

THESIS

GROWING PAINS: THE LOCAL FOOD MOVEMENT IN NORTHERN COLORADO

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## ABSTRACT OF THESIS

### GROWING PAINS: THE LOCAL FOOD MOVEMENT IN NORTHERN COLORADO

Global food and agribusiness corporations exhibit significant control over food production and consumption. Around the world, people contest this corporate food regime through efforts like local food movements. Critics often undermine the power of localism movements and claim that local food is a short-term trend that will not impact the larger market. In my thesis, I explore the local food movement in Northern Colorado. My analysis draws on fieldwork I conducted in 2009-2010 and includes data from participant observation, semi-structured interviews (n=23) and an online survey (n=67). In Northern Colorado, local food producers and advocates are passionate about and committed to growing the local food system. The strong network of producers ensures that the movement stays rooted in and develops as an integral part of the community. Despite producers' enthusiastic and collaborative energies, local food is not for the most part economically viable. Producers, consumers, and advocates in Northern Colorado are faithful to local food, but individual commitments cannot counter the powerful forces that shape food production and consumption. In order for local food to challenge the global agro-food structures, the movement has to adopt a more political and economically focused approach that moves beyond consumer education and marketing strategies.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Beets, peppers, and salad greens grow in straight rows along the banks of the Poudre River. The early morning sun warms the gnarly peach trees as they stand watch behind the fields. A lone tractor, in waiting, is silhouetted like a paper cutout in front of the hogbacks of the foothills. Charles meets me in the rows of bush beans, pulling his buckets and hand tools behind him in his re-constructed garden cart. We start picking beans and chat in the cool morning air. Despite his unassuming and quiet manner, Charles has made a name for himself and is often asked to speak about the relationship between people, food, and the land. His eyes shine as he talks about how well his cucumbers, now heavy with fruit, recovered from the three inches of rain and three inches of hail that pounded the seedlings last June. Charles's love of farming and of the land is tangible and helps him counter the inherent difficulties of farming. He is one of the many passionate farmers in northern Colorado. These farmers, against many odds, have chosen to farm and chosen to farm for the local market.

One of the main goals of the local food movement is to re-localize food systems. However, popular media and food advocates often emphasize consumer-oriented strategies for change—"voting with your dollar"—rather than challenging the policies that structure our food system and hinder local movements. For example, in Michael Pollan's latest book, *Food Rules: An Eater's Manual*, he outlines sixty-four rules that "comprise a kind of choral voice of popular food wisdom" and help eaters re-learn how to eat (2009:xix). *Food Rules* is one of the many self-help, food, diet, and agriculture

books that have been published in the past five years. Pollan's "Rule 1" highlights current food interests:

Eat Food. These days this is easier said than done, especially when seventeen thousand new products show up in the supermarket each year, all vying for your food dollar. ...Today much of the challenge of eating well comes down to choosing real food and avoiding these industrial novelties (2009:5).

Pollan's main advice on eating is: "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants" (2009:xv).

His central rule and all correlated rules are a reaction to the "scientific" and nutrition-crazed food system that adds value to food through packaging, additives, and processing.

Pollan critiques the Western food system and the Western diet, but the onus for change falls on individual consumers to adhere to what he calls "personal policies." These personal policies respond to the industrialized food system that has created problems like food deserts, obesity, starvation, and resource depletion. The current global food system came into existence through food, trade, and labor policies that are in line with capitalist development. However, solutions to reel in this ever-expanding system often rely on individual efforts and personal policies.

In this study, I explore how a community of people in Ft. Collins, Colorado has responded to the negative impacts of the global agro-food economy. This study analyzes the local food movement's attempt to transform the food system. It also studies the dichotomy between individual efforts and broader policy implications.

### *Ft. Collins, Agriculture, and History*

Ft. Collins is a small agricultural and college town, under 120,000 people, and 60 miles north of Denver. People flock to Ft. Collins to check out the local breweries, like New Belgium and Odell's, to bike down the wide, tree-lined streets, and to become part of the laidback outdoor lifestyle. Ft. Collins does not boast the hustle and bustle of

Denver nor the affluence and progressiveness of Boulder. Yet, in 2006, Money Magazine voted Ft. Collins the country's number one small city to live in. Ft. Collins made the top ten again in 2010, as number six (CNN Money 2010). This community, originally established as an intentional farming settlement, continues its commitment to the outdoors, the land, and farming albeit in a modified or re-awakened form.

In the mid to late 1800s, during Colorado's mining boom and bust, pioneers headed west in search of a better life. Many towns along the Front Range were originally founded as agricultural communities. For example, Horace Greeley (editor of *New York Tribune*) urged easterners to "go west" to create utopian agricultural, family-value based, and temperance communities (McWilliams and McWilliams 1995). His namesake, the town of Greeley, is 30 miles southeast of Ft. Collins. It used new irrigation methods for that time to become a huge producer of sugar beets and beef (Brooks 2009). Greeley was the best-known agricultural community, but not the first or the only one along the Cache La Poudre River. Other agricultural towns founded in the 1860s and 1870s include Laporte, Bellvue, and Ft. Collins (after the military left). One local producer argues that the local food movement in Ft. Collins is a modification or extension of earlier movements:

All along the Front Range (Longmont, Greeley, Ft. Collins) there were intentional food movements [back then] that were bringing people out [from] the east to the west—let's grow food together, that's the intention of people coming. It has always been a part of the heritage of Ft. Collins (Jacob, interview, March 2, 2010).

The current "intentional food movement," according to Jacob draws on an older tradition in the area. Jacob refers to himself as the "second generation" or second wave of farmers in Colorado. The first wave of farmers, the original founders, set the stage for the second

and third waves to move “back to the land” and re-embrace these western agricultural lands. This third wave of farmers, the newly engaged-young farmers, continues the legacy of intentional farming communities along the Poudre River. Over the years, these farming communities have shifted their practices and moralities in response to local, state, and national changes. Yet, they continue to stay connected to their agricultural heritage. For instance, the local food movement is currently contesting the global agro-food economy that was just forming during the first wave of agriculturalists. This link to the past validates the Ft. Collins local food movement.

In Ft. Collins, food is a hot topic. Farms keep sprouting up. Aspiring farm interns put their names on long waitlists to spend their summers working in the fields. Consumers rush to join Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs, shop at farmers’ markets, and enroll in “foodie” classes. The local media promotes farmers’ markets and spotlights farmers. The relatively small size of Ft. Collins allows the movement to stay rooted in the community and to be driven by the interests of producers and advocates. Yet despite the attention to local food and local food’s connection to the community, the movement encounters many difficulties that include how to best engage consumers, build a distribution system, make ends meet (cover land/water costs), and juggle the various interests (producers and consumers) of the movement. The definitional (what is “local”) and relationship-based concerns (how to foster interaction) seem common to food movements and social movements elsewhere. However, the structural issues (distribution and land/water costs) are specific to the Ft. Collins community. That is not to say that other communities do not face similar issues. Rather, Ft. Collins’ market

distribution and high land and water costs are local concerns to be dealt with at a local level.

### *Overview and Outline of Research*

In this study, I will argue that the Ft. Collins local food movement has built a strong foundation. Producers and food advocates are passionately committed to growing the local food market, directing the future of the movement, and working towards increased local and regional food security.<sup>1</sup> A collaborative producer network also ensures that the movement stays rooted in the community and challenges the impersonal nature of the global agro-food system. Despite these strengths, I will show 1) how structural barriers impede producers' ability to make a living farming and 2) how the gap between consumers and producers adds to these barriers. At this point, the movement relies heavily on producers' individual commitment to local food and on consumers' conscientious consumption. However, in order for local food to challenge the current agro-food system, people need to transition to more collectively focused actions.

The following chapter, Chapter 2, will explain my personal interest in this research, my methodology, and my data analysis process. In my research, I employed mixed methods in order to study the economic viability of the local food system. My research focused on the people who grow food for the Ft. Collins market. The subsequent three chapters use the data from my research to support my overall argument, stated above. Chapter 3 will briefly explain the global agro-food system from one theoretical

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<sup>1</sup> Food security refers to both the availability of food in a community and an individual or household's access to that food such that people do not live in hunger or with the threat of starvation. In local food, food security is often discussed in terms of access to locally produced food. Therefore, if the global agro-food system is disrupted and food is less available, communities will have food security if and when local producers grow specifically for the local market.

perspective, and how alternative agriculture, including the local food movement, is a response to the current food regime. This chapter also explores the local food movement in Ft. Collins from the perspective of people involved in the movement (producers and advocates). Chapter 3 concludes with a short critique of the food movement and its limitations for change. In Chapter 4, I focus on the food community in Ft. Collins, which includes producers and the general population. I show how a sense of community is important to the success of the local food movement. Ft. Collins supports a diversity of producers. I describe some of the production models employed among Ft. Collins producers and show how the diversity of producers' models and skills enhance the movement. However, all is not perfect in local food land, so I also explore some of the intra-movement tensions that weaken producer collaboration. In the final data chapter, Chapter 5, I discuss the economic viability of the local food movement and the barriers that impede future growth of the local market. I link producers' frustrations with land and water limitations to land use policy. I also investigate the tension between producers and consumers. Many producers emphasize consumer education and marketing to increase the movement. However, this individually-focused tactic is not designed to question the larger obstacles that impact the growth and long-term success of the movement. I conclude my study, Chapter 6, with a brief summary and a set of suggestions for future study. My aim in this research is to provide the food community with a thorough analysis of the local movement, its strengths and weaknesses. I acknowledge my own limitations, but hope that this research is beneficial to the people involved in the Ft. Collins local food community.



### *Terms and Definitions*

This section includes a brief definition of words and terms that I will use throughout my thesis. When I speak about agriculture and food producers, I include the production of plants, fungi, and animals. By the term “producer,” I refer to a person who is producing food to sell to the local market. For my study, I did not interview producers of value-added items (salsa, bread, baked goods). Value-added producers are also important to the movement, but face different challenges than agricultural producers. The term “local” has a wide range of definitions and uses, which will be explored in Chapter 3. For the purpose of my research however, by “local market” I mean markets and communities in Northern Colorado, defined as Larimer, Weld, and northern Boulder counties. Using these two terms together, “producers for the local market” refers to people who grow food to sell to consumers (retail or wholesale) in Northern Colorado, where Ft. Collins is the main urban hub.

In Colorado, there are two main types of agricultural crops: traditional and specialty. These two terms can be misleading. Traditional Colorado crops are generally commodity crops: plants and animals that can be grown on a large scale, stored, and traded on the commodity market. For field crops, these traditional or commodity crops include grains, dried beans, and hay. For animal production, the non-specialty industries include beef, dairy, and poultry. On the other hand, specialty crops are what may first come to our minds when we think about farming and food. Specialty crops include perishable products like lettuce, greens, tomatoes, tubers, fruit, horticulture, and minor animal enterprises. Specialty crops have to be sold or processed in a more time-sensitive manner than traditional crops. In addition, specialty crops are often more labor intensive

(hand planted and handpicked) and not as amenable to machine production. Much of agriculture policy, including crop insurance, is built around commodity crops, not specialty crops. The local food movement is largely focused on specialty crop production.

The food that is produced for the local market may be sold wholesale or direct sale. The wholesale market includes sales to restaurants, end-retailers, and food distributors. Produce sold wholesale is typically a larger quantity of produce, sold at a lower price, to someone other than the end-consumer. On the other hand, direct sales occur when producers sell food directly to the end-consumers, through an organized system like Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) and farmers' markets or through personal contacts. CSAs can be organized in various forms. The basic premise of a CSA is that a community of people supports a farmer. Individuals purchase a "share" in a farm for a specified price, paid before the season begins, and in exchange, shareholders receive a weekly share of the food produced by the farm. In this sense, shareholders take part in the risk of farming—if there is a good crop, they get more and if a bad crop, they get less. Typically speaking, CSAs also hold events for the member community, usually at the farm. These events may include cooking demonstrations, harvest celebrations, and workdays. A new variation of the CSA is the Neighborhood Supported Agriculture (NSA), which functions as a CSA, but with a geographically limited membership. NSAs grow and sell produce in their specific neighborhood—front and backyards function as the farm and the neighbors are the shareholders.

The other main direct sales outlet is the farmers' market. Farmers' markets bring food producers together in an established area on a regular schedule. Most farmers' markets take place during the growing season, often on weekends or on weekday

evenings for four or more hours. Markets are organized by producer cooperatives, government agencies, or non-profit organizations. The organizers charge producers for their participation in the market, a set price for their stall space and/or a percentage of sales. Market vendors also pay sales tax (included in the price of goods) to the organizers. Markets have become more than just a place to buy produce and salsa. They are food and community events with live music, community performers, and activities for children.

I also researched “food advocates,” that I define as people who work to support and grow the local food system in Northern Colorado. Food advocates may be paid for their advocacy work or volunteer their time in community gardens or local non-profit organizations. Food advocates and food producers work together to support and develop the local food system in Northern Colorado.

Most food producers in Ft. Collins are considered “small,” as defined by acreage or by gross cash farm income (GCFI).<sup>2</sup> The USDA definition for farm size based on GCFI classifies a farm as small if their annual GCFI is less than \$250,000. Small farms can be commercial farms that grow commodity crops (beef cattle, hay, poultry, and grain/soybeans) or noncommercial (GCFI less than \$10,000) farms that may rely heavily on off-farm work or retirement income to cover household expenses (Hoppe, MacDonald and Korb 2010). Based on this USDA definition, the majority of the producers in this study and those involved in the local market are small farm operators and many operate small noncommercial farms.

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<sup>2</sup> This is gross income, not net income. The GCFI is also referred to as “farm gate income,” the money that comes in the farm gate, not the money that goes out to cover production costs.

## **Chapter 2: Methods**

### *Background*

I have worked in the agriculture community over the past ten years, as a student, laborer on an organic farm, agriculture teacher, and migrant farm worker organizer and educator. During this time, I noticed divisions between the farmers who grow for the commodity and wholesale markets and those who grow for local and direct sale markets. The difference between these two groups is not universal, but it is apparent. My experience in various agriculture communities peaked my interest in people's decision-making around farming. Over the past century, the number of people involved in US agriculture has dropped significantly, from 41 percent of the workforce in 1900 to 1.9 percent in 2000 (Dimitri, Effland and Conklin 2005). People talk about an uncertain future of farming noting the average age of a farmer today is 57.1 and the fastest growing group of farmers involves people who are 65 and older (US Census 2007). Despite the aging population of farmers and agriculture's unknown future, high school, college, and graduate students continue to study agriculture. Many aspiring farmers do not have a background in agriculture. Many future farmers hope to work on small farms, but most small farms have weak financial performance (Hoppe, MacDonald and Korb 2010). Some of my personal questions about people choosing to farm as a career include: Why do people continue to enter a profession with an uncertain future? How are small-scale farmers able to cover their cost of production, not to mention make a profit? What makes

people keep farming, even as the physical labor of farming gets harder as people age?

I moved from North Carolina to Colorado to work with migrant farm workers in 2006. I quickly realized that Colorado agriculture is not North Carolina agriculture. The seasons, weather, water use, crops, and farm sizes are like comparing growing spinach to growing tobacco. Despite the differences, in both places there are farming communities of people young and old. Within the first weeks of my arrival, I met a farm family who are leaders in the Ft. Collins local food movement. For the next couple of years, I visited their farm and enjoyed their produce. When I began thinking about my thesis research in agriculture, I was drawn to the warm and welcoming food community in Ft. Collins.

In the fall of 2008, I worked with the CSU student Agribusiness Association (ABA) to conduct a research project for my Anthropology methods course. My work with ABA introduced me to agriculture students and professors at CSU. During this research, I noticed a divide on campus between “traditional” or “conventional” agriculture students who study agribusiness, farm management, animal science, and crop science and the “organic” students who may have similar majors but are enrolled in the interdisciplinary program in organic agriculture. In my research, the students’ affiliation with “conventional” or “organic” affected their definition of “sustainability,” their reasons for farming, and their sense of community (McNamara 2009). The following spring, I continued my agriculture studies. I enrolled in two courses: Agriculture Policy at CSU and a continuing education course on “Local Food.” The difference in approach to food between these two courses was stark. According to most agricultural economists, the local food market is a niche market that will continue to play an insignificant role in total food production and the agro-food economy. Most people involved in producing or

studying commodity and large-scale crop production look at the local food and the organic food markets and snicker. In the local food course, the emphasis was on educating us, the consumers, about the benefits of local food and supporting our local community. In the class, I was introduced to key players (advocates and producers) in the movement. The juxtaposition between agribusiness and local food sectors made me want to learn more about the local food movement.

### *Research Overview and Research Questions*

For my thesis research, I focused on producers in Northern Colorado (Weld, Larimer, and northern Boulder counties) who produced food (produce, herbs, meat) for the Ft. Collins market.<sup>3</sup> My central research question asked how economic viability works in the local food movement in Northern Colorado. By “economic viability,” I wanted to understand if and how producers make a living and whether the local food movement is likely to play a larger and longer role in the food system. For example, do producers cover their cost of production? And if not, how are they making a living? Is local food going to be around for the foreseeable future? The current media attention on food and on local food makes agricultural economists and local food producers alike question whether the local food movement is a short-term fad.

In considering how producers achieve economic viability, I wanted to learn how they make economic and philosophical production decisions based on their own financial situations and moral commitments. In order to gather data to address these questions, I employed a mixed method approach, explained in the following section.

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<sup>3</sup> I also spoke with people who worked in the Denver and Boulder markets; however, they were not the focus of my study because the Ft. Collins market is different from that of Boulder and Denver.

I worked with key players in the local food economy including food producers, food advocates, and people involved in the various food marketing strategies (CSAs, farmers' markets, wholesale production, and direct sales). In these interviews, I wanted to understand the current reality of the local food system in Northern Colorado and how people envision and are working toward the future of a local food economy. I gained insight into the local food movement of Northern Colorado and the major barriers to long-term economic viability. I also saw how people are working to build and maintain the local food economy.

*Research Design: Mixed Methods*

In my mixed method approach, I combined participant observation with qualitative and quantitative methods. Throughout the 2009 growing season, I tried to immerse myself in local food production by conducting participant observation, volunteering 5-10 hours/week on a local farm, visiting weekly farmers' markets, attending producer gatherings, and going on farm tours. I became a regular in the local food community. I looked forward to going to the farmers' market and catching up with the latest news. Producers and advocates became invested in my research—they asked how my research was going, what I learned, and when I would be finished. They were interested in my research and what I had to share.

In order to meet potential informants, I relied on connections that I had with local producers. Through these initial connections and informal interviews, I used respondent-driven sampling and informant's social networks to identify additional people to interview. In addition to community connections, I approached individuals I observed who play important roles in the agriculture community. After the growing season was

over, producers had more time to meet with me and meet with each other. The majority of my interviews were conducted after the heavy planting and harvest seasons.<sup>4</sup> During the off-season, I also attended events including social events (MAD about farming dinner, CSA cooking class, Martin Farms harvest celebration) and professional events (Getting Connected Conference, Colorado Big and Small, CSA conference). These gatherings helped me continue to interact with producers and learn more about their plans for the following season.

In addition to these various strategies of collecting data, I relied most on semi-structured interviews. I developed an initial interview protocol (see Appendix 1) that asked local producers about the local food movement, production models, problems achieving economic viability, personal motivations for producing food, food policy and the food community. These questions asked producers to identify both individual and community factors associated with food production-distribution decisions. In addition, my questions attempted to produce data about the economic, cultural, social, and moral factors that influence producers in their production decisions. The semi-structured interviews allowed me to organize and compare my interviews while still being able to gain in-depth and personal information, which impacts producers' decisions and roles in the food system.<sup>5</sup> My follow-up questions during both the initial and subsequent interviews clarified and asked additional information about the factors that affected individual and community decisions. The interviews were all conducted face-to-face and

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<sup>4</sup> Most interviews with producers were conducted from late August to December

<sup>5</sup> When interviewing food advocates and food professionals, I modified the interview protocol. The interview protocol was designed for producers, so some production-oriented questions were not relevant for non-producers.



lasted between one hour and two hours. Interviews were conducted in coffee shops, in the homes of producers, and on the farm. In all, I conducted twenty-three interviews and three follow-up interviews<sup>6</sup> (see Appendix 2).

I tape recorded the interviews and later transcribed them. Potential interviewees were contacted by phone, email, or via a personal introduction at food events. I was able to conduct interviews with most of the major players in the movement, as identified by informants and through observation. The variety of people that I talked with represents the range of variability, but they do not represent the full population of producers. For example, two influential leaders in the movement agreed to an interview when asked in person, but then did not return communication or did not have time for an interview. In total, I conducted semi-structured interviews with producers (n=13), food advocates (n=8), and food professionals (n=2). These categories are not static because many advocates produce food, but are not directly responsible for production decisions. Likewise, all producers are, to some degree, food advocates.

The data from my semi-structured interviews formed the basis of my online survey. The survey (see Appendix 3) was made available online to the key players in the local food movement including people involved in production, distribution, consumption, and policy. The survey included questions about informants' perception of the local food movement and the long-term viability of locally produced agricultural markets. The survey was an instrument for verification, but also for deeper exploration of the characteristics of the food community. I posed a series of Likert scale questions that

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<sup>6</sup> With one key informant, I conducted three interviews. The first two covered the interview protocol. In the third interview, I asked my informant to provide me with feedback on my preliminary findings, main points, and themes.

tested the data from my participant observation and interviews. I also incorporated open-ended questions that asked participants to respond to quotes about local food and agriculture. The survey was designed for food advocates and food producers. The final page of the survey was “producer-only” as the questions pertained specifically to production decisions. All other questions in the survey were general in nature. When interviewing producers, I asked if they would be willing to fill out a survey at a later date. To those that agreed, I emailed them a link to the online survey (hosted online by Survey Gizmo). In addition to my personal contacts, I was also given permission to post a link and send an email message to two local food Facebook groups: “Slow Food Cache La Poudre” and “Local Food Happy Hour.” The online survey was only available during a two-week window in November 2009. During this time, people (n=67) completed and submitted the survey. Many other people partially completed the survey, but these results are not included in my analysis. The Facebook posting generated the majority of the survey participants as it reached more people.

For me, a mixed method approach allowed me to gain a depth of knowledge that otherwise would not have been possible. Conducting participant observation, volunteering on the farm, and interacting with the community of producers helped me understand what was happening on the ground. My personal experiences and conversations with producers allowed me to develop an interview protocol that asked relevant questions. After specific questions or after the interview, many producers commented that I asked good and important questions. My semi-structured interviews provided valuable information. The interviews allowed me to compare producers’ situations and how their individual circumstances affected their respective economic

viability. The survey results confirmed many of the themes from the interviews and allowed me to have more confidence in my research findings. The survey also allowed me to reach a broader audience in a timely manner. Each method added to my understanding of the local food movement. When combined, I was able to see the complexity of the relationships in the movement and the barriers to production.

