

[Bluegrass Local Food Summit Bomford by Beth Dotson Brown](#)

[http://goodnessofthegarden.blogspot.com/ \](http://goodnessofthegarden.blogspot.com/)

Friday, April 22, 2011

[Bluegrass Local Food Summit considers how we feed ourselves](#)

“If the earth is sacred then every spot on the earth is sacred and that means Kentucky is sacred.”

So began Jim Embry as he introduced participants in the Bluegrass Local Food Summit to the subject of the day on Thursday, April 21. He talked about how in our Commonwealth we also need to create “common health.” That, he said, begins with what happens below the grass with the worms, nematodes, etc.

Embry pointed to our current food system in the United States as one factor in the poor health of the population. Because of the food we eat and the far-reaching influences of how that food is produced, the health of our people and our earth is in jeopardy.

Throughout the upcoming week I’ll share highlights from the conference. Today I want to begin with information from Michael Bomford of Kentucky State University who followed Embry. Bomford posed the question: What does it take to feed ourselves as we do now? He looked at a 2010 study called [Energy Use in the U.S. Food System](#) and demonstrated its findings without the scientific language that would lose someone like me.



Here’s the recipe he used as he filled a container with enough oil to feed one person for a day: 2 1/4 cups of crude oil for what goes into the farming system—fertilizer, pesticides, running equipment, etc.

3 ¾ cups to process that food
1 cup for food packaging
2/3 cup for transporting that food to our stores
2 ¼ cups to operate the stores
2 cups to operate restaurants and food services
4 ½ cups for kitchen energy use in our homes

That comes to just over a gallon of crude oil to feed one person for one day.

There were two initial reactions I heard most commonly from audience members. The first was that we assumed it required much more energy to transport the food. The second was that we had no idea our kitchens used that much energy.

Of course, many individuals require less crude oil to eat daily. Anyone who who gardens, buys foods locally, rarely eats at restaurants, eats whole foods rather than extremely processed foods, buys in bulk and adopts other habits doesn't have the same impact. Nonetheless, for those of us who think we're doing well, it's certainly challenging to consider how we can do better, especially when we realize that this energy use is only 15 percent or so of the total energy we use per capita in the U.S.

It's quite sobering, yet on this Good Friday and Earth Day, it's especially appropriate to consider what truly is sacred.