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December 2024 || Newsletter Edition 172

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CSU Food Systems Spotlight



Allison Armstrong

MPH Student, Colorado School of Public Health at CSU, Nutrition

Allison is a master's student of the Colorado School of Public Health at the Colorado State University campus. Before coming to CSU, Allison studied Global Public Health at the University of Virginia, where she completed a Capstone project investigating equitable and sustainable food security initiatives. She currently serves as a

Graduate Research Assistant under Dr. Dawn Thilmany, working closely with COFSAC and Nourish Colorado to analyze impacts of the LFPA, LFP, and LFS programs. Allison plans to focus her master's research on food and nutrition security to improve population health by connecting consumers with less-processed, locally-sourced food.



Mark Your Calendar



Food Safety Training for Colorado Cottage Foods Producers

Learn how to safely produce food from home as a cottage food business. This online course covers a variety of topics, including: basic food safety, foods that are permissible under the updated Colorado Cottage Foods Act, ingredient labeling, special considerations for food preparation at high altitudes, and safe food sampling best practices.

Registration is \$50; times are all in Mountain Standard or Daylight time. Click each date below to register and learn more about the program. For additional dates, [check here](#).

The next CSU Extension Cottage Food Safety Trainings will take place on:

- December 14**, 12:00-3:30pm, online
- January 23**, 12:00pm-3:30pm, online
- January 24**, 9:00am-12:30pm, online

Quivira Coalition's New Agrarian Program Apprenticeship

Quivira Coalition's New Agrarian Program organizes 8-month apprenticeships for beginning agrarians to work and learn on regenerative farms and ranches in the

West. The applications for the 2025 season are open until December 15th, or once all positions are filled.

Apprenticeships take place on working ranches and farms beginning in March/April 2025 and end in November 2025. Each position is full-time and paid, including housing. Support from the program includes an education stipend, supplemental education Zoom calls, one-on-one check-ins with a coordinator, and networking opportunities to begin a career in regenerative agriculture. See participating sites [here](#).

Learn more about the apprenticeship [here](#).

**ARE YOU READY FOR
A CAREER IN
REGENERATIVE AG?**

**QUIVIRA
COALITION**

*Applications for a New Agrarian Program
apprenticeship open Nov 1 - Dec 15*

Quivira Coalition's New Agrarian Program pairs beginning agrarians with experienced mentors for an 8-month, full-time apprenticeship in regenerative agriculture. Mentor sites are in CO, MT, ID. Applications are open November 1- December 15th.

CONTACT US:
newagrarian@
quiviracoalition.org
505.820.2544

QUIVIRACOALITION.ORG/NEWAGRARIAN

Northern Colorado Foodshed Project Farm Business Accelerator

Northern Colorado Foodshed Project has opened applications for its 2025 Farm Business Accelerator Program. This three-year program is designed to guide aspiring farmers through the process of starting their own farm business by providing affordable access to land, water, and infrastructure at the Accelerator Program farm site in South Fort Collins. Additionally, local organizations and CSU will offer business development and marketing training, as well as networking opportunities.

The deadline to apply is **December 16, 2024**.

To learn more, visit the [Farm Business Accelerator Program website](#). If you have any questions, contact ed@foodshedproject.org.



READY TO START YOUR OWN FARM BUSINESS?

The Foodshed Project Farm Business Accelerator is a 3-year program offering beginning farmers an alternative entry point to establishing a successful farm business. We provide a bridge to business viability for those with existing farm skills through low-cost access to everything needed to manage a successful farm business: land, water, infrastructure, technical support, marketing assistance, and business education through CSU Extension's Building Farmers program.

Participants will have access to plots starting at ¼ acre up to 1.5 acres depending on experience, as well as shared access to infrastructure including irrigation, equipment, tools, and storage. Program fees vary depending on plot size and start at \$500 per year.

2025 SEASON APPLICATIONS DUE DECEMBER 2024
PROGRAM RUNS MID-JANUARY TO EARLY OCTOBER

LEARN MORE & APPLY AT:
FOODSHEDPROJECT.ORG/FARM-BUSINESS-ACCELERATOR

Though the program is designed for vegetable and crop producers, we are open to all types of producers – if you are interested please email us!

