

FoodHub in the News



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By Mitch Lies

USDA pushes local foods, exports *Undersecretary helps launch Food Hub in Portland*

PORTLAND, OR – A top USDA official said Feb. 2, the agency's push to promote local food purchases isn't being done at the expense of export market development.

"Exports and growing export opportunities are as important as ever," said Ann Wright, USDA's deputy undersecretary of marketing and regulatory affairs. "We are working as hard as ever at opening up doors (in export markets) to provide opportunities for our producers."

Wright was in Portland Jan. 31 to Feb. 3 to promote the USDA's "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" initiative and help launch Food Hub, an online network that links farmers to consumers.

Food Hub, developed by the Portland-based nonprofit Ecotrust, is an example of regional food networking the USDA is promoting in Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food, Wright said.

The USDA launched the initiative last fall to help increase local food sales.

The initiative is designed to connect consumers to farmers through a USDA sponsored website and other promotional ventures.

Wright said local food purchases are expected to top \$11 billion in value by 2012.

"Regional food economies are another market for producers, but in no way are we trying to discourage exports," she said.

USDA officials ranked foreign market development high in their priorities in developing the agency's 2011 budget, she said.

"Those programs saw increases in the president's budget. Whether we get those increases are another thing," she said. "But those are priorities for us."

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