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HB 4090

Policy Sphere: Public Safety, Strategic Environmental Defense, Economic Development

Mission Guidance: Establishment of targeted rebates for off-setting industrial economic pricing of strategically essential foodstuffs; development of regional food security through reducing structural subsidies for foodstuff transportation.

Date: 05 February 2018

Problem: The State of Oregon is underprepared for the scale, shape, and size of impacts associated with a significant seismic event: structures and systems are not sufficiently robust to deter likely loss of life and destruction of property. Pre-event mitigation and preparedness are not optimized because of a lack of financial resources as well as public support for the spectrum of investments required for an appropriate program. Therefore, creativity and innovation reveal the need for partnerships between the private and public sectors that yield capacity “enablers” for certain and specific “higher priority” functions.

One of the “hidden” weaknesses within our respective level of resiliency is the globalization of foodstuff production, transportation, and the economic pricing instruments that subsidize critical materials from far-off, distant locales – that likely would not be available during the reconstruction phases after a catastrophic seismic event (or other major disaster). The problem is both availability of locally grown essential foodstuffs as well as the mechanisms that insulate the costs of global transportation – from the market prices paid by retailers and consumers.

Significance: The Willamette Valley is among the most productive foodstuff production regions in the world – in terms of capacity, climate, and environment. However, artificial globally sustained incentives have historically moved local agriculture away from production of foodstuffs towards markets sustained through international commerce.

The result of this misalignment has been a drastic reduction in our organic foodstuff self-sufficiency; a systemic misunderstanding as well as valuation of the environment because of subsidization of transportation costs (absent the economic value of impact upon the commons – specifically, global sustainability of carbon produced but not priced through petroleum dependent supply chain activities; and the hidden costs of post-event reconstruction for prioritization of efforts with respect to natural resources.

Harm/ills: The direct impact of a seismic event will be of historical proportions. “Best-case scenarios” recognize the lengthy period of full recovery, but most do not clearly outline the danger to loss of life related to shortages of food for the years following such an event: infrastructure capacities will be rebuilt, but not immediately – the ability of the region to produce as close to the approximate requirements for sustaining the population cannot be overemphasized. The People surviving the catastrophe will be dependent upon movement of goods produced outside the region; it is critical that organic foodstuff production be improved in order to both shorten the period of reconstruction/recovery as

well as reduce the amount of goods and materials dependent upon what promises to be an insufficient supply bridge. Absent this organic foodstuff production capacity it will be difficult to feed the survivors and orient people “back to work” in pursuit of the post-event “normalcy.”

Inherency: Existing market dynamics have established “farm to market” relationships and related expectations absent the insulated carbon carrying costs embedded in the global nature of product availability. This is neither new, nor region specific – the “tragedy of the commons” lessons playing out across the globe are the result of rational actors employing industrial economic practices; unfortunately, these protocols have largely undervalued the “price” of a limited carrying capacity of a sustainable planetary environment. So long as there remain hidden subsidies for the impact of carbon upon the natural world, we will continue to make choices that are not aligned with the natural economy.

Solution: Establishment of a robust, strategic, and well-funded self-sufficiency foodstuff rebate program could transform the marketplace through equalizing the subsidies involved: rebates for regionally produced foodstuffs would accomplish the following: strengthen our organic resiliency for post-event reconstruction/recovery; discourage structural misalignments resulting from the current invisibility of the impact of rising carbon levels within the global environment; and provide increased economic opportunity for food processing of regionally grown foodstuffs. This solution is primarily a public safety proposal, but its potential as a strategic environmental defense and economic development concept may be significant.

Mechanics: The Oregon Strategic Carbon Reduction Rebates would be developed through an inclusive, multidisciplinary public commission responsible for determining existing levels of foodstuff self-sufficiency based upon regional availability as well as targets. Policies would implement rebates for at least the following business sectors: agriculture, fishing, food processing, retail (food) sales, as well as other economic sectors identified as critical to the sustainability of post-event foodstuff availability.

The following reflect aspirational targets by the year 2030:

- Regional production of 50% of all foodstuffs consumed within the borders of Oregon;
- Establishment of the Oregon Strategic Resiliency Self-Sufficiency Zone (300 mile circle from the center of the State of Oregon);
- Expansion of food processing capacities including targeted statewide strategic investment for post-event production requirements;
- Implementation of quarterly foodstuff rebates for “at risk” retailers – to ensure availability of critical foodstuffs in vulnerable areas; and
- Establishment of partnerships securing foodstuff optimization involving local/regional non-profit, private, and public enterprises to ensure best use of subsidized food during pre-event horizons.

Solvency: This plan would yield significant increases in foodstuff certainty for post-event requirements through reorienting market drivers: it reflects a proactive, rational approach.

Costs: While the program would require significant “upfront” investment it would result in job creation and stimulation of food processing activities. Over time, it may well “pay for itself” because of the multiplier effects of manufacturing. Whatever the economic benefits, the program would save lives and drastically reduce the time of reconstruction.

Summary: The People of Oregon will suffer the impacts of a catastrophic seismic event at some point in the future. Strategic investments in foodstuff security will save lives; a reorientation of existing economic signals will also modernize market dynamics resulting in a predictable decrease in carbon emissions and a healthier global environment.