers worked 250,249 acres; by 2012 total farm acreage had fallen to 179,130, a decrease of 28 percent (Census of Agriculture, 1969, 2012). Thus, a smaller number of farmers were selling more and more products each year.

Chart 5: Adjusted Net Cash Income for farmers in Blaine County, 1969 - 2016



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis. Viewed October 4, 2018.

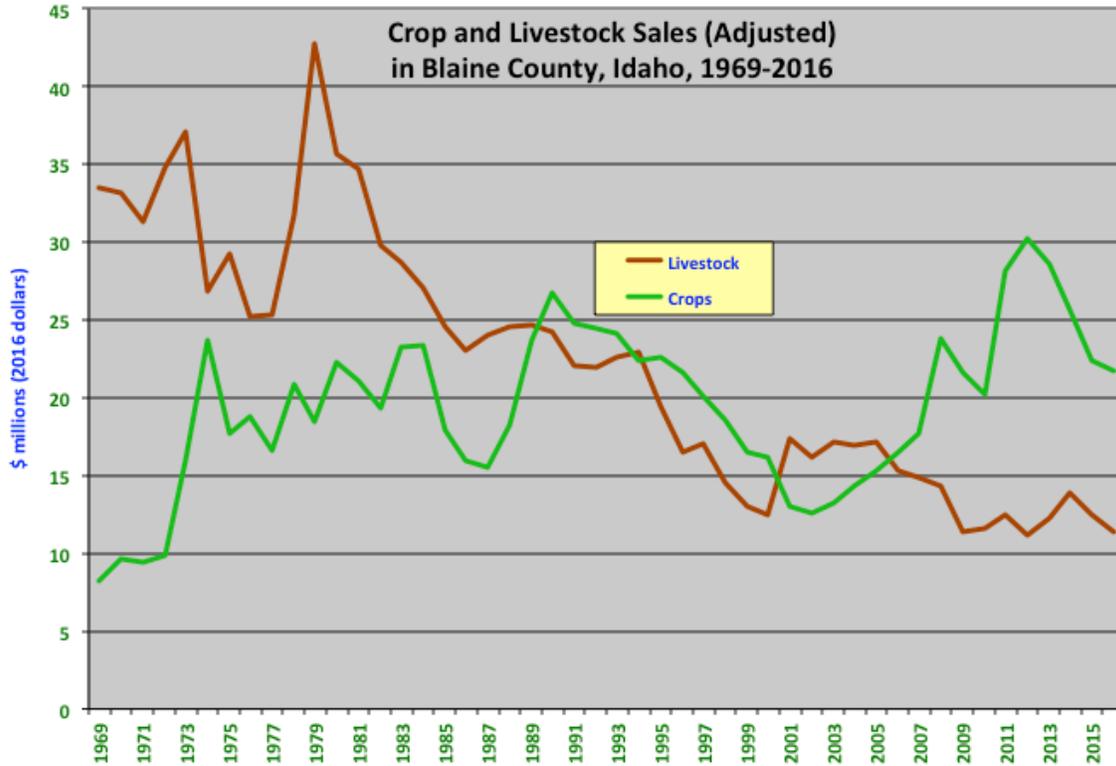
Note: BEA data covering 1969-2000 was not available on its web site in January, 2019 during the government shutdown.

Yet the annual data covering personal income for farmers shown on the previous chart should also be adjusted for inflation, to provide a different view of the same data. Since 1969, the value of the dollar has declined six-fold, due to inflation. Chart 5 shows the same data as the previous chart, but is measured in 2016 dollars.

After making this adjustment, it is clear that the Blaine County farm economy peaked in 1974, and has offered fewer returns to farmers ever since. In that year, both cash receipts and production expenses peaked, while farmers earned a net income of \$8.7 million (in 2016 dollars) in a single year. Slightly smaller peaks occurred in 1990 and 1993, and speculation in grain trading caused a brief rise in commodity prices in 2011. Yet each of these peaks was followed by declines in the farm economy. Overall, Blaine County farmers earned \$3 million less by raising crops and livestock in 2016 than they had earned in 1969.

This shows that farmer investments in new productivity did not yield lasting returns (Economic Research Service, 2012, 2013). Although Southern Idaho grew into a prime farming and food-manufacturing center, with national prominence, during this era, few Blaine County farmers gained lasting benefits from that transition.

