



Ashland Food Co-op

FTSLA Annual Sustainability Report

2010

(Covers activities from Jan - Dec 2010)

Author of the Report and Data Collection Process

Contact info (phone/email): Stuart Green (sgreen@ashlandfood.coop), AFC Sustainability Committee

Position in the company: Cleaner

How did the company collect and verify the information/data and what functions were involved?:

Compiled invoices; in-store monitoring, measurement, and interviews.

Background Information

The people who founded Ashland Food Co-op in 1972 were centered on creating an alternative to the processed foods of the time. The impulse to operate a not-for-profit business in ways that honor and nurture people and planet continues today. As the co-op approaches its 40th birthday, sustainability has been raised to the top the list of ways the co-op operates as a socially responsible business. This focus has sparked a new commitment to our mission, vision and values in all levels of the organization. It has also forced staff, management and board to take a realistic look at what we do and how we do it. It has become perfectly clear that we have a lot of hard work ahead to fulfill our vision of becoming a fully sustainable cooperative business by 2030.

Who We Are

Nestled in the beautiful Rogue Valley in southern Oregon, Ashland Food Cooperative is Southern Oregon's first and only Certified Organic Retailer. The Co-op has a long history of bringing healthy, organic food to the community. Our co-op started as a buying club in 1971, and has grown into a well-respected, deeply loved full-service cooperative grocery with more than 7,000 owners.

We're dedicated to providing the best customer service and highest quality foods in the region. We wholeheartedly support the local economy and our area's growers and producers. We also provide a unique selection of high quality and organic gourmet specialty foods, and wines and beers sourced from around the corner to around the world.

Community is at the heart of our mission. We give back every year through our Community Grants program, awarding yearly grants of up to \$1500 to local non-profit organizations. Our Basic Pricing program consists of nearly 100 products that make whole, healthy foods affordable to everyone. We are charter members of the Ashland Green Business Program and Ashland Renewable Pioneers, serving as an example of what is possible in our community.

Education plays a huge part of our mission as well. Our Community Oven culinary and wellness program provides cooking classes, in-store culinary demonstrations, and wellness lectures. Community Oven also includes a free Pantry Basics class for owners to introduce them to simple menu planning and basic cooking using whole, organic foods.

Our peers have recognized our leadership in social and environmental stewardship. In 2008, the Natural Products Association gave us their Social Responsible Retailer Award. The Oregon Organic Coalition named us Outstanding Organic Retailer in 2009. Oregon Business Magazine put us in the Best 100 Companies to Work For in Oregon two years running. In 2009 we were named one of their Best Green Companies to Work For.

Annual Reporting Commitment

In 2008, Ashland Food Co-op became a member of the Food Trade Sustainability Leadership Association (FTSLA). This organization provides business in the organic food trade with guidelines and recommendations for how to embody sustainability in their own operations.

Each year, we will strive for continuous improvement and to practice transparency in annually auditing our performance and selecting reporting metrics that are relevant to our business. This report is a compilation of information we have collected and intend to submit to the FTSLA to qualify for ongoing membership in the association.

The Co-op has adopted its own Sustainability Vision based on the principles of The Natural Step and the 11-point action plan from FTSLA's Declaration of Sustainability in the Organic Food Trade. Our report will be organized using our Four Sustainability Goals.

(FTSLA metrics that are not applicable to AFC include: 2. Distribution and Sourcing, 9. Animal Care)

Our Sustainability Vision and Goals

By 2030, Ashland Food Coop will be a living model of cooperation with the Laws of Nature. We will achieve this by accomplishing:

1. Zero Waste
 2. Carbon neutrality, conserving energy, utilizing renewable energy
 3. Elimination of persistent man-made chemicals
 4. Modeling sustainability, justice, and equity in all of our relationships with employees, vendors, community, and other co-ops.
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2030 Goal – Zero Waste

Includes FTSLA metrics: 6. Waste, 5. Water, 7. Packaging

WASTE

Waste reduction has been a priority at AFC for many years. In addition to supporting our sustainability efforts, reducing waste saves a significant amount of money. AFC employees separate unwanted materials into more than a dozen different waste streams, only one of which goes to the landfill. At present, our two largest volumes of landfill waste come from our deli (largely post-consumer waste) and our produce and meat departments (waxed cardboard boxes). It has been challenging to develop useful metrics for the tracking of landfill waste, recycling, and compost but we are exploring ways to track this information and measure change more easily.

WASTE	2010 (est cu yds)
Diverted via conservation	37 (see Packaging - Bag Program)
Landfill output	1,165
Recycling output	3,070
Compost output	58

WATER

In 2009 AFC began aggregating and posting water usage data in the store. AFC does not have a written water conservation policy, but is always keeping an eye toward efficient resource use. Our overall water use has been steady over the past few years, even as sales have increased.

Although there seem to be few opportunities to reduce water use in our retail setting, there were several notable achievements in 2010. We increased the visibility and size of our bulk water filter, allowing customers to refill larger containers more conveniently. Our deli and meat departments refined the defrosting protocol to avoid excessive use of water. In addition, we installed a dual-flush mechanism on an older toilet in a satellite office building.

