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October 2025 || Newsletter Edition 181

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CSU Food Systems Spotlight



Katie Alexander

CSU Extension Small Acreage and Marketing Agent

Katie Alexander has spent more than 15 years working to support healthy soils, resilient landscapes, and strong agricultural communities. Her career began with USDA NRCS, and today she serves as the Small Acreage and Marketing Agent for Colorado State University Extension in the Tri-River Area. Since 2008, she has served on the Soil Health Committee, and since 2020 she has contributed to the Western Colorado Food and Farm Forum, now known as Roots of Renewal. Katie also brings

hands-on experience in exhibition poultry and equine knowledge, which she shares with youth and community members.

At home, she and her husband are raising their three daughters on a cow/calf and haying operation in western Colorado. A proud CSU alumna with a degree in Soil and Crop Sciences, she combines her professional expertise with her personal passion for agriculture to help connect people, land, and community.



Mark Your Calendar



Colorado Proud Farm to School Meal Month

Colorado Farm to School Month kicks off on **October 1st** to celebrate Colorado agriculture and local food procurement. The Colorado Proud team and the Colorado Department of Education have expanded the activity options to span the entire month, so there are more ways than ever for schools to get involved. To find more information about activities and to register please go to: [Colorado Proud School Meal Month website](#).

Currently, there are 300,000 students participating across 15 school districts: *Pueblo, Jeffco, St. Vrain Valley, Denver Public Schools, Salida, Manitou Springs, Swink, Moffat County, Thompson, Edison, Mesa County Valley, Aurora, Plateau Valley, Mapleton, Las Animas.*

Sign your school up today!

End o' Summer Farm Extravaganza



community.

Join Poudre Valley Community Farms for a guided tour of our farm at Flores del Sol Natural Area, where you'll see firsthand how local farmers are using regenerative practices to grow food for our

Learn about PVCF's work to preserve farmland and how our partnership with the Northern Colorado Foodshed Project supports the next generation of producers. Come to see the bounty of the farms and share some snacks featuring our farmers' goodies!

This event is on **October 9th** from 5:00 to 7:00pm. Registration is \$10.

Register here.

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 \$55; times are all in Mountain Standard or Daylight time. Click each date below to register and learn more about the program. For additional dates and to learn more, **check the website here.**

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

- October 3, 9:00am-12:30pm, online, **register**
- October 15, 1:00pm-4:30pm, online, **register**
- October 25, 9:00am-12:00pm, Rifle, CO (Spanish), **register**
- November 5, 6:00pm-9:00pm, Rifle, CO (Spanish), **register**
- November 7, 9:00am-12:30pm, online, **register**
- November 12, 9:00am-12:00pm, online (Spanish), **register**
- November 13, 12:00-3:30pm, online, **register**
- November 19, 1:00pm-4:30pm, online, **register**
- November 20, 5:30pm-9:00pm, online, **register**

Overview of Local Food Systems Online Certificate Series

This Training Program consists of three courses and is available for enrollment from **September 8 to October 15**. Participants will have six months (from October 15 to April 15, 2026) to complete the courses at their own pace.

This online training program is designed for those who are just getting started in their local food systems career, or for those who have experience but want to

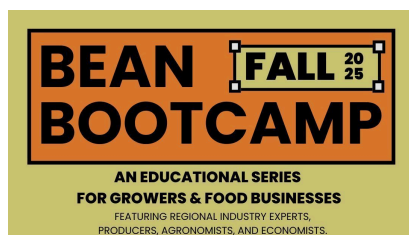
gain a broader or more complete perspective. The training program is housed at NC State University, and is a partnership between N.C. Cooperative Extension, Clemson Cooperative Extension, and Virginia Cooperative Extension.

Courses

1. **Foundations in Local Food Systems Development**, 20 hours (prerequisite to Courses 2 and 3 below): Price = \$250, [register here](#)
2. **Farm to Fork: Foundations in Local Food Supply & Value Chains**, 15 hours: Price = \$200, [register here](#)
3. **The Bottom Line: Economic Realities and Other Opportunities in Local Food Systems**, 15 hours: Price = \$200, [register here](#)

All courses are asynchronous, meaning you work through the content at your own pace. Depending on enrollment, they will also be offering at least one optional synchronous session while courses are running, led by course instructors, to help participants network while expanding their knowledge.