Chart 6: Crop and Livestock Sales (Adjusted) in Blaine County, 1969 - 2016

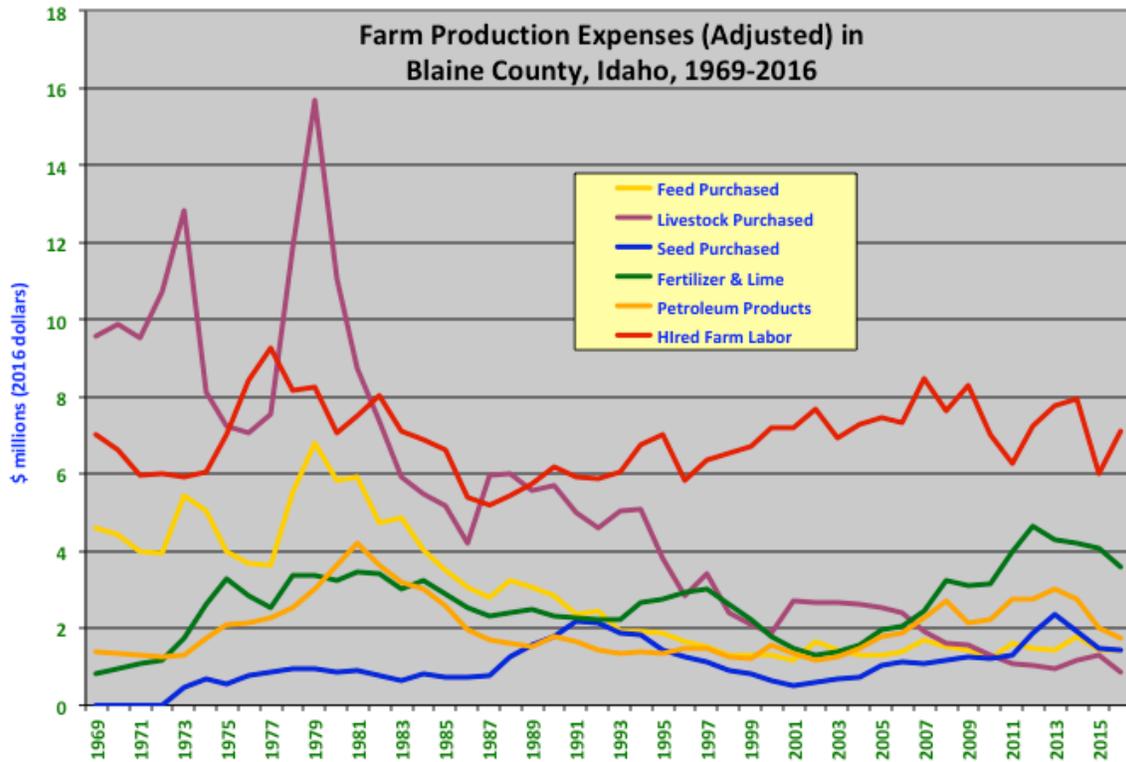


Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis. Viewed October 4, 2018.

Note: BEA data covering 1969-2000 was not available on its web site in January, 2019 during the government shutdown.

As Chart 6 shows, this transition in the Blaine County farm economy was characterized by a decline in sales of livestock and related products (the maroon line) while sales of commodity crops rose (green line). Note that this chart does not show profitability, but only cash receipts.