FOODSHEDPROJECT.ORG
INFO@FOODSHEDPROJECT.ORG



Cottage Foods Business Training: Passion Into Profits

CSU Extension is offering a short course that will give cottage food producers the tools to ensure success at local farmer's markets, with family and friends, and at retail stores. The training provides easy-to-use resources for ensuring producers account for their costs of production and product-market-fit.

Registration is free.

Dates:

- **December 16th, 10am-12pm:** Register on **Eventbrite** or **Facebook**
- **January 9th, 3-5pm:** Register on **Eventbrite** or **Facebook**

Courses will be offered on a monthly basis throughout the year.

The USDA AMS Local and Regional Foods Resources and Research Webinar Series

The USDA AMS Local and Regional Foods Division has launched the *Local and Regional Foods Resources & Research webinar series*, a monthly webinar series highlighting local and regional foods research projects, resources, partnerships, and programs.



Upcoming Webinars:

The webinars will be held on the third Thursday of each month from 11am to 12pm MT.

- **Dec. 19, 2024** - Visualizing Food Systems Data: Examples from Consumer Food Insights, Food and Agriculture Mapper and Explorer (FAME) and the Local Food Economics Data Visualization Challenge
- **Jan. 16, 2025** - The Promise of Urban Agriculture: Courses for Grower and Planners

[Click here to register.](#)



BUILDING FARMERS
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

2025 Colorado Building Farmers and Ranchers Course

The Colorado Building Farmers and Ranchers program builds community and capacity in agriculture for beginning farmers and ranchers around the state. From January 14 to March 4, 2025, course facilitators and instructors will guide new and beginning farmers (those with less than 10 years of experience) through a series of eight online evening classes designed to explore agriculture as a business, including the principles of business management, developing a marketing plan, managing risk, obtaining financing, and more. The program also provides more experienced farmers and ranchers with tools and ideas to refine and enhance their business management and marketing skills. Participants are supported with group and individual exercises and coaching, which result in participants creating a business plan and presenting it to a group of peers.

When: Tuesdays evenings, 6pm-8:30pm from January 14-March 4, 2025

Where: Online, via Zoom

Who: Agricultural producers with less than 10 years of farming experience

Cost: \$250 per participant, and \$125 for each additional participant from the same farm business

Learn more [here](#); preregister [here](#).



2025 Offal Party

The CSU Ag Innovation Center invites all people who support regenerative, circular food systems that promote human, animal, and environmental health to the 2025 Offal Party. This event offers an opportunity to learn more about why consuming offal, or organ meat, and wearing leather are key to supporting Colorado's soil health.

Who: All are welcome to attend, including foodies, ranchers and cattle feeders, fashionistas, pet owners, processors, and entrepreneurs.

Why: Ranchers and cattle feeders provide nutritionally dense meat for consumers and steward our rangelands with responsible grazing and, to break even, they must ensure that they have a market for all parts of the animal. Offal is the most nutritionally dense part of the animal. Additionally, leather made from hides is a high-performance material used in clothing.

When: Saturday, January 25, 2025, 5:30-10pm.

Where: Stockyards Event Center (5004 National Western Drive, Denver, CO 80216).

Featuring:

- Genuine Leather Fashion Show
- Offal Business Plan Competition
- Chef prepared farm-to-table offal delicacies
- Line Dancing

Get your Offal Party tickets [here](#).

For any questions, support, or ideas, schedule a meeting with Jordan Lambert [here](#).

University of Colorado, Colorado Springs Grain School

University of Colorado, Colorado Springs is offering an online, asynchronous course focusing on heritage grains. This course covers basics, crop science and improvement, history and culture, soil health, climate change, production, processing, infrastructure, quality, economics, the role of whole grains and culinary applications in nutrition, health, disease and sports performance, community related aspects of the grain value chain and cooperatives, grain sovereignty and justice, and artisan baking and cooking.

The course begins on February 3, 2025. The cost of attendance is \$395, however there are limited scholarships available for producers and makers. For more information about scholarships, contact nmeyer2@uccs.edu.

Register [here](#).