Upon successful completion of each course, participants will receive a Certificate of Completion from NC State University. For more information, including registration, please visit the [website](#) or contact the course coordinators at localfoodncce@ncsu.edu.



Bean Bootcamp

Bean Bootcamp is a 4-part grower education series designed to support resilient, profitable, and sustainable bean production in the San Luis Valley and beyond.

Where: Ski Hi, Monte Vista

When: Wednesdays, 9am to 10pm from Oct 29th–Nov 19th (lunch included)

Each week features regional experts covering key topics:

- Varieties: drought tolerance, heirloom genetics, variety trials (Oct 29)
- Production: agronomics, equipment, budgets (Nov 5)
- Processing: facility FAQs, value-added products, labeling (Nov 12)
- Markets: logistics, regional + export markets (Nov 19)

Registration for the entire series costs \$50, or registering for each class individually costs \$15. Virtual options are available. If you have any questions, email Madeline at madeline.wilson@colostate.edu.

[Register here.](#)

Experiential Short Courses with Pueblo Seed & Food Co.

Come join Pueblo Seed & Food Co. in the Canyon of the Ancients for a short course focused on the foodways of the Southwest, organic farming, soil health, and more.



The upcoming course, Maize & Millets, will be held October 31st through November 2nd, 2025. This event includes a farm tour, tasting, and bakehouse experience.

The cost without lodging for **the course** is \$150, with add-on activities available. For questions, contact info@puebloseed.com.



Agrivoltaics Farm Tours and Volunteer Days

The Colorado Agrivoltaics Learning Center is hosting a series of public tours of agrivoltaic farms in Colorado. These tours will take place at Jack's Solar Garden in Longmont through October.

Attendees will be introduced to agrivoltaics and learn about its potential benefits to farmers, biodiversity, and communities. Registration costs \$17.50.

The Learning Center is also hosting volunteer days at their Medicinal Herb Garden, where participants will seed, weed, prep beds, and harvest.

Register for a tour or to volunteer here.

Idaho Food Business Foundations Workshop Series



Are you ready to launch your food business, grow your cottage food operation, or break into retail & wholesale? The Idaho Food Business Foundations workshop is a series covering everything from food safety to packaging, sourcing, and marketing—giving you the foundation to confidently produce, sell, and scale your product.

Workshop Schedule:

- October 7 - Food Safety 2: Advanced Practices and Compliance
- October 21 - Processing Methods for Small-Scale Food Manufacturing
- November 4 – Sanitation 1: Cleaning & Sanitizing Basics
- November 18 – Sanitation 2: Deep Cleaning & Microbial Control
- December 2 – Sourcing Local: Regional Ingredients for Your Value-Added or Specialty Food Products

- December 16 - Marketing and Distribution – Reaching Your Customer
- January 6, 2026 - Packaging & Labeling: Getting Retail Ready

Cost: **\$50 per class** (Virtual and in-person options)

Bonus: Attend 5 or more classes and receive 4 hours of consulting FREE to help grow your business.

Register here.



National Annie's Project Facilitator Trainings

National Annie's Project is offering virtual facilitator trainings on **November 18-19th** from 10am-12pm and 2pm-4pm (both days). **Register here.**

Registration is free but limited to the first 20 participants. All 8 hours must be completed for registrants to be certified as an Annie's Project facilitator. If you are interested in hosting Annie's Project in your county, the first step is to take this course. Contact karisha@anniesproject.org with questions or for more information.



Naturally Colorado's Fall Fling

The 2025 Fall Fling Showcase is one of Colorado's most vibrant gatherings in the natural products industry. The event takes place on **October 15th, 5-9pm** in Arvada.

Naturally Colorado member companies will sample, sell, and showcase their products to industry professionals, retailers, and the broader natural products community. This year, the showcase includes a dedicated Retail Hour designed for direct, meaningful connections with buyers from leading retailers across the state.

Participants receive a display table, two event passes, and brand exposure through targeted promotional efforts reaching over 6,000 professionals. This is a unique opportunity to connect, celebrate, and grow alongside Colorado's most innovative and values-driven businesses. To learn more, **visit the event page.**

Attendees: Register here. Tickets are \$75 for members and \$100.



