

Local Food Systems,  
Community Food Assessment,  
and  
the Whatcom Food Network

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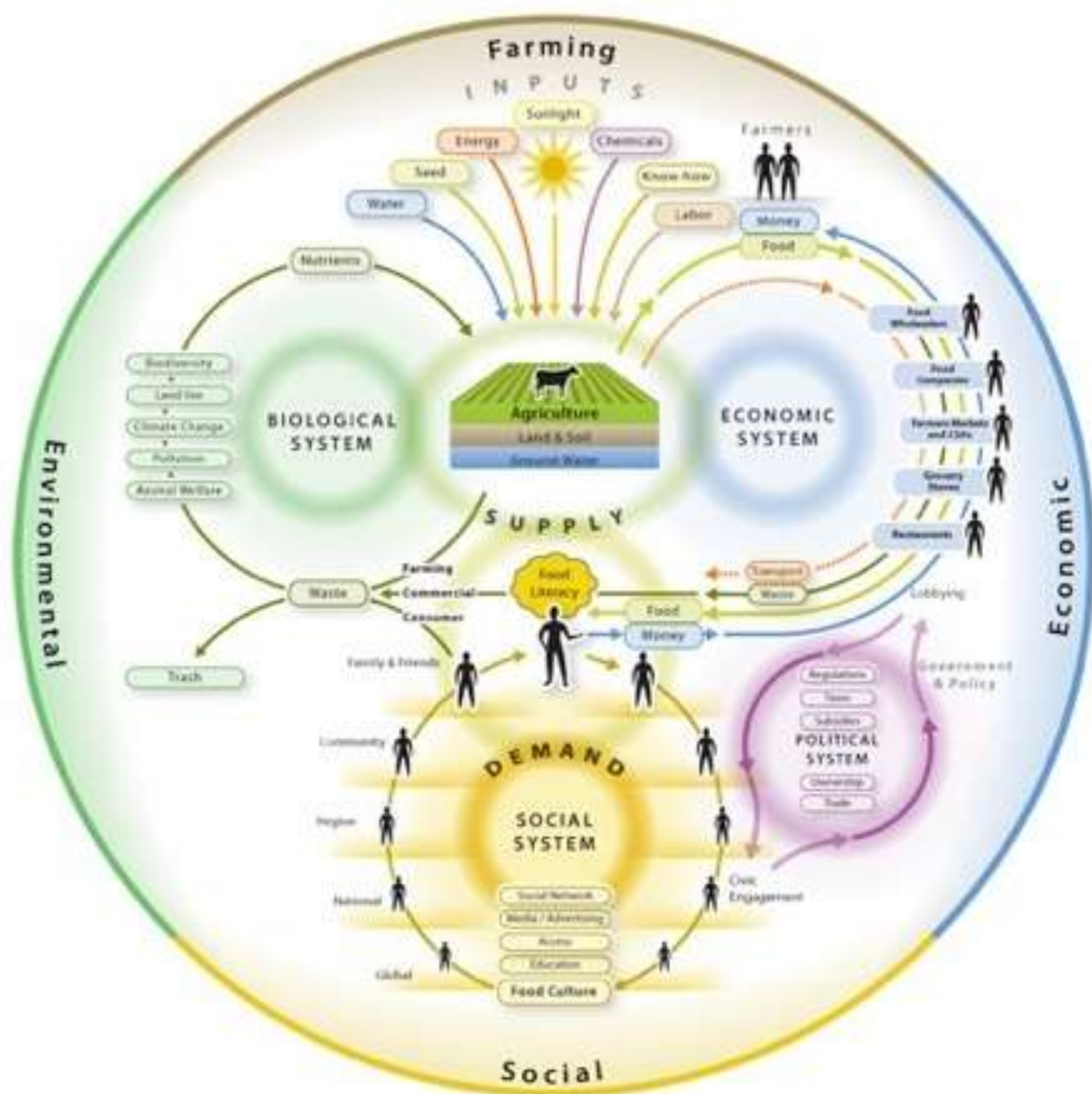
# What is a Food System?

A **community food system** is a food system in which food production, processing, distribution and consumption are integrated to enhance the environmental, economic, social, and nutritional health of a particular place.

# LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM







# What is going on in the Whatcom County Food System?

We asked this  
question in 2007 and  
started the  
Community Food  
Assessment



## Whatcom County Community Food Assessment

*A snapshot of the Whatcom County food system from 2008 to 2009.*



# Community Food Assessment (CFA)

- A snapshot in time
- Information about a food system
- Looks at assets and needs
- Used to improve or develop programs
- Promotes community involvement, collaboration, and discussion

<http://whatcom.wsu.edu/ag/cfa/>

# Whatcom County CFA

- Led by WSU Whatcom County
- Team consisting of representatives from
  - Agriculture
  - Hunger advocacy and emergency food
  - Human health
  - Land and water
  - Farm worker advocacy





# Chapters/Categories

- Demographics
- Health and food consumption
- Food Access
- Agriculture
- Fisheries
- Food Processing
- Food Waste

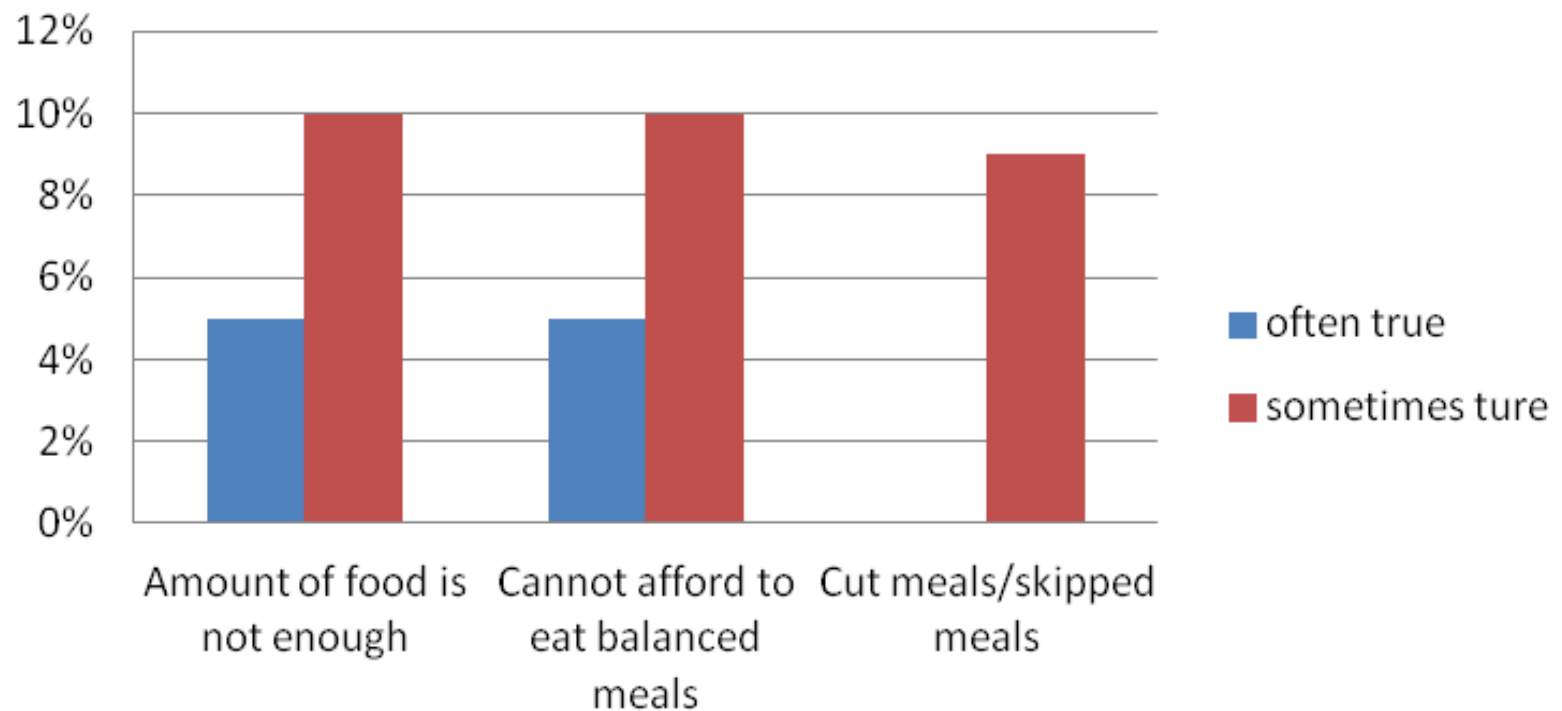


# Each Chapter...

- What we know and what we don't
- Challenges
- Opportunities

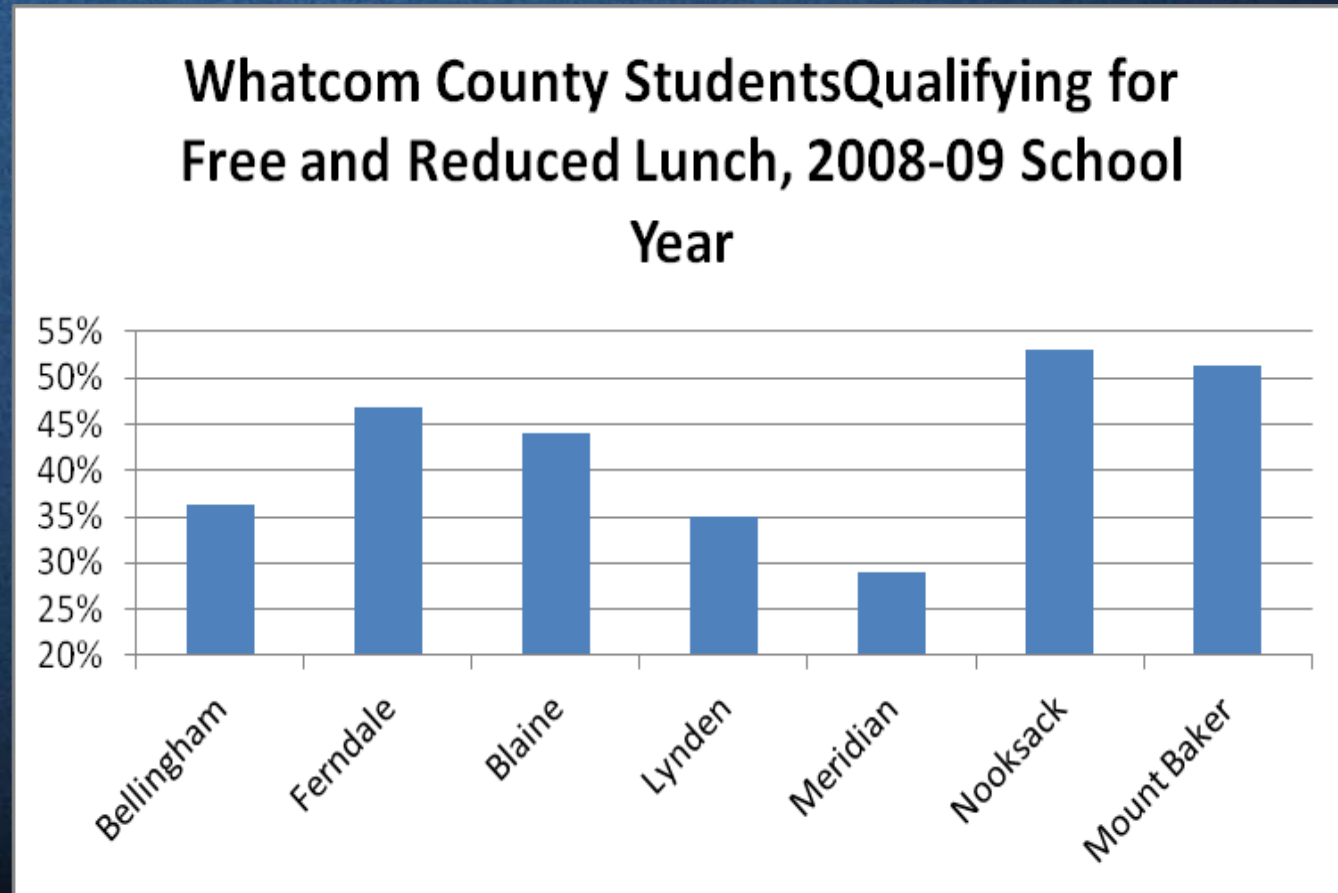
# Food Security

## Assessment of Hunger Indicators for Whatcom County, 2008



# Food Security

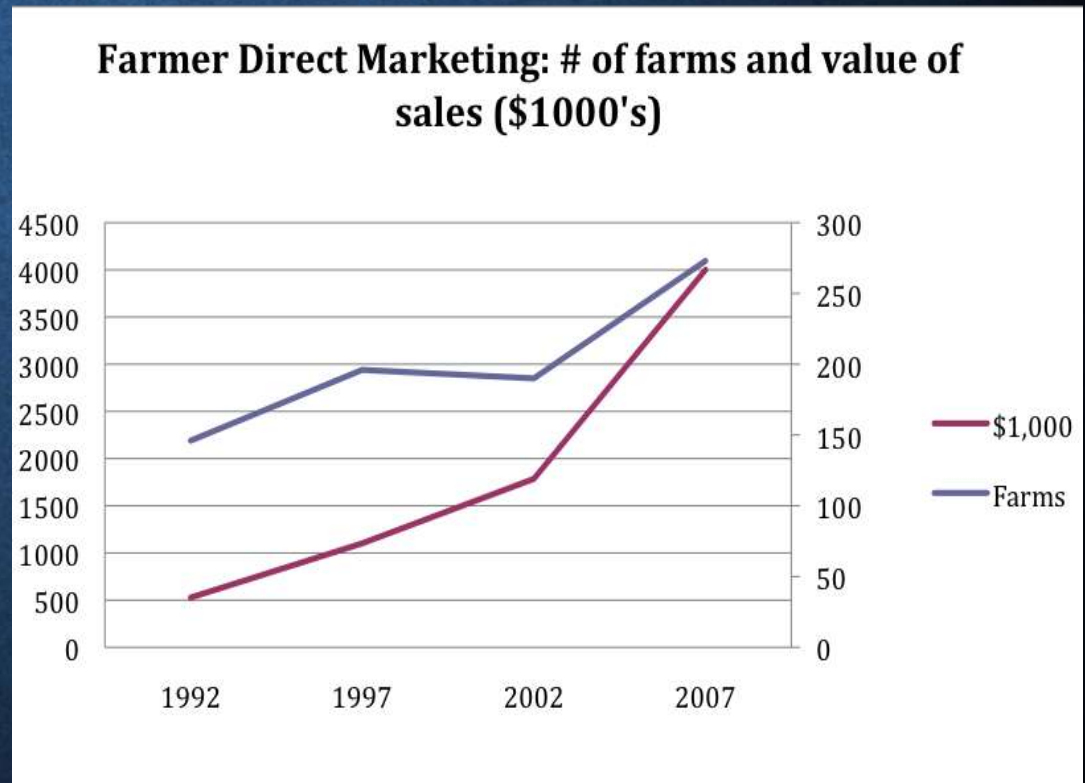
- Almost 15% of residents below Poverty Guidelines