UCCS University of Colorado
Colorado Springs

COURSE STARTS FEBRUARY 3, 2025

Have ACCESS ALL YEAR

Includes all parts of UCCS Grain School with
Kick Off Orientation Session Feb 4, 2025 at 4.30 - 6pm MST

Sign up here:
<https://forms.gle/ScxQsxBLXLsRkKMy7>

Farming & Processing
February



Nutrition & Health
March



Community
April







University of Colorado Colorado Springs (UCCS)
Grain School Online 2025
Take the Full Course (\$395) starting February 3, 2025

LIMITED SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE FOR PRODUCERS AND MAKERS. PLEASE INQUIRE NMeyer2@UCCS.EDU

Sun Soil Water Summit 2025

The Sun Soil Water Summit is a weekend-long gathering focused on bringing the community closer to the food system. There will be a variety of events to celebrate local leaders, educate peers, and uplift local entrepreneurs.

Main Events

SUN SOIL
WATER
SUMMIT
2025

PUEBLO COUNTY
PUEBLO COUNTY
PUEBLO COUNTY

March 14th & 15th
Pueblo Community College



pueblofoodproject.org/sunsoilwater

- Pueblo Food Systems Leadership Awards & Gala | Friday, March 14th, 6-8pm
- Sun Soil Water Summit | Saturday, March 15th, 8am-4:30pm
- Makers' Market and Happy Hour | Saturday, March 15th, 4:30-7pm

Additional Events

- Brewery Walk | Friday, March 14th, 8:30-10pm
- Fly Fishing on the Arkansas | Friday, March 14th, TBD
- Bird Crawl | Saturday, March 15th, 7:30-8:30am
- Gagliano's Sausage Making | Sunday, March 16th, TBD

These community events are a fundraiser for the Pueblo Food Project. Scholarships are available for the main events only. Dual translation will be offered for all events except fly fishing. **Get your tickets here!**



Farm Resilience Online Course

Asynchronous, self-paced course now open for enrollment!

Learn practical strategies and tools to boost your farm's resilience amidst the challenges of climate change. This self-paced, online course is designed specifically for farmers and ranchers in the West, focusing on real-world solutions and hands-on techniques. Join a community of like-minded individuals and gain the knowledge you need to secure your farm's future.

Enroll today and deepen your journey towards climate resilience and sustainability.



Funding Opportunities

Small Business Builder Grants for Colorado Farm and Food Businesses

The Northwest and Rocky Mountain Regional Food Business Center is offering grants of up to \$10,000 to support small and mid-scale Colorado farms, ranches, and value-added businesses. This program is specifically for businesses that are producing in, sourcing from, and focused on local and regional markets, or serving multiple small- and mid-scale food and farm businesses.



Grant funds are intended to be used to improve business skills, strengthen the viability of your business, expand your access to markets, or strengthen local and

regional food and agriculture supply chains.

Access the following links for the upcoming sessions:

- Colorado BizBuilder Small Grants Office Hours Session 2 – **Thursday, December 5th, 8am – 9am – Register Here**
- Colorado Small Business Builder Final Session – **Monday, January 6th, 5pm – 6pm – Register Here**

Applications are due **January 10, 2025**. Awardees will be announced in February 2025.

Visit the website to learn more and apply for funding.



FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Grant Eligibility
The NWRM Business Builder grants are designed for businesses incorporated or based in the state of Colorado who identify as one or more of the following:

- Farm, ranch, and fish/seafood businesses
- Value-added food businesses
- Food processors, aggregators, and distributors

For full eligibility criteria, visit our website.

Application Details
Applications deadline January 10th, 2025
Awardees will be announced in February 2025

Questions?
Upon reviewing the grant guidelines, if you have any additional questions, please reach out to the NWRM Regional Team here. 

<https://wfm.rns/3YIBNsx>

Small Business Builder Grants
Focus on Place:
Colorado Farm and Food Businesses

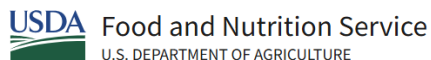
The Northwest and Rocky Mountain USDA Regional Food Business Center is offering grants of up to \$10,000 that are designed to support small to mid-scale Colorado food and farm businesses.

Your Colorado-based farm, ranch, or value-added food business may be eligible. The program is for small and mid-scale businesses that are producing in, sourcing from, and focused on local and regional markets, or serving multiple small- and mid-scale food and farm businesses.