WATER	2010 (gal)	2009 (gal)	2008 (gal)
City Tap Water Consumed	157,825	163,150	157,730
Waste Water Discharge	≈157,825	≈163,150	≈157,730

PACKAGING

In 2007 AFC used approximately 30,000 bags/month for bagging groceries. In 2008 we began charging 10¢ for our large paper grocery bags (small paper bags are available at no cost); at the same time, we discontinued the use of plastic bags at checkout. We sell reusable cotton and recycled plastic shopping bags at cost or less. We also make clean cardboard boxes available to customers that would otherwise be recycled. After making these changes, our monthly use fell to just over 7,200 bags/month. Our use of paper bags has continued to fall; in 2010 we averaged 3,500 bags/month.

This represents a savings of approximately 320,000 paper bags per year, or about 37 cubic yards of packaged paper product.

In February 2010 AFC began replacing styrofoam meat trays with natural fiber bagasse trays. We used over 136,000 bagasse trays in 2010, which prevented an equal number of styrofoam trays from entering the waste stream. Unfortunately, bagasse trays produced unfavorable results when used with seafood and fish; we are still looking for alternative packaging options for those products.

In 2010 AFC began using durable-ware in the deli. Customers dining in the deli have the option to use BPA-free plates and bowls. This change reduced the amount of post-consumer waste generated in the store by approximately 50%, although this it is difficult to measure exactly. Paper to-go boxes are still available for takeout.

We package deli, bulk, cheese, meat, and seafood items for resale. We use plastic alternatives when available including biodegradable cellophane bags. Our customers can compost, re-use, or recycle nearly all of our in-store packaging.

We do not have a specific packaging policy, we prefer to use and sell items that employ appropriate levels of environmentally friendly packaging materials. Packaging metrics are difficult to interpret in our retail context, as most of the items we sell are pre-packaged. We may track packaging inputs more closely in the future.

2030 Goal – Carbon Neutrality, Energy Conservation, Renewable Energy

Includes FTSLA metrics: 3. Energy in Facilities, 4. Climate Change

ENERGY IN FACILITIES

Ashland Food Co-op has always had an eye on energy conservation. It makes good business sense to try to use less to help the bottom line. We do not have a written policy governing energy use and conservation.

Numerous conservation measures over the years have made the AFC facilities more efficient and electrical consumption in our main store has fallen 5.9% in the past two years, despite an increase in sales. However, our overall consumption increased in 2010 after we acquired several new satellite buildings. Our new Pioneer St. building underwent a complete remodel using green building concepts and systems. It features upgraded administrative offices and a Community Classroom with a teaching kitchen and top efficiency appliances.

In years to come we will continue to identify ways to reduce our energy demand, and find additional ways to use that energy more efficiently. There is no doubt that more efficient use of energy will require increasing staff education and awareness, as well as upgrades in our infrastructure. In the future, we aspire to use 100% renewable energy.

ELECTRIC	2010 (kWh)	2009 (kWh)	2008 (kWh)
237 N First St	769,840	803,840	818,080
195 A St	8,294	11,142	10,774
300 N. Pioneer St	9,222	--	--
302 N. Pioneer St	4,828	3,738	--
309 ½ N. Pioneer St	5,648	--	--
Total	858,114	818,720	828,854

RENEWABLE ENERGY	2010	2009	2008
45 solar panels on site	10,303 (est. kWh)	9,304 (kWh)	11,606 (kWh)
Green Power purchased; Bonneville Environmental Foundation Green Tags	116,000 kWh (116@\$8.50)	116,000 kWh (116 RECs)	116,000 kWh (116 RECs)
Onsite Renewables (% total)	1.2% (est.)	1.1%	1.4%
Green Power purchased as % of total	13.5%	14.2%	14.0%

NATURAL GAS	2010 (therms)	2009 (therms)	2008 (therms)
237 N First St	21,483	20,300	18,926
195 A St	710	1,048	841
300 N Pioneer	128	--	--
302 N. Pioneer St	--	--	--
309 ½ N. Pioneer St	--	--	--
Total therms	22,321	21,348	19,767

ELECTRICAL EFFICIENCY (kWh/sq ft)	2010	2009	2008
237 N First St - 17,457 sq ft	44.1	46.0	46.9
195 A St - 936 sq ft	8.9*	11.9	11.5
300 Pioneer - 2800 sq ft	3.3*	--	--
302 Pioneer - 480 sq ft	10.1	7.8	--
309 Pioneer -1200 sq ft	4.7	--	--
Aggregate	37.5	43.4	43.9
Total sq ft	22,873	18,873	18,873

* Less than one year of occupancy

CLIMATE CHANGE

At this time AFC does not have a specific policy regarding climate change. We do have several small projects underway which reduce help to reduce our ecological footprint. However, much more work remains on this front.

The scale of climate change makes it challenging to implement specific policies in a retail setting, so we are focusing on small, climate-positive projects as a place to start. We provide secure parking for bicycle commuters and shoppers, and we give weekly prizes to employees who walk, bike, and carpool. In 2010 we initiated a program to collect bikes from the community, repair them, and give them to employees for free. In 2010, five employees signed up for and received free bikes. In addition, the AFC sponsors a bike repair and tune-up day where employees can get free maintenance and discounted parts.

