

Components of Sustainable Agriculture:

The class anticipated that by taking three different and narrow perspectives to sustainability (economic, environment, and equity) the models they proposed would be dramatically different. What we found, however, was that there were several commonalities. For agriculture in the Willamette Valley to be economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable it should:

- Be focused on small scale farming
- Use only organic, not synthetic inputs
- Rely on direct marketing and (bio)regional cooperatives with local distribution networks;
- Be a transparent system where information on farm locations, and agriculture and labor practices are readily available for the consumer
- Follow agroecological farming practices
- Be focused on food crop production over non-edibles
- Work to restore critical natural areas such as wetlands to increase ecosystem services.

We recognize that our recommendations are based on an ideal world where change is possible, desired, and policy supportive.

Challenges to Accomplishing Our Model

In transitioning agriculture in the Willamette Valley to be more sustainable, the students became aware of several challenges that would have to be addressed. The following outlines some of the key obstacles highlighted by the class:

- lack of environmental policy
- the cost of conversion: acquiring funds and support
- the time intensive nature of the agriculture proposed
- how to move from large scale to small scale agriculture
- how to function outside of corporate agriculture
- making sure that everyone benefits from local foods
- policy implementation/enforcement
- common food culture resistance to seasonality
- other cultural barriers
- making equity a priority
- land rights affected in transition
- bolstering immediate short-term profits
- proposed infrastructure is new and not completely understood
- realizing our connection to a larger world than the Willamette Valley and how we contribute to feeding the current and future global population

Recommendations for Future Research:

In order to investigate more fully the idea of making agriculture in the Willamette Valley environmentally, economically, and ethically sustainable the class recommended the following areas for future research:

Environment

Increase understanding of current Willamette Valley farming techniques.
Investigate the contribution that urban agriculture could make to bioregional sustainability.
How could livestock be integrated?
Increase understanding and analysis of current environmental policy applicability to agriculture.

Equity

Increase understanding of policy implications for food security and farmworker rights.
Understanding the consequences of a shift in power.
Modeling and analyzing effective means to distribute food.
Understanding local reasons for why people food insecure.
Understanding the impacts of shifting cultivation to only food crop production.

Economics

Integrate real world economic data and profitability – distribution, inputs - into proposed models.
Understand the current and predicted future profitability of food/cash crop production
Conduct further research on the economics of organic production and marketing.
Investigate the profitability of cooperative.
Compare models and region to other case studies and conduct local pilot projects.