Uses of grant funds are intended to be used to improve business skills, strengthen the viability of your business, expand your access to markets, or strengthen local and regional food and agriculture supply chains.

Want to learn more?
Visit our webpage at nrockymountainregionalfoodbusiness.com/biz-builder/

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.
<https://www.usda.gov/non-discrimination-statement>



Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program

Each year, the USDA awards Farm to School grants that support the planning, development, and implementation of farm to school programs. These grants help state, regional, and local organizations initiate, expand, and institutionalize farm to school efforts. The fiscal year 2025 request for applications is now open. It has been split into three separate solicitations:

- Implementation Grant
- State Agency Grant
- Turnkey Grant

The deadline for applications is **January 10th, 2025**.

To learn more, [visit the Patrick Leahy Grant Program page](#). For helpful resources, visit the [Applicant Resources page](#), where you can find links to webinars that provide assistance on applying for a Farm to School grant.

Ongoing Assistance for Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops Program



USDA's Farm Service Agency is offering the **Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops Program (FSCSC)** again this year. The FSCSC program provides financial assistance for specialty crop operations that incur eligible on-farm food safety program expenses related to obtaining or renewing a food safety certification.

For calendar year 2024 this assistance starts July 1st and goes through January 31, 2025. The application period for calendar year 2025 will be January 1, 2025 through January 31, 2026.



Committed to the future of rural communities.

Rural Development Food Supply Chain Guaranteed Loans Available

As part of the American Rescue Plan, the USDA **Rural Development Food Supply Chain Guaranteed Loan Program** is offering loans of up to \$40 million for qualified lenders to finance food systems projects.

These loans will be available to projects that are starting or expanding activities in the middle of the food supply chain. For example, the program will support new investments in infrastructure for food aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storage, transportation, wholesaling, and distribution. Applications will be accepted until funds are exhausted.

Colorado contact information for Rural Development and its regional offices can be found [here](#).

Robert McElroy, the Rural Business & Cooperative Services Program Director with the Colorado State Office is eager to discuss this opportunity with anyone who has a potential project. His email is: robert.mcelroy@usda.gov.



News, Resources & Reading

Announcing the Launch of Native Grown + Gathered



Native Grown + Gathered is an online platform supporting indigenous food sovereignty across the Northwest and Rocky Mountain regions. This platform brings together Native food producers, traditional food gatherers, and those committed to revitalizing traditional indigenous foodways to strengthen communities.

Through Native Grown + Gathered, you can explore

- A directory of Native-owned food businesses and producers
- Information on the upcoming Native Foods Expo
- Funding opportunities and educational resources to support Indigenous-led food systems

Visit the Native Grown + Gathered platform [here](#)!

Rooted

in Agroecology and
Food Sovereignty

Subscribe to *Rooted* Digital Magazine

Subscribe to *Rooted in Agroecology and Food Sovereignty*, a new international magazine featuring frontline experiences and perspectives from farmer leaders, indigenous people, researchers, and advocates. *Rooted* highlights transformative ideas and actions related to agroecology and food sovereignty and lifts the voices, perspectives, and knowledge of those at the forefront of action to transform food systems.

Read the first issue on Policymaking for Agroecology [here](#). In this issue, authors from Brazil, Kenya, the Indian Himalayas, and Switzerland share lessons learned and perspectives from movement leaders. The next issue will cover the link between health and agroecology – see the call for contributions [here](#).

[Subscribe to the magazine here.](#)

The USDA Allocates \$2 Billion to Expand Specialty Crop Storage and Marketing Assistance

The USDA launched two new programs — the Marketing Assistance for Specialty Crops and the Commodity Storage Assistance Program — to help specialty crop growers



overcome market barriers for products and unlock pre-market storage for crops following severe weather events.

The Marketing Assistance for Specialty Crops initiative will provide \$2 billion to assist specialty crop growers to maintain a strong domestic supply and expand market opportunities. The program will help specialty crop growers with specialized handling and transport equipment with temperature and humidity control, packaging, moving perishables to market quickly, and higher labor costs. The USDA expects applications for the program to open in December.

The Commodity Storage Assistance Program will provide \$140 million to help producers gain access to a packinghouse or other facility necessary for the marketing of agricultural commodities. This is designed for farmers across the nation due to disaster-related challenges.