Drive|Lead|Succeed Conference

The Economic Development Council of Colorado (EDCC) is hosting the annual **Drive|Lead|Succeed Conference** to nurture the growth of Colorado's economy. This year's theme is "Colorado's Economic Superheroes: Forging a More Vibrant Future." This conference delivers three days of resources, tools, strategies, and extensive networking opportunities.

The conference takes place from **October 26-29th** at the Pueblo Convention Center. To join over 500+ statewide industry stakeholders, [register here](#).

The event will:

- Unite industry leaders to exchange insights
- Introduce tools and solutions to address pressing economic issues within Colorado's professional economic development community
- Cultivate meaningful collaboration between economic development professionals, business and non-profit leaders, government officials, and more

EDCC is looking for sponsors for this event. Sponsors receive complementary registrations and secondary acknowledgements on event materials. EDCC sponsors are part of a broad network of economic development partners across the state. [Become a sponsor here](#).

Cultivating Connections, Sowing Success

Join the Colorado Department of Education, Colorado School Nutrition Association, Nourish Colorado, and Greeley-Evans School District for Cultivating Connections, Sowing Successes.



This will be a day for K12 operators, Colorado's agricultural producers, and strategic partners to gather, learn, and connect around Farm to School in Colorado. You'll meet producers, learn strategies from peers, get connected with resources, and attend hands-on, informative sessions! You can plan to spend most of the day at this completely free event.

The event will take place in two regions: **Friday, November 14th in Brighton** and **Friday, December 12th in Grand Junction**. Choose which one works best for you – or join for both! Be sure to get registered:

- Brighton: <https://bit.ly/FrontRange-FtS-Event>
- Grand Junction: <https://bit.ly/WesternSlope-FtS-Event>

2025 National Sorghum Producers Yield Contest



NATIONAL SORGHUM PRODUCERS
the voice of the sorghum industry

Growers are invited to enter the 2025 National Sorghum Yield Contest. State and national winners will be selected from contestants in East and West regions across the Irrigated, Dryland No-Till, and Dryland Tillage divisions, with one overall winner chosen in the Food Grade category.

Sorghum growers can choose between two protocol options for yield verification, [read here to learn more](#).

The entry deadline for the 2025 contest is November 26th. All completed forms must be received by the NSP office no later than December 3rd. [Click here to complete the entry form](#).



2026 Researcher & Extension Meetup and Organic Conference

The Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) invites you to save the date for a special Researcher & Extension Meetup on **Monday, February 9, 2026**, in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

This event will bring together organic-focused researchers, extension professionals, and educators to connect, share knowledge, and lay the groundwork for future collaboration across the region. This event is free to attend. Registration details are coming soon.

Following the meet-up, the **High Plains Organic Conference** will take place on **February 10th and 11th**. Conference registration is \$45 with meals included. If you're interested in presenting research or helping shape a research-focused track, email communications@ofrf.org.

2026 Sun Soil Water Summit

Join Pueblo Food Project, CSU Pueblo County Extension, and partners to gather, learn, and share delicious food at the Sun Soil Water Summit. This weekend-long gathering at Pueblo Community College is focused on bringing the community



**PUEBLO
FOOD
PROJECT**

closer to the food system. With several events celebrating local leaders, educating our peers, and uplifting local entrepreneurs, there is something for everyone at the summit.

- **Pueblo Food Systems Awards and Gala - March 20th, 6:00pm-8:30pm:** An evening of celebration as we honor leaders in the Pueblo Food System. We will enjoy local food, drinks, music, and an inaugural silent auction.
- **Community Led Summit - March 21st, 8:00am-4:30pm:** A gathering to learn, share, inspire, and catalyze community food systems change. This day-long conference will include keynote presentations, panel discussions, hands-on breakout sessions, and delicious food. This summit will help community members, organizations, and producers gain knowledge to better engage with our food system.
- **Makers' Market and Happy Hour - March 21st, 4:30pm-7:00pm:** Conference participants can explore ideas, try products, and support local food businesses while enjoying local beer and wine at the Makers' Market and Happy Hour. Makers and community organizations interested in a table are welcome to share their products and ideas.