Chart 7: Farm Production Expenses (Adjusted) in Blaine County, 1969 - 2016

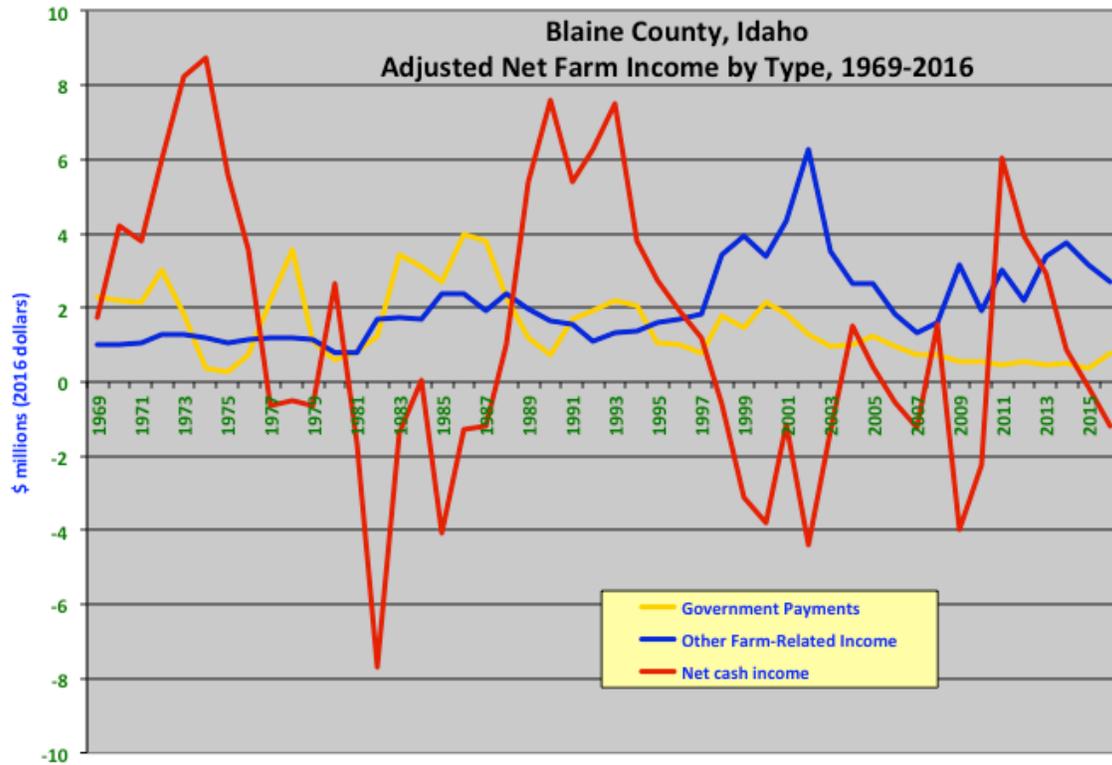


Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis. Viewed October 4, 2018.

Note: BEA data covering 1969-2000 was not available on its web site in January, 2019 during the government shutdown.

As Chart 7 shows, livestock purchases (which often would have been bought from a neighboring farm in earlier years) fell precipitously, while the costs of external inputs, such as fertilizers and seeds sourced outside the County, have risen in recent years. The most steady cost has been farm labor, which has remained at about \$7 million per year (in 2016 dollars) for the past 48 years. Since many of these workers live in the County, this represents a significant source of income for Blaine County.

Chart 8: Sources of Adjusted Net Cash Farm Income in Blaine County, 1969 - 2016

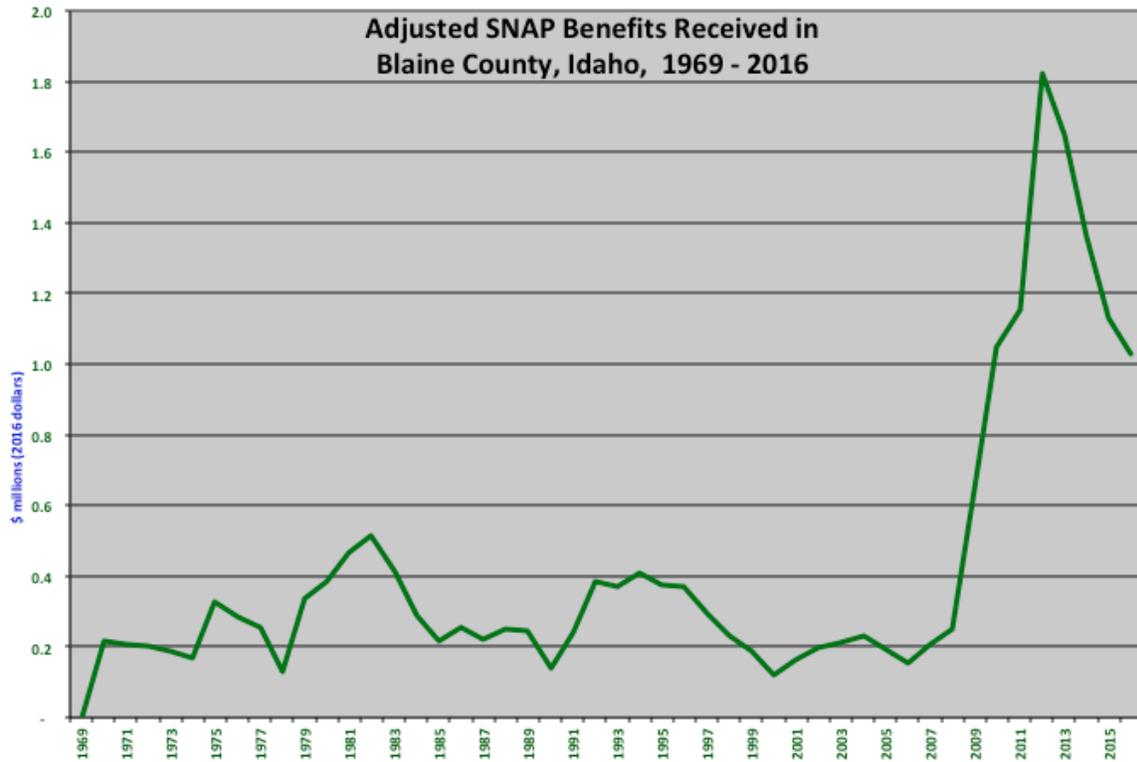


Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis. Viewed October 4, 2018.

