



FAIR TRADE, LOCALLY!

By Emily Connor, ACG Member-owner

We need to remember that people grow our food. Where would we be without them? Everyone deserves to have access to local food that is safe, fresh, and high quality. Understanding our food origins is a growing concern and every consumer has the right to be informed while deciphering product labels. But with an abundance of choices lining the grocery aisles, this simple task has become challenging and quite overwhelming for most shoppers. Who exactly is growing our food? Where are the farms? What are the conditions of the farms? Imagine being able to connect directly with farm owners and workers, knowing the names and faces of the people who feed us.

The truth about the farming industry these days is not exactly comforting to conscious eaters. The majority of farmers and farm workers all around the world are constantly faced with the plummeting prices of their

products through sales to brokers and wholesalers, although commodity prices are constantly fluctuating. As a result, food growers are receiving smaller and smaller profits. In combination with the rising cost of farm inputs, this is causing a decreased quality of life among the farmer and farm worker population just trying to stay afloat. Farms across the U.S. have diminished from approximately 6.5 million from 1935-1997 to a mere 2 million by 2007, and over 50% of the farming revenue was accounted for by 10 corporations. The leftover farms are swelling with hundreds and sometimes thousands of underpaid migrant workers. Industrial-sized farms have become a new monster, with poor working conditions and product quality. They continue to thrive while bullying small-scale family farms into the corner with no chance to compete, let alone survive the market. According to the National Agriculture Workers Survey, 61% of farm workers live in poverty and nearly 75% have

no health insurance. What will happen if this trend continues? Thankfully, like-minded individuals concerned with agricultural justice are coming together to remedy this problem.

You may have seen the phrase "Fair Trade" on food labels here and there when perusing the grocery aisles, usually on imported goods such as coffee and chocolate. But, did you know there is a Domestic Fair Trade Movement right here in the U.S.? Blossoming from sustainable-minded farmers and



Open Daily 9am-10pm

503.287.4333

AlbertaGrocery.coop



IN THIS ISSUE:

- Take an Inter-Coop Tour... 3
- Visiting Malinowski Farm.... 3
- School Lunch Gone Local ... 5



Our mission is to serve as a community resource and gathering place, while providing fresh, high-quality, affordable food to the diverse members of North and Northeast Portland. We emphasize products from local, organic, and socially responsible sources, and work to build connections between our customers and their farmers.

Alberta Cooperative Grocery
1500 NE Alberta St.
Portland, Or 97211

info@albertagrocery.coop
503.287.4333
503.809.9899 (fax)
www.albertagrocery.coop

Calling All Owners: Run for the Board!

It's board election season here at Alberta. Who are these people who decide to run for and serve on the board? Member-owners just like you! Just think: unlike so many other businesses and institutions in our world, your very own neighborhood grocery store is overseen by folks that you democratically elect, and you yourself could be a director.

Running is easy: just pick up a candidate packet at the register. Candidate statements are due Saturday, 2/14/09.

FAIR TRADE, LOCALLY!

(cont. from p. 1)

supporters in the upper Midwest, Domestic Fair Trade focuses on bringing farmers and consumers together and working toward a holistic approach to agriculture. In recent years, there has been a gigantic spotlight on organic farming and the general health concern of pesticides impacting our bodies and the environment. When we buy organic, we know we are fueling our bodies with safe and healthful food. Organic standards extend as far as enforcing strict regulations of the treatment of livestock, are against the use of petroleum-based fertilizers, and prohibit synthetic chemicals but do not include anything about the treatment of the human beings laboring the farms. Going beyond the "organic" label, the Domestic Fair Trade movement is about protecting the actual people who grow our food.

