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Farm Bureau Commemorates Food Check-Out Week

Salem, Ore., January 30, 2006 — Food in America is affordable. In fact, in just five weeks, the average American will have earned enough disposable income to pay for his or her food supply for the entire year, according to the Oregon Farm Bureau.

As a result, the Oregon Farm Bureau is celebrating Jan. 29 – Feb. 4, 2006, as Food Check-Out Week. The latest statistics compiled by the Agriculture Department's (USDA's) Economic Research Service indicate American families and individuals currently spend, on average, just 9.5 percent of their disposable personal income for food.

Applying the current statistic to the calendar year, it means the average household will have earned enough disposable income -- that portion of income available for spending or saving -- to pay for its annual food supply in just five weeks.

Not only is America's food supply the world's safest, but it's also the most affordable, said Anne Rigor, Chair of the OFB Women's Advisory Council. "Our nation's increasing standard of living would certainly be reduced without the safe, abundant and affordable domestic food supply produced by America's farmers and ranchers." Food Check-Out Week tracks the amount of income needed by Americans to purchase food on an annual basis, according to Rigor.

To mark the occasion, the OFB Women's Advisory Council is donating more than \$2,000 worth of food to the Ronald McDonald House Charities in Portland and Bend. Members will be shopping with lists provided by three chapters, using funds donated by numerous county Farm Bureaus and the Women's Advisory Council. The Ronald McDonald House provides a "home-away-from-home" for the families of seriously ill children receiving medical treatment in these areas. The food will be used to help feed families staying at the House.

(MORE)

FOOD CHECK-OUT WEEK
PAGE 2

In comparison to Food Check-Out Week, most Americans worked until mid-April to pay their taxes in 2005, according to The Tax Foundation.

Rigor said the high-quality, affordable food we enjoy is a product of our successful food production and distribution system, as well as America's farmers retaining access to effective and affordable crop protection tools.

This week should hold meaning for most Americans, Rigor said. As food producers, we are concerned that some Americans cannot afford to buy the food they need, but we are proud of the role Oregon farmers play in making our food supply more affordable for all.

The percent of disposable personal income spent for food has declined over the last 34 years. According to USDA, food is more affordable today due to a widening gap between growth in per-capita incomes and the amount of money spent for food.

This overall decrease is made more notable by the fact that trends indicate Americans are buying more expensive convenience food items for preparation at home, as well as more food away from home.

The Agriculture Department's latest statistic, compiled for 2004, includes food and non-alcoholic beverages consumed at home and away from home. This includes food purchases from grocery stores and other retail outlets, including food purchases with food stamps and vouchers for the Women, Infants and Children's (WIC) program. The statistic also includes away-from-home meals and snacks purchased by families and individuals, as well as food furnished to employees.

(30)

Editors: Digital photos of the Portland Food Check-Out Week event are available on request. Contact: Anne Marie Moss, annemarie@oregonfb.org, (503) 399-1701

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Helpful Web sites:

- American Farm Bureau: <http://www.fb.org/programs/checkout/2006/>
- Downloadable Food Check-Out Week graphic at <http://www.fb.org/newsroom/graphics.php>
- USDA Economic Research Service: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/cpifoodandexpenditures/data/table7.htm>