



distribution systems

BEELINE

Beeline's system streamlines distribution and provides small farmers with greater access to the marketplaces that keep them in business.

PROJECT Beeline
LOCATION Portland, Oregon

- + Dawn Danby
- + Mary Rick
- + Jyoti Stephens
- + Kevin Etra
- + Daniel Wilhelm

In the United States, our food travels between 1,500 and 2,500 miles from farm to plate. Local food offers many benefits: cost, freshness, security and the preservation of open land. But merely localizing food production does not guarantee efficient delivery or the profitability of small farms. Many frequently make less than ten cents on every dollar spent on their produce.

HOW IT WORKS

Beeline is a virtual marketplace and distribution system for fresh produce in the Pacific Northwest designed to support local farms by reducing the cost of transporting produce to retailers.

An online system connects retailers and restaurateurs to growers. As orders are placed, Beeline automatically plans transportation routes with a robust Global Positioning System and radio-frequency identification to "pool" pickups and deliveries. The system saves individual farmers from having to deliver their own product.

A version of Beeline is currently being tested in Portland, Oregon by Ecotrust's Food Hub initiative.

BENEFITS

Not only does Beeline's system save time and reduce driving miles, it also provides small farmers with greater access to the marketplaces that keep them in business. By aggregating products from a number of farms, Beeline helps small farms stay competitive without having to resort to single-crop monoculture.

- + Maximizes transportation efficiency
- + Reduces costs to individual farmers
- + Helps local farmers compete

Beeline's use of technology allows drivers to link pick ups and deliveries as shown above. Handheld digital assistants connect distributors to markets (below). Ecotrust is currently testing Beeline in Portland, Oregon. (delivery shown at right)



Photo: Gregor Torrence