AFC aims to be carbon neutral by 2030, but given the constantly changing nature of climate science, policy, and carbon measurement we are still uncertain where the path will lead us in the long run. Nonetheless, we will continue to explore ways to mitigate our climate impacts.

2030 Goal – Elimination of Persistent Chemicals

Includes FTSLA: 1. Organic

ORGANIC

We have been a certified Organic Retailer since 2007. We carry organic products whenever the choice is available. Nearly all our produce and unprocessed bulk items are organic, as well as most dairy products and a majority of standard grocery items. We follow the requirements for Organic Retailers in the National Organic Program (NOP) and also follow Good Organic Retailing Practices (GORP). These standards guide our policies and practices. Our department managers and buyers strive to offer as many certified organic products as possible. In addition to selling high-quality natural products, we endeavor to maintain our facilities and employee work spaces in a way that minimizes the use of persistent man-made chemicals.

ORGANIC	2010
Organic Products/Ingredients Purchased % of total by weight	85% - 90% (est.)
Organic Products/Ingredients Purchased % of total dollars	75% - 80% (est.)
Organic Products/Ingredients Sold % of total sales by weight	85% - 90% (est.)
Transitional Products/Ingredients Sold % of total sales dollars	Very few. Transitional products only when certified organic version is not available.

ORGANIC OTHER	2009
Organic practices for all other agriculturally derived materials in your operation, including bio-based packaging, fiber, and other products.	We use potato starch utensils, bagasse plates, and PLA cups in our deli. We package bulk dried fruit and nuts in cellophane bags. We offer cotton canvas shopping bags at checkout.
Other Organic -% of organic in other agriculturally derived materials used in your operation	We provide Organic Cotton T-Shirts to employees

2030 Goal – Model of Sustainability

Includes FTSLA metrics: 8. Labor, 10. Consumer Education, 11. Governance

LABOR

Our Mission Statement calls for us to provide “a workplace that fosters opportunities for participation, empowerment and growth in an environment of mutual respect and cooperation.” We strive to live up to this statement every day.

LABOR	2010	2009
Total Workplace Employment	149	146
Managers	12 (4 male / 8 female)	12 (4 male / 8 female)
Staff	137 (81 male / 56 female)	134 (73 male / 61 female)
Total Number & Rate of Employee Turnover	48 (24 male / 24 female)	44 (24 male / 20 female)
Involuntary	14	14
Voluntary	34	30
Less than 6 months service	13	19
6 months to 1 year service	8	5
1 to 5 years service	25	16
More than 5 years service	2	3

COMPENSATION	2010	2009
Employee Health Care Benefits - % of cost covered for full time	100% - less \$50/month employee contribution	100% - less \$35/month staff contribution
Employee 401(k) - % of employees eligible for benefit plan	75% - eligible 1 yr employment, 1000 hours and at least 18 years old	90% - requires 1 yr. employment @ 1,250 hrs
Employer Matching contribution - % of employer match	Employer match 100% first 3% of pay and 50% next 2% of pay	Employer matches up to 5%

HEALTH AND SAFETY	2010	2009
Total number of recordable injuries and illnesses under OSHA	15	9

DIVERSITY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY	2010	2009
Composition of Workforce -		
Gender	85 males / 64 females	77 males / 69 females
Age – Under age 25	12 males / 9 females	8 males / 12 females
Age 25-35	41 males / 27 females	40 males / 32 females
Age 36-45	19 males / 10 females	15 males / 9 females
Age 46-55	8 males / 11 females	6 males / 8 females
Age 55+	5 males / 7 females	8 males / 8 females

CONSUMER EDUCATION

The AFC Sustainability Committee regularly provides articles for our bi-monthly newsletter to keep co-op owners up-to-date on sustainability projects. Newsletter topics in 2010 included: the Meat Department's elimination of most Styrofoam trays, sustainable living tips from sustainability committee members, details of the sustainability features in a newly remodeled building on our campus, the Deli's elimination of paper tickets for drink purchases which were replaced with reusable laminated tickets, a feature article on a local company that recycles all parts of electronic devices and computers, a feature article on a local brewery's path to net zero energy use, "sustainability confessions" from the sustainability committee, and the use of BPA-free receipt paper at checkout.

In 2010 AFC's Community Oven culinary and wellness program provided a mix of 130 classes, lectures and forums to educate the community about healthy eating, cooking and wellness.

GOVERNANCE

AFC is a consumer cooperative owned by our customers and employees. Consumer cooperatives are managed democratically to fulfil the needs and aspirations of their members. They operate as a form of mutual aid, oriented toward community service rather than monetary profit. Members vote on major decisions and elect the board of directors from amongst their own number. It is the board's responsibility to direct the general manager, guide the strategic direction of the cooperative, develop policies consistent with that direction, and to oversee implementation of strategic goals.

Our seven member board of directors has mandated and empowered our sustainability mission as part of our annual strategic goals, both at the board level and on the operational level.