To analyze my data, I transcribed the interviews and conducted a theme analysis of the content. I compared the major themes in my semi-structured interviews with data from my survey. The analysis in this study is not comprehensive, but builds on the strongest themes from my research. In writing my thesis, producer names and farm names are pseudonyms. Some characteristics of producers and farms were also changed to protect producer identity.

### *Research Findings*

The findings of my research are presented in Chapter 3, Chapter 4, and Chapter 5. Findings from this research have also been presented in one published paper (*Furthering Perspectives Vol. 4. 2010*) and two conference papers (Society for Anthropology of North America 2010 and Agriculture, Food, and Human Values Association 2010). The findings will also be presented to local food producers and advocates at a community meeting in Ft. Collins in the fall of 2010 and at the annual American Anthropological Association meeting in New Orleans in fall 2010.

### **Chapter 3: The Global Agro-food System and the Local Food Response**

Food producers and advocates in Ft. Collins are involved in the local food movement for a variety of reasons. Some like to eat fresh food and some seek communion with the soil. Regardless, people gather to share their skills and attempt to create a new reality in their local foodshed.<sup>7</sup> Agriculture has changed drastically over the past century. Some producers and consumers applaud the technological and biological innovations in agriculture. Others run the other way and try to remove themselves from the industry-heavy food production system. Alternative agriculture, like local food, exists in relation to the “conventional” industrialized food system. Any analysis of local food would be incomplete without a discussion of the agro-food industry.

In this chapter, I provide a brief overview of the agro-food industry and my theoretical approach—food regime analysis. I will introduce the concept of “civic agriculture” and discuss how local food can be considered a form of civic agriculture. In my discussion of the local food movement, I outline the growth and the potential benefits of the movement, both nationally and in Ft. Collins. I show how people involved in the Ft. Collins movement define “local” and identify the main goals of the movement. My aim is to analyze the local food movement in Ft. Collins and how this movement relates

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<sup>7</sup> The term “foodshed” builds off the concept of a watershed and was first used in 1929 (see Hedden 1929) to describe how food moves from producer to consumer. A foodshed includes all the land, resources, and processes involved between the production and consumption. Originally, this term was used to explore the globalizing nature of food production. In the past decade, the term has been reclaimed to analyze local food systems and describe how local producers connect with consumers (see Kloppenburg et al. 1996).

to the larger discussion of local food. In Ft. Collins, the food movement's grassroots base speaks highly of its civic nature. Yet, the movement struggles to meet the economic needs of producers, which compromises its future continuance. This chapter will conclude with an analysis of the limitations of the local food movement. I will discuss producers in Chapter 4 and the economic viability of farming in Chapter 5.

### *Food Regime Analysis and Alternative Agriculture*

Food production, distribution, and consumption have changed drastically in the past century. Many argue that the industrialization of the food industry has removed the personal connections between food production and consumption and turned food into another commodity to be traded in the global marketplace. In order to counter the commodification of food, scholars have argued for an alternative analysis of the food system that includes social, cultural, environmental, and economic perspectives.

A global food regime analysis uses a systems perspective to understand how social life and networks are embedded in food relations. This systems-based analysis allows the people involved in food production to be active agents in the process. Various scholars, including McMichael and Friedmann, have used this analysis. As McMichael (2009b:281) argues, the food regime concept is “a key to unlock...the structured moments and transitions in the history of capitalist food relations...[as] it is not about goods per se, but about the relations within which food is produced...refocusing from the food commodity as *object* to the commodity as *relation*, with definite geo-political, social, cultural, ecological, and nutritional relations at significant historical moments.” McMichael calls the current global foods system a “corporate food regime.” Friedmann (2005) also uses a food regime analysis. She argues that the current regime is a continued

search for capital accumulation, which also served as the basis for the two earlier regimes—colonial-diasporic (1870-1914) and mercantile-industrial (1947-1973).

In her analysis, Friedmann studies the time periods between food regimes, which she refers to as “transition periods.” According to her, we are currently in the transition period that is creating the third regime, which she terms “corporate-environmental.”

Friedmann argues that social movements play a large role in the creation of new regimes. For example, building off the demands of social movements, the corporate-environmental regime evaluates food based on quality audited supply chains (e.g. organic food). Agro-food corporations have responded to social concerns, but have selectively appropriated these demands and standards to elicit a higher price for goods. She holds that this “new round of accumulation” is “based on selective appropriation of demands by the environmental movements, and including issues pressed by fair trade, consumer health, and animal welfare activists” (2005:229). Social movements and democratic processes were important in bringing attention to the relations of production and, according to Friedmann, can continue to play a role in the current regime. For example, she argues that social movements can oppose green capitalism’s attempts to use their powerful organizations to construct new frames for understanding reality and to institute new rules (e.g. organic certification) that “appropriate social movement demands to serve renewed accumulation” (2005:231). Whether the current food regime is a “corporate food regime” or a “corporate-environmental” one, it is typified by global corporate dominance in the food sector. In my research, I employ a food regime analysis in order to study how producers interact with each other, their localities and communities, and the larger agro-food industry.

During the past two regimes, food production industrialized, modernized, regionalized, globalized, and severed the link between production and consumption. Changes in food production have been global, but many people argue that these global shifts in production are connected to US policy that promotes overproduction and low commodity prices, which are offset by federal subsidy programs. US food and farm policy has focused on high quantities of low cost food. In part because of this farm policy, in the US, the agribusiness sector has grown because cheap and abundant food is used to create novel uses for agricultural products. Despite the increase in agricultural production, US exports have remained flat and farmer income has declined (Ray et al. 2003). The benefits of increased production fall more in the hands of agribusiness corporations than farmers. US agricultural companies work domestically and internationally. The US model of mechanized, high input, monoculture production has been exported around the world. Agribusiness corporations sell the inputs and market the outputs through the global agro-food industry. A University of Tennessee study argues, “Since US policies influence the fate of farmers well beyond our borders, policy approaches addressing the needs of US farmers should recognize our larger global influence” (Ray et al. 2003:ii). The global and industrialized agro-food system has changed how producers, consumers, and the community interact.

The once locally situated process of food production and consumption has expanded and shifted to constitute a complex and powerful global system. Despite or perhaps because of the trends of past and current food regimes, as Lyson (2004) argues, people have begun to create space for “civic agriculture.” In contrast to the corporate and market-dominated food system, the concept of civic agriculture promotes “rebuilding the

linkage between farmers and consumers...[to] establish a foundation for a more socially and environmentally integrated food system” (Lyson 2004:7). Civic agriculture, while it does not “currently represent an economic challenge to the conventional agriculture and food industry,” does include innovative and sustainable production practices that counter the often destructive and resource extractive practices of industrial agriculture (Lyson 2004:1). These innovative and sustainable production practices are often referred to as “alternative agriculture.” Civic agriculture aims to present a more holistic approach to agriculture, however it does not always meet this mark. Selfa and Qazi (2005), building on DeLind (2002), argue that civic agriculture focuses on alternative practices, but these practices continue to rely on economic solutions (e.g. u-pick operations, farmers’ markets, CSAs) that may ignore the social and ecological principles of civic agriculture.

The global scope and ability of “civic agriculture” to contest the neoliberal, corporate-controlled food economy is unclear. Lyson acknowledges that civic agriculture may not present a substantial-enough force to challenge the global industrial and market-based food economy. However, he and Friedmann hope that social movements can and will change the current agricultural paradigm. On the other hand, critics often claim that alternative agricultural movements (e.g. organic agriculture, Slow Food, local food) are a short-term trend that cannot change the industrialized and global economy of food production. Regardless of the long-term continuance of alternative agriculture, in many areas of the world today, people contest the corporate food regime through grassroots movements like local food.

The local food movement emphasizes local food production and markets that support relationships between producers and consumers and develop local living



economies. Producers involved in local food re-situate food in the community and uphold food as a relation rather than just an object. The premise of local food is compelling and communities around the world are attempting to develop their food systems to support local economies.

### *The Local Food Movement*

The local food movement in the US emphasizes locally produced, marketed, and consumed foodstuffs. The aims of the local food movement are diverse but tend to unify around five areas: (1) health and safety, (2) decreasing the carbon footprint, (3) taste and freshness, (4) preservation of the landscape, environment, and agrarian culture, and (5) social justice. Despite the partially defined goals of the local food movement, the term “local” is highly contentious and used in various ways. Local can be a specific mile-radius, a philosophy, an environmental standard or a morally based opposition to globalization. Local has multiple definitions and uses because local is a movement, an identity, and a marketing and product differentiation tool.

### *The Growth and Benefits of Local Food*

Due to a limited economy of scale, local products tend to cost more than mass-produced and widely distributed commodities. Yet, many consumers pay the higher price for local or place-based products. In the US, the two main types of outlets for local foodstuffs are farmers’ markets and CSAs. Small food producers (GCFI of \$250,000 or less) do most of their marketing through direct sales, which have drastically expanded in the past ten years. In the US, farmers’ markets continue to increase with 4,694 in 2009 (80 in Colorado), a 6.8 percent increase since 2006 and a growth of nearly 3,000 markets since 1994 (AMS 2008). CSAs have also experienced unprecedented growth from 50

CSAs in 1990 to over 2,500 in 2009 (80 in Colorado) (Local Harvest 2009). In 2009, Ft. Collins supported four weekly summer farmers' markets (Wednesday, two on Saturday, and Sunday) and twice monthly winter farmers' markets from November to March. In addition to Ft. Collins markets, surrounding communities like Laporte, Wellington, Cheyenne, Windsor, and Loveland also have weekly markets. In 2009, the Ft. Collins area had ten CSAs with at least five new CSAs planned for the 2010 season (Local Harvest 2010).

For the local food movement, marketing of local foodstuffs benefits producers, consumers, and the community. For example, CSA direct marketing mitigates many potential insecurities of local food production (weather or market hardships) since "shareholders" pay in advance for weekly summer produce. Numerous studies argue that farmers' markets have a community-wide economic benefit through increased local business revenue (see Lev, Brewer, and Stephenson 2003) and statewide economic and job growth (see Henneberry et al. 2008 and Otto and Varner 2005). Local agriculture can also be marketed indirectly (food co-ops, grocery stores) through value-based labeling (e.g. "cage-free" or "Colorado Proud"). In markets without direct producer-consumer contact, the value-based production practices are institutionalized and legitimized through labels. Barham (2002) argues that value-based labeling is an ethical and moral social movement that aims to counter and transform unsustainable practices, re-embed agriculture within the larger social economy and refocus attention on social and natural relationships often lost in commodity market exchanges. In this sense, local food, whether marketed through direct sales or value-based labels, seems to re-integrate the food relationships into to the local community (see Hinrichs 2000).

Economically, local food may benefit producers and communities; however, the economic success of local food does not imply that the movement's "civic" goals are being met (see DeLind 2008). Many scholars caution that civic agriculture cannot be conflated with local agriculture or place-based food. DeLind (2008:129) argues that in order for civic agriculture to remain civic, it has to "belong to all people as inhabitants of place...[and remain] bound into democratic process and engagement." In this sense, civic agriculture is more than market-based responses (CSAs, farmers' markets, etc.) to re-situate food back into place and community. Civic agriculture is a dynamic process that involves the hands, feet, and voices of a community to create an alternative food reality. The local food movement can be an act of civic agriculture, but civic agriculture is not an inherent characteristic of local food movements.

In the past ten years, the local food movement in Ft. Collins has become more visible. A long-time producer says she can sell a lot more locally now than in 1997, "now we are rock stars... it's the silliest thing, but it helps a lot" (Susan, interview, September 10, 2009). In addition to local "rock stars," national media (films, articles and books) has promoted the work and values of food producers like Joel Salatin (Polyface Farms, Virginia) and Will Allen (Growing Power, Milwaukee) and food advocates like Michael Pollan (author *Omnivore's Dilemma, In Defense of Food*), Barbara Kingsolver (author *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*), and Alice Waters (chef and advocate, *Chez Panisse, The Art of Simple Food*). This media attention, according to most producers, has helped peak consumer interest in food and encouraged people to join CSAs and shop at farmers' markets. National figures also help producers connect their products to what consumers are familiar with. One beef producer, Catherine, thinks that the media attention is

“helping us be able to raise more animals” and allows them to plan for expansion.

Catherine also has a copy of Pollan’s *Omnivore’s Dilemma* on her farmers’ market stand and tells her customers, “You know that farmer [Joel Salatin] in this book, we’re doing it in the same way.” She thinks that local and sustainable agricultural production have “become more a part of the lexicon and certainly not for every population group, but I think that’s huge...it’s changing what we’re able to market” at a higher non-wholesale price (interview, September 23, 2009).

Government and non-government organizations have also promoted local food. The Larimer County Cooperative Extension and Master Gardener groups run the Old Town farmers’ market, which is the best-attended market in Ft. Collins. Non-profit organizations include Be Local Northern Colorado (Be Local), Northern Colorado Food Incubator (NCFI), Slow Food Cache La Poudre, Rocky Mountain Sustainable Living Association, and Beet Street Market. Be Local and NCFI have teamed up to sponsor events that include the winter farmers’ market series, radio programs on farming, and other community events. Be Local, the most active of these non-profits, has built its organization from the ground up and currently sponsors numerous events (winter farmers’ markets and Getting Connected Conference) and programs (Be Local coupon book). Be Local’s efforts emphasize local food and businesses to build “local living economies” (Be Local 2009). Local food events are aimed at food producers, restaurants, retailers, and the community at large. For example, Beet Street sponsors an annual local food tasting event that highlights producers, chefs, and restaurants that work with local food. For a variety of reasons, the word has spread about local food and it has taken hold in Ft. Collins. To attest to the presence of the local food movement in Ft. Collins, ninety-

four percent of survey respondents (n=67, producers and local food advocates) agree there is a local food movement in Ft. Collins with 68 percent holding that the local food movement is “strong.”

#### *What is Local? and Food Movement Goals*

Producers and advocates agree that there is a local food movement in Ft. Collins, but fewer agree on the precise meaning of that: What does “local” mean? And what are the main goals of the movement? Despite these two weakly coherent concepts, local food continues to be an influential force in Ft. Collins. I argue that “local” and local food goals are not well defined because these terms and ideas are linked to individual value-systems and moralities.

For example, survey respondents employ a diversity of definitions for “local,” which are likely tied to their own political and moral leanings. When asked to define “local,” respondents could select more than one geographically delineated definition (67 respondents, 128 total selections). Most people defined local as food produced and consumed within 100 miles (25 of 128 total responses) or within the state (23 of 128) and fewer people defined local in limited geographic terms such as within 20 miles (14 of 128), city/town (13 of 128) or immediate community (11 of 128) (see Chart 1).

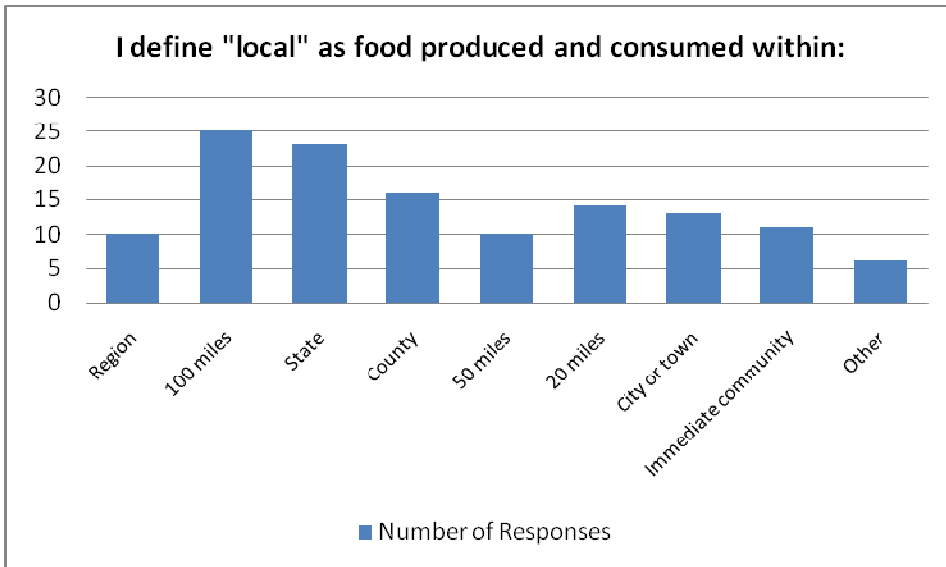


Chart 1: Definitions of local (survey, 67 respondents, 128 total selections)

Even though local food is often defined in terms of a distance between production and consumption, many survey respondents (39 percent) do not think “local agriculture is best defined as a specified distance from farm to table.” If local is not defined as a distance from production to consumption, it is not certain how it would be best defined.

Despite the lack of agreement on how local should be defined, the term is commonly used to signify the geographic range between farm and market. The following two examples show how local is used as a measure of distance and as a moral value. One producer, Charles, explains that he and his partner “wanted to move away from selling any food at all in Ft. Collins and really make it local” by selling only in Laporte (a town 6 miles northeast of Ft. Collins) as opposed to transporting food to Ft. Collins to sell (interview, August 31, 2009). On the other hand, Judy, who works for a large farm north of Ft. Collins says, “our big goal is to keep everything in Colorado. We go up to Cheyenne and Laramie, say southern Wyoming, keep everything local” (interview, July 2, 2009). In these two instances, the term “local” is used differently, as based on the

producers' size, production model, and personal motivations. As a value-based label and as a movement, "local" is upheld as a challenge to the global agro-food system. However, as seen in the two producers' use of local, many people are concerned about the possible corporate co-opting of local (as also seen with "green" and "organic"). For example, Frito-Lay launched a marketing campaign in 2009 that highlighted their "local farmers." In their Florida-based processing plant, Frito-Lay emphasized the locally sourced relationship between Florida potato production and Florida potato chip processing. Despite opposition, Frito-Lay, according to a recent *New York Times* article, is one among many big companies that "are embracing a broad interpretation of what eating locally means... they are mining the concept because consumers care more than ever about where their food comes from" (Severson 2009). A Ft. Collins Slow Food member expresses her concern and frustration over the wide application of local, "The term 'local' has become almost a joke; overused, misrepresented, and taken advantage of" (survey response 2009). The various definitions, uses, and claims of "local" can serve to strengthen the movement by appealing to a broader base or can weaken the movement by division.

The goals of local food production, as with the definitions of local, are tied to people's value system. They depend on individuals' priorities and are not unified across the movement. When asked to rank the goals of local food, respondents agreed on four main goals: decrease chemical usage (70 percent), produce high quality food (68 percent), improve environmental health (67 percent), and support local producers (54 percent). The goals are tied to values and moralities and vary by individual experience and background. While all respondents agreed that "participating in local agriculture is

self-satisfying,” how local food is able to satisfy people will vary. On a similar note, respondents find satisfaction in local food involvement and link local foods and personal values as almost all (98 percent) state “I am involved in local foods because it corresponds to my value system.” Most (84 percent) also agree that “producing, supporting, and consuming local food is a moral decision.” Involvement in the local food movement seems to be a conscious, valued-based and moral decision, but the movement is not exclusive as most people (85 percent) think that “everyone should be involved in local food.” Even though people apply different definitions to “local” and the movement goals, local food is growing in Northern Colorado.

#### *Limitations of Localism?*

Local food is present in Northern Colorado, as in other parts of the US and the world. Food and agriculture only account for a small amount of the US GDP; however, in terms of localism movements, food is one of the best-known and most studied localist movements (Hess 2009). In addition to food efforts, communities also attempt to re-localize businesses, downtown living, and resource use. Even though local food is but one form of localism, it is often heralded as a “savior” for financially strapped businesses, communities, and farmers. Hope resides in local food’s ability to create economic revenue for producers and businesses, build community, and reconnect consumers to the production cycle. To some degree, localism movements have been promoted as a universal solution to struggling communities, farmers, and independent business. Promotion of local products, goods, and services sets up local businesses in an opposing and binary relationship to anything global, corporate, and large-scale—local is good and global is bad. In a similar vein, localism is often implicitly tied to improvements in



sustainability and social justice; however, there is no guarantee that localism can solve economic, environmental, or social problems. As Alkon (2008:488) contends, local food markets are the economic arm of localism movements and “function according to a logic predicated on individual choice and the maximization of self-interest.” This individualistic logic cannot meet the same goals as collective action, where individuals sacrifice their needs for those of the group. Localism movements focus on environmental, social and economic goals. However, as Alkon and others have pointed out, collective action, not individualist logic, is better suited to address the environmental and social justice goals of localism movements.

Most agro-food researchers initially promoted local food. However, as the movement for local food has expanded, researchers advocate caution in the universal good of localism. Localism is not always positive as it can be a “local trap” (see Born and Purcell 2006), constitute “defensive localization” (see Hinrichs 2003), represent only a totem or symbolic community (Winter 2003), prioritize local over global inequalities (see DuPuis and Goodman 2005), or take focus away from distributive justice (see Allen and Hinrichs 2007). The food movement has also been criticized for deviating from its founding principles. DeLind (2010) argues that the original place-based movement to restore equality, ecology, and ethics to communities, as outlined by Dahlberg (1993), has changed into a popular media extravaganza led by superstars (e.g. Michael Pollan), followed by locavores, and mimicked by corporations (e.g. Wal-Mart). Therefore, DeLind and others are pushing for a re-evaluation of the local food movement to critically examine the direction of local food. DuPuis and Goodman (2005:360) emphasize the need for “reflexive localism.” They hold that non-reflexive localism can

have two major consequences: (1) “deny the politics of the local” and (2) “lead to proposed solutions...that are vulnerable to corporate cooption.” Initially local food was rooted in context and place; however, national and international attention promoting “local” may lead to the adoption of universalizing solutions and prescriptions. These universal solutions, largely economic in nature, may compete with the work of communities to address local concerns. On the other hand, if producers’ economic needs are not being met, then it may foreclose the possibility of any locally based social and civic change in the food system.

As with all movements, there are limitations. As a small urban center, Ft. Collins is not at great risk of being commandeered by corporate or non-profit interests. The local food community is not without strife and tension, but the cooperative and collaborative relationships between food producers and advocates makes the movement civic in nature. However, as will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, the producers’ struggle for economically viable production is a mounting concern. Despite the precautions of an overly economic-focused local food, producers do have to make a living if they are to keep farming for the local foodshed.

