

Purchasing power supports sustainable ranching

When it came time for Cory Carman to take the reins of her family's century-old ranch 15 years ago, she had a vision focused on sustainability. Today, that vision has grown into a thriving business of eight family ranches, working together to build out the resiliency of Oregon's food system and the rural economy.

OHSU has been there from the beginning.

"Our partnership with OHSU is aligned to shared values," said Carman, a fourth-generation rancher in Wallowa County. "OHSU takes its responsibility to the state seriously — not just in supporting the development of healthy food products but also putting money back into the local economy."

"Eating is part of healing. Our priority is to source high-quality nutrition for our patients, and with Carman Ranch, we can also leverage our purchasing power to support the health of Oregon lands," said Scott Cochrane, OHSU food and nutrition services coordinator. "We're proud to be involved."

Combined, Carman and the participating ranches run cattle over about a million acres, and as part of their commitment to creating sustainable meat operations they practice what's known as regenerative agriculture, which focuses on long-term soil health.

"When we think about how to support Oregon's rural agricultural communities, it's all tied to soil health," Carman said.

Currently, the Carman Ranch team supplies nearly 90 percent of OHSU's beef products and, according to Carman, the predictability of that purchasing contract is crucial. "Knowing that we are going to have a certain amount of business allows us to make advance commitments to meat producers across Oregon."

The OHSU Department of Food and Nutrition works with a number of Oregon food producers and also participates in initiatives to increase the production and distribution capacity of local farmers so they are positioned to supply OHSU and other large institutional buyers.

"Reflecting our commitment to sustainability, we're eager to find innovative ways to grow this type of purchasing partnership," Cochrane said.

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