

Local farmers discuss local foods

By KYLE ODEGARD

Corvallis Gazette-Times reporter

November 17, 2008

The poor economy hasn't hammered some small farms that concentrate on organic produce in Benton and Linn counties.

Matt Borg, of Matt-Cyn Farms outside Albany, said food is a priority for his customers, so that's not where they are going to tighten belts.

John Eveland, of Gathering Together Farm near Philomath, said most of his business' produce goes to folks with medium to higher incomes, who are educated and somewhat affluent.

"Is that where I want to be in the future? No," Eveland said.

The panel discussion was held Sunday at the First Congregational United Church of Christ. It was part of a fundraiser event for the "That's My Farmer!" program, which more than 50 people attended.

"That's My Farmer!" is a collaboration between nine Corvallis faith communities and 12 local farms, coordinated by Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon. Volunteers sell coupons that work like cash with local farmers, and 10 percent of the cost of the coupons goes toward providing coupons to lower-

income residents.

The project is in its fourth year, and projects sales of more than \$10,000 in 2008.

While small produce farms are doing fine, but worried about a recession or depression, farms that have animals might be hurting this year.

Julia Sunkler, of the one-woman My Pharm in Alpine, said that the price of feed has doubled this year, but she couldn't justify raising the price of rabbits, poultry, lambs or beef given the economy.

"I may have gotten the short stick this year, but I'm hoping next year will make up for it," Sunkler said.

She said that she has received a boost from the publicity of being involved with the "That's My Farmer!" project.

The small growers all utilize farmers markets, many of which, including one at the Benton County Fairgrounds, operate in the winter.



Andy Cripe | Gazette-Times

More than 50 people attended a panel discussion with local farmers during a fundraiser for the 'That's My Farmer!' program.

“We’re really lucky in the maritime Northwest that we can produce food, really good food, on a year-round basis,” Eveland said.

While demand for locally grown food is growing, there’s still no lobbying organization to represent small farmers in Oregon, and that’s desperately needed, said Sharon Thornberry, Oregon Food Bank Community Resource Developer.

After the talk, there was a gathering with apple cider and pumpkin pie — made with local ingredients, of course.