## **Chapter 4: Local Food Community and Food Producers in Ft. Collins**

Food producers, advocates, and consumers support the local food movement in Ft. Collins. In this chapter, I will discuss the local food community in Ft. Collins, which includes the various producers, the strong producer network and the producer-consumer interactions. Food producers in Ft. Collins use numerous production models to grow and sell their farm products. Production models include CSA, farmers' market, wholesale, institutional support, and diversity models. Most local producers employ a diversity model approach. Despite the variation in production models, producers continue to come together to develop the local system. In part because of its size, Ft. Collins' producers are part of a well-established network in which they emphasize collaboration and downplay competition. Competition and conflict certainly exist, but most producers do not view them as hindering local production. In addition to working with other producers, the producers also interact constantly with consumers. The producer-consumer relationship seems to be positive. However, every producer has stories about consumers who have limited knowledge about food production or CSA working members who signed up for more farm labor than they could handle. If consumers do not understand the realities of food production, their engagement with local food may be unreliable and short term. Even though all consumers may not be on board, the food community remains strong. Despite the strengths of the local food movement, there are barriers that impact the community local food goals. These barriers to the movement are not insurmountable, but

they are real. And one of the largest obstacles is how to best approach the barriers themselves and how to continue the forward momentum. This will be discussed in Chapter 5.

### *Local Food Community*

In Ft. Collins, the local food movement has grown up around generations of farmers. People involved in local food are open and eager to talk. Producers and local food advocates meet up at monthly “Local Food Happy Hour” gatherings and annual conferences and events. The formal events are open to the public and allow consumers and producers to come together over their love of food. Summer and winter farmers’ markets are hip, fun, and educational as producers engage in the shoptalk of food and recipes. Susan speaks highly of the food community and the work of the food advocates in Ft. Collins, particularly Be Local. Be Local, she says, is “constantly in our faces saying, look this is important—food security” (interview, September 10, 2009). Susan thinks that advocacy has helped people engage with and commit to growing their own food despite tough economic times and bad weather spells. Susan was amazed at her plant sales in the spring of 2009, the “economy tanked...[but] our plant sales were through the roof!” (interview, September 10, 2009). The early season hailstorm wiped out people’s plant starts, but they came back and bought more. Susan notes a shift in people’s commitment to food—not only do they care about what they are eating, but they are committed to trying to grow their own food.

The open and interactive relationships between producers, food advocates, and consumers create a strong sense of community and challenge the impersonal relations of the industrialized food system. Lacy (2000:5) describes the interactive nature of

community as a “group of people in a locality capable of initiating a process of social or community action to change their economic, social, cultural and/or environmental situation.” Lacy goes on to argue that the various social fields in a community come together to create a community field in which “actors pursue not a single interest but the general community interest” (2000:5). It is not clear if Ft. Collins has created an interactional community,<sup>8</sup> but the food community is central to the success of the movement. Community is cited as a reason for involvement as most people (63 percent) give the community as a reason to continue “to be involved in local food.”

Personal relationships have shaped the open nature of the local food movement and have helped develop the movement. The local food community is built on personal relationships, made of people with similar values (62 percent) who socialize with each other (62 percent) (see Chart 2). The community’s commitment can be seen through producers’ work to develop innovative methods for producing food and through consumers’ continued support of local producers, as noted in participation at local markets. Throughout my interviews and fieldwork, people talked about the importance of a supportive community and community building (via relationships, outreach and consumer education). This food community includes both the producer community and the community at large (consumers, businesses, etc). Survey respondents clearly see a

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<sup>8</sup> Lacy (2000:5) draws on Wilkinson (1989) to describe the community interaction necessary for empowering communities. He says, “community interaction...[is] a process whereby many different interactions and associations that constitute a common life are integrated as a whole.” Because of these interactions, the community is able to “strengthen local forms of social organization and community interaction can provide the basis for empowering communities” (Lacy 2000:5). An interactional community includes a “community field” in which people pursue community interests that makes the community more able to pursue collective action.

supportive food community as central to the success of local agriculture (97 percent agree) (see Chart 2).

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
<b>Local agriculture cannot survive without a supportive community</b>	70%	27%	3%	0%	0%
<b>I feel connected to other people in the local food community because they share my values</b>	7%	55%	21%	15%	2%
<b>Many of the people I socialize with are part of the food community</b>	7%	55%	21%	15%	2%
<b>I continue to be involved in local food because of the local food community</b>	15%	48%	27%	10%	0%

Chart 2: Local food community, survey responses (n=67)

The community supports local food producers in Ft. Collins. This past winter, Ft. Collins held a winter farmers’ market twice a month, the only markets of this type in Colorado. Producers and consumers came from as far as Boulder County and Wyoming to participate in the events. The winter markets’ gross sales were \$213,653 for the ten markets and reached 18,200 customers. Markets had an average attendance of 1,822 people and average vendor sales of \$21,365 with each vendor making about 55 sales (Be Local, personal communication 2010). Producers were happy with the consumer interest and the winter market series is expanding next winter (2010-2011) to start earlier and end later. Be Local is also extending the winter market model, at the request of the communities, to a venue in Loveland (three markets planned for 2010-2011).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Be Local is based in Ft. Collins where the majority of its projects are implemented. However, its geographic range includes Northern Colorado. Be Local works with people and organizations in various communities, as needed and requested, to help them develop local living economies.

Local community support is important for the continuance of local agriculture. Despite this commitment to local food, many food producers and advocates want more to happen. They argue that the community needs to be expanded (e.g. consumer education, more consumers, more businesses on board) and intensified (e.g. commitment to Ft. Collins local over Colorado local). In meetings, food advocates brainstorm ways for the community to be more engaged with the local food movement. The most common suggestions include improving the distribution and marketing system, educating consumers, training the next generation of farmers, and changing local policy. At this point, it is not evident which of these areas is the top priority, but they all affect the food movement in the present and the future.

#### *Characteristics of Food Producers*

People who produce for the Ft. Collins market live and work in communities around Ft. Collins, in Larimer County (Ft. Collins, Laporte, Wellington, Loveland, Masonville) and Weld County (Windsor, Greeley, Platteville, Ault). Most producers in Weld County where land is more affordable market their produce in Ft. Collins because it has a more developed market and a more committed food community. Some producers who sell in Ft. Collins hail from Boulder County (Longmont), but Ft. Collins is typically not their main market as Boulder and Denver are larger and closer markets. In my research, I refer to Ft. Collins producers as those who grow for the Ft. Collins market, irrespective of farm location.

The 2010 Northern Colorado Regional Food Assessment was a collaboration of Weld, Larimer, and Boulder counties to collect data on the three counties and plan for an expanded regional food system. As part of this larger project, the Larimer County cohort

analyzed farm types and farm acreage (see Figure 1), which I summarize below. In Larimer County, almost all farms (94 percent) are small farms, based on GCFI. Of these small farms, the majority are noncommercial farms: limited resource farms (less than \$100,000 in sales and below poverty level household income, 11 percent of farms), retirement farms (operators retired, 22 percent), and lifestyle farms (operators with major non-farming occupation, 47 percent). Noncommercial farms constitute 80 percent of the farms in Larimer County and 80 percent of agricultural acreage. Few small farms (14 percent) are commercial and report farming as their sole occupation. These commercial farms include lower sale farming (less than \$100,000, 12 percent) and higher sale (between \$100,000 and \$249,999, 2 percent). Out of the total number of farms in Larimer County, only one percent is a large family farm (sales between \$250,000 and \$499,999), but this one percent represents 12 percent of agricultural acreage. Five percent are non-family farms but constitute zero percent of acreage (Northern Colorado Regional Food Assessment 2010). In other words, the majority of farmers in Larimer County are small, noncommercial farmers who do not rely on farming as their sole occupation (see Figure 1).

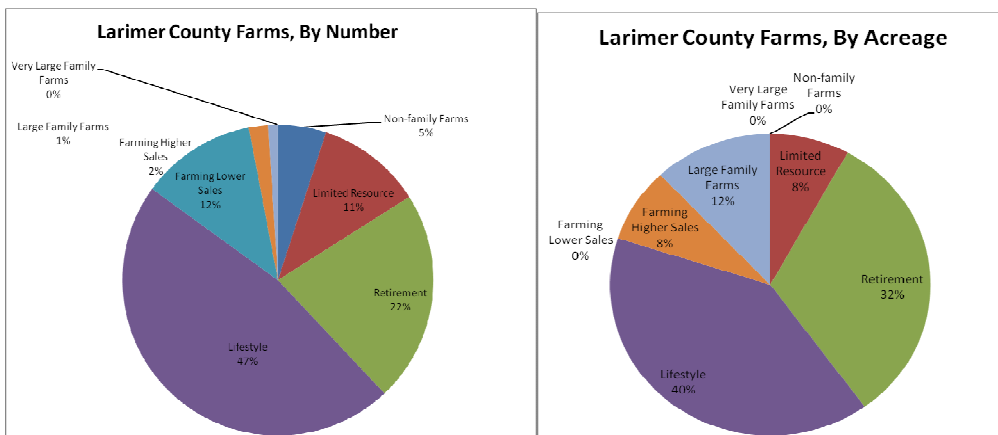


Figure 1: Larimer County Farm Statistics and Agriculture Land Use (adapted from Northern Colorado Regional Food Assessment 2010:42)



While most farmers are small and noncommercial, the most striking difference between producers is how they are connected to the land they farm. Most farmers and people who work on the land are attached to it, but there are varying degrees of attachment. Producers who own the land have a different relationship to the land than those who are not tied by mortgages. This distinction seems to be very important in the historically agricultural Ft. Collins community that is in the midst of urban and suburban expansion. Larimer County and Ft. Collins populations have increased dramatically in the past twenty years (35 percent 1990-2000, 17 percent 2000 and 2009). The incorporated city of Ft. Collins has increased by almost 50,000 people during this time. Other nearby urban areas have shown even larger explosions in growth between 2000 and 2009 (29.3 percent in Loveland, 113.4 percent in Wellington, and 846.5 percent in Windsor).<sup>10</sup> Projected growth patterns for the County follow these recent trends (Compass of Larimer County 2010).

In the midst of large population growth, farmland has increased in price and decreased in total acreage. In Larimer County, only a few lands have consistently been in production, land I term “stable lands.” These agriculturally stable lands are limited, but central to the movement. The lands that have been in production for over a decade include: Peaceful Hills/Open Valley (since 1945), Martin Farms (since 1953), Abundant Life Farm (since 1984), and Colorado Horticulture Research Station (since 1993, since 2002, Specialty Crops). These lands help establish the current movement and provide hands-on training for the next generation of farmers and food advocates. Many current and prospective farmers started their careers volunteering, interning or working on these

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<sup>10</sup> These numbers are correct. Windsor and Wellington used to be small agricultural towns. Now, many people live in these communities and commute to Ft. Collins, Denver, Greeley, and Loveland for work.

four farms. Jessi, who has worked on two of these farms, says: “When you have these stable pieces of land, it is a place where lots of people can come to and come back to” (interview, October 8, 2009). The relationships formed on these farms stretch throughout Ft. Collins, Colorado, and the nation. For example, Daniel, a highly respected and active extension agent, interned at Abundant Life Farm for three years. Technically, he is a Boulder County extension agent, but his commitment to small-scale farming and his connections in Larimer County make him important to the Ft. Collins food community. Many people started farming or became introduced to local agriculture through the people and plants of these influential lands. Charles farmed at Open Valley (on Peaceful Hills) before he moved onto his current farm and a former garden manager at Peaceful Hills now works for Martin Farms. Susan and John, once married, met through the farming community at Abundant Life. John and Susan, independently, also worked stints at Martin Farms. Will interned at Abundant Life before he branched out on his own. People who work and have worked these lands are connected to a network of agriculturalists, a farming community, and a natural history of the land. The long-term production exemplified by these four farms however, is not typical of the Ft. Collins area. Many of the other farms have a short production lifespan and farmers move from one piece of land to another.

Still, most of the key players in the movement are attached to these stable lands through working or personal relationships. The local food leaders include both long-term and new residents. Most of the local food leaders have been Ft. Collins residents for over ten years (though most were not raised in Colorado), and many for over twenty years. Other local food leaders, “the younger generation,” are recent transplants to the area, ten

years or less (stayed after attending CSU or recently moved to farm). Arguably, producers who have been involved in the community longer are likely to be more invested in the continuance of local agriculture and more likely to have farmland (own or long term lease). On the other hand, the younger generation of farmers is very committed to local food production and they have made career decisions (low income ones) to farm. Yet if the younger generation seems very committed to the movement, they appear less committed to the community. The transient and “always something better” nature of many recent graduates may be to blame, but I argue that structural barriers (e.g. the lack of affordable land and water) make it very difficult for young, committed, and often idealistic farmers to break ground and keep farming in Ft. Collins for the long term. I will explore these structural barriers more in Chapter 6.

### *Producers and Production Models*

Producers in Ft. Collins employ a variety of production models. A few producers market their produce through CSA or NSA-only or farmers’ market-only approaches; however, the majority of producers use a diversity model that includes any combination of CSA, farmers’ markets, and restaurant, retail, and wholesale accounts. Producers create their production model based on various factors such as economic need, rental or mortgage expenses, personal experience and preference, value-systems, and proximity to markets. In this section, I will highlight producers who exemplify different models of production, but it will not be an exhaustive review.

#### CSA-only model

On three acres of cultivated land, Jacob and Laurie employ a CSA-only model. Their CSA was one of the first in Colorado and currently supports over 150 members.

Twenty-seven years ago, as part of the “back to the land movement,” Jacob and Laurie started farming a couple of acres behind their house. Initially, their production model included a CSA and also selling to the local food co-op and the farmers’ market, which they helped found. However, they have operated their farm exclusively as a CSA for the past twenty years. Their membership numbers have waxed and waned over the years, but they have a committed community of supporters who celebrate the harvest, work the land, and join in fellowship. For their labor needs, Jacob and Laurie have working members, farm interns (small stipend), and government supported youth workers (Larimer County Workforce Center). Many producers comment that Jacob and Laurie are great at developing community, maybe better than at growing food. Of all the CSAs in Ft. Collins, Abundant Life is celebrated as having the most active membership support. Despite their strong community, only in the last few years has their CSA shown some economic profitability. Nevertheless, according to Jacob, the decision to only have a CSA is:

For us, it’s not really whether it’s the most economically viable system, it just works, from a lifestyle perspective. It’s the [model] that we feel we can manage the best. ... We have unique economic circumstances that make it so we can make [our way of farming] a little bit more [about] lifestyle choices. [This is in contrast to] a lot of people that are having to pay off a mortgage<sup>11</sup> and all kinds of other stuff that makes them have to really scramble in every direction that they can to get as much produce sold as they want to (interview, March 2, 2010).

As one of the first CSAs in Colorado, Jacob and Laurie have established a model for others to follow and trained countless producers and advocates. Despite commitment to the CSA model, few other producers have been able to maintain a CSA-only approach.

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<sup>11</sup> From my understanding, they paid in full for their farm and house in the 1980s so they do not have mortgage payments.

Most producers combine CSA with other marketing outlets in order to provide additional income.

### Farmers' market model

Of all the producers I interviewed, no one just sold to farmers' markets. While there are probably some producers that do, producers tend to spread out their risk and diversify their marketing outlets in what I call a "diversity model." For the purposes of explaining these different production models, I will discuss producers whose model relies heavily on the farmers' market.

Often, if producers sell principally to the farmers' market, they also have a couple of small accounts with individuals and businesses. Katie has been raising lamb for sale for ten years. She sells her meat at farmers' markets (50 percent of her total sales), to individuals (45 percent, whole and half lamb), and to restaurants (5 percent, two accounts). The majority of her individual customers are in Ft. Collins (two-thirds), but she also has customers in Loveland, Greeley, and Denver. Katie will deliver meat to people's houses or have customers meet her at the market or in parking lots. Katie began her sheep farm raising only lamb she could sell as whole and half lambs, but as the herd became more established; she had more lamb than she could sell in large quantities. A co-worker suggested the farmers' market. Katie did her research, got the proper licensing, and entered the market. The farmers' market allows people to try lamb on a small scale (1 lb. ground lamb) before they commit to a whole or half lamb. Once Katie began at the market, she says: "The meat just flew! It took a year or so for people to realize you can buy meat here—then they come looking for me. If I didn't show up, I would get a tongue

lashing next time—“Where were you? We wanted our lamb chops”” (interview, September 26, 2009).

Even though she does not sell all her lamb at the market, the market has allowed Katie to increase her production, advertise her farm, and meet potential customers for whole and half lambs. Katie sells a lot at farmers’ markets, but she calls her model a “mixed model” and says it would be bad not to have outlets outside of the farmers’ market. In this sense, Katie is not a “true” farmers’ market-only model, but the farmers’ market is her main sales outlet, and through the market, she has grown her customer base. One problem with the farmers’ market is that the market schedule (April to October) does not align with the meat harvest schedule (late fall) so she often runs out of lamb during the summer markets or has to store meat over the winter before selling. The farmers’ market allows her to advertise her business and introduce her product to customers. The market is convenient for customers, but Katie has found that if people are committed to buying her meat, they will come out to the farm or meet her somewhere.

The farmers’ market is a good way to meet potential customers, publicize a farm or products, and drum up support for expansion into a different model or market. Ted, who is growing for his first year, was advised not to try a CSA his first season. Instead, he focused on selling his produce at farmers’ markets and to local retail (small grocer and co-op) and restaurant accounts (two accounts). Ted talks about his marketing decisions:

I would have liked to have done a CSA. But I’ve worked for a lot of CSA farms and it’s even stressful when you know what the hell you are doing. I have [to make] this box for this person and I already have the money. It puts the burden on my shoulders; I can’t just take what I have to market. It would have been nice to already have people’s money, but it would have been sucky, like [farms affected by hail], to not actually have anything to give them. I would eventually like to get to a small CSA as part of the business. ...I will do [a CSA] next year—a small one (interview, August 17, 2009).

Ted is happy, given the hail early in the season, that he did not have a CSA this season. He replanted his crops, sold what he could at the market, and gave his plants time to recover. Even though CSAs bear part of the risk, Ted is like many farmers who do not want to disappoint CSA members by not having produce to give them. So until producers have a couple of years of crop planning and production experience under their belts, many are advised to sell to markets, where they can sell what grew. In 2010, Ted did start a CSA, but he took a different approach from most CSAs. He combined the convenience and flexibility of the farmers' market with the pre-season commitment of the CSA to create a "Market CSA." In this model, members buy a share before the season and have credit at the Ted's market stand throughout the growing season. Members can pick out their own produce to fit their tastes and schedules and Ted has early season start-up funds and a steady customer base. Ted's production schedule is a little more flexible with a Market CSA than with a typical CSA, which gives him space to improve his production skills.

Will, similar to Ted, began farming with the farmers' market as his main commercial outlet. For the past two years, Will has rented twelve acres to grow field crops that use a lot of space like corn, cucumbers, watermelon, and winter squash. His main market is the farmers' market, but he also allows people to come to his farm and pick their own vegetables (about 20 people/season). He also sells his sweet corn through local CSAs and to a few retail outlets. With two years of farming in Ft. Collins, Will plans to have a CSA in 2010. Given his experience, Will says: "I've proved to myself that I can grow it—and I didn't have a lot of doubt anyways" (interview, September 30,

2009). Now that Will has confidence in production and has spread the word about his farm, he will add a CSA onto his farmers' market model of production.

### Diversity model

Charles, a "beginning farmer" according to the USDA definition (0-10 years), has farmed for nine seasons in Larimer County. Charles and his partner Kathy currently live on rented land where they farm three acres. Charles is a full-time producer and his partner is a part-time producer and works at a local business in town. Charles focuses his attention on his CSA (40 percent of his total sales), but also sells produce at farmers' markets (55 percent, Old Town, Laporte, winter market), and some wholesale (5 percent, food co-op, restaurants, coffee shops). Their 30-member CSA requires all members to come to the farm to pick up their weekly shares, which creates a sense of community and connection with the farm. Even though Charles and Kathy do well at farmers' markets where they move the majority of their produce, Charles would prefer just to do CSA. For him, the CSA is a top priority. He says:

We really focus on quality—we don't say we're bringing this to market because it's better. We'd be more likely to say that we're giving this to CSA because it's better and we can let the people at the market make their own choice. ...I think [CSA has] become this idea that things don't have to be as nice and I think that is a really unsustainable business model. I think they have to be as high quality as you get. And that's the type of people we want to attract honestly—people that can recognize the beauty and the work that goes into it. I think our [CSA shares] are the best because we're told that a lot (interview, August 31, 2009).

Charles is passionate about the CSA and providing his members with quality produce. But right now, a CSA-only model does not work. Charles and Kathy depend on the farmers' market sales to cover the cost of production.

Susan, another local producer, has farmed on and off for twenty years. She has certified organic properties in various states as she moved with her family over the years.



The majority of her farming has been in Larimer County. She currently co-manages a farm with Mary that grows on three different properties, eleven acres total, including greenhouse space. Mary and her life partner own these three properties. Susan rents from Mary. Susan refers to her business as a “hand worked, small truck farm” or a “market farm” and does not “think anybody should ever sell themselves short in this profession and say they garden if it’s something like this,” this being one or more acres of land cultivated for market (interview, August 19, 2009). Susan is a master marketer and is the epitome of a diversity model approach to small-scale farming. Susan and Mary have a 50-member CSA in Ft. Collins (20 percent of total sales) and also sell to farmers’ markets (40 percent, 5-7 per week and winter market), restaurants (20 percent, Ft. Collins, Longmont, Windsor, etc.), small wholesale accounts (10 percent, small grocers, food co-ops), and schools (10 percent, Weld County school district). They sell to markets in Estes Park, Cheyenne, and Laramie. Even though it is a lot of time on the road, these distant markets are worth it as Laramie consistently pulls in the highest gross market sales. In addition to a diversity of produce markets, Susan also has two early-season plant sales (bedding, herbs, and vegetable plants) and has a couple landscape installation and maintenance accounts (homeowner associations). In addition to the CSA, these two sources of revenue help Susan have enough start-up money to get the plants in the ground.

Susan’s diversity approach provides her with additional income and flexibility in markets. If she has boxes of fingerling potatoes to move, she can call her chef, school, and market contacts and get them sold. Susan is unique in her extreme diversity and her marketing skills. However, being diverse also means spending a lot of time on the phone

and on the road. Concerning transportation, Susan says, “It’s stupid, absolutely insane. Because I’m so diverse, the transportation issue is not streamlined enough for it to be effective and efficient.” She contends that she could change her method and only deliver some days, “But as small as I am, I [need] all the income I can get. I’m grasping for anybody that will say yes, I’ll take your product” (interview, September 10, 2009). In thinking about her plans for next year, Susan reflects on possible models of production and says:

I don’t think there is one model of production. It depends on where you live and your geographical relation to markets. There is not one model of production, but the best for me is to be diverse. Now that I’ve done all that and tried everything, I could go back and pick and choose and say yes CSA, and no to the rest. I might be doing that right now, but I haven’t made a clear-cut decision yet. All the places I sell and all the things I do to market my product have been really successful. For me, CSA might not be the way to go, but for others it is wonderful (interview, September 10, 2009).