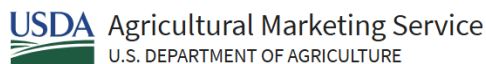
To read more about these programs, [see this article](#).



Colorado Organic Grains Microgrant Awardees Announced

This year, the Colorado Grain Chain is distributing six \$5,000 grants to awardees of the Colorado Organic Grains Microgrant Program. The awardees are businesses in the middle phase of the organic grain supply chain. This round of grants is the first of a three-year Microgrant program. Each recipient shared innovative concepts that help make organic grain usage reach a larger audience and underscore the importance of organic grains in the food system.

[Learn more about each project and stay tuned for updates here.](#)



USDA Announces an Additional \$1.7 Billion in Funding for Local Food Purchases

Coloradans were instrumental in fighting for continuation of the [Local Food Purchase Assistance Program \(LFPA\)](#).

Colorado Rep. Caraveo and Sen. Bennet co-led letters from the House and Senate to the USDA urging for continued funding for these pandemic-era programs. All Colorado Democrats (Reps Crow, Neguse, DeGette, Pettersen and Sen. Hickenlooper) signed on. Also, the [National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition](#) led a country-wide organizational sign-on letter in support of LFPA and out of 580 national signatures — 101 were from Colorado.

Here are more details:

Secretary Vilsack and USDA announced an additional \$1.7 billion in funding for local food purchases. Specifically,

- \$500 million for Local Food Purchase Assistance Program
- \$500 million for Local Food in Schools
- \$200 million for a new, local food in childcare facilities initiative
- \$500 million for the Emergency Food Assistance Program

You can read the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition's press release [here](#). You can read USDA's press release [here](#).



List Your Business in USDA AMS Local Foods Directories

The USDA **Local Foods Directories** allow you to market your local food business to a wider nationwide audience. In particular, make sure your fall-season agritourism venture is featured on the USDA Local Food Directories! To create a new listing, answer quick and easy questions about the status of your business so consumers can learn more about you.

[Click here to sign up for the directory.](#)

Manager Fellowship Available for Mid-Career Agrarians

The New Agrarian Program has launched its first-ever **Manager Fellowship**, a year-long training program to develop business, finance, and leadership skills in aspiring ranch managers and entrepreneurs. While the program was initially designed with our apprenticeship alumni in mind, we are excited to now offer limited spots to additional mid-career agrarians who are interested in joining us!



The Manager Fellowship began with a kick-off event on **November 21-24** at Paicines Ranch in California, and continues virtually as fellows attend Zoom workshops, chat with experienced mentor-coaches, and participate in cohort discussions. Ideal candidates have at least two years of production experience in agriculture, a serious drive for either entrepreneurship or higher-level ranch management, and a commitment to the program for the upcoming year.

Applications are currently open and are accepted on a rolling basis, so we encourage you to apply soon! Feel free to contact us with any questions at newagrarian@quiviracoalition.org.



Promise of Urban Agriculture Courses Now Available

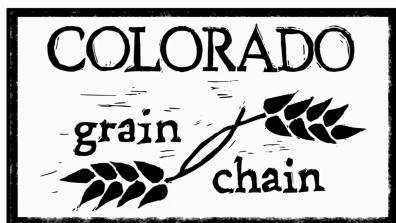
USDA AMS, in partnership with the Cornell Small Farms Program and Rooted, is offering the Promise of Urban Agriculture courses. The courses represent an innovative and holistic approach to support urban farming businesses and communities.

This project is informed by **The Promise of Urban Agriculture**, a 2019 national study of commercial farming in urban areas conducted by AMS and the **Cornell Small Farms Program**. With information from this study, the project team created The Promise of Urban Agriculture courses designed to educate both growers and planners on urban agriculture and the impact of city plans and policies.

The Promise of Urban Agriculture courses are available online and are free to those who register for the courses **by January 31, 2025**.

Click [here](#) to access the courses.

From Our Communities



Join the Colorado Grain Chain

Consumers and businesses are encouraged to join the Colorado Grain Chain (CGC). Heritage and heirloom grains are a great way to diversify, build soil, and add value to Colorado's agricultural abundance. Through the Colorado Grown Grains

Co-Brand strategy, the Colorado Grain Chain supports producers and makers with co-branded marketing materials, grain chain business access, and networking opportunities. For more information, contact **Audrey Paugh at connect@coloradograinchain.com** or apply to become a member [here](#).

