

At the “Food Policy from Neighborhood to Nation” conference on Friday, Congressman Blumenauer stressed the need to redirect farm and agriculture policy to better benefit Oregon farmers and ranchers. Touching on a variety of subjects, ranging from the ineffectiveness of our subsidy dollars to the underfunding of research and conservation programs in the 2012 Farm Bill, Blumenauer criticized the current Farm support structure for not successfully serving the vibrancy of both our rural and urban areas. He said, “We need to provide more support to farmers and ranchers for the clean air and water, land preservation, and carbon sinks they provide.” Blumenauer reminded his audience that while Oregon produces more food and specialty crops than any other state in the union, it only receives about .003% of total federal payments under the Farm Bill, on average, per year.

While Blumenauer praised Oregon’s participation in the federal Food Stamp (SNAP) program, he criticized Congress for being too short-sighted in its decision to reduce funding to federal health and nutrition programs for women, infants and children by \$500 million. Meanwhile, taxpayers spend an estimated \$2 billion annually on what Blumenauer called a “destructive and fiscally reckless sugar subsidy program.” Blumenauer commented that he was encouraged by the presence of community members from 47 states and their focus on farmland preservation, urban agriculture and access to healthy food. In conclusion, Blumenauer said, “Nowhere in public policy can we do more good, have more fun, save not just our agriculture and rural communities, but enrich the cities and save the planet.”