Unlike Charles who would prefer to employ a CSA-only model, Susan finds the CSA membership management to be overwhelming. She considers not having a CSA next year and instead thinks about beefing up her market and wholesale accounts. A diversity model allows producers to spread out their risk, try various market outlets, and evaluate what works best for them.

### Institutional model

The next two examples are outliers in the Ft. Collins market, but both farms and models play key roles in the movement and the future direction of local food. Catherine, pregnant with her first child, talks with excitement about the benefits of her job, which include working outside, eating fresh produce, and having great health and dental benefits. I questioned her, “health benefits!?” I know that it is unheard of for producers to have health benefits through their farming job. Catherine, her husband and their soon-to-

be son are an exception. Catherine and Kevin work for a well-established farm, which is supported by a religious community and retreat center. This organization has owned and managed the pasture and irrigated farmland for over fifty years. It is a “stable land.”

Catherine and Kevin have worked and lived in the community for the past seven years, working with both produce and beef production. Currently Catherine and Kevin work exclusively with the expanded grass-fed beef operation, managing a 60-head herd in 2009. The beef is sold to the community and retreat center (10 cattle) and farmers’ markets (remaining 50 cattle, Ft. Collins, Denver, winter market). Some cuts of the farmers’ market cattle are sold to local restaurants (one in Boulder, one in Longmont) and food co-ops (Loveland); however, the majority is sold through the market. Catherine tries to sell as much beef as quarter, half or whole cattle as opposed to single cuts, but she really enjoys being able to sell a pound of ground beef to a customer interested in trying local, grass-fed beef. Catherine and Kevin run an institutionally backed farmers’ market production model. According to Catherine:

I think that this model has potential to be self-sustaining. ...We would love it if there was some sort of buyer’s club or CSA [that we could sell to]. We probably will do a CSA at some point, but right now it feels a little saturated. ...We think there could be a way to do some CSA around some animal products. ...So we’re still playing with what those models are for our future. Right now, we’re making the beef situation work. We have some infrastructure needs to start our own herd that would make it even more profitable. Right now, we are buying yearlings (interview, September 23, 2009).

Catherine and Kevin run a good operation with great marketing. They are well-known and respected beef producers in Northern Colorado, but their financial success would not likely be the same if they did not have the backing of an institution. Catherine discusses this relationship:

This is the other interesting part of our business operation. We're part of 501c3 non-profit, classified as a church. There is some money that comes in from our conference business and also we're the headquarters of this international organization so there are donations that come in from around the world. [We also have] two other for-profit businesses and we own a lot of the stock that funds a lot of the programs and activities that go on here. ...[Our beef] operating costs are a percent of total Peaceful Valley income—divvied up into departments and all the income goes back into the large pot and then pieced out again as needed. In that way, we're really different from most farmers who have their own business and are running it in that sense (interview, September 23, 2009).

Their institutional support does not mean that Catherine and Kevin are not concerned about covering their cost of production or offering a fair price for their product. Catherine says:

We are making sure that our beef income is covering labor, water, purchasing, and butchering for the production and marketing groups. Within our unit, we are sustainable. But we aren't factoring in the cost of renting or owning the land and as a 501c3 we don't have taxes and that makes a huge difference (interview, September 23, 2009).

Catherine continues to improve and revise their marketing plan and devise ways to develop their beef production. Right now, their beef production income covers the cost of production for their vegetable production, which has had net losses in the past. So, to make their farm production more economically sustainable, they are considering starting a CSA, applying for grants to continue their educational outreach, and leasing their land or water rights. Catherine and Kevin are able to make a living farming because they are good at what they do and because they have the support of an institution. Many producers talk about applying for grants or working with organizations and institutions to help them become more financially stable. However, grant-dependent farming is not a long-term solution to making local food work. Grants can be helpful in the initial years to allow producers to establish themselves, buy equipment, and learn the ropes. In the end, producers still have to find a model of production that can cover the costs of production.

## Wholesale Model

In part because of their institutional support, Catherine and Kevin have options to develop and modify their production model to better suit their personal and economic needs. Another way to increase production options is to increase the scale of production. For Colorado, Martin Farms is a large farm, but compared to many California farms, they are small potatoes. Over the years, Martin Farms has specialized in organic crops like beans, greens, and herbs. For example, they are the largest producer of cilantro outside of California and Mexico. Bill Martin and his son James Martin have been farming land north of Ft. Collins since the 1960s. They farm 2,400 acres in organic grain (50 percent) and mixed produce and herbs (50 percent) production. Martin Farms also has a tree nursery and recently expanded into animal production (poultry, pork, lamb, eggs). Two years ago, Martin Farms transitioned from a closed (not open to the public) wholesale farm to a more community-based CSA model. They continue to ship to Texas and the east coast, but no longer Japan. Over the past two years, the farm has shifted its focus to more local accounts. In 2009, Martin Farms sold produce through their CSA (2,500 members in Colorado and Southern Wyoming, 10 percent of sales), farmers' markets (Ft. Collins and winter market, minimal sales), restaurants (20 from Ft. Collins to Colorado Springs), local retailers (food co-ops), distributors (Grower's Organic, Door-to-Door), schools (Weld County and Poudre Valley), and global retailers (Whole Foods, Safeway, HEB). Despite their recent move to produce more for local markets, Martin Farms continues to employ a largely wholesale model of production, as the majority of produce is still sold through wholesale accounts. I did not personally interview James Martin as he was over-committed; however, I met him and heard him speak on numerous occasions

(email correspondence, January 7, 2010). I also interviewed many people who used to work or currently work for Martin Farms. I draw my information about Martin Farms from these sources, as James encouraged me to do given his own time constraints. James Martin often speaks about how the CSA saved his farm from bankruptcy. Judy, an employee on the farm talks about this:

There is a consensus from James and his group—that have been there for a long time—that it is unlikely that the farm would be here in the capacity it is this year if it wasn't for the CSA. That is because they went through some bankruptcies and hail and spinach recalls and all the stuff that can really wreck a farm. The CSA model is getting us out from underneath that bank's thumb because we are getting money up front that is paying for seed money, literally, and labor. We don't have to borrow from the bank. Typically, a farmer will borrow from a bank, plant it, pray that everything works out okay and hopefully, at the end, they can at least recoup what they owe and hopefully a little bit more to keep them hanging on until next season when they have to borrow again. [The CSA] is changing that whole cycle in a big way. CSA members are much more forgiving if there is a little hail damage or if there are holes in the leaves of the radish or something, which he could never sell to a grocery store like that (interview, July 2, 2009).

The farm's long-term goal is to keep all the produce local, in Colorado and Southern Wyoming, through an expanded CSA (capacity to feed up to 30,000 families) and to continue local retail and wholesale accounts. According to Judy, the farm wants to:

Keep everything local and then really work to start really building that CSA to help us become a more sustainable farm. And actually talk about the "p word," profit (interview, July 2, 2009).

Their CSA model does not require people to come to the farm to pick up shares, as many CSAs do. Rather, the farm has about 100 pick-up locations all over Colorado and southern Wyoming where members come during their weekly time-period to get their shares. The farm has a well-orchestrated schedule that packs CSA shares (which include other businesses' products like bread, dairy, and mushrooms), gets them on the various delivery trucks, and to the pick-up locations. The CSA is large, but it still constitutes a

small percent of total production at Martin Farms, which is largely a wholesale production farm that also markets locally.

These five vignettes are not representative of all the producers in Ft. Collins, however, they exemplify the main models of production in the industry, which include: farmers' market-only, CSA-only, institutional or grant-funded, wholesale, and diversity models. For additional information on local producers, refer to Chart 3. Many of the producers who sell predominately at farmers' markets may also have a couple personal accounts or business accounts to round out their sales. Small farmers like Charles and Catherine do not have enough restaurant or retail accounts to consider them wholesale farmers. Rather, the majority of Ft. Collins producers, with the exception of Martin Farms, focus on direct sales to consumers, through farmers' markets or CSAs. This emphasis on direct sales makes the farmers' market venue and consumer-relations essential to the success of the movement. Producers have chosen to work together in order for the farmers' market, local food sales, and CSAs to grow in a positive and sustainable way. The Ft. Collins producer network works together irrespective of farm size, product, or production model.

	<b>Main products<sup>12</sup></b>	<b>Model of Production<sup>13</sup></b>	<b>Size</b>	<b># years farming</b>	<b>All income farm-related</b>	<b>Production/Certification</b>	<b>Land agreement</b>
<b>Susan and Mary</b>	Specialty crops, plants	Diversity (CSA, FM, wholesale, plant sales)	11 acres (3 properties), 50 CSA shares	20	No	Organic	Own (1 partner)
<b>Ted</b>	Specialty crops	Diversity (FM, wholesale)	2 acres	1	No	Naturally grown, no chemicals	Rent
<b>Charles and Kathy</b>	Specialty crops	Diversity (CSA, FM, wholesale)	3 acres, 30 CSA shares	9	No	Naturally grown, no chemicals	Rent
<b>Jacob and Laurie</b>	Specialty crops	CSA-only	3 acres, 155 CSA shares	30	No	Organic and Biodynamic	Own
<b>Ann</b>	Specialty crops, eggs, poultry, orchard fruit	Diversity (CSA, FM)	26 acres, 1/2 acre cultivated, 6 CSA shares	30 (3 yrs for market)	No	Naturally grown, no chemicals	Own
<b>Katie</b>	Lamb (whole, half, cuts), wool	Diversity (FM, individual, wholesale)	80 acres, 40 ewes	10	No	Pasture and grain fed	Own, lease some
<b>Catherine and Kevin</b>	Beef (half, quarters, and cuts)	Institutional support (FM, wholesale)	320 acres, 160 acres in pasture, 60 calf herd	7	Yes	Grass-fed, holistic management	Own (by institution)
<b>Will</b>	Sweet corn, cucumbers, pumpkins	Farmers' market (limited wholesale)	12 acres	2	No	Naturally grown, no chemicals	Rent
<b>James</b>	Field crops, specialty crops, poultry, eggs, pork	Wholesale (wholesale, CSA, FM)	2,400 acres, 3,000 CSA shares	35	Yes	Organic	Own, rent, and conservation easements
<b>Dorothy</b>	Specialty crops (herbs, cut flowers, specialty produce)	Diversity (FM, restaurants, individuals)	2 acres	12	No	Organic	Rent
<b>John</b>	Specialty crops	Institutional support (CSA)	2-3 acres, 75 CSA shares	15	Yes	Organic	Own (by institution, CSU)

Chart 3: Ft. Collins Producer Characteristics and Production Models

<sup>12</sup> Specialty crops include non-commodity field grown crops (e.g. greens, tomatoes, squash, etc.)

<sup>13</sup> Listed in order, from largest to smallest in terms of percent of total farm income



### *Producer Community: Collaboration and Relationship-Building*

Even though producers apply a wide range of production models, they unite to bolster the market for local food. The producer community in Ft. Collins is strong. Producers loan each other equipment, make group orders on supplies and seeds, ask for production and marketing advice, and collaborate on market expansion. The biggest advocates for the local food movement are the food producers. Many people look to the long time producers and community educators as leaders in the food movement. These leaders include Jacob, Laurie, Susan, James, and John. Younger farmers are also stepping up to the plate, rallying attention, and calling for action. The producer community, regardless of age or experience, is unified and committed to expanding the movement. Be Local and the Northern Colorado Food Incubator (NCFI) have played a key role in supporting producer efforts. Producers often talk about what they would like to see and do, but do not have the time. Be Local and NCFI have worked to turn some of the producer dreams into reality. Be Local has also brought local food and Slow Food groups together in order to further develop the community and the local food market. In this section, I will discuss the producers' collaborative nature, which creates a solid foundation for building long-lasting relationships. The relationship and community focus of the local food movement enables the movement to be civic and democratic, both important to long-term sustainability.

Even though many producers are vying for the same consumer market, there is more collaboration than competition. Catherine says, "I feel like for the most part there is a real genuine sense of community. People are really interested in each other's lives, hearing about other farms, and offering support where they can" (interview, September

23, 2009). Will discusses the practical aspects of collaboration—equipment sharing. He says:

You kind of need to rely on others to make it feasible. Share equipment and rely on your neighbors to do custom harvesting for you when you can't afford to buy a machine. It doesn't pay for everybody to own one of these bedding machines; it's not practical. I've loaned equipment to others. It's more camaraderie than competitors (interview, September 30, 2009).

Will, a self-pronounced machine-lover, is often called to fix producers' tractors or to help producers create beds and lay plastic. He is happy to help and is an asset to the producer community. Producers have different roles in the movement, according to their skills and experience. Susan is the unspoken marketer and other producers ask her for the market price of beets, chard, and carrots. Jacob and Laurie have become public figures for the local food movement—they represent the history and the future of local farming. Their sound bites on “community supporting agriculture” connect with consumers and inspire producers. Each producer brings his or her skills and personality to the local food community to make it a living and breathing force that continues to attract new producers and encourage consumers to make conscious food choices.

Producers' statements about the local food community are backed up by examples of collaboration. After a huge early season hailstorm hit farms in Ft. Collins in the summer of 2009, producers who were not affected (north and east of town) rallied to help their fellow producers. Many producers told stories about the devastation (3 inches of hail and 3 inches of rain in one hour) and also about the community's support. Farmers' market customers still paid full-price for “hail-kissed chard,” producers shared their greenhouse-raised transplants to help others replant, and work crews came together to clean up damaged plants. One of the most publicized acts of collaboration was between

two long-time producers—Jacob and James. The hail did not hit Martin Farms and Martin Farms reached out and helped the thoroughly hailed Abundant Life farm. Martin Farms offered their produce, at no cost, to Abundant Life. CSA working members caravanned to Martin Farms where they harvested cilantro, spinach, radishes, and basil for their fellow CSA members. The CSA model is built on the principle that members reap the bounty and accept the losses of the farm. As I helped harvest this donated produce, I heard CSA members voice their appreciation for a “community supporting agriculture”—the larger Ft. Collins community was supporting agriculture instead of just the member community supporting agriculture. Abundant Life CSA members, through this support, received shares for three weeks while the hail-damaged produce recovered.

In addition to physical acts of collaboration, the producer community also comes together to support each other in planning for future seasons and for future of the movement. In the spring, Susan and Ann, two CSA producers, organized a gathering of CSA producers, where they expected a small group (5-6 people) to attend. The main goals of the conference were to welcome new producers into the area, create a community to share ideas and resources, and plan for future collaboration. I arrived at the meeting early and watched producers flood in— the circle kept expanding to make room for twenty-five producers! This unexpectedly large and informal “CSA Conference” became a venue to meet producers, discuss equipment sharing (possibly an equipment co-op), provide information on liability insurance (farm and farmers’ market), and plan for joint ordering (seed, starters, plastic). The long-time producers were natural mentors for the greenhorns as they told stories and invited people to their farm to see how they compost, organize their CSA pick-up, and work with school groups. The organizers ran

out of time for the planned agenda items (discuss community marketplace and grant for distribution system) because so many people came and everyone was excited to talk and share. With a warm buzz in the air, the meeting ended. Plans were made for continued collaboration, but with the growing season starting up, producers knew they might not have the luxury to come together again until the late fall.

Many producers emphasize collaboration and downplay competitive market forces because, at this point, there is enough of a market for all. Some producers claim the movement is centered on a larger goal, the regional “breadbasket.” Catherine denies the competitive edge in producers as she talks about a recent conversation with another producer (potential competitor): “Her way of putting it is—what’s in our food basket for Northern Colorado? What can we provide and are we saturating that? And the answer is no” (interview, September 23, 2009). Susan shares a similar sentiment as she talks about the movement in reference to food security. Susan highlights the collaboration of farmers in Ft. Collins, but she is not satisfied with the current level of collaboration. She wants more:

I don't think it is interdependence, but I'd like to build that. Not interdependence, but a cooperative way of farming because I do think that we are wasting our resources, our land, our machinery, our equipment by *not* doing that. I think that all of us trying to grow 20 varieties of this and that doesn't make as much sense as let me do 10, you do 10, then we'll co-op the stuff and sell the stuff and we'll make a food security system that's even better (interview, September 10, 2009).

Perhaps, until the regional market is saturated with food producers and food security needs are met, collaborative efforts will trump competitive forces.

The movement’s commitment to strengthening the regional food system creates a collaborative attitude and emphasizes community and building relationships. The food community is about relationships. For the food movement to continue, many argue that it

has to be socially embedded and built on personal relationships. Building relationships, mentoring future farmers, and creating community are part and parcel of growing food. Relationship and community building seem to come naturally to the Ft. Collins food community. At farmers' markets, producers share stories and talk between customer sales. Producers also work together to support the farmers' market and consumer needs. They send customers to other producers who have a specific cut of meat or purple carrots. Susan talks about how growing food has changed. Community, communication, and collaboration are now central to the success of the movement:

I think that back in the day, before cell phones and computers, farmers were so isolated. Now, Ted and Will, Mary and I will get together and lay all our plastic together. We buy it all together—it's that cooperative. Daniel [Boulder County extension agent] has helped producers cooperate together more than they used to (interview, September 10, 2009).

This collaborative attitude can also be found as producers work together to encourage restaurants to consistently buy local produce. Producers know that chefs are busy and they prefer to have a streamlined food purchase system. Chefs often prefer to buy from a central distributor, either national (Yancey's or Cisco) or regional (Grower's Organic or Door to Door Organics). A centralized system is easier than piece-mealing orders from five different farmers with five different product lists and ordering procedures. Aware of this, Ted and Susan, two producers, joined forces and created their own informal distribution system. They merged their product availability and offered each other's products to their respective clients. Ted says:

[It would help] if there was a small co-op or something. But me and Susan are working on a little something through her restaurants. She'll sell for me directly, but only what she doesn't have. She'll sell a fuller line and then we work out how I get [the produce] to her house. She is not taking a cut—we are helping each other out. She calls every week—you got this or that? ... We've become a unified

front for [restaurants]...as opposed to them dealing with multiple farmers (interview, August 17, 2009).

The partnership between Susan and Ted is built on a professional relationship in which they both respect each other's production methods and high quality produce. If they had different definitions of quality, then they may not be as willing to sell each other's produce to chefs with whom they worked hard to develop a trusting relationship. Susan shares Ted's sentiments about helping each other out:

This morning, I took collards to Ted to sell to [a restaurant] because he doesn't have any. It is growers helping growers grow. And I don't care if he tells them its mine, or his or whatever (interview, September 10, 2009).

Susan also sells other producers' produce at farmers' markets, where re-selling is allowed. Some markets allow producers to sell produce they did not grow because they "believe it is good to give consumers plenty of choice." Susan does not have a problem selling other producers' produce, but she does not like to hide that she did not grow it because "that's where re-selling gets a bad name and I don't like to call what we are doing re-selling." Rather, she calls it "growers helping growers grow" and labels the produce (sweet corn and pumpkins) from other farms on her stand (interview, September 10, 2009). Susan might not be so apt to sell other producers' produce if she did not think it was of high quality or if she did not agree with their production practices. There is tremendous collaboration between producers, but for cooperative selling to happen, there is an unspoken rule that the cooperative producers must have similar quality standards.

Producers focus on collaboration and on relationship building in their discussions of the food movement. In the network of producers, each is called on to use their various skills to support the movement and help it grow. Some producers are public speakers, others work behind the scenes to start distribution systems, and others engage with the

younger generation to bring them out in the field. Lastly, some producers focus on their production skills. Not all producers are cut out for a job in public relations, which is, in large part, what the food movement is about. The movement rests on people's ability to work with and build relationships with producers, consumers, and the community at large. Jacob and Laurie, who have taught and mentored countless producers and food advocates in Colorado, explain the importance and the difficulty in relationship building.

Jacob says:

Relationship and community building is risky business because there aren't any guarantees. People aren't always who they say they are, but they are always people. There's a lot of give and take and forgiveness and all kinds of things that are required in any relationship. ...And we really think that community building is as much a part of what we are doing here as growing vegetables. It's risky stuff, it's really risky stuff. We try to make it clear to people that if they want to engage with us at that level, it's not just about growing vegetables (interview, March 2, 2010).

Despite the challenges of relationship and community building, Ft. Collins' producers continue to expand the community by developing personal connections. Personal relationships have shaped and helped develop the community's commitment to the local food movement. These relationships keep the local food movement rooted in the community of Ft. Collins.

At first glance, it might seem unusual for producers to support and collaborate so much. In other industries, producers of the same product (beef, greens, peaches) would be viewed as competitors. But producers' commitment to the larger goal of local or regional food security often trumps potential competition. For the movement to continue, new producers have to enter the market. Even though there are barriers to entry (land, water, capital), producers are supportive and express concerns about the long-term success of new producers. According to Susan:

On the end of producers, it seems as though it's usually a small 3-5 acre person, who may or may not be getting into [farming] for the first time, but are getting into it for the first time in this location. And for whatever reason, they fail. Every time we have a producer fail or agricultural land transition back out of agriculture, our food security just got weakened (interview, September 10, 2009).

Susan is good at growing and marketing food, but she is not just concerned about her own success. She is deeply aware of the difficulties that new farmers face in the Ft. Collins community. In order for the larger goal of food security to be met, many long-time producers reach out and mentor new farmers.

Many producers have known each other and worked together for years. However, as the experienced producers think about their next life steps, they are concerned about who will fill their role and produce for the local market. Jacob and Laurie are transitioning from their role as producers to more producer-educators in order to mentor new producers. They say they have always been educators and they will never stop farming, but if the movement is to grow, someone has to train all the “whipper snappers, the greenhorns, the ones that have got all this enthusiasm and idealism and they don't have the land” (interview, March 2, 2010). Developing the future leaders of the food movement is central to the long-term sustainability of the movement. Jacob and Laurie are committed to the movement and to the community to the extent that they are planning for a role transition in which they will farm less and teach and build relationships more. Jacob says:

To a certain extent, for us, [farming] is not like a traditional career where you work until a certain age and then you are done. I think our roles will change: how we're impacting the regional food system and how we do that might change more towards the engagement with relationships and maybe a little less to being out there with the working member[s] transplanting [seedlings] (interview, March 2, 2010).



In their transition to educators, a crucial role for the continuance of the movement, Jacob and Laurie are applying for grants and looking for other sources of income to compensate for the unpaid work of training the new generation of local food producers. Even though community building is difficult and teaching is time-consuming and not financially profitable, experienced producers continue to work for the larger goal of regional food security. This larger goal unifies producers and encourages collaboration. However, the producer network is not without conflict. Producers make up the force of the movement, and as people, they are dynamic, passionate, and have strong opinions about how to produce food and support the movement.

*Producer Community: Conflict and Competition*

The value-based and moral underpinnings of the local food movement unite the diverse producers under a common agenda to strengthen the local food market and increase food security. However, opinions about the “best” way to expand the movement differ and these opinions become a divisive force. Even though producers emphasize the collaborative nature of the local food movement, in my fieldwork and interviews, there were obvious sentiments of conflict and competition. Some producers talk about competition with other producers, but more than competition over price, producers conflict in their value-based production models. Tension between producers also stems from questions of operation scale, producer age, and model of production.