Note: BEA data covering 1969-2000 was not available on its web site in January, 2019 during the government shutdown.

Summing up the farm income picture, Chart 8 shows the three main sources of net farm income for Blaine County farmers: selling commodities (red line); renting out land (blue line); and federal subsidies (orange line). Note that federal payments were the largest and most consistent source of farm income from 1977 to 1988, while rental income dominated from 1997 to the present. This is to say that for landowners, renting out farmland is a more reliable source of income than actually farming the land.

Chart 9: Adjusted SNAP benefits received in Blaine County, 1969 - 2016



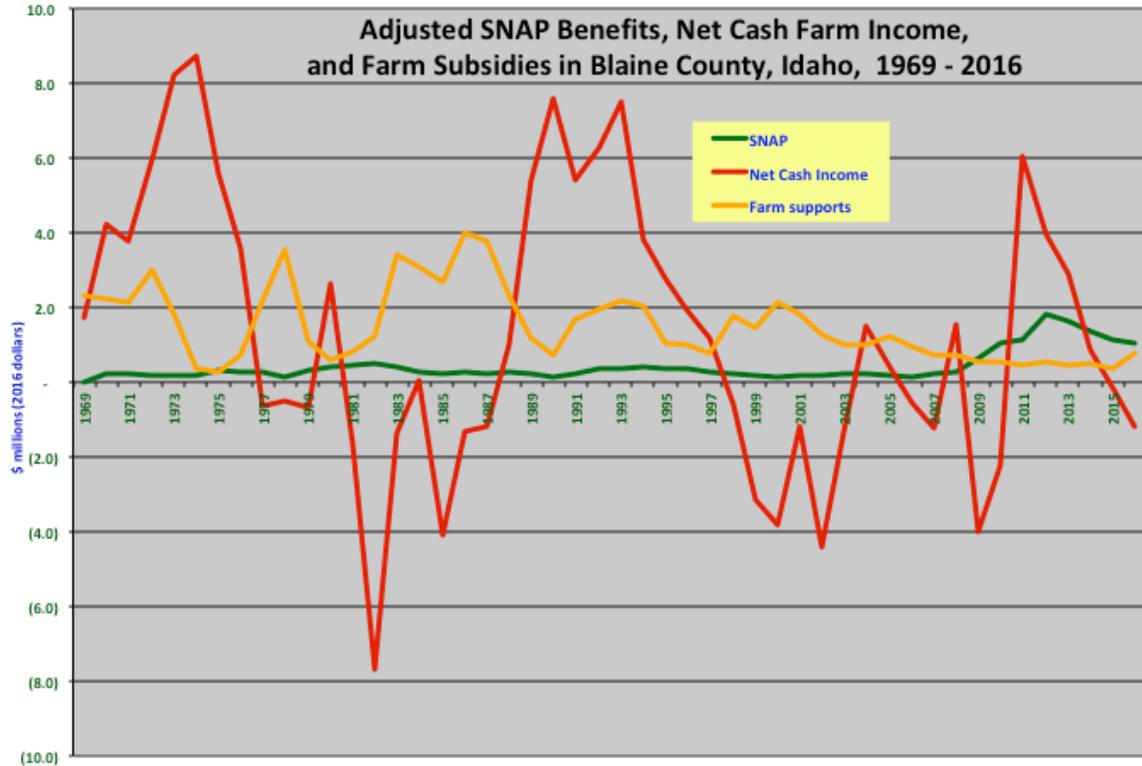
Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis. Viewed October 4, 2018.

Note: BEA data covering 1969-2000 was not available on its web site in January, 2019 during the government shutdown.

Meanwhile, hunger increased in Blaine County, despite the rise of personal income noted above. As Chart 9 shows, SNAP recipients collected \$200,000 of benefits in 1970 (no data were recorded for 1969), but benefits rose dramatically during the global housing finance crisis, peaking at \$1.8 million in 2012, and now stand at about \$1 million per year (See also Chart 2).