Short Survey for Agritourism Operators

Be counted! If your farm, ranch, or agricultural business is open to visitors, please complete this 5-minute survey from the University of Vermont. [Click here to take the survey](#).



There are 28 Colorado responses and we hope to reach 50 by December 15th.

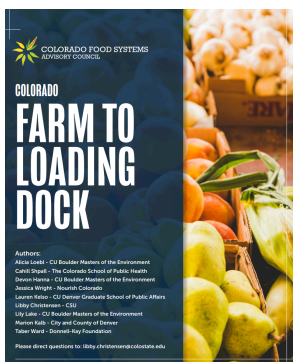
The goal of the survey is to understand how many agricultural operations in the U.S. welcome visitors for direct sales and experiences. This includes pick-your-own, farm stands, tours, overnight farm stays, and recreation. If you have any questions about the survey, contact lisa.chase@uvm.edu or 802-656-7532. If you have questions about your rights as a research project participant, please contact the Research Protections Office at the University of Vermont at 802-656-5040.

Black, Hispanic, and Tribal Producer Wholesale Marketing and Technical Assistance Survey

Farmers and ranchers who identify as Black, Hispanic, or Tribal and sell wholesale, either now or in the past, or plan to access wholesale markets, are encouraged to take this online survey. This project aims to understand the specific technical assistance needs of Black, Hispanic, and Tribal producers when accessing and scaling into wholesale markets. Responses from the survey will support identifying best practices, challenges, gaps, and associated issues to inform technical assistance providers, programs, policies, and institutions.

The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete: [click here to take the survey.](#)

If you are an individual, organization, or institution providing technical assistance to Black, Hispanic, and Tribal producers, and are willing to participate in an interview, contact pratyooosh@vt.edu or washton@iit.edu. Please contact the project team with any questions or comments.



Farm to Loading Dock Report

This **report** from the Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council explores the partnerships, training, and resources needed to move food from Colorado's agricultural producers to wholesale institutional markets. The report highlights big and little policy recommendations to expand institutional markets in Colorado.



Check Out a Podcast by the North American Food Systems Network!

Check out the "Finding Your Future in Food Systems" Podcast Hosted by Vivian Le of the North American Food Systems Network! Episodes feature guest speakers who have carved out their own unique niche in the local food systems space. You can [click here](#) to listen to episodes.

New Consumer Food Insights Series Available

A new series of **Consumer Food Insights is now available**. The survey, conducted in Winter 2023, captured current food shopping trends as well as changes in U.S. consumer food behaviors since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Click [here](#) to access the new series, and in November, they will start posting regional data on market usage.

Want to learn more?

Attend the December 19, 2024 USDA Ag Marketing Service webinar on Visualizing Food Systems Data.

Webinar registration



Connect with the Northwest and Rocky Mountain USDA Regional Food Business Center

The Northwest and Rocky Mountain USDA Regional Food Business Center (RFBC) is one of 12 Regional Food Business Centers funded by USDA, with the goal of improving local and regional food systems and better serving underinvested farm and food businesses. The Northwest and Rocky Mountain RFBC serves Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Oregon and Washington.

Read our latest newsletter [here](#).

AND, the Colorado Biz Builder grant program is now live (see above for all the details), and stay tuned for more funding opportunities in the future.

Learn more about the Center's educational and technical support programs for small- and mid-sized food and farm businesses, and sign up for updates here: <https://nwrockymountainregionalfoodbusiness.com/>.



ABOUT FOOD SYSTEMS

at Colorado State University

Food systems are the connections between natural resources, the agricultural and food industries, and the buyers, consumers, and communities to which they contribute. Research, extension and education identify and inform opportunities to bridge how production, supply chains, and eaters respond to changing markets, policy, and the environment. At CSU, we focus on these key areas to train, influence, and communicate ways to connect food-related roles and foster healthy communities, economies, and individuals.



Stay Connected

Find us on social media, get farm or food systems related questions answered via email, forward to a friend, or submit your contributions to our newsletter!



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Submit Contributions

Food Systems CSU | <https://foodsystems.colostate.edu>



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