As noted earlier, Ft. Collins’ producers employ a variety of production models. There is room in the market for all types of producers, but there is also tension between producers as some models conflict with others. For example, producers often feel competition between farms of different scales. Ted, who sells produce from his small

farm to the farmers' market, only feels competition with large-scale farms. He talks about competition at the farmers' market and says:

And it sucks that [a large farm] is there—that hurts a lot because you know they are just there to market for their CSA and probably just break even [at market]. But it's like—what about the little guy [who is farming and selling at market]? [With these big farms], everyone behind the [farmers' market] stand is just an employee. No one knows the reality. Mexicans are working [and farming], but not selling. ...If [this farmer] asked one thing he could do to help me—I'd say don't come to the farmers' market—sales would be spread out amongst me and other small farms. Yeah, it hurts man (interview, August 17, 2009).

Not everyone feels tension like Ted's over farm size. Will has farmed on rented land for the past two seasons and recently bought his own land. For 2010, he plans to farm both lands. However, he admits that even with expanded operations, he probably will not make a profit in 2010. Even though he does not make a profit, Will does not feel competition with larger farms in the area. On the other hand, Will is not trying to live off his farming income, as Ted is. He is retired and his wife has steady employment. In addition, in 2009, his main product was in a niche market so maybe his own financial and farming situation makes him more collaborative than competitive. Regardless of his personal situation, Will sees an increase in scale as a means to financial viability:

Probably, if you are wanting to make a living at it, to be a sufficient size to produce enough income to make a living, that is probably the biggest factor if that is what they want to do for their living. Be a sufficient size (interview, September 30, 2009).

Will does not view large-scale farming as an immoral choice, as many small farmers do. To Will, who has worked with large-scale conventional farmers, an increase in scale is a way to become economically viable.

Conflict over scale is tied to producers' value systems, access to resources, and one's experience with farming. Ted, who feels competition with large-scale farms, has no

intention to produce on a “gigantic scale.” It is not in line with his value-system. He says, “I would [never] want to have a majority [of my produce] for wholesale. I don’t want to grow food and ship it off on a truck” (interview, August 17, 2009). Even though a larger scale production may be more economically viable, farming is not just about money. Ted farms because it makes him “an actual part of the community—becoming a contributing member instead of someone passing through who likes to rock climb” (interview, August 17, 2009). For many producers, farming and growing food is more than money, but many farmers still have to hawk their produce at market to pay bills. The community is collaborative, but the difficulty of farming makes it ripe for conflict.

Producers also have different definitions of community and community supported agriculture (CSA). The definition of “community” is often tied to the definition of “local.” Similar to the tension over local, one farm may define the local community as the state of Colorado and another limit the local community to Ft. Collins or Larimer County. The scope of an operation affects how a farm can and does engage with the community. Many producers applaud Martin Farms’ movement to include a CSA-type model, but question whether their model can or should be called a CSA. This disagreement comes back to some of the central and value-based questions of the movement: What is community? What is support? Ft. Collins producers ask: Can CSA members in Vail really support Martin Farms in Northern Colorado? Is financial support enough to define a CSA? Where is the community part of CSA? In order to differentiate the 3,000 member CSA from the 50 member CSA, some producers advocate a name change—to call large scale “convenience-based” CSAs what they are—a food box or a subscription program. Martin Farms does not question the name of their CSA. They continue to market and plan

for expansion of the CSA. According to Judy, a Martin Farms employee, James is reaching out to other farms and “extending the olive branch,” but if our help and support are not wanted, then we will continue to follow our plan and “march on” (conversation, February 17, 2010). Martin Farms needs the producer community’s support to continue to grow for the local food system, but because of their scale of operation, they are not as dependent on the Ft. Collins market and community as smaller producers may be.

Similar to the tension over scale, producers often allude to how producers farm or interact with the community differently, depending on age and experience level. The producer community is welcoming and the older generations of farmers actively mentor the younger farmers, but this relationship is not without tension. Alternative agriculture in Ft. Collins was active in the 1970s and 1980s and many producers from this older generation continue to be involved. The new generation of producers (farming ten years or less) is increasingly involved in local food. There is a strong community of farmers in Ft. Collins, but within that one group of producers, the community is divided into older and younger generations. Catherine has farmed for almost ten years, but is not as young as other beginning farmers. She straddles two communities. She enjoys the young farming community, but does not see these farmers as being full-time and reality-based in their farming. She explains:

There is a network of people especially in Ft. Collins—I call them the “young hip farmers.” There’s this whole group—they do underground dinners. I’m peripheral. I get invited every once in a while to attend. A lot of them are people who kinda work on other people’s farms. They don’t have quite as much of a farming actual lifestyle as we do. We’re the bottom line responsible. ... Sometimes their priorities [are different]—I’m like come on you guys this is the middle of the night on a Friday! I have market in the morning! (interview, September 23, 2009).

The older generation provides support and advice for the younger generation but they seem to view the younger generation as “idealistic” and having “something to prove.” The younger generation compensates for their lack of experience with passion and spearheads many local food events like exclusive invitation-only and locally sourced “Mad About Farming” dinners.

The social network of young farmers is extensive and older farmers are occasionally, but not always included. After I received an invitation, I attended a “Mad About Farming” dinner in mid October. At this invitation-only dinner, along with thirty-five other guests, we enjoyed a communal dinner that featured local mushrooms, salad greens, apples, beets, and quail in a five-course meal (see Figure 2). The theme



Figure 2: MAD dinner

of the evening was “simplicity.” Two stacks of wooden pallets served as the table, adorned with pumpkins and candles. We sat on the ground and feasted on gourmet dishes, all prepared on-site (see Figure 3), sipped homebrewed gin,



Figure 3: On-site Brick Oven

and listened to bluegrass pickers. The dinner was organized by the younger generation of farmers, held at an older generation’s farm, and attended by food advocates young and old. The idea for the MAD dinners came out of young people’s frustration that local restaurants are not committed

to buying local food. The organizers wanted to show that local food (all food local or from the food co-op) can be used to cook great meals that are not “elitist.” (Some farm

dinner cost up to \$200/person.) Guests were encouraged to make a \$20 donation, which would cover the costs of the meal and provide a start-up fund for the next meal.

According to one of the organizers, the older generation of farmers was invited to attend, but few came.

A couple weeks later at a meeting, Judy, who works for an older generation farmer, relayed her boss's side of the story. Judy explained that her boss was not invited to these "secret dinners held by young producers who do not know what real farming is about." According to him, these MAD dinners are about celebrating the "legacy" of farming. She said, "He's been farming 30 years, that's legacy! These other farmers have been farming only one year—that's not legacy!" Judy said that her boss is "sensitive" right now and feels left out of the community and assumes that his knowledge, experience and support are not wanted by the larger food community (i.e. the younger generation of producers) (conversation, February 17, 2010). In some ways, maybe the younger generation did not want this producer to attend because they were trying to create a food network that was in line with their value system—community, fellowship, and fun. There is a difference in how producers relate to farming and each other. These differences can be overlooked in order to work towards a common goal. However, if there is not a clearly established common goal, then individual producers advocate their way as the best way, whether the lines are drawn by age or production model.

The community is often cited as a reason for people to continue to be involved in local food. At the same time though, producers experience different levels of community support and have various ideas and methods to garner additional support. Producers' sense of support and their own moral and political leanings create conflict over how to

grow the movement. Younger farmers tend to take an activist approach, older farmers push for education, and others stress marketing. Ted helps organize the MAD dinners and dreams of “guerilla marketing.” In “guerilla marketing,” Ted would give his friends wads of cash and tell them to go to stores and restaurants and ask for local food, and if there is none, they buy nothing and leave (interview, August 17, 2009). This is an on-the-ground and reaction-based tactic to get people on board. Other producers like Laurie and Catherine talk about building relationships and focusing on consumer education. Other producers like James stress the marketing arm of local food, often with the help of CSU marketing guru Dawn Thilmany. Regardless of the tension over proposed solutions, producers know the community needs to show additional support in order for local food to continue. One producer thinks there is “false support of the community” in the sense that it “seems like a lot of talk, but not a lot of *talk*” (Ted, interview, August 17, 2009). This comment leads to the question: What is real support?

#### *Food Producers and the Local Food Wave*

Media attention may bring more people to the farmers’ market and encourage participation in a CSA. On the other hand, it does not guarantee people’s commitment to the movement. Ted said that at the CSA where he interned, all the members read Kingsolver and Pollan and it was “helpful to have publicity” but he “thinks that it plays into the shallow interest people have.” Local food “sounds beautiful but [members] don’t actually want to learn how to cook collards [and would prefer a] tomato and sweet corn CSA share” (interview, August 17, 2009). The emphasis on local and national agricultural celebrities (Joel Salatin, Michael Pollan, Will Allen) spotlights the

movement, but as DeLind (2010) questions, can national celebrities affect local communities and change the global agro-food system?

The media attention to local food has contributed to increased consumer awareness and participation, but many producers question the “fad” factor of the movement. Charles thinks local food “is a fad and it’s still very much on the periphery of America” (interview, August 31, 2009). The faddish-nature of local food has helped some producers get into farming, increase their income, grow CSAs, and market their produce. However, not all producers are benefiting from the popularity of local food. Jacob, a long-time local producer discusses the change in the movement over time. Jacob and Laurie have been involved with local food for almost thirty years. Their reflection on the change in the movement highlights the increased popularity of the local food movement, but unlike Susan who has become a “rock star” and increased her sales; Jacob and Laurie have experienced a decrease in CSA members in the past two years. This decrease could be caused by many factors, one being an increase in the number of CSAs, which include more convenience-oriented distribution systems (e.g. multiple pick-up locations). Laurie says:

[We are] re-evaluating our place in the movement right now that there is this swelling [interest in local food]. For so many years we were trying to convince people that this is a good idea and now more people are thinking this is a good idea. And what we are saying is, what is our role now that this has become more of an accepted thing? ...I am concerned about the trendiness thing and Jacob lightly spoke of it—our numbers are significantly off this year as far as membership. We have half our members returning from last year. ...I’m not taking this as if we are going to die tomorrow, but it is significantly off (interview, March 2, 2010).



The food movement in Ft. Collins is strong, but many producers note the increased popularity of local food with a cautious enthusiasm. Producers question if local food can transition from a movement to a long-term reality that financially supports farmers.

Most producers are concerned about their bottom-line and want, at a minimum, to cover their production costs. Ideally, they would also pay themselves a small wage. Few local food producers make a profit farming. In most industries and professions, not making a profit or a salary is not an option. Farming is different. Most of the producers farm because they love it and not because they make money. Ted talks about the lifestyle of farming and the non-economic benefits:

I like [farming], it's fun. It's really neat. In an ideal world—I'd just give [the produce] all away. I don't really like charging for it, it's weird. That bunch of kale is \$2.50 and \$1.45 wholesale. It cheapens it. Yeah, I'd rather just give it away for free. My principal motivation is enjoyment of the work and ephemeral rewards that you don't find at the computer earning a secure and decent living. [It's not the economics of farming], it's the beauty of it (interview, August 17, 2009).

Ted does not farm so he can sell. He sells so he can farm. In other words, producers work hard to survive off their passion—growing food. Many beginning farmers talk about their love and passion for farming, but if the choice is between passion and debt, what will people choose? Will young farmers choose a different career when they want to have children, health insurance, or plan for retirement? For a local food system to become a reality in Northern Colorado, more producers have to be able to financially survive off their farming income. In order to become more than a trend, the local food movement has to address the barriers that directly affect the movement's long-term economic viability. National media attention, the individual commitment of producers and the producer network are not enough.

## **Chapter 5: Trials and Tribulations of Local Food**

People who do not farm often idealize and romanticize farming, but it is hard to make a living working the land. For example, Charles loves to farm and wants to continue farming in Ft. Collins, but it is not easy. As he and I weed the squash, Charles candidly talks to me about pulling up his roots and moving again, after only two years on this fertile land. Charles likes Ft. Collins, but says:

I'm tired of being a tenant, a sharecropper. It feels very feudal to me. [If Ft. Collins] really [was a] supportive community, things would change. People would have to pay more for their food. Farms either have to reach the asinine levels of inflation that all other professions have in terms of salary or the others have to come down. So it's kind of the same thing, making it a more equitable playing field—treating farmers as professionals not as peons or peasants (interview, August 31, 2009).

I agree with Charles. I do think that the local food movement, through relationships and networks and a strong sense of community, presents an alternative to the corporate food regime. Nevertheless, in order for the local food movement to be transformational and sustainable, individual commitments, like Charles's, have to unify into collective action to address the structural barriers affecting the economic viability of farming.

The Ft. Collins movement is built on a commitment to the human and ecological communities. This commitment is seen through the movement's work to increase the availability of and access to fresh, healthy, and local food. Currently, a tri-county and interagency effort is studying the regional food system and establishing county-based food goals. The work of the Northern Colorado Regional Food Assessment speaks to the regional commitment to local food. In crafting an alternative, the larger locally-based

structural factors have to be part of the conversation. These barriers include improving access to resources (land, water, and capital), creating a distribution system, and developing a more supportive and better-educated consumer base. The individual decision to farm is not enough and without collective action to address these structural factors, the possibility of a truly alternative agriculture system is barred. In this chapter, I will explore producer's understanding and definition of economic viability. I will also use examples of producers' struggles to show the real barriers to a long-term and viable local food system. This analysis is not intended to be negative or depressing. There is a lot of passion, commitment, and hope in the Ft. Collins food community. Rather I want to call attention to some of the barriers that individual producers and the community face in achieving a viable local food system.

### *Economically Viable Farming*

Financial worries affect producers big and small. In 2009, producers struggled to handle the economically painful effects of farming. Multiple hailstorms decimated crops. Producers composted marketable food because of insufficient markets and low consumer demand at farmers' markets. Producers struggled to pay for labor to plant, weed, and harvest and had to rely on inconsistent volunteer labor. In this section, I will discuss the meaning of economically viable farming. I provide examples of producers who struggle to balance their love of farming with their need to make a living. Some producers are able to make a go at farming, but many express anxiety over their continued ability to farm, whether part-time or full-time. This anxiety over future finances affects the long-term viability of a local food system.

If farmers are to continue farming, they have to be able to cover production and living costs. One producer, John, defines economically viable as “something that a person can retire from eventually—have saved up enough to retire” and argues that if farming is not economically viable “then it can be really disappointing and disillusioning” (interview, September 11, 2009). In the 1980s, John farmed for ten years. He quit to go back to school so he could have a more stable career that would allow him to provide for his family and not overwork his stressed back. John says the social reward of farming can only get producers so far and “if they are dirt poor and working all the time” they might quit farming (interview, September 11, 2009).

Using a present or future-oriented definition, at this point, local agriculture in Ft. Collins is not economically viable. Most producers want to only farm, but they have to rely on off-season jobs, second non-farm incomes, or personal savings to make ends meet. Charles and Kathy are committed to farming, but “even working all the time and not sleeping, you still don’t make it.” Kathy works in town and earns about two-thirds of their household income. Charles says, to farm, “You have to be okay with living substandard” as he and Kathy do (interview, August 31, 2009). Ted, another enthusiastic farmer, wants to focus on farming and does not like juggling jobs. He says, “It’s either do both things poorly or do one thing well. I’m jumping ship. I’d like to be a farmer full-time” (interview, August 17, 2009). But to feed his farming habit, Ted works as an engineer in the off-season. Dorothy has a similar passion for farming. She has wanted to farm since she was a kid growing up in the suburbs. The only reason she has farmed for fifteen years is because her husband has a steady income. She says:

My husband has a very good job, which has allowed me to do a lot of community-type stuff and try to farm and make some money doing that. We could have never done it without his job (interview, November 19, 2009).

Dorothy works closely with a young producer, Jessi, who is also passionate about farming and committed to owning her own farm. Dorothy, who lost her land at the beginning of the 2009 season, lamented her future and the future of farming:

I feel bad for myself, but I really feel bad for young people, like Jessi, who want to farm. It's just this enormous thing in front of her. And she's really good at saving. She's a really frugal person, but she is going to be in her forties before she can outright buy a piece of land. I've never said that to her face, but I can do the math (interview, November 19, 2009).

Currently, Jessi has a “safe” opportunity to farm, where even if she fails in her first season, she will still get a paycheck and healthcare. She is a farm manager for an institutionally backed farm. However, her dream of owning a farm is an uphill battle that may not be possible without an additional revenue stream.

Producers often rely on a second income, but sometimes one additional income is not enough and two people in a household have to have steady employment to be able to provide for a family. Katie, trained as a veterinarian and working a full-time job, raises sheep because she loves lamb and enjoys working with animals. She says, “The sheep aren't going to make me a millionaire, but they pay for themselves” (interview, September 26, 2009). If you had asked her a few years ago, she would have said she had plans to increase production and farm more, but her husband recently lost his job. Their plans have changed:

We'll probably shift away from farming, unless he wants to do the farming part. My whole focus has changed. I need to get my career back going again. I was happy to not look at climbing or doing anything more and now I'm not happy. I wanted to retire and be a farmer, but it's not reasonable at this point, at this stage because of family financial stability. You saw one kid, there are two others. I want a chance for them—if they want to go to college, I want to get them there. I

think [farming] is do-able here, but it's not what I want for us anymore (interview, September 26, 2009).

Katie and her family recently moved to Nebraska where her husband found a job. It is difficult to find professional employment in Ft. Collins. There are some jobs for recent graduates starting their careers, but often people leave Ft. Collins in search of better employment. If producers are relying on a second household income or a second job to make a living farming in Ft. Collins, then the local job market and the local food market have to mesh.

Even if producers do not need to rely on their farming income to make a living, they still express concern about the economics of farming. Will, in his second year farming, hoped to cover costs of production in the 2009 season. He lost money in 2008 because of high start up costs and massive hail damage during harvest. When I asked him if farming was worth it despite the weather and the economics, he said:

If you love to farm, it is still worth it. The weather is beautiful—I just look at the mountains at 5:30 in the morning—that is gorgeous, not much traffic. It's pretty gorgeous. It's fun. If it wasn't for the interstate, it'd be tremendous (interview, September 30, 2009).

Will keeps farming because he loves it. He says that farming is not his livelihood and “that part makes it a little easier.” He does not have to depend on farming for his living, but does not want to suffer huge losses: “I would like to make money doing this, it would make it more enjoyable. It is enjoyable, but it would be more so if you [could] make money doing it” (interview, September 30, 2009).

Will acknowledges how difficult it is to make farming financially viable and links the lack of viability to the high turnover of farmers. Perhaps because he is not in the same

situation, Will does not seem upset by the fluidity of farmers—it is just how it is. He talks about the local food movement and says:

I kind of look at it and I say, there may be enough people who want to try this, that you'll have people entering production each year. And maybe they'll do it for a couple years and realize, no, this isn't financially viable but during those two years, they produced vegetables for the local movement. They'll go away and you may have some more come into the market. I see new people in the market this year that weren't there last year and I see people moving out of the market that have been here for a couple of years. ...Same number of players, but not same players—that is kind of sad that they realize it isn't working and they go do something else that they can make a living at. That is the sad part that you can't do this and make a living (interview, September 30, 2009).

If producers cannot be financially viable farming, despite the passion, farmers will likely leave farming for another career or leave Ft. Collins for a better place to farm.

Farming is a seasonal job, and in Colorado, the season is short. Thus even if the money is good for a bit, it is not enough. Charles talks about his own finances:

We did the math, what need to make, what we would make at the market, and what can we supply. At the market, we make \$1000/market this time of the year. If we had a mortgage, we wouldn't cover costs. Right now, we are paying rent and we can pay the rent. I don't pay myself, we just put it all back into the business right now. People think, oh \$4,000/month, \$5,000 if there are five Saturdays, you guys are doing well, but we get that for two months. For four months, we're making maybe half that. In May, we are hardly making anything. April, when we sell the shares, we get a big boost of income then and then it really slows and then by July it starts picking up and we're making at least \$700/market but then we miss some from hail. [In 2009] we lost all of our wholesale accounts from hail and so that really hurt us. [Because of the hail], the first two weeks of July are big market and we had zero sales, not one dollar (interview, August 31, 2009).

What Charles and Kathy are doing now is not financially viable. Charles muses about plans for expansion or other ways to farm to make ends meet, but there are always barriers:

Say I wanted to do 150 shares and get paid a teacher salary but without any health benefits, then I'd still have to depend on unpaid volunteers and I'd still be living without insurance and wouldn't be able to pay a mortgage. And with the 150 shares I would need another acre and I couldn't work it so I would need more

volunteers. It doesn't work. And then in a community where there is no [local food] system—development is what determines land value on agriculture land—so we're not at all welcome here and we're not encouraged to stay. ...[People] want to develop [the land]—higher taxes and make jobs. We're very much the cool, hip thing, very unsupported (interview, August 31, 2009).

Jessi, an aspiring farmer, agrees with the concerns stated by Will and Charles, but continues to be hopeful. She knows the difficulty that young people face as they plan for farming careers, but has faith in youth's creativity and ingenuity:

I think because there are so many younger people getting interested in agriculture, if we all go into this and then it doesn't work, then we are all going to drop out of it and do something else. But, if we can do it or if we can find ways or create ways to make it work, we have the tools and the resources to make it work, then people will want to continue to produce. If we all jump in and then jump out—get out dragging a bunch of debt behind us—then it's not going to help. That'll be the end (interview, October 8, 2009).

In Ft. Collins, producers come and go. As Will stated, new producers keep filling the vacated market stands, but when will this stream of beginning farmers run out? When will the stable producers retire or move on? The fluidity of producers is indicative of larger structural problems in the market. In Ft. Collins, the producers who have been the mainstays (consistently producing food for the local market) are those who own land. Other producers, without a steady land base, tend to come and go. The producer community may be stabilized through creative land use solutions (as Jessi proposed) or through policy changes. Regardless, if local food wants to stay, something has to change.

*Resources: Land, Water, and Capital*

Many producers are not economically viable. This lack of viability can be related to various factors, but in my interviews, the three most prominent factors included: access to affordable fertile land, to water rights, and to financial capital. Market access is also important, but without a way to grow food, there is no market. Land is expensive, so



many producers work on rented land. Colorado farmland has to be irrigated and water is not readily available or cheap. In this section, I will provide agriculture land use numbers for Larimer County and describe changes in land use patterns. I will also examine how these changes in land use have affected producers who rent, own, and seek to buy land. In Colorado and the West, if producers want to raise specialty crops, fertile land is worthless unless the producer has access to water rights. I will provide a brief overview of water law in Colorado and give examples of how producers have been directly and indirectly affected by appropriation-based water law. Lastly, I will discuss how access to capital impacts producers in their planning and in their day-to-day operation. These resource-based structural limitations are endemic of many agricultural communities and specific to Ft. Collins and farming in the West.

