



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Blaine County Community Food Assessment (BCCFA) grew from The Hunger Coalition's interest in food insecurity rates, and the community's interest in local food system development. The BCCFA research was possible due to fundraising by The Hunger Coalition, the VISTA program, which provided two full-time volunteers for the project, and committed community partners. The research provides a critical tool for community members pursuing opportunities to localize the food system: it can support grant applications, be used as baseline information to continue research, and it provides recommendations to get the ball rolling.



together in the food system framework. We are all part of an interdependent system. The many moving parts need to be coordinated to achieve bold goals such that food access, healthy diets and sustainable farming work together to promote greater health and quality of life for all.

In our first year, we researched Blaine County's food production, consumption patterns, food waste and recovery, and food security. Current activities include conducting monthly networking meetings, disseminating the research in this report, and identifying shared values, vision and goals. Identifying these will enable this group to impact the Blaine County food system in subsequent phases to the project.

Key findings from the research help pave the way with recommendations for the group to consider. See the full report for all findings, recommendations and research methods. To view the full report, [click here](#).

2015 BCCFA REPORT KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The BCCFA is a group of organizations and individuals working

1

FOOD PRODUCTION

Interviews documented challenges and opportunities in adapting existing agricultural production to provide food for Blaine County markets.

KEY FINDING – Farmers and ranchers are interested in growing food that can be sold in Blaine County markets. The majority of agricultural products currently travel outside of the county immediately after harvest to commodity markets.



RECOMMENDATION

Create land access agreements and farmer internship pipelines to foster production with existing land owners and their land/water/infrastructure resources.

MORE DETAILS: According to the 2013 Blaine County Agriculture Census, there are 193 farms and a total of 191,949 acres of land in farms. Of the total farmland, 54,197 acres is total cropland, and 31,751 of that total cropland is irrigated. The major commodities grown in the county are alfalfa, malting barley, and seed potatoes. The county's livestock industry is estimated at 15,600 cows and calves, and 15,400 sheep. The total value of agricultural products produced in the county is \$26,437,00.^(*)



2

FOOD CONSUMPTION

Surveys investigated consumer understanding and values about food production and sourcing.

KEY FINDING – Affordable, healthy, tasty food are the highest ranking food values, and 'organic' foods were ranked lowest in value. Most people identified "local" food as foods grown and raised in Southern Idaho.

RECOMMENDATION

Conduct additional research to determine household behaviors around a) food expenses as part of household budget, b) healthy food selection, and c) food preparation.



MORE DETAILS: Shopping patterns – Individuals in middle income brackets shop outside of the county more frequently than the higher and lower brackets

- **Availability** - The store in Carey lacked 15 of the 80-item basket inventoried for each store, rendering it a food desert for fresh produce and meats.
- **Accessibility** – There are some problems for pocket communities in between towns, but this is allayed by the relative wealth of those residents.
- **Affordability** - National meal cost statistics from 2013^(**) put Blaine County as the fifth most expensive county in the nation. Cost comparisons across the county stores show the least costly food is in Bellevue and Hailey.



WHAT'S A FOOD SYSTEM? A food system is all the people, processes and places involved in moving food from the seed a farmer plants to the table, be it a home, cafeteria, store, restaurant, or more. It encompasses everything from farming, processing and distributing, to retailing, preparing, eating, food rescue and composting.

3 FOOD WASTE AND RECOVERY – Interviews investigated existing services as well as barriers and opportunities to do more.

KEY FINDING – Commercial recovery options currently exist in Blaine County. A disposal service and a commercial compost company are piloting a food waste recovery program together.

RECOMMENDATION – Support end-use/sales of compost produced in this partnership by consumers and companies in the area. Support the expansion of existing services with additional restaurants and stores.

MORE DETAILS: Clear Creek Disposal and Winn's Composting are conducting a pilot project with the Blaine County School District and area restaurants to collect commercial food waste.



- Albertsons in Hailey is pursuing 'zero-waste', and has implemented significant diversion of food through donations to the local senior center, The Hunger Coalition, and composting.

4 FOOD SECURITY – Surveys and interviews documented the food security rate in Blaine County and analyzed

USDA-identified metrics of food affordability, availability and accessibility.

KEY FINDING – The food insecurity rate for Blaine County is 14.1%, with a ±2.9% margin of error, and an additional 5% of the county population is marginally food insecure. Fixed costs of living, such as rent, are relatively high, creating a household income dynamic that squeezes variable costs including food, potentially contributing to food insecurity.

RECOMMENDATION – Create food assistance opportunities that engage the community as a whole and eliminate stigma, such as volunteer/work in trade for food, and discounted food markets.

MORE DETAILS: Food insecurity can happen to anyone experiencing an unusually high financial burden or sudden loss of income. About 40% of The Hunger Coalition's clients experience this 'situational poverty.' 23% of food insecure households responded by survey that they would try to receive assistance if they



could volunteer or work in trade for food, and 46% said they would never seek food assistance. Stigma is a pervasive problem in addressing food security.

Definition of food insecurity (Life Sciences Research Office): Limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.

North of Ketchum	8.1%
Ketchum	9.4%
Sun Valley	4.9%
Btwn Hailey & Ketchum	6.0%
Hailey	17.2%
Bellevue	19.0%
Carey	50.0%
South of Bellevue	14.5%

Policy, necessary to create systems to support change, is not addressed in this report.

(*) <http://extension.uidaho.edu/blaine/2013/04/16/agriculture-in-blaine-county/>
 (**) <http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/our-research/map-the-meal-gap/data-by-county-in-each-state.html>
 (***) See appendix 7 and 20 for an explanation of results and methods.

NEXT STEPS FOR STEERING COMMITTEE

POTENTIAL VALUES:

Community Stability



Strong local and regional agriculture will help Blaine County communities thrive by providing a decent livelihood to farmers

and ranchers, while creating and maintaining attractive communities for people to live in, work in, and visit.

Healthy Eating

Blaine County residents will move toward healthier eating patterns, with local, affordable products, such as fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and both plant and animal sources of protein.



Rights to Food



All Blaine County residents will have access to adequate, healthy, culturally appropriate food at all times, a basic human right.

Sustainability

Regional food production, procurement, and access will be advanced embracing environmentally respectful practices, economically just principles, and socially responsible behaviors.