Not only does SNAP data reveal the vulnerability of the Blaine County population, it also shows how much this vulnerability is connected to global events outside of the control of county residents. Also critical, it shows the losses endured under a farm economy that is geared to exporting commodities to distant markets, while local people go hungry.

Chart 10: Adjusted SNAP receipts, Net Cash Farm Income, and Farm Subsidies in Blaine County, 1969 - 2016



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis. Viewed October 4, 2018.

Note: BEA data covering 1969-2000 was not available on its web site in January, 2019 during the government shutdown.

In Chart 10, SNAP benefits are compared to net cash income: for farmers. Tragically, this chart shows that during several periods over the past 48 years, SNAP benefits have been a larger and more reliable source of food income for Blaine County than farming was. While farm income has produced solid returns from time to time, this is based on selling commodities for export rather than feeding Blaine County residents.

Perhaps more critically, in every year up to 2008, the 200 farmers of Blaine County received more in federal subsidies than the 2,000 lower-income residents of the County received through SNAP benefits. Feeding America data (Gundersen, et al. (2018) show that 2,230 Blaine County residents were food insecure in 2016, a rate of 10.4%.¹⁶

¹⁶ Gundersen, C., A. Dewey, A. Crumbaugh, M. Kato & E. Engelhard. *Map the Meal Gap 2018: A Report on County and Congressional District Food Insecurity and County Food Cost in the United States in 2016*. Feeding America, 2018.

Blaine County food consumption

Blaine County residents purchase an estimated \$63 million of food each year, \$36 million of this to eat at home. Table 1 shows how this breaks down by category of food items purchased for home use.

Table 1: Overall Food Consumption by Blaine County Residents

	\$ millions
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	8
Fruits and vegetables	7
Cereals and bakery products	4
Dairy products	4
Other food at home	13

Source: Calculation by Meter using Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Expenditure Survey for 2015. Note, however, that since these figures draw upon averages for the western states, actual food costs in Blaine County are likely to be higher. These data do not cover food expenditures by visitors.

Annual food consumption by product

The table below is based upon USDA Economic Research Service 2015 estimates of food “availability” on a per capita basis. This is a calculation of how much food was produced, imported, or exported, to come up with an estimate of how much each person consumes in a year. The 2017 population from the Federal Census was used to calculate Blaine County consumption in pounds.

Vegetables		Per Capita Availability Pounds, 2015	Total Pounds Required for Blaine County
	Artichokes	1.4	30,834
	Asparagus	1.65	36,340
	Beans, Lima	0.0018	40
	Beans, Snap	1.47	32,375
	Broccoli	6.64	146,239
	Brussels Sprouts	0.46	10,131
	Cabbage	6.68	147,120
	Carrots	8.47	186,543
	Cauliflower	1.29	28,411
	Celery	5.53	121,793
	Cucumbers	7.4	162,978

Strategic Plan for Wood River Valley Region Community Food System — Ken Meter 2019

	Eggplant	0.85	18,720
	Escarole & Endive	0.17	3,744
	Garlic	1.93	42,506
	Green Peas	N/A	
	Greens, Collard	1.54	33,917
	Greens, Mustard	0.39	8,589
	Greens, Turnip	0.39	8,589
	Kale	0.51	11,232
	Lettuce: Head	14.46	318,467
	Lettuce: Leaf & Romaine	10.78	237,419
	Mushrooms	2.98	65,632
	Okra	0.4	8,810
	Onions	18.3	403,039
	Peppers, Bell	10.69	235,437
	Potatoes	33.5	737,804
	Pumpkins	5.32	117,168
	Radishes	0.48	10,572
	Spinach	1.67	36,780
	Squash	4.59	101,090
	Sweet Corn	7.63	168,043
	Sweet Potatoes	7.51	165,400
	Tomatoes	20.5	451,492
	Other	N/A	
Fruit			
	Grapefruit	2.43	53,518
	Lemons	3.42	75,322
	Limes	3.06	67,393
	Oranges & Temples	9.35	205,924
	Tangerines & Tangelos	5.04	111,001
	Apples	18.94	417,135
	Apricots	0.12	2,643
	Avocados	6.52	143,596
	Bananas	27.9	614,470
	Blackberries	0.08	1,762