Registration will open soon. If you are interested in volunteering, complete [this form](#).

Center for Sorghum Improvement Seminar Series

The **Center for Sorghum Improvement (CSI)** at Kansas State University is hosting a monthly seminar series to engage researchers, industry leaders, and agricultural professional in meaningful discussions about sorghum research, from genetics to production practices to marketing opportunities.



View the seminar schedule and subscribe to the mailing list [here](#).

For more information or to directly receive seminar notifications, contact Sarah Sexton-Bowser, managing director, at sarahann@ksu.edu.



Farm Resilience Online Course

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. CSU was fortunate to partner with this program to develop some of the content and decision tools.

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



Funding Opportunities

Climate Smart Market Expansion Project

The Climate Smart Markets Program drives market development and increases sales for agricultural products. These products are grown using practices that directly address Colorado's climatic challenges. Through competitive awards, the program incentivizes innovation and creates new climate-smart market opportunities by removing the financial risk associated with entry and start-up.

The Climate Smart Market Expansion Project is a competitive opportunity that supports pilot projects to facilitate expanding the marketplace for climate-smart commodities and products.

The second round of the Climate Smart Market Expansion Project will post a request for proposals on **October 3, 2025**.

- View the solicitation document in Colorado VSS (watch for a soon to be posted link).
- To learn more, attend the optional virtual Information Session on Friday, October 17th, 11 am (Mountain Daylight Time)

Eligible businesses or organizations must be based in Colorado or have demonstrated clear relationships with Colorado-based suppliers.

For more information, check [here](#).

Get Ready to Apply for the Upcoming Agricultural Stewardship Tax Credit!

In 2026, Colorado farmers and ranchers can receive a tax credit for managing their land in ways that improve soil health, boost water efficiency, and/or create diverse ecosystems by choosing from 17 different qualified stewardship practices. Learn more about the qualified practices by referring to our guide sheets for each practice on our website. The



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application window for the upcoming Agricultural Stewardship Tax Credit opens on **November 10th, 2025**.

Webinars

Attend an informational webinar to see a walk-through of the application process, learn how to apply, and have your questions about the program answered:

- Thursday, October 9th, at 10 am
- Thursday, October 16th, at 6 pm

The content will be the same at both webinars and a recording of the webinar will be posted to our website if you are unable to join. **Register here.**

Online Resources

On the **Ag Stewardship Tax Credit Website**, interested producers can learn more about the program through:

- Guide sheets for each of the 17 qualified stewardship practices that are eligible for the tax credit
- An overview presentation about the program
- A tax credit calculator that estimates credit payments based on acreage and practices



News, Resources & Reading



Wallace Center
AT WINROCK INTERNATIONAL

The Wallace Center at Winrock International's Agriculture and Food Systems Strategy

The Wallace Center at Winrock International is proud to announce its new **Agriculture and Food Systems Strategy**, a bold vision and plan for the years to come.

As a national program of Winrock International, the Center's work is grounded in Winrock's mission "to empower the disadvantaged, increase economic opportunity, and sustain natural resources." Building on decades of leadership and trusted relationships, the Wallace Center is strengthening its role in this time of rapid change. With strong regional roots and national reach, they are deepening their impact by scaling innovation, channeling resources, and supporting lasting change through collaboration. This strategy ensures they remain grounded in their vision and values moving forward.

Through this strategy, the Wallace Center will support:

- Just economic opportunities by strengthening value chains, unlocking resources, and supporting fair markets
- Healthy agricultural ecosystems through regenerative practices that improve soil, water, and farm profitability
- Effective cross-sectoral collaboration to align investment, policy, and innovation for greater impact
- Resilient communities by uplifting local leadership, creating good jobs, and building long-term wealth

Cultivation Station: A Colorado Proud Podcast

Cultivation Station is a business development podcast from the CO Department of Agriculture's Colorado Proud program. The podcast dives into the rich and diverse world of food and agricultural businesses. Whether you are just beginning to think about starting a food or ag business in Colorado, or your operation is up and running, there are many expert insights and insider tips to help you be successful.



[Find the full list of podcast episodes here.](#)



Colorado Regional Food Summit Reports and Share Out

In early 2025, Colorado's Regional Food Summit Event Series