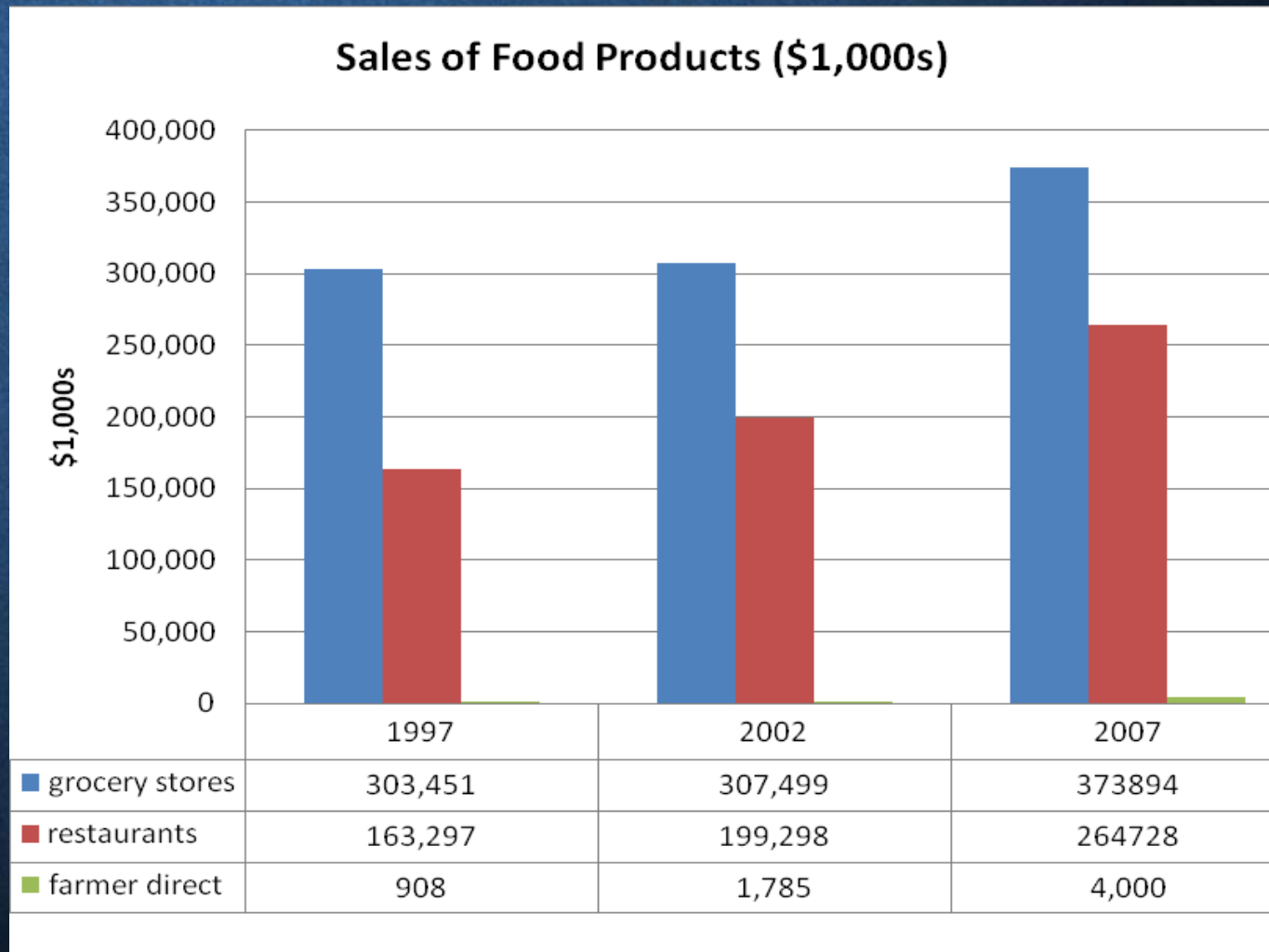


# Where does Whatcom get its Food?

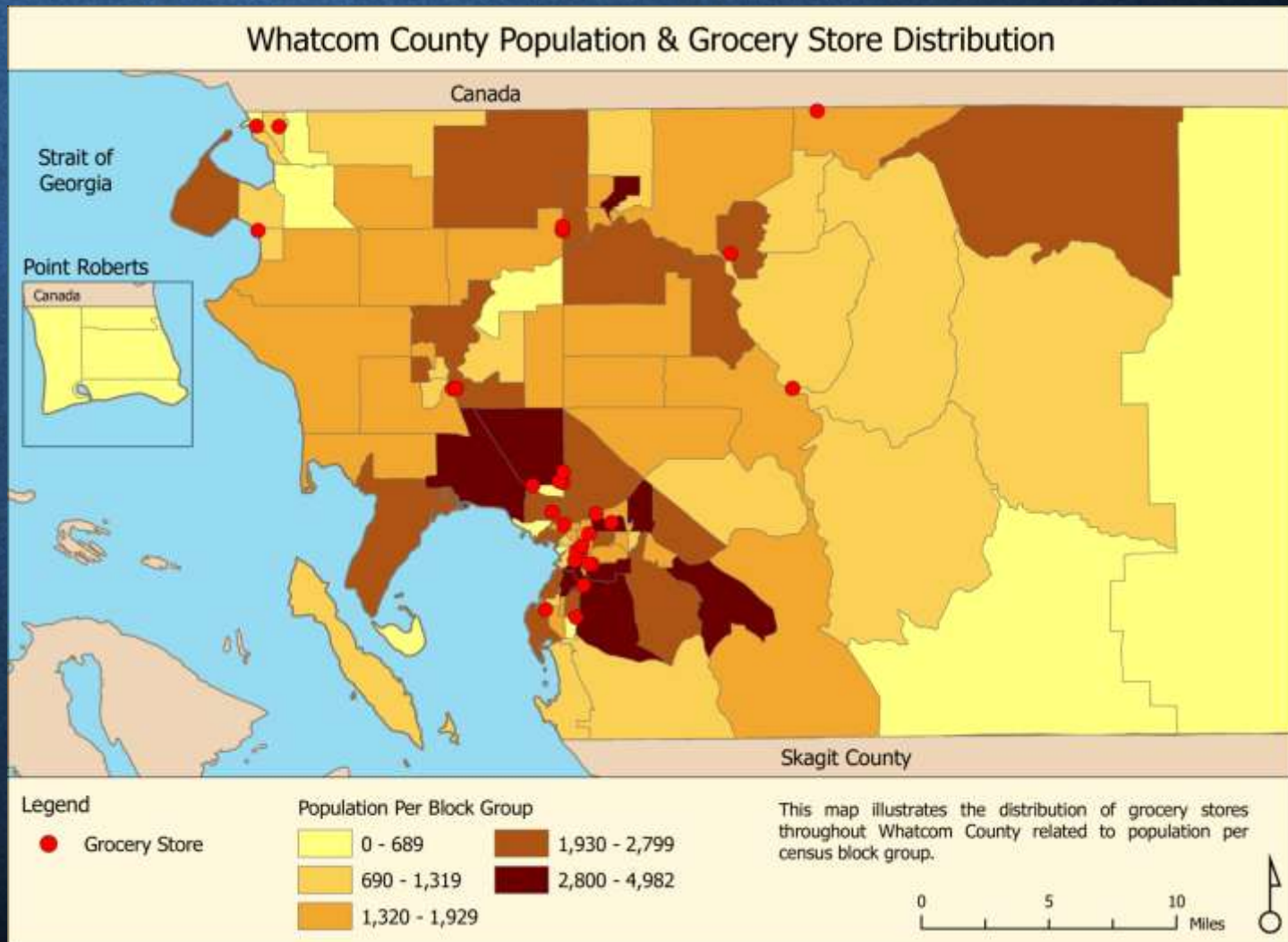
- Farm direct marketing up 94% from 2002 – 2007
- Food service providers face many barriers to using local food



# Grocery vs. Restaurant vs. Direct



# Access to food is impacted by poverty and distance to full service food stores





# Emergency food

- # of clients to BFB up 39% from '07 – '09
- 24 emergency food providers exist in WC
- Food grown through innovative community gardening and gleaning projects



# Agriculture

- Many different types of crops have been grown here since 1900
- # acres in farmland decreased significantly from 1950 to 2007
- More large and small farms – few mid sized





# Agriculture and Environment

- Positive and negative impacts
- Rising nitrate and phosphorus levels
- Research and education programs to assist
- Certification programs





# Threats to Agriculture

- Land – access, quality, quantity, cost
- Water – quantity, quality, access



# Agriculture Opportunities

- Direct marketing / locally produced food
- Extended growing season
- High value crops
- Energy efficiency
- Energy production





# Food Processing

- Current capacity for processing
  - Fish
  - Dairy
  - Berries
- Potential needs for processing vegetables and other crops



# Still much to learn – data missing

- Behavior specific to:
  - cultural background, employment type, education
  - Underserved communities are difficult to assess
- Relationships between
  - Hunger and obesity and other health factors
- Market analysis of new opportunities for agriculture

# CFA → Whatcom Food Network

- CFA identified need for collaboration between organizations working on different aspects
- Starting in 2010, a group working on diverse areas of the food system came together to start the Whatcom Food Network





# Whatcom Food Network

- Composed of representatives of
  - Organizations
  - Agencies
  - Institutions
- Members aim to understand system-wide issues, while relying on the success of each organization to play their part.



# How the Whatcom Food Network Benefits Organizations:

1. **Increase communication, coordination, and collaboration** among food system-related organizations, agencies, and institutions.
2. Gain a **collective understanding** of the **barriers and gaps** in Whatcom County's food system and develop common goals for addressing them.
3. **Build community capacity** through education, leveraging resources, and mutual support.
4. Work **inclusively with the diverse communities** of our region to ensure lasting success.

# Whatcom Food Network Model