### Land

In 2007, 29 percent of Larimer County (489,819 acres) was used for agriculture. Of that land, the majority was in pasture and rangeland (64 percent) with the remaining land in cropland both non-irrigated (24 percent) and irrigated land (13 percent). From 1997 to 2010, in the Front Range area of Larimer County (mountains excluded), over 20,000 acres have shifted out of agricultural production. Between 2002 and 2007, Larimer County agricultural acreage declined as opposed to an increase in cultivated acreage in Boulder and Weld Counties during the same time period (Northern Colorado Regional Food Assessment 2010). Agricultural land is transitioning out of agriculture. Much of it is being subdivided and consumed for housing and urban development. When land is valued for commercial or residential development, the cost to buy or rent land

skyrockets and small-scale producers often cannot cover the land-related expenses by selling sweet corn.

Despite attempts to develop a community to support local food, access to land in Ft. Collins makes it hard to farm. Producers move around a lot. The downside of this constant land switch-a-roo, according to Jessi, “A lot of people who are producing don’t have the land security to stay.” Jessi continues, “I think that if producers have the choice of moving around from this land to that land, they would instead choose to have one piece of land that they could really invest in and do perennials, plant trees, have a stable place for animals and whatever else they want to do. I think it reveals that we don’t have land security” (interview, October 8, 2009). Among Ft. Collins producers, there is a real lack of land security. Susan cycles through land—she certifies a property, farms it for one or two years, and moves on to another piece of rented land. She says, “If you are leasing land and you don't even know if you'll have that land available next year, you certainly aren't going to plant any perennials. You're always living season to season and that stinks for sure” (interview, September 10, 2009). Dorothy did not heed this advice and planted perennials on her rented land for fifteen years. From the beginning, her husband thought it was a bad idea, but Dorothy had faith in the future and wanted to farm with perennials (rhubarb, raspberries, rosemary). She said:

My husband, right from the beginning, was reluctant to put any perennials on land we didn’t own. I’d always be like—we could dig it, bare root it, grow on it and sell it. He went for that. We did that over the years, we sold a lot of plant material. But in the end, he was right, it didn’t work (interview, November 19, 2009).

At the beginning of the 2009 season, without warning, Dorothy was kicked off her land in Ft. Collins. One of the landowners moved back to town and decided he wanted to

make more money and turn the farm into a RV storage lot. Dorothy recalls this painful experience:

[He] lowered the [tractor] blade and just shaved [the plants] off. He did it the night before we had a whole crew to help move. It was the maddest I had been in 20 years. ...It makes me think that just in a certain sense, it wasn't meant to be—so many factors were conspiring against me (interview, November 19, 2009).

Dorothy recovered as many of her plants as possible and tried to transplant them on a friend's acre, but the hail and rain ended the season for her in June. She did not have the energy to finish the season out. Not having her own land directly affected her ability to farm.

Charles, working on rented land, found himself in a similar situation. His lease went sour at the start of the growing season, the second year on the land. He finished out the season, but had to move off the land soon after. To keep him in the community, many people offered Charles and Kathy land to farm, but they want more security than a lease agreement. Charles wants to pursue his dream and own his own farm. He and his partner “feel pushed out by cost...there's no way we can afford a farm here” (interview, August 31, 2009). He adds, “We're very picky, we don't want to sacrifice our dreams to stay in this town, it's not that great. It's nice [and] supportive but not enough because farmers can't afford land” (Charles, interview, August 31, 2009). Charles decided to leave for the less expensive land of the Midwest. Many producers of the younger generation are in the same situation—committed to growing local food, but open to moving to other communities where rain falls or land is affordable. The high cost of land may be a contributing factor to the transient nature of producers, which could be interpreted by the older generation as the younger farmers as being “flaky” or not committed to farming.

Good and experienced growers struggle to find land they can afford to buy. Many enter into lease agreements, but in the end, the landowner has the final say on how the land is used. After she was kicked off her land, Dorothy and her husband, began looking for land. They thought it was a good time because property was cheaper due to the economic downturn, but:

One of the problems around here is that most people that have 2-7 acres have sold off their water rights. So, you can get land, but there is no water. Do I really want to pay \$350,000 for a piece of land with a house that is falling apart and no water? Land is huge. People make a lot more money selling your water and putting houses on the land than you do with agriculture (interview, November 19, 2009).

Producers who own their land or have access to capital to buy land are rare. Land in Ft. Collins is expensive and much of it is commercially zoned for development. Will has been involved in agriculture for over 25 years and discusses the land-use decisions that farmers face:

[In my years of working with agriculture], the farmers that are left—they've got to be pretty big to make a living doing that. And all this development encroachment and they can't afford to buy land, so they are renting land. And that's not all bad if you don't want to tie up a whole bunch of money in real estate. It's been good for those who could buy land—prices escalated; it has helped their net worth. ...Some of them are using it for their retirement and I'm all for it. They are entitled to their retirement as well as anybody else. You can't blame them for wanting to sell it for the highest price they can get although that doesn't make it any easier for the next guy coming along, makes it harder. But that's just economics (Will, interview, September 30, 2009).

Farmers have a right to sell their land for the highest price, but those prices are too high for farming incomes and moving land out of agriculture puts the local community's food future in jeopardy. Purchasing land is financially unrealistic for most producers who would not be able to cover mortgage and property taxes through farming income. Jessi aspires to own her own farm someday, but she knows land is expensive. In conversation, she has brought up this major barrier with many people:

When I've expressed [this concern]—"Gosh, I don't know, how do you make it work? How do you get enough money to afford land? How do you make payments on their land? This is what I'm struggling with"—a lot of people are like, "Oh you just need to find a rich boyfriend." It is very decidedly *not* a feminist position. I just don't buy that as the only way (interview, October 8, 2009).

Jessi is optimistic that there are more creative ways to find security in farming. She originally thought that owning land was the only way to be secure in her farming future, but she is considering other options, which do not involve her searching out a wealthy man or saving pennies for thirty years. Viable and creative options include: "approaching people who already have land who want it to be farmed, approaching people who want to support agriculture and small farmers—institutions or people—[and] involving them financially in their business. Those are all things people have to do if they want to have small businesses" (interview, October 8, 2009). These ideas may sound naïve, but Jessi is trying to work within the current system that does not value agricultural land.

Even producers who have capital cannot always find good farmland in the urban and suburban area. Will, in his second career, looked for land for ten years and recently bought a house with a couple acres. He is excited about being able to walk out his back door to tend his corn. In this case, the availability, more than the affordability (his wife has a good salary and he is retired) of land limited Will's farming endeavors.

For the capital-rich and capital-less, community members and the county are discussing options to farm county-owned open space land. This land cannot be developed but is not necessarily ideal for farming because a lot of land does not have water rights attached, making it unsuitable for small-scale specialty crop production. In addition, some producers feel that farming on open space land with low rents and limited overhead costs will hurt the producers who own land and have to incorporate their land-related

costs into their market prices. Land availability, private or public, limits producers' ability to farm and make a living farming in Northern Colorado.

Even when you own the land, producers still make production decisions based on the available land and water. Susan and her partner Mary farmed eleven acres in 2009. In order to make the best use of their land, they planted crops that did not require large amounts of space or water (greens, potatoes, onions) and also did multiple plantings throughout the season (greens, beets, radishes, carrots). For crops that take up a lot of space (corn, squash), Susan and Mary bought from and traded with a grower in Longmont who has the space, machinery, and labor to grow these crops. Not everyone agrees with this practice of cooperative farming, but Susan and Mary thought it would enable them to get the most out of their land and satisfy CSA members who love sweet corn. Discussions of local food security are discussions of land security and land use policy.

### Water

In addition to land, lack of water is also a barrier to farming in the high desert of Ft. Collins. Water rights are expensive and are geared to meet the needs of urban areas (extensive reservoirs), ranchers (dry land pasture), dry land cultivation, and large-scale production with central pivot irrigation systems. Small-scale specialty crop producers struggle to work with water use policies.

Archaic water law in Colorado is based on prior appropriation—first in time, first in right—established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Colorado mining camps. The right to appropriate water, to divert water from a natural stream for beneficial use, was established in the Colorado constitution (article XVI, section 6, adopted in 1876). The appropriation

doctrine is the rule in the West, as opposed to the riparian doctrine<sup>14</sup> in the East. In order to settle the arid west, water had to be available for non-riparian landowners. During time of water shortage, the oldest appropriation rights get priority—“junior” water rights may be shut off so “senior” rights can be served. Appropriation water rights are not connected to land ownership and they can be abandoned, bought, and sold. Water rights regulate surface water (streams, reservoirs and ditches) and groundwater (wells). Water law in Colorado is complicated and fraught with litigation. Water related issues in Colorado are governed by numerous organizations that include the Colorado Water Conservation Board, the Colorado Division of Water Resources, the State’s Engineer’s office, and the state’s several water divisions and 80 water districts. Colorado water involves water use in the state and with other western states that depend on the water that originates in the Colorado mountains (flowing east and west). According to the Water Information Program: “While the conservation, use and storage of water will continue to be a source of debate among users and the states, water continues to be Colorado’s most precious resource. How we manage, conserve, store, and distribute water will remain one of Colorado’s most pressing policy challenges” (WIP N.d.).

Water rights affect producers, urban and rural residents, and municipalities. When property with water rights is sold to developers, the water rights are often separated from the land and sold to another user (such as Front Range municipalities). For example, John, who used to farm his parents’ land, explains their experience:

My folks sold our farm to the city of Thornton and it still disturbs me. They didn’t know who they were selling it to—this unknown buyer arrived and bought up 100 farms along this one irrigation system so it could control the water rights of that

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<sup>14</sup> Riparian doctrine states that the landowner of the bank of a body of water has a right to reasonable use of that water

ditch. ...The municipalities and their water grabs have been really destructive for agricultural interests and we've let them do it too—it's really short-term thinking (interview, September 11, 2009).

Land and water use policy in northern Colorado are not oriented to preserving land for farming.

One new Ft. Collins resident recently bought 115 acres north of Ft. Collins so he and his family could get back to their farming and ranching roots. On the land, they grow hay and to do so, Chris had to buy back the water rights for his land, which comes from an irrigation ditch that runs north of the property. The water rights cost more than the land itself! Chris is also on the Larimer County Agriculture board and says the county is losing a lot of the “mom and pop and family farms” and “there are a lot of people who want to farm but don't have land” (interview, May 6, 2009). To help remedy this, Chris and his wife sponsored a farmer, Ted, who has farming experience, passion, but no land, to work on two acres of their land. Ted is thankful for having access to water on Chris's land, but the water rights are set up for traditional Colorado crops (e.g. hay) that do not need to be irrigated until the end of the summer. He struggles to make this system work for vegetable production:

I have a sweet ass water situation with really good rights and a pond! I don't have to pump water out of a ditch when it comes—I have water in a giant pond full of water, it's sweet. But, they fill [it] in at the end of summer when the water rights end; they fill it full (2 acres). But [the water] leaches and evaporates over the winter. So, in spring when I was pulling out of it, it's not much and it's super concentrated and saline. It was starting to hurt the crops so I ending up having to use tap water—it was a super lot of money to irrigate with tap water—but I have to so I'm not putting this crap water on. ...It's so freaked up. \$60,000 a share. I can't fathom (interview, August 17, 2009).

If land is available and has water rights, the rights are typically set up for traditional crops and not specialty crops, like greens and produce that need clean water through the



growing season. Ted is able to farm through this arrangement, but he could never afford the land or water on his farming income. The rent-free land allows Ted to farm, but he cannot make long-term investment in the property or his farming operation. At some point, Ted will probably think about moving to another property or community.

Ann, similar to Ted, has access to water from a ditch that runs along the border of her property. She uses the water to flood irrigate her orchard, garden, and property. When I interviewed Ann, we spent an hour walking around the property, moving hoses. She relies on a gravity feed system (ditch is uphill) to irrigate, but without pumps or mechanization, Ann and her husband constantly move hoses throughout the day. The water is full of debris and often clogs the hoses, so any pressure-driven sprinkler system is out of the question. Ann says she is still learning about irrigation: it is a huge time and financial investment. She said, “We have talked to a gajilion people and tried to find systems [that will work for our water situation]... and it’s like ‘that will clog up in two minutes and it’s \$2,000!’ There is a lot of technology [for] big operations, but not [for] small scale” (interview, July 6, 2009).

When I interviewed Will, we also spent a lot of time talking about water. He has access to well water that runs in a ditch on the north end of his rented property. The landowners set up a flood irrigation system that Will used in 2008, but it was not very efficient. In 2009, in addition to the flood system for his corn, he and an engineer friend designed a pump system that runs drip lines for his vegetable crops. Will is proud of his irrigation system, “it is slick” and it saves him a lot of time. The high cost of the system will pay for itself over time, and if Will leaves this property, he plans to take the pumps, valves, and lines with him. Where he goes, his designer irrigation system follows. Small-

scale farming requires ingenuity, patience, and money. Will has the skills and the money to decrease the amount of time he has to spend on irrigation, but not all farmers are so lucky.

### Capital

In addition to large amounts of capital needed to buy land or water in Ft. Collins, producers also struggle to have the capital to buy seeds and equipment and to pay for labor. The CSA model of production (CSA-only or within a diversity approach) helps producers pay for the early season start-up costs, but many producers continue to struggle with cash flow throughout the year. James has professed the wonders of the CSA model because he no longer has to go to the bank. However, most other producers talk about how even with the CSA money, they struggle to make ends meet until the heavy harvest season begins in mid-June. Susan says:

My biggest problem is that I never have enough start-up money to not have to do most of the labor myself. ...Sure, FSA [Federal Service Agency] believes in me and loans me \$100,000 every year, but if I have to pay it back ten months later, it's impossible. CSA helps with start-up costs, but that money was spent a long time ago and we still have to give out 20 weeks of produce (interview, September 10, 2009).

Susan daydreams about help. She says, "If I had a silent investor, I could do amazing things with this company, this business. If I had someone with money that believed in me, oh my god, talk about food security—help me out here!" (interview, September 10, 2009).

Dorothy explains a similar situation when she ran a subscription service. A subscription service is similar to a CSA (pre-pay and weekly produce), but without an emphasis on farm community activities.

When we did subscription service, the main reason I did that was to have working income in the spring instead of putting everything on the credit card. I did some dumb things with that like if you signed up for a full thing, I gave people delivery to their homes for \$15. I was just trying to find a way to always have money coming in from something (interview, November 19, 2009).

The subscription service helped Dorothy with her initial costs in the spring, but it still was not enough money. She says, “You actually handle a lot of money, but the amount you get to keep is not that big, but there are always checks coming and going” (interview, November 19, 2009). Producers struggle with cash flow throughout the season (e.g. waiting for restaurants to pay before they can pay for labor) and struggle with low net farming income.

When funds are tight, producers are less likely to hire labor. They may attempt to do all the work themselves, working 12+ hour days, or rely heavily on labor from family, volunteers, or working members. Susan says labor is important in small-scale farms and “should figure in more keyly then we made it figure in.” Susan and Mary “assumed that in the beginning we could do it all—just means we have to work a whole lot harder ourselves” (interview, September 10, 2009). Despite passion and commitment, two people cannot farm seven acres (rule of thumb, 2-3 people per acre) on their own. Susan and Mary did not follow Susan’s rule of thumb so their workers worked longer, weeding was neglected, and production was lower. Intensely planted market farms require a lot of labor, which demands either capital to pay labor or a community invested in volunteering manual labor. Most of the unpaid and paid labor on local farms pulls from the middle and upper middle class recent college graduate labor pool. Larger farms that have more access to capital and have higher labor needs may also rely on migrant farm workers.

### *Local Food Marketing and Education*

In the previous section, I discussed how producers often do not have enough money or do not have access to capital to farm on their own terms. Many of the reasons behind limited land and water in Larimer County are structural. Acting individually, producers have a hard time changing these policies. This difficulty in envisioning how to change policies makes producers focus on what they feel they have control over marketing and consumer education. However, even though individual consumers can and do choose to support local producers, increased attention to marketing and consumer education will not solve producers' financial woes. Consumers have become accustomed to inexpensive food, which is directly related to US and global food policies. In this section, I will examine producer attempts to change the course of the local food movement through consumers. In addition, I show how educating consumers and marketing CSAs is not enough to shift the food system to support a local food system.

The local food movement relies more on individual and direct contact between producers and consumers than widespread value-based labeling. The emphasis on direct sales can be seen through the limited producer use of the "Colorado Proud" program. The Colorado Department of Agriculture's "Colorado Proud" program (a type of value-based labeling) was developed to help promote Colorado-grown food products. There is no charge to join the organization and it has marketing material for Colorado products, available at a cost. Most of the local producers do not participate in Colorado Proud because they are small scale and locally-centered, as opposed to Colorado-centered. According to one Colorado Proud member and Ft. Collins producer:

I think [Colorado Proud programs] are important [but] I don't know if they are key. If we went around the market today, a lot of vendors belong, but they don't

display the symbol, they don't advertise it. Unless shipping outside of Colorado, [there is no need to display Colorado Proud]. We are in Colorado...nobody would expect different at a farmers' market. I don't know how much it helps some of the other people, but the price is right, it doesn't hurt us (Katie, interview, September 26, 2009).

The Ft. Collins local food movement focuses on direct sales with less of a push for value-based labeling. Value-based labeling is not seen as an immediate need because producers argue they can explain production practices through personal contact typical of direct marketing.

The direct contact between consumers and producers is essential to the movement and often referred to as "consumer education." In the process of selling products, producers talk to consumers about production practice, local seasonality, and how to cook and eat the food. Most survey respondents agree (94 percent) that "consumers do not understand the seasonality of agriculture" which directly impacts consumers in their support of local foods and producers in their education attempts. On a similar note, most people agree (98 percent) that "consumer education is essential to the success of local agriculture." With an increase in the popularity of the local food movement, comes an increase in encounters with well-intentioned but not well-informed CSA members. Judy describes some of her experiences:

I think up until this year, it's been a lot of preaching to the choir where you get the people who are already searching for something different. I think this year is about educating and hacking into markets that have never heard of the CSA. [These new members are] kind of clueless, but it does breed some interesting and hard questions. A lady called yesterday, "I don't like kale and I don't want it, can I return it?" Sam [answered the phone and] had to say, "We're not a grocery store, we're a farm, did you know what you were signing up for?" She responded, "but I don't want kale, I want potatoes." Sam replied, "We're a farm—we have potatoes and they are in the ground, but they aren't ready." So, when you reach out to a whole audience that doesn't know anything about seasonality and their food system, it's difficult. ...Someone else called and said, "I'm really glad I joined, everything looks beautiful, but I have a really dumb question. I've always

purchased lettuce that's been washed and in a bag and I have a head of lettuce and I don't know what to do with it." And good for her for taking a chance and signing up for a CSA, but can you imagine? There's just a lot of education (Judy, interview, July 2, 2010).

As these anecdotes show, in the global food system, consumers have lost touch with local ecologies and the seasonality of agriculture because tomatoes and apples are available year-round. The divide between production and consumption makes consumer education essential to the local food movement. Nevertheless, consumer education alone is not a realistic solution.

Consumer education has been a keystone of the local food movement, nationally and locally. This can be seen through the spike in books and films on the agro-food industry in the past five years (films include *Food Inc.*, *King Corn*, *Farmer John*). In 2009 alone, over twenty books were published on the how-tos of the food system (how to eat like a locavore, find markets in New York City, convert your lawn into a garden, etc.). Many of the books and films on the food system end with—buy local, support your local farmers, join a CSA.

This media attention has paid off and people are more aware of the food system. However, this education approach is largely targeting already educated consumers. In Ft. Collins, food producers and food advocates are highly educated with college education and advanced degrees. This is apparent in the demographics of the survey respondents (see Chart 4). All respondents have at least had some college; the majority have a 4-year degree (39 percent) or a Master's Degree (40 percent). Granted, this survey was distributed through a convenience sampling of people that self-claimed participation in the movement; however the high level of education is noteworthy.

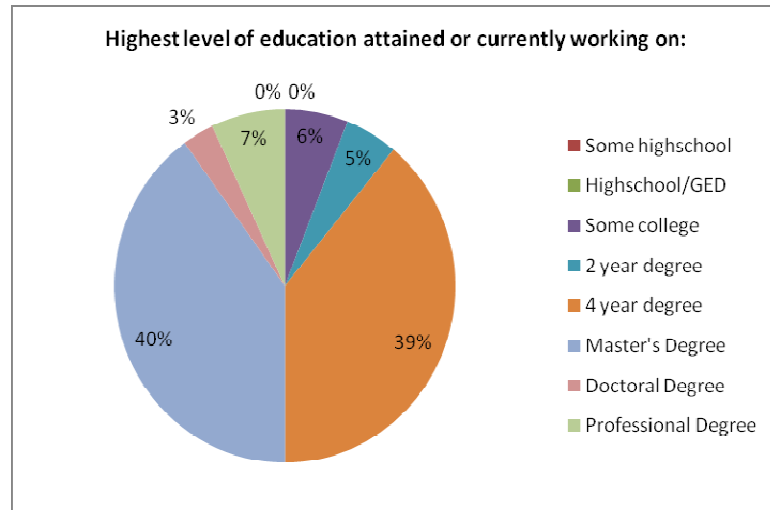


Chart 4: Level of education, survey response (n=67)

The support of the food movement among highly educated people (see Chart 4) parallels national trends. Along with their education, people involved in the movement tend to have higher income levels. Higher education and higher income lead to increased spending on food, especially organic or local food. In the Northern Colorado Regional Food Assessment, the participating counties (Boulder, Weld, and Larimer) collected various data, including the average amount spent on produce. The differences between the counties are significant (see Figure 4). Boulder is known for its great farmers' markets (twice a week in the summer), which are often used as a model for other aspiring markets. The strong Boulder local food market may be tied to high education and income level of residents in the county and the higher than national average spent on produce. The lower average education and income levels in Weld and Larimer Counties may account for the lower average (below national and Colorado averages) spent on produce.