	Blueberries	1.54	33,917
	Cantaloupe	6.99	153,948
	Cherries	1.19	26,209
	Cranberries	0.07	1,542
	Dates	0.5	11,012
	Figs	0.21	4,625
	Grapes	7.72	170,025
	Honeydew	1.65	36,340
	Kiwi	0.51	11,232
	Mangoes	2.5	55,060
	Olives	0.88	19,381
	Papayas	1.14	25,107
	Peaches & Nectarines	3.26	71,798
	Pears	2.87	63,209
	Pineapple	7.18	158,132
	Prunes & Plums	0.58	12,774
	Raspberries	0.49	10,792
	Strawberries	7.95	175,091
	Watermelon	13.47	296,663
	Grains		
	Barley	0.73	16,078
	Durum Flour (2010 data)	12	264,288
	Oats	4.5	99,108
	Rice (2010 data)	20.4	449,290
	Rye	0.5	11,012
	Wheat Flour	134.7	2,966,633
	Dairy & Milk		
	Fluid Milk & Cream	173.7	3,825,569
	Dry Milk Products	3.6	79,286
	Cheese	30.7	676,137
	Cottage Cheese	2.1	46,250
	Condensed & Evaporated Milk	0.9	19,822
	Frozen Dairy Products	21.9	482,326

Strategic Plan for Wood River Valley Region Community Food System — Ken Meter 2019

Eggs			
	Eggs	34.9	768,638
Meats			
	Beef	76.9	1,693,646
	Veal	0.3	6,607
	Pork	59.1	1,301,618
	Lamb	1.1	24,226
	Chickens total	97.5	2,147,340
Fish			
	Fresh/Frozen Fish and Shellfish	10.8	237,859
	Canned Fish and Shellfish	3.3	72,679
	Cured Fish and Shellfish	0.3	6,607
Nuts			
	Almonds	1.7	37,441
	Hazelnuts (filberts)	24.8	546,195
	Peanuts	7	154,168
	Pecans (filberts)	0.5	11,012
	Pistachio Nuts	0.2	4,405
	Coconuts	0.9	19,822
	Walnuts	0.4	8,810
	Other Tree Nuts	1.2	26,429

Climate is not the limiting factor

Source: *USDA Census of Agriculture, 1930; 2012*

Having few other options, farmers in Blaine County produced considerable food in a climate that was most likely harsher than today, and with far simpler technology. Notably, while most of the farms focused on exporting commodities such as wool, meat, and grains, the County had considerable ability to feed itself, especially with milk and butter. In 1930, County population was 3,768.¹⁷

In 1930, there were 382 farms in Blaine County. They farmed a total of 158,952 acres (compared to 186 farmers farming 179,130 acres in 2012). All County farmers combined sold an aggregate total of \$2.2 million of crops and livestock in 1930 (worth \$29.8 million in 2012 dollars). That is, sales by Blaine County farmers in 1930 were worth 77% of the total farm product sales of \$38.6 million made by Blaine County farmers in 2012, and these products were raised on 89% of the land base current farmers use.

County farmers raised 22,142 acres of hay, 4,798 acres of wheat, 1,401 acres of oats, 1,377 acres of barley, 18 acres of rye, 66 acres of potatoes, and 12 acres of vegetables. Vegetables raised commercially included green beans, cabbage, celery, sweet corn, lettuce, onions, peas, potatoes, spinach, and tomatoes. 87 farms (23%) raised vegetables for their own use at home.

Fruits raised commercially included apples, cherries, pears, plums, grapes, currants, gooseberries, raspberries, and strawberries.

344 farms (90%) raised livestock (called “domestic animals” in the Census since they were valued for what they produced or the labor they performed as much as for their sales). Blaine County farmers sold \$900,356 of sheep, \$478,309 of cattle, and \$128,610 of horses in 1930, and also sold hogs, mules, chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, and bees.

Of these 300 (87%) milked cows. Of the 970,173 gallons of milk that were produced by 55 farms, only 116,285 gallons (12%) were sold. Of the 39,282 pounds of butter that were churned by 227 farms, only 5,149 pounds (13%) were sold. This meant that considerable food was retained by farm families for their own use at home.

Cream was more regularly traded, with 190 farms (63% of those with livestock) selling 184,074 pounds. County farmers also sold 47,589 dozen eggs in 1930, and 659,148 pounds of wool.

At the end of the Census year, the following livestock were living on Blaine County farms: 124,900 sheep & lambs, 13,279 chickens, 9,625 cattle, and 2,962 hogs.

67 (18%) county farmers sold products through cooperative marketing arrangements.

¹⁷ worldpopulationreview.com/us-counties/id/blaine-county-population/