

# FOOD AND BEVERAGE SECTOR

Table 9: Lane County Food and Beverage Sector Employment Forecast

2014	2024	# Growth	% Growth	Replacements	Total Openings
3,360	3,804	444	13.2%	843	1,287

Source: Oregon Employment Department

The Food and Beverage Sector is a traded sector that includes both manufacturers and wholesalers. It is important to Lane County as a growth industry and was one of the few industries along with health care to weather the Great Recession without major losses. Between the end of the recession in 2010 and 2015, the number of firms grew from 125 to 144 and employment grew from 2,907 to 3,572.

Going forward, the sector is expected to add 444 additional jobs by 2024 for a 13.2 percent growth rate compared to 11 percent for all industries (Table 9). In addition, there are expected to be 843 replacement openings. Total job openings will reach 1,287 over the 10-year period.

Unlike many areas, wages are higher in the Food and Beverage Sector in Lane County compared to overall industry wages. In 2015, the Lane County average annual wage in

the Food and Beverage Sector was \$42,293 compared to \$40,802 for all industries. Statewide, wages in this sector are somewhat less than the average for all industries. In Lane County, many firms in the food and beverage manufacturing portion of the sector produce specialized products such as organic food and craft beer as opposed to large food processors, helping to push wages higher.

Educational requirements for the Food and Beverage Sector are relatively low (Table 10). Nine out of the 10 of the largest occupations require a high school diploma or less, yet employers in the industry report having difficulty hiring and keeping workers.

The Lane County Food and Beverage Collaborative is currently tackling many issues facing the local industry. During the convening of the Lane County Food and Beverage industry, the issue of an inadequate workforce

was expressed by several companies. Employers struggle to find reliable and adequately trained employees. According to Wildtime Foods Co-owner, Whit Hemphill, “the challenge has primarily been in finding people with the sort of long-term potential benefitting our investment in training and wages.” Wildtime Foods has increased wages and benefits for employees in order to retain and attract



Photo courtesy of Wildtime Foods

## LANE WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIP

good workers. However, Whit has noticed “it simply takes a higher number of applications and interviews than in years past to find that right person.”

Additionally, work in the Food and Beverage Sector is often seasonal which can discourage potential workers from pursuing careers in the industry. As a result, a task team from the Food and Beverage Collaborative is working on an employee sharing program that would allow employees to secure year-round employment.

Such a program would keep a qualified workforce from leaving the area in pursuit of year-round employment in the industry and prevent employers from continuously paying the high costs of training associated with employee turnover.

**Table 10: Lane County Top Food and Beverage Occupations and Entry Level Education**

Occupational Title	2014 Employment	Typical Entry Level Education
Packaging and Filling Machine Operators and Tenders	216	High school diploma or equivalent
Driver/Sales Workers	207	High school diploma or equivalent
Food Mixing and Blending Machine Operators and Tenders	167	High school diploma or equivalent
Wholesale and Manufacturing Sales Representatives, Except Technical and Scientific Products	167	High school diploma or equivalent
Bakers	157	Less than high school
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	141	Less than high school
Truck Drivers, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer	140	Postsecondary training (non-degree)
Waiters and Waitresses	112	Less than high school
Shipping, Receiving, and Traffic Clerks	104	High school diploma or equivalent
Slaughterers and Meat Packers	101	Less than high school

Source: Oregon Employment Department

## LOCAL RESPONSES TO FOOD AND BEVERAGE WORKFORCE NEEDS:

**Future Workforce:** LWP continues to partner with the Eugene City Club and Lane ESD to offer the Lane County Employment and Economy class. This ten week series involves local companies offering in-depth tours to area educators. The 2017 series will focus on local food and beverage manufacturers.

**Investments:** From 2014-2016, LWP has invested \$189,000 in on-the-job training contracts with local food and beverage employers.