## Annual Per Capita Spending on Produce

Based on per capita weekly spending on produce (CSU study average), per capita population estimate adjustments for county buying patterns

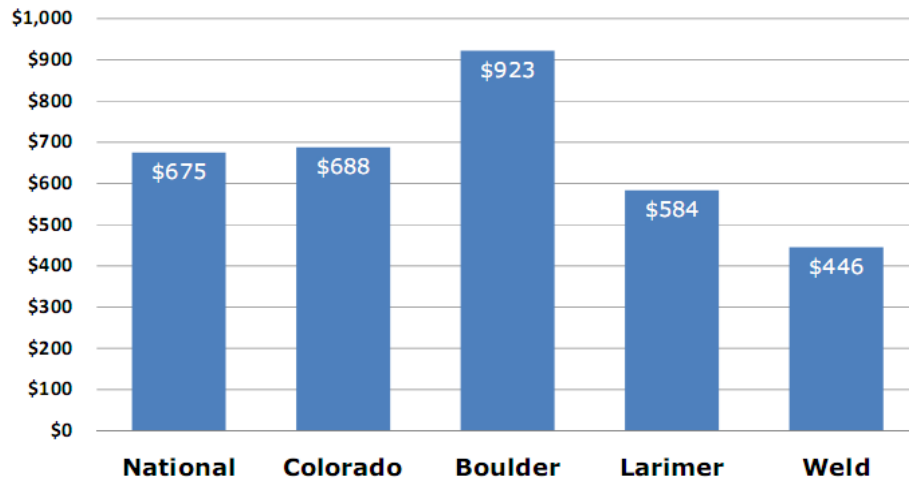


Figure 4: Comparison of Annual Per Capita Spending on Produce (adapted from Northern Colorado Regional Food Assessment 2010:46)

### *Mainstream Support and Market Distribution*

The food movement is often critiqued for its highly educated and wealthy supporters, to the exclusion of other community members. The food community sees this lack of mainstream support as a limitation. Survey respondents disagree (82 percent) that “mainstream society supports local agriculture production.” The Ft. Collins food movement is attempting to branch out from the class-based support of local food and bring social justice to the table. A local non-profit, The Growing Project, is committed to providing food for low-income people in the community through gleaning projects<sup>15</sup> and community gardens. In addition, many local farms and community gardens donate produce to the Food Bank of Larimer County (over 197,000 pounds donated in 2008) to

<sup>15</sup> Farmers often do not harvest all the produce in the fields. A farmer may decide not to harvest produce because he or she does not have the money or labor to harvest, the produce has been deemed “seconds,” or there is not a market for the produce. In these instances, that farmer can notify a group like The Growing Project and they organize volunteers to “glean” the fields—harvest the produce and donate it to the Food Bank or other community groups.



be distributed to local families (Larimer County Food Bank N.d.). The Food Bank also comes to the Old Town market and collects boxes of produce from vendors. Last year, through this relationship, 2,400 pounds of produce were donated (Larimer County Farmers' Market 2010). However, despite these efforts to include the broader community, the Ft. Collins food community consists largely of local producers marketing to educated middle to upper class consumers. To remedy this peripheral support, producers and advocates discuss the need for a distribution system in Northern Colorado.

Some Colorado communities, like Boulder and Denver, have systems that centralize ordering and distribution of local foodstuffs. Boulder is different from Larimer County. Boulder's restricted growth boundaries set aside land for agriculture that is close to urban areas and also promotes dense urban growth. These land use policies make a local food distribution system (Door to Door Organics) easier to coordinate. In Denver, land use planning has not been as proactive as Boulder, so farms tend to be farther away from urban areas, but the urban concentration provides a large market for local and organic food. Grower's Organic, based in Denver, serves restaurants in the Denver area. Grower's Organic is a producer cooperative and distributor. The cooperative buys organic produce wholesale from producers (local, when available) and sells and delivers to restaurants. In Larimer County, land use planning has not been as proactive. Agricultural land is disappearing and urban growth is not concentrated. These factors, in addition to differences in restaurants and clientele, make a distribution system in Ft. Collins difficult.

Currently, many small businesses in Ft. Collins buy "local" produce from Denver and Boulder. Ted emphatically proclaims this action as "false support" and says, "A lot

of these restaurants are riding the local food wave, but just buying from the Grower's Organic" (interview, August 17, 2009). In response, Ted and Susan, two Ft. Collins' producers, joined forces and created their own informal distribution system. They merged their product availability and offered each other's products to their respective clients. Producers are committed to the local market and want to collaborate, but to do so they have to sidestep turf wars over retail accounts, valuations of quality, and competition based on size. In order to have a local distribution system that just sells local food (not non-local organic food, like Grower's Organic and Door to Door), local production has to be able to meet local demand. In order to produce the amount of produce needed to meet restaurant demand, Ft. Collins' producers will have to coordinate product availability between all the farms, large and small. This is difficult because one farm, Martin Farms, produces more food than all the other farms combined. A key food advocate reflects on the difficulty of collaboration between large and small producers and says:

So in some sense, what [large producers are] doing is inviting [small producers] to collaborate with [them]. What does it look like for somebody with 3, 5, 10 acres to collaborate with [a large farm] unless [the small producer] want[s] to be a real specialty niche provider for something that [the large producer] needs more of. I think that's really the dilemma for the small producers at a personal, emotional level. They want to be independent, they want to have their own business, and a lot of them, I've found, are really not so inclined to collaborate (David, interview, February 19, 2010).

Producers want to work together to meet the growing interest in local food, but logistical and personal barriers complicate the task. Food producers and food advocates are working to improve the distribution system, but as many producers note, the relationships needed to collaborate on a system are often more difficult to build than the physical market or distribution space.

Food producers and advocates often look to the distribution system as a way to garner more mainstream support. Many people emphasize the need for a permanent marketplace structure, which would create a yearlong outlet for local producers and businesses, provide community spaces, and stimulate the local living economy. The concept for a community marketplace originated from the food community—producers, Be Local, and Northern Colorado Food Incubator (NCFI). This concept moved beyond the food community when the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) got on board. The Ft. Collins Community Marketplace is currently a collaboration of the DDA, NCFI, Be Local, and CSU Center for Fair and Alternative Trade (CFAT). This marketplace will be a year-round community market that will “serve as the intersection of locally sustainable and globally fair entrepreneurial practices and values” (DDA N.d.). This collaborative community project, a “market-based solution for the conscious consumer economy” holds great hope for producers as they will have a more consistent market to sell to and consumers will have a more stable outlet to buy value-based, local products. In the plans for the marketplace (proposed completion in 2012), there will be space for a permanent retailers (New Belgium tasting room, producer cooperative green grocer, butcher, bakery), ambulatory retailers (seasonal produce, crafts), and business tenants (sustainability-based businesses). The advisory board for the marketplace is also discussing the possibility of the marketplace housing a distribution system. Perhaps, the green grocer or a Ft. Collins local store could provide the physical space (storage, refrigeration) for a distribution system.

The Community Marketplace is an example of collective action in the movement. As a group, producers and advocates identified a problem, the limited distribution system

and non-permanent space for local products, and came up with a plan. This marketplace project is a collaborative effort that speaks to collective action; yet, it still relies on conscious consumers and enterprises to “energize the conscious consumer economy” (CFAT 2009:4). In the Marketplace, conscious consumers will shop at stores and buy from vendors who sell local and fair trade products. Raynolds and Wilkinson (2007:34) argue that fair trade, as a form of conscious consumption, “has emerged as a constituent component of the new forces of market construction, coordination, and regulation which link social movements, commodities, and policies in new global networks.” According to a recent report, the vision for the Marketplace is to provide a place to “brin[g] together the vibrant local food system and the engaged customers...[which] seeks to give increased vitality to the local and regional economy” (DDA 2009:3). The broader goals of the Marketplace aim to “celebrate...a vibrant downtown and community, and healthy agricultural land and environment” (DDA 2009:1). Change is happening through the market and not through changes in the policy that structures the market.

### *Agriculture Policy and the Role of the Government*

Farmers see themselves as being very self-reliant. They are. Producers are resourceful, creative, and passionate. Alternative production practices, community relationships, and radical ideals separate many of the local food producers from the larger agricultural industry. Still, these farmers live and work within a global agro-food system. The “alternative” continues to be defined in relation to the “conventional.” If the alternative is to challenge the current system and make food systems more locally rooted, then alternative social movements have to engage with the bigger political structures. In this section, I will discuss US farm policy in relation to what it means to be a “small

family farm.” I will also talk about how producers view agriculture policy. Producers know they are farming against the grain. They understand how federal and local policy affects local agriculture. They emphasize the social and economic qualities of local food and place less attention on the policies that continue to limit the viability of local food.

### Small Family Farms in the US

Most producers growing for the local market are labeled “small family farms.” The USDA farm size definition based on GCFI classifies a farm as small if their annual GCFI is less than \$250,000. In 2007, ninety-one percent of all farms in the US were classified as small, constituting twenty-three percent of agricultural production. Of small farms, the majority (60 percent) is noncommercial and of the noncommercial, 22 percent have a GCFI of less than \$1,000 (Hoppe, MacDonald, and Korb 2010). Even though small farms represent a majority of farms, US farm production continues to shift to large farming operations that have competitive advantage and stronger financial performance. The number of very large farms (GCFI of \$1,000,000 or more) and their percentage share of sales grew between 1982 and 2007 while the number of small commercial farms decreased. In 2007, the number of small noncommercial farms increased (over 50 percent of all farms), in part because of efforts by the USDA to count all small farms, but their contribution to total agriculture production has not increased (Hoppe, MacDonald, and Korb 2010). Another way to analyze the US farm sector is to look at farm size and production output. The majority of US farms, 54.4 percent in 2007, are small (less than 100 acres) yet these small farms only represent 4.8 percent of total farmland and 3.7 percent of harvested cropland. On the other hand, only 4.2 percent of all farms are large (over 2000 acres), but they account for 39.4 percent of farmland and 39.6 percent of

harvested land (USDA Census 2007). Hoppe, MacDonald, and Korb (2010) predict that large farms will continue to increase, small commercial farms will continue to decline, and noncommercial farms will remain steady. Noncommercial farms, according to their analysis, “exist independently of the farm economy, so competition from larger farms is less likely to reduce their numbers” (Hoppe, MacDonald, and Korb 2010:*iv*).

US farm policy is often stated in terms that appear to support small family farmers; however, farm policy disproportionately and negatively affects small farmers. For example, the stated goal of agricultural subsidies is to support rural development, ensure domestic food security (sufficient production), and provide a “safety net” for farmers. Yet, many analysts argue the farm lobby is a main beneficiary as targeted industries (commodity producers) receive more benefits than other industries (small and non-commodity producers) in the agriculture sector (Riedl 2002). While the majority of farms in the US are “family owned,” corporate interests manipulate many farms. Corporations tend to have greater power over farms as farm size increases, regardless of whether the farm is family owned. The corporate and large-scale farms wield influence in the “alternative agriculture” arenas also. In 2007, 64.7 percent of farms growing organic produce were less than 100 acres; however, these farms only constituted 6.4 percent of total organic acreage. Large farms (over 2000 acres) represent 2.7 percent of organic farms yet 43.1 percent of total organic acreage (USDA Census 2007). Despite the prevalence of small farms, the majority of food grown in the US is grown on large-scale operations with ties to agribusiness corporations, who have much to lose if current policy changes.

Historically, small-scale farmers in the US have struggled financially and have had a lower than average household income; however, since 1990 farm household incomes have equaled average US household income and in 1996, surpassed the US average (USDA in Mishra and Sandretto 2002). This overall increase in farm income and the resulting income stability, a main goal of US farm policy, is not due to an increase in farm income (higher prices for production, etc.), but rather from an increase in non-farm income (Mishra and Sandretto 2002). US farmers' financial struggle has led to an increase in contract farming, expanded production scale, and employment in non-farm sectors of the economy. In other words, commodity production, the main emphasis of US farm policy, has not provided most farmers with a stable income. Food producers in the US, whether producing for a global, national, or local market, struggle for financial stability. The farmer who grows and sells conventionally and the farmer who grows and sells for alternative markets are affected by the predominance of corporate agriculture, US farm policy, and low priced foodstuffs.

#### Political Engagement in Ft. Collins

The connection between the global food regime and the local food movement tends to come second to social and economic concerns. In my interviews, I asked producers and advocates if there are any government policies (federal, state, local) that are helpful to them, hurt them, or would be beneficial. Most people gave brief responses and did not seem overly excited about the question. The two most common responses were that agricultural subsidies hurt small producers and government farm programs are not designed to meet the needs of small producers. On a positive note, producers talked about the Workforce Center that has provided farm labor at a reduced cost, the National

Resource and Conservation Service that has helped with farm improvement funding, and the Farm Service Agency that has assisted producers in designing financial plans and securing farm loans. Producers talked about some programs, but spoke largely of people involved in government programs. They mentioned by name cooperative extension agents, Farm Service agents, and marketing experts. These relationships and the knowledge shared have helped producers navigate the farming world. However, the policies behind the people were rarely discussed.

Despite producers' reluctance to talk about farm policy, they understand the complexities of the food system. As one small-scale producer acknowledges, "I really understand why big agriculture is upset [about falling commodity prices], but it's not the fault of the small producers...it's the big corporate producers" (Ann, interview, July 5, 2009). In the survey, most respondents agree (78 percent) that "current federal farm policy has a negative impact on local production." Another producer discusses the social impacts of farm policy:

People still kind of think it's not real—you can't do it as a small farm. The whole mentality, this was taught to us, it wasn't an accident. It was very much thought out—get big or get out. It was very much thought out, it wasn't at all an accident. In the 1960s, the USDA, that was their slogan, get big or get out. And that still exists. So people are a little confused still. I do think [local food is] very faddy. It might seem all hunky dory, but it's not. There haven't been very many strides in terms of farmers making a living (Charles, interview, August 31, 2009).

Even though food advocates and producers are aware of the impact of federal policy on the regional food system, they are not likely to challenge policy as a way to improve food security. Less than half (45 percent) cited the large-scale agriculture industry as a barrier to local agriculture production. In a sense, the local food community is saying—we know federal farm policy is harmful, but can we do anything to change that?



Federal farm policy is not a main target for change. On the other hand, the local government, perhaps because of personal relationships and the local community, is a potential key player. Most (89 percent) people think that “local government should promote local food production” but only some (31 percent) cite city or county government as “very important” to the success and viability of local agriculture. In comparison, consumers and producers were cited as very important (81 percent for each). Consumers and producers, through relationships and community, appear to be more important to the food movement than the government or policy. The role of local government may be to support local and small-scale producers rather than to make formal policy change, as one producer says:

I'd like to see a local government program that covers agriculture more in this area. ... You drive to old farms and it's all housing now and the county commissioners, while we have some that are strongly rooted in agriculture, it's not for the small grower. Just more local government involvement, not like *that* because that sounds like I want my government involved, but in a positive way, a supportive way. That would be helpful (Susan, interview, September 10, 2009).

People involved in the local food movement in Ft. Collins seem to believe that the success of the local food movement hinges more on local community and government support than on policy changes. Producers want government officials and community members to think about food and commit to buying more local food. On the other hand, they are not drafting policy proposals to change county land and water use or participating in farm bill lobbying. Ft. Collins producers may not currently be challenging agriculture policies, but they are not standing idly by. For example, in 2004, a group of Colorado producers, the leaders from Ft. Collins, appealed to the Colorado Board of Health to modify raw milk regulations in Colorado to permit consumers to obtain raw milk (non-pasteurized) for personal consumption. The Raw Milk Association of Colorado

(RMAC) succeeded. Consumers can buy a “share” of a cow or goat. In exchange for partial ownership of the animal, consumers receive raw dairy products (milk, yogurt, cheese).

In another example, cattle and beef industry organizations and producers in the West rallied in Ft. Collins on August 27, 2010 to speak up about competition in the cattle industry. The Colorado beef industry ranks tenth in production in the US and is Colorado’s largest agriculture industry.<sup>16</sup> Despite the importance of the cattle industry, beef producers (12,000 in Colorado) struggle to be viable as producer profits have reached record lows. Currently, when a consumer purchases beef, only about 46 cents of every dollar goes back to the producer; the majority of the income (64 cents) goes to companies that purchase, slaughter, process, market, and distribute the beef (Blevins 2010). In June 2010, the Obama administration and USDA secretary Tom Vilsack proposed new rules to increase competition in the meatpacking industry (four meatpackers<sup>17</sup> control 80 percent of the market) and help small producers survive in the vertically and horizontally integrated livestock industry. The cattle industry has come together to contest the power of the meat agribusiness corporations. The federal government (USDA and Department of Justice) responded with proposed regulations and people involved in the cattle industry gathered in Ft. Collins to voice their thoughts about government involvement, both positive and negative. The proposed legislation is targeted at large meatpackers; however, some small producers who direct market to consumers in

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<sup>16</sup> Almost one-third of the counties in Colorado are “economically dependent” on the cattle industry. Cash receipts for cattle and calf sales represent over half of the gross farm income for the state (\$2.5 billion of the total \$4.9 billion) (Colorado Beef Council N.d)

<sup>17</sup> JBS of Brazil, Tyson Foods, Cargill, and National Beef

Colorado express concern about the unintended consequences on small producers (Allmer 2010).

Generally speaking, the Ft. Collins community seeks out support for local food through direct relationships and consumer education. Education and direct relationships may be central to the nascent stage of the local food movement in Ft. Collins; nevertheless, for local food to substantially challenge the global food system, the message will need to become more politically and economically focused. A key local food advocate acknowledged the importance of policy in moving the local food movement forward and said it would be great if someone took up the issue, but it was not his interest.

One glimmer of politically-oriented food policy change comes from the Transition Movement, an international grassroots organization that aims to “build community resilience in response to the challenges of peak oil, climate change and the economic crisis” (Transition US 2010). In May 2008, the Transition Movement moved beyond Europe and made its first presence in the US in Boulder, Colorado. Transition Boulder and Transition Colorado have begun to challenge land-use policy in Boulder County and advocate for increased public land for food production. Transition Ft. Collins is not on the radar yet, but with the Transition Movement’s concern about local sustainability in the post-peak oil times, discussions of land-use and local food policy will have a larger presence at the table. If local is currently a fad, the Transition Movement may be important in planning for when regional food security becomes a necessity.

Charles speaks to the future of local:

Right now it’s a fad and it’s cool and hip to be a farmer and it’s going to wear out because it’s hard to be a farmer. So, it will go away. ...If it did become

economically viable then I think that would be another thing that would change it from fad to reality (interview, August 31, 2009).

The local food movement may benefit greatly from the internationally organized and networked Transition Movement as long as the Transition Movement's solutions are not universal models for change. The barriers that limit food security in Northern Colorado are local concerns that will require collective action aimed at local solutions.

Currently however, as Charles alluded to, local food is not mainstream. When local food becomes necessary or becomes economically viable, maybe then it will move out of its trend-like state.

## **Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion**

In this thesis, I have reviewed the local food movement in the context of the larger global food regime. I have presented my research methodology, my data findings, and my analysis of their importance and meaning. In this chapter, I briefly review the key points in my research and relate these to the local food literature and to implications for the movement in Northern Colorado.

In Ft. Collins, people from various backgrounds, experiences, and personal commitments come together to build a local food system. This movement fights to bring fresh food to the community, decrease the carbon footprint of food, and support local living economies. It is a healthy and well-intentioned movement. People want to reconnect with the land and with the culture of food. Individuals with passionate commitments to producing and consuming food ground the movement. These personal policies often overlap and allow the community to collaborate and set goals. The strong producer network and food community solidify the foundation of a burgeoning local food system. Those involved in local food acknowledge the barriers to strengthening the local foodshed. The main barriers to tackle include developing the local market, increasing consumer education, and formalizing a distribution system. These are important projects. However, of equal importance are the less tangible barriers like land use, limited “stable lands,” access to affordable land and water, food policies, and class-based realities. In order to “make it” as a local producer, most producers have outside income, a “little something to sweeten the deal.” The producers who overcome these barriers, albeit

marginally, and farm locally tend to have personal wealth, land, or other income sources. Economic viability seems to require a lot of luck or access to capital that positions people to make farming work. Similarly, a consumption-based approach relies on wealthy and educated consumers to fork out money for the higher-valued local food. Producers and advocates often recognized the impact of these structural barriers, but they did not focus their energies on addressing them.

Initially, my research began as an analysis of the economic viability of the local food movement in Northern Colorado. My economic focus was inspired by the neoliberal economic critiques of local food. Through my research, my analysis expanded. I began to have a deeper understanding of people's commitment to local food and place-based action. Producers and advocates emphasize their non-economic reasons for farming that include: loving the land, working with the soil, and building a community. Theisen (2009), a local producer and advocate argues: "Relationships must be built. Local is not the answer alone and local is not synonymous with good. Relationships must be built." The relationships in the Ft. Collins food community are viewed as central to the movement and key to the future of the movement. The focus on consumer education and direct marketing suggest the role of such relationships.

In addition to relationships, producers indicated that a sustainable and locally rooted food system also depends on the market. Even though the market tends to commodify these non-economic and place-based characteristics of food, the movement continues to emphasize the role of market and conscious consumers. I am not implying that local food cannot and does not grow through market and consumption-based strategies. Rather, they alone—are not enough. Even with a market-based approach,

many producers continue to struggle. Within a capitalist system, the market will weed out weaker producers—which may be those without resources or those working on a small scale. Local food system goals and food security goals may not be met if working just within a capitalist framework.

Economic factors have to be addressed in developing local food systems. People have to make a living. However, local food is not just economics. If local food represents a type of civic agriculture, then, as DeLind and Bingen (2008) argue, the movement has to be politically engaged. As stated earlier, Lyson (2004) upholds civic agriculture as an alternative to the global agro-food system wherein people are engaged through their food choices: CSA, farmers' markets, and u-pick operations. This individual and consumption-based approach to local food, as DeLind and Bingen (2008) argue is not necessarily civic.

They state:

While “civic agriculture” is a welcome term, allowing academics, practitioners, and the public-at-large to speak collectively about these grassroots efforts, it also has helped to solidify a set of understandings that conflate things “local”—and in this case local food and farming—with things “civic.” In particular, it tends to direct our attention away from the culture of place and toward a functionally discrete and largely rational and market-based sense of civic engagement and political activity (DeLind and Bingen 2008:128).

DeLind and Bingen continue to describe “civic” as being “bound into democratic process and engagement” (2008:129). In this sense, buying local potatoes or riding a bike to the farmers' markets are not inherently civic activities as they are “far too instrumental” (DeLind and Bingen 2008:129). Rather, for local food to be civic, it has to “allow for deeply contextualized understanding of the particularities of place, identify the multiple opportunities for negotiating place-based meaning, and incorporate concerns with community responsibility and accountability” (130). The community-based focus of the

Ft. Collins local food movement provides a solid foundation for civic engagement. Yet, the local concerns and place-based realities (land, water, labor, and markets) are not fully incorporated into the larger community's responsibility or accountability system. Local food has to shift from its individual, consumption and market-based approach to a collective and civic movement if local food is to continue and become integrated into a place-based future of Ft. Collins.

In the market-based world we live in, it is difficult to incorporate these sensual, spiritual, and value-based meanings into our understanding of food and of place, as DeLind and Bingen (2008) advocate. If local food is to grow and incorporate emotions and a sense of place, even though contradictory, local food, first, has to be economically viable. Producers and consumers participate in local food for a variety of non-economic reasons, but if producers continue to end seasons in the red, then, many will leave their love of farming to pay the bills. And local food will be a dead end. Localism movements are built on relationships, place-based sentiments, and on re-directing the flow of money back into the local community. Civic engagement in local agriculture is a great goal, but in addition to being civic, local agriculture also has to be economically viable and sustainable for the long term.

