

## Mayor wants to help Oakland food system

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oakland — Oakland Mayor Ron Dellums remembers growing up in West Oakland, where there were three fresh-meat markets in the area. These days, the only area grocery store is the recently opened Mandela Foods Cooperative.

Dellums hopes to change that with the help of the Oakland Food Policy Council, something he discussed Thursday at the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service West Coast summit at the Hilton Oakland Airport. The summit, hosted by Roots of Change, focused on how to improve healthy-food access and nutrition for low-income communities.

People throughout Oakland should have the ability to make choices about the food they eat, said Althea Harper, coordinator of the Food Policy Council. But when all the choices are bad, people don't have much of a choice, she added.

"There are parts of the food system that are broken," Harper said.

The Food Policy Council is a "call of service" that started with people in the community, Dellums said.

The people of Oakland should view it as part of the model city in dealing with healthy food access, he added.

"We're big enough to be significant, small enough to solve the problem," he said.

He said that what food people grow, where they grow it, how they grow it and how they distribute it has enormous implications. With global warming, it is not inconceivable for people to fight over the need for food and water.

"The challenges of global warming, global health, global economics, global water threaten us at a very powerful level," he said.

This is a moment to lead by example, Dellums said.

"It's not that Oakland or San Francisco or this region alone are going to conquer the issues of access to food, greening our communities, global warming, global health, but it has to start somewhere," he said.

Bringing together the community's industrial capacity, its academic excellence, its research capabilities and the progressive population will begin to demonstrate the models needed to adjust the issues concerning food and resources, Dellums said.

"The answer is in our hands," he said.