Taking care of our food growers is a pertinent ingredient in moving toward a healthy and sustainable planet. The Domestic Fair Trade movement is setting agricultural standards, ensuring farmers equal rights and independence, and allowing them to directly connect with the marketplace and keep control of product costs. Equal rights for farmers and food growers means giving them a voice and including them in trade benefits: living wages, profit sharing, and cooperative workplaces. The movement also supports the empowerment of women, minorities, indigenous peoples, and other marginalized members of society to come together and participate in fair trade. The Domestic Fair Trade Association will provide even ground for idea sharing among people involved in all sides of food production and consumption. This direct form of trade will reduce middle parties, which are usually corporations buying out farmer's yield for less than acceptable prices. The goal is to remove them from the picture and connect consumers directly with their food producers, encouraging person-to-person relations. Soon you will know that not only is your food certified organic, but it is grown by people who are treated with fairness and respect.

So, why didn't we think of this sooner? Well, we did! The Domestic Fair Trade label is

nearly a decade in the making with careful planning, driven to incorporate social justice awareness into clean agricultural practices. In early 2007, there were 4 farms in the upper Midwest that agreed to participate in the launch of the Domestic Fair Trade project. In doing so, these farms were closely audited on three major guidelines: to respect workers' freedom of association and right to collective bargaining, to provide health and safety protections including access to health care and knowledge of potential hazards, and to pay a living wage. Another positive aspect for these small-scale farms to come forward and become a part of the Domestic Fair Trade label is the potential for growth in terms of the farm's profit. The higher price paid by consumers for labeled products will directly benefit the quality of life and work for farmers. There are many of us struggling with food costs and although paying more can be a stretch for individual budgets, even small amounts that drip into the local economy are crucial for maintaining fresh farm-driven food in our community.

The Domestic Fair Trade label is spreading throughout the Midwest with plans on launching pilots in Canada, Washington, and parts of the Northeast. Spreading awareness is the first step, and we can all cross our fingers that this movement will transform farms nationwide, reviving appreciation for local agriculture and the hard laboring workers that feed our entire nation. Rosalinda Guillen, Executive Director of Community to Community Development in Bellingham, WA advises, "*The most important reason for community co-ops to get involved is to support justice for farm workers. It has been a long struggle to bring fairness to farm workers and the opportunity to raise their voices in the food system.*"

The Alberta Co-op is proud to announce we are taking the required steps to become a member of the DFTA, and we are excited to join in the mission to support organic and socially justified production of local food. One of the first steps to the application is to conduct a "stakeholder conversation." If you would like to be a part of this discussion and

(cont. p. 5)

RECIPE: WARM WINTER SQUASH SALAD

INGREDIENTS

- Winter squash
- Nuts
- Hard cheese
- Chard or Kale
- Red wine vinegar



METHOD

Cut in half, de-seed and bake your favorite winter squash at 350 degrees until soft. Or, if using delicata squash, it can be cut into half-moons and sautéed with the skin on. Toast the nuts (pine nuts, walnuts or pecans would go nicely.) Chop if they are on the large side. De-stem and finely chop greens. Steam chard very briefly or kale for a minute longer. Scoop out warm squash, toss with any kind of hard cheese, greens, nuts, and red wine vinegar, mash slightly and serve warm.

FAIR TRADE, LOCALLY! (cont. from p. 2)

receive a \$5 gift certificate, please email Jocelyn@albertagrocery.coop. We would sincerely appreciate your feedback and ideas.

While patiently awaiting the official label, the concept of fair trade already exists. Where? How? Inside your local co-operative! Co-operatives already pay many farmers a higher price than corporations, giving farmers a better wage, and providing them with the means to maintain a dignified workplace. Yes, this does mean slightly higher prices. As a community, affordable and healthy food is a concern and a priority for everyone. The more wealth we can collectively circulate throughout the local economy, the more we can all share in the benefits. The value of deciding to spend the extra dollars to “keep it local” is directly supporting the equality and rights of our food growers. They are the names and faces providing us with local, organic, fresh, beautiful, and soon to be officially “fair trade” food.

Further reading: www.localfairtrade.org, www.dftassociation.com



SCHOOL LUNCH GONE LOCAL: FOOD FORETHOUGHT

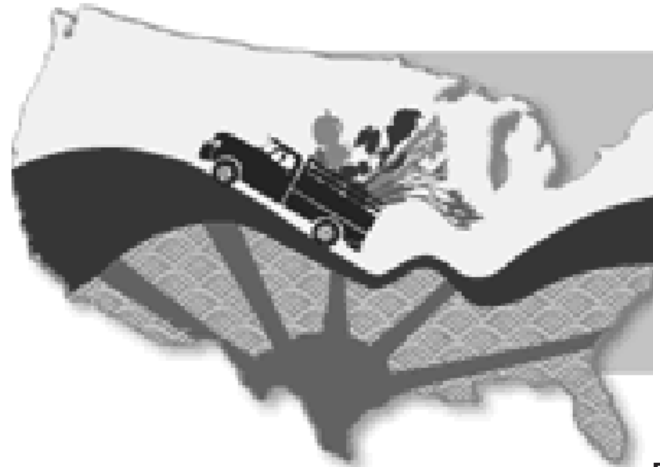
By Jill Erickson, ACG member-owner

May 2009 will mark the 4th annual Farm to Cafeteria Conference, and this year it will be held in our very own City of Roses. The theme: “Going the Distance- And Shortening It.” The conference organizers are hosting a contest open to students K-12 asking for film submissions that describe students’ image of “real food”. As an employee of Portland Public Schools and an Alberta Co-op working member, the subjectivity of this topic struck me as interesting. Predicting the perception of real food from the eyes of an average student in my district may be practically impossible, but here’s what I do know. The forethought involved in the PPS school lunch program is extensive, despite being invisible to most students.

Most days seem average on the student’s side of the sneeze guard at schools all across the district. Chicken sandwiches, pizza, cheeseburgers, and burritos are all regular menu items. The variable healthfulness of these foods may be questionable, but looking deeper into the matter we see markers of a food revolution. From the kitchen side of sneeze guard, it’s a change to find that burritos are actually being assembled from whole ingredients, versus frozen bricks pre-packed with preservatives. Buns and pizza dough (that actually rises on-site) made from local flour and assembled at local businesses are another step in the right direction. Cheese and hamburger served with fresh roasted potatoes from local farmers, the menu for January’s Local Lunch Day, is a huge leap. Receiving these menu items in their raw form is another drastic deviation from the school lunch norm. As every cook knows, preparing menu items from their whole, raw form is time consuming and labor intensive. The translation for nutrition services workers (as they are referred to in the school district) can be a stressful day with little or no breaks.

The thought invested by Portland Public Schools into brain food for our students is commendable in its early stages. What this plan lacks and inevitably must address is the human-power it takes to power learners through their day sustainably, healthfully, and locally. This is food for thought as we consider the important items of business for our new city and federal governments.

www.eatthinkgrow.pps.k12.or.us www.farmtocafeteriaconference.com



IT'S THE ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING!

Saturday, March 7th, 2009

Mississippi Ballroom, 833 N. Shaver St.

4-6:30 Meeting

6:30-8 Dinner & Social

Board elections! 2nd annual square dance!

Buyers Forum on
purchasing criteria!

Delicious food!

Talent show!

Working member awards! and more!

**WATCH FOR YOUR BALLOT, OFFICIAL ANNUAL MEETING
INVITATION, & ANNUAL REPORT IN THE MAIL SOON!**

BE OUR VALENTINE!

**Winter Member
Appreciation Day**

**Saturday,
February 14th**

A day of 15% off,
chocolate, wine,
massage, & tons of
other member-
owner love.

Join us!

Also 2/14: Board candidate
orientation from 3-4 p.m.



1500 NE ALBERTA ST.
PORTLAND, OR 97211

FORUM POTLUCKS CONTINUE!

Join us online: www.albertagrocery.coop/reportbacks.htm

PRSR STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
PORTLAND, OR
PERMIT NO. 1436