Economic factors are essential to the success of a local food system. Yet, economic discussions and plans alone cannot adequately address the dynamic nature of building, maintaining, and sustaining local food systems. Feenstra (2002) in her analysis of California local food system projects (through the University of California Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program, SAREP) concludes that to be sustainable and community-supported food systems, the projects need to create four types of space:



social, political, intellectual, and economic. If systems create these spaces then the “three P’s” will be better addressed: public participation, partnerships, and principles or values (Feenstra 2002). Feenstra’s analysis and evaluation of the SAREP-supported projects calls attention to the equal importance of the various spaces.

In Ft. Collins, the food movement has established social and economic spaces, but has weak intellectual and political spaces. The social spaces encourage celebration of local food and foster civic and public participation. The economic-focus of many Be Local and NCFI events and the various production models in Ft. Collins speak to the economic space—a commitment to making local food economically viable. While Be Local, NCFI, and producer groups work closely with people at CSU and the local community, providing an intellectual space, there is a lack of coordination and follow-through. According to Feenstra (2002:103), intellectual space includes: “articulating the vision of a sustainable food system...conceptualizing a community food system initiative... and reflecting on progress and future plans with local residents.” Be Local and NCFI are involved in coordinating and planning the local food system and bring various community partners together. Be Local and the academic community have worked on marketing local food, community education, producer-specific production and marketing techniques, and to some extent, planning for the future. Many graduate students in Sociology and Agriculture and Resource Economics have worked with producers and the local market; however, the producers mentioned that they often did not see the results of earlier research. Even in my own research, producers suggested that they have been interviewed countless times about the local food system, but to what end? Researching the local community and having the producer voice are important to the

movement's future planning. However, producers may get burnt out talking about the same things to various people who are not communicating with each other. I hope to partially resolve this tension by presenting my data to the food community. Even so, it seems as if a lot will be lost due to limited research coordination. The intellectual space has been carved out, but could it benefit from increased coordination between partners. As the movement continues, it should also incorporate an intentional reflection and evaluation process.

The fourth space that Feenstra (2002) stressed, political space, seems to be the least developed in Ft. Collins. As stated, the movement is interdisciplinary and community based, but on the whole, is not politically minded. Feenstra argues that political spaces are important because they “can help food system pilot projects or models institutionalize their efforts within a community...[which] stabilizes the activities and allows them to mature in place” (103). The high turnover of farmers and the struggles of producers to find affordable land in Ft. Collins are signs that, if the food system wants to mature, it has to begin developing a more active political space. The continuance of a local food system depends on the movement's ability to institutionalize, through policy or land agreements, in order to support local producers for the long term. The Community Marketplace project is a great step towards creating a more consistent market for producers. Yet, the Community Marketplace does not directly address land-use policies that continue to impact farmers' ability to farm for the local market. The Northern Colorado Regional Food Assessment is beginning to work on the more structural aspects of developing a regional food system. I am optimistic that the inter-county and inter-agency efforts will support a regional food system. The dark side of the agro-food system

remains largely unaddressed—federal and global food policy. Follett (2009) argues a similar point to Feenstra (2002). He concludes that in order for “strong alternative food networks” to create change, they have to address the impacts of federal policy and create space for public engagement.

There is an abundance of opportunity for the local food movement in Ft. Collins. The community is interested in and committed to supporting local producers. A local food system has the potential to increase access to fresh food, support Northern Colorado businesses, and preserve farmland for the future. That being said, the agriculture market is not a free market. Government policies shape food prices, food distribution, and farmer livelihoods. Local markets can change the food system, but without collective and political action, local food will continue to be a fringe movement. The global market does wield incredible power and we are not going to change that policy tomorrow, but we have to realize that we need to try. Some policy factors to be addressed to increase food security and develop local food systems include:

1. Have central distribution systems as an integral part of the community
2. Ensure that land and water rights do not introduce insurmountable risks for people wanting to enter the food market
3. Enable water rights to be accessible and affordable to farmers and designed to meet the needs of specialty crop production
4. Make sure that agricultural land has necessary tax exemption and zoning so that it is assessed by its marketable value as farmland, not as potential development land

My research is not comprehensive, but it is clear that advocates and producers are working hard to strengthen the local food system. I applaud them and their efforts. However, a high-functioning local food system will require that people question current policies and come together in an even more cooperative way. The food movement has responded to neoliberal economic and market ideology and focused its efforts on creating and sustaining alternative food markets. Unfortunately, adding a new market to the agro-food system will do little to shift the power structures of the system. We cannot feel our way through the movement; we have to take a serious look at policy. One way to approach policy and structure-related factors is via collaborative efforts. I will discuss possible organization models for this kind of work below.

To develop a local food system, producers have to address barriers at the local level. However, local agriculture, as all agriculture, is shaped by the three main production constraints: land, labor, and capital. The producer population in my research was small and is not class stratified. Despite the small sample size, the end result is the same—local food production is not economically viable. For example, if a producer inherits land, he or she may be a step ahead of other producers, but the producer still has to deal with labor and capital constraints. Agriculture production, historically and currently, relies on exploited labor, in a Marxist sense. This is no different in local agriculture. Local farms depend on educated middle to upper middle class young people for labor. These young laborers work for vegetables, for an hourly wage without benefits, or for a stipend. If a local farm is large enough, it may hire migrant laborers, who are minimally compensated for their labor. The future of local food is dependent on a constant supply of young idealistic workers or migrant farm workers who are willing to

plant, hoe, and harvest for little to no financial gain. All producers have to juggle the same constraints of land, labor, and capital to become economically viable. However, producers have access to different resources, which impacts their individual decisions and how they work to be economically viable. Therefore, to shift any of these agricultural constraints, we have to look at the policies that structure land use, access to capital, and labor laws.

There are various ways to deal with the constraints of local food production in order to create a sustainable system (per Feenstra 2002) and uphold the principles of civic agriculture. First, the most common approach is to increase consumer education efforts and marketing campaigns. As I have already argued, these efforts are not enough. Second, is to create a more collaborative and engaged food community. And third, is to engage with policy at the local, state, or federal level. I think that a combined approach is best—work to build a more collaborative community that can and does address the consumer, producer, and policy-level barriers.

Throughout the US, communities have created models to foster the necessary social, political, economic, and intellectual spaces needed for sustainable food systems. One of the most common approaches is to develop a Food Policy Council (FPC) that brings various stakeholders together to discuss food security. FPCs can be sponsored by government organizations (state, county, or city level) or non-government organizations. Currently there are 100 FPCs in the US and five in Colorado. Boulder County has an FPC, sponsored by the Boulder County Extension agency, but there is not an FPC for Northern Colorado. There are national organizations like the Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) that encourage communities to develop FPCs (see CFSC N.d.).

Another model is the producer cooperative. This model focuses more on producers to help them engage with the larger food structures is a producer cooperative. The Colorado Farm Bureau and Rocky Mountain Farmers Union are both cooperative structures, but they are organized on the state level and largely deal with commodity agriculture. There are also industry specific groups such as the National Corn Growers Association, Colorado Cattlemen, and Colorado Potato Administrative Council. These groups organize producers and call for policy change at state and national levels. However, these groups often do not address the barriers that small-scale specialty producers face. In Ft. Collins, producers have discussed creating a producer cooperative at the local level, but few steps have been made to formalize such a cooperative. A cooperative structure would allow producers to act as a more integrated force to share resources, develop individual and group plans (marketing, financial, policy), and engage with the food-related structures.

An NGO-type organization is another model in which networks producers and help them address the structural barriers. Be Local has played a supportive role in the producer community, drawn attention to the importance of local businesses, and worked hard to educate consumers. The Legacy Land Trust, another NGO in Northern Colorado, has made impressive strides in preserving land for open space, wildlife habitat, and agriculture. Be Local, the Legacy Land Trust, and other NGOs are important to the Northern Colorado food community. In coordination with more producer-oriented efforts or with another organization, these efforts could make an important difference in developing food security. Across the US, there are many examples of non-profit organizations that work to address the variety of concerns that impact rural communities,

beginning farmers, and local food systems. For example, the Land Stewardship Project, a NGO that supports agriculture on a statewide level in Minnesota, has four specific areas of focus that include: community based food and economic development, farm beginnings, policy and organizing, and stewardship science. A similar multi-pronged approach in Northern Colorado may help the producers, consumers, and communities develop a local food system that fully considers the constraints to local production.

In addition to food-related collaboration, Northern Colorado could also explore more horizontal collaboration. The Northern Colorado Regional Food Assessment and the Community Marketplace are great examples of collaboration between organizations and communities. The Community Marketplace has brought the DDA, Be Local, and food producers together. This project could foster greater ties between food and tourism, the Better Business Bureau (BBB), and the Chamber of Commerce. The increase in consumers' interest in food has spiked demand for agriculture tourism. Preserving farmland and open space are important for the economic and tourism development of Northern Colorado because people visit, move to and live in Ft. Collins for the outdoor and "back to the land" lifestyle. Perhaps, by putting a market value on landscapes, farmers' markets, or events (e.g. a bike farm tour similar to Tour de Fat), farming will become a bigger priority in long-term planning decisions.

An organization can also be institutionalized at the government level, through a university or extension agency. Boulder County has a good beginning farmer program that is open to beginning farmers in Larimer County. This program provides classes, resources, and mentors for people interested in farming and producers in their first few years of farming. The beginning farmer program is a good start, but it does not reach all

producers in Northern Colorado, does not directly deal with policy, and has limited staff and resources to meet the needs of Northern Colorado agriculture. In Larimer County, the Rural Land Use Center is making strides to preserve open space and allow producers to farm open space, but as always, there is more to be done. At a state-level, the Colorado Proud program, through the Colorado Department of Agriculture, is well-intentioned, but focuses on marketing and consumer education and may not be as helpful to small-scale producers who rely on direct marketing. Most government models are organized at the state level through the Department of Agriculture or at the county level through extension agencies. Some programs also collaborate between universities and extension, like CSU's Specialty Crops program. All of the government programs in Colorado provide producers with resources and access to specialists in their field, but a more integrated program may help the various programs communicate with each other. For example, the Beginning Farmer Center in Iowa, through legislative action, became an integral part of Iowa State University's extension service. This program is geared to meet the various needs of farmers starting out in Iowa.

Producers in Ft. Collins want to change the difficult reality of producing food for the local market, but they cannot do it alone. Currently, there is an exciting energy around local food in Northern Colorado. Now seems like a good time to channel the energy into discussions about the future of an economically viable and sustainable local food system. There are barriers to local food, but as other communities have shown, producers, consumers, and communities can work together to make change happen—to re-integrate local food into Northern Colorado landscapes and economies.



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## Appendix 1: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

1. How long have you been producing food? How long have you been working the land at your current location? How many acres do you manage/plant? What are the major products grown/raised? What percent of your produce is sold through a CSA, the Farmers' Market (how many?), direct sales (who?)? If you have a CSA, how many members do you have, when is the season, and what is the rate of membership? How long have you lived Northern Colorado? How old are you?
2. Is there, in your view, a local food movement in Fort Collins? What is this movement about, how long has it been operating, and who are the major players involved? Do you consider yourself to be a part of this movement? How did you come to it?
3. What model of production is the most *economically* sustainable (i.e. one that can assure its own future)? Are there limits or challenges you see to the economic viability of this model? What challenges does this model face that conventional production does not?
4. How does the model you just described (question #2) compare to what you do? What are the components to the model you use (production, marketing, distribution)?
5. How did you come to use this model? Are there personal or economic factors that led you to one model of production (land ownership, water rights, labor, personal skills)?
6. What are the biggest problems that you encounter with respect to achieving economic viability?
7. Have you ever had to compromise your standards or your sense of what is important in order to survive financially? Are there times when your production methods did not work? What did you or do you do?
8. What other factors besides economics (the local food movement? community? other producers? consumers?) influence you in your production decisions? Are there social factors that have influenced a change in your production methods or that have encouraged you to continue your production?
9. Are there any moral commitments that motivate you and shape the way you produce food? What is the primary motivating factor in your production decisions?
10. What does producing food for the local community mean to you? Is there anything you would like to change to make food production more satisfying? When you think of the players in the local agriculture community, who do you think of? How many times/day do you speak with or see another producer or person directly involved in agriculture or the local food system? Who do you

speaking to the most? What do you talk about? Throughout year, do you speak with different people or in different amounts?

11. Do you consider other local producers to be friends? Competition? Partners? Professionals? How do the local producers interact with each other? Is there a sense of community, reciprocity, or interdependence?
12. Are there any government programs that are helpful to producers like you? What kinds of programs would you like to see? Are there any ways that the government is hurting producers like you?
13. In your opinion, how does the production model (both philosophical and financial) of your farm/local food system compare to other local agriculture producers/communities?



## Appendix 2: List of Interviews

Amanda	3/6/09
Adam	3/20/09
Sam	4/22/09
Molly	4/30/09
Chris	5/6/09
Jennifer	6/30/09
Judy	7/2/09
Ann	7/05/09, 8/19/09
Ted	8/17/09
Susan	8/19/09, 9/10/09, 2/3/10
Charles	8/31/09
Kelly	9/2/09
John	9/11/09
Catherine	9/23/09
Katie	9/26/09
Will	9/30/09
Matt	9/28/09
Jessi	10/08/09
Dorothy	11/19/09
Jason	12/10/09
David	2/19/10
Jacob	3/2/10
Laurie	3/2/10

## Appendix 3: Online Survey<sup>18</sup>

### Local Agriculture Survey

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#### Introduction, Page 1

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Thank you for your willingness to complete this survey. It should take 15-20 minutes to complete. I am a graduate student in Anthropology at CSU and I am conducting this survey as part of my thesis research. The survey will ask you questions about your personal experience in local agriculture and about how you view the Northern Colorado local food community. All responses will be anonymous. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me (Maureen McNamara) at [mcmcnama@colostate.edu](mailto:mcmcnama@colostate.edu)

1. I consider myself an advocate for local food production.
  - Yes
  - No
  
2. I consider myself a local food producer.
  - Yes
  - No
  
3. I live in:
  - Ft Collins
  - Greater Ft Collins area
  - Laporte
  - Wellington
  - Masonville
  - Windsor
  - Loveland
  - Greeley
  - Cheyenne
  - Other
  
4. I have lived in this community (listed above) for \_\_\_\_\_ years.
  
5. I define "local" as food produced and consumed (select one or more) within:
  - Immediate community
  - City or town
  - County
  - 20 miles
  - 50 miles
  - 100 miles
  - State
  - Region (e.g. Inter-mountain west)
  - Nation
  - Other
  
6. Local agriculture is best defined as a specified distance from farm to table..
  - Yes
  - No

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<sup>18</sup> This survey was originally and designed and posted on Survey Gizmo. To make the survey into a word version (not used for my research), I had to change the layout of the content.

Statements of Agreement, Page 2

7. Local Agriculture and the Local Food Movement: To what extent do you agree with the following statements:

	SA	A	N	D	SD
I have strong feelings about local agriculture.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
There is a local food movement in Ft. Collins.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
The local food movement in Ft. Collins is strong.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
It is easy to participate in or support local agriculture.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Participating in local agriculture is self-satisfying.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Local agriculture is a "safe" career.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
I am consistent in my support of local agriculture.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
When available, I consume local agriculture first.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
I plan to be involved in local agriculture in 5 years.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Producing, supporting, and consuming local food is a moral decision.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

8. To what extent do you agree with the following statements:

	SA	A	N	D	SD
Mainstream society supports local agriculture production	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Consumers influence local agriculture production.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Consumers do not understand agriculture seasonality.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Consumer education is essential to the success of local agriculture.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Community is important to local agriculture.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
There is a core group of local agriculture advocates in the Ft. Collins area.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
There is a high turnover of local food producers in the Ft. Collins area.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
A turnover of local food producers negatively affects the local food community.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
The community of people involved in local food in Ft. Collins is cooperative.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
There is a competitive nature to the local agriculture community.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
The local food community makes it worthwhile to continue in the local food movement.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Many of the people I associate with are a part of the local food community.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
I feel connected to other people in the local food community because they share my values.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Everyone should be involved in local food.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

9. To what extent do you agree with the following statements:

	SA	A	N	D	SD
I am involved in local foods because of its value and not because of economic factors.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
In order for local production to continue, it has to be economically sound.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Increasing the scale of local production would make local agriculture more economically viable.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Local food production is about quality not quantity.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Local market prices cover production costs.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
It is easy to make a profit in local food production.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Efficiency is important to local agriculture production.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

For local producers to succeed, they must rely on social connections. \_\_\_\_\_

For local producers to succeed, they must rely on non-paid help from people they know. \_\_\_\_\_

Small-scale local producers can only make it economically if there is a second household non-farm income. \_\_\_\_\_

There is a strong informal economy in the local food community (i.e. barter, trade) \_\_\_\_\_

Local government is helpful to the long-term success of local production. \_\_\_\_\_

Federal farm policy has a negative impact on local production. \_\_\_\_\_

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 Frame Elicitation, Page 3  
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10. Please respond to the following quote from a May 2009 NY Times article that described Frito-Lay's recent ad campaign highlighting local potato farmers in Florida:

Five different ads will highlight farmers who grow some of the two billion pounds of starchy chipping potatoes the Frito-Lay company uses each year. One is Steve Singleton, who tends 800 acres in Hastings, Fla. "We grow potatoes in Florida, and Lays makes potato chips in Florida" he says in the ad. "It' a pretty good fit."

Frito-Lay is one of several big companies that, along with some large-scale farming concerns, are embracing a broad interpretation of what eating locally means. This mission creep has the original locavores choking on their yerba mate. But food executives who measure marketing budgets in the millions say they are mining the concept because consumers care more than ever about where their food comes from. "This is celebrating the notion of community," said Dave Skena, vice president for potato-chip marketing of Frito-Lay. "We don't use the term "locally grown" because that's a personal issue for so many people."

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

11. Please respond to the following quote:

"The interesting thing I learned was that if you're really concerned about your health, the best decisions for your health turn out to be the best decisions for the farmer and the best decisions for the environment-- and that there is no contradiction there. " --Michael Pollan

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

=====  
 Rankings, Page 4  
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12. Based on what is most important to you, please rate each of the following goals of local agriculture production.

	<b>Most Important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Somewhat</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Not Important</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Decrease carbon footprint						
Provide						

financial stability (for producer)						
Produce high quality food						
Improve environmental health						
Improve personal health						
Enable local food security						
Strengthen local community						
Produce large quantities of food						
Protect U.S. producers						
Connect consumers with food production						
Decrease chemicals usage						
Increase awareness of food production						
Support local producers						

13. Other important production goals \_\_\_\_\_

14. Based on your experience, what are the biggest barriers to local agriculture production in the Ft. Collins area.

	Huge Barrier	Barrier	Small Barrier	Not a Barrier	N/A
Availability of farmland	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Availability of water	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Federal agriculture subsidy programs	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Market price for local food	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Trendiness of local food	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Fickle consumer demand	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Length of Farmers' Market season	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Limited interest from restaurants	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Lack of central distribution system	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Local government support	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Local food community's ability to effect change	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Large scale agriculture industry	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

15. Other barriers to production \_\_\_\_\_

16. Based on your experience, rank the importance of each group to the success and viability of local agriculture production.

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Consumers	_____	_____	_____	_____
Producers	_____	_____	_____	_____
Farmers' Market	_____	_____	_____	_____
Local Restaurants	_____	_____	_____	_____
Local Retail/Wholesale	_____	_____	_____	_____
Local Non-governmental Organizations	_____	_____	_____	_____
Local City Government	_____	_____	_____	_____
Local County Government	_____	_____	_____	_____
State Government	_____	_____	_____	_____
17. Other important groups	_____			

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Background, Page 5

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18. How long have you been involved in local food? \_\_\_\_\_

19. What was the main motivating factor for you to initially become involved in local food?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

20. In what capacity have you and are you involved in local food?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

21. The highest level of education that I have attained or am currently working on is:

- Some high school
- High school/GED
- Some college
- 2 year degree (Associates)
- 4 year degree (BA/BS)
- Master's Degree
- Doctoral Degree
- Professional Degree (PhD, JD)

22. How old are you?

- 20-25
- 26-30
- 31-35
- 36- 40
- 41-45
- 46-50
- 51-55
- 56-60
- 61-65
- 66 or older

23. Gender

- Male
- Female

24. My income allows me to purchase organically produced food:

- whenever I want
- for special occasions
- when it is on sale
- rarely
- never

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 Producer Only, Page 6  
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If you ARE A PRODUCER, please complete page 6. If you are NOT A PRODUCER, please continue to page 7.

25. Based on your own experiences in production, to what extent do you agree with the following statements:

	SA	A	N	D	SD
I get satisfaction from producing food for the local community.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
I plan to continue producing in the Ft. Collins area.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
I plan where I am going to sell my product before I produce it.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
I have a marketing plan in place before I start production.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
I will make a profit on production this year.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
My farm income will cover my costs of production this year.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
In my production, I work on land that does not belong to me.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
I rely on the informal economy (trade, bartering, volunteers) to produce my food products.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
If I had greater access to financial resources, I would be better able to produce for the local market.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

26. To improve the Old Town Farmers' Market, I would recommend to:

- Start the season in May
- Start the season in June
- Extend the season through November
- Have an additional mid-week evening Old Town Farmers' Market
- Hire a full time, year round coordinator
- Have a later start time on Saturdays
- Consolidate all Ft. Collins Farmers' Market into one main Farmers' Market
- Increase the number of producers at the Market
- Decrease the number of producers at the Market
- N/A
- Other

27. Thinking in general terms, please respond to the following questions:

	SA	A	N	D	SD
The Ft. Collins area is an easy place to produce.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
The Ft. Collins area is an easy place to market/sell food locally.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
The Old Town Farmers' Market is a good outlet for selling local products.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
CSA is the most economically viable model of production.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Restaurants are a good market for local products	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

28. Thinking about your own experience and production, please respond to the following questions:

	SA	A	N	D	SD
The Ft. Collins area is an easy place to produce.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
The Ft. Collins area is an easy place to market/sell food locally.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
The Old Town Farmers' Market is a good outlet for selling	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

local products. \_\_\_\_\_  
CSA is the most economically viable model of production. \_\_\_\_\_  
Restaurants are a good market for local products \_\_\_\_\_

29. To me, other producers are:

- Professionals
- Colleagues
- Competitors
- Friends
- Community partners
- Other

30. The Ft. Collins local food community is:

- Supportive
- Cooperative
- Competitive
- Group-minded
- Individualistic
- Other

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Thank You!, Page 7  
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Thank you again for your input in this survey. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me (Maureen McNamara) at [mcmcnama@colostate.edu](mailto:mcmcnama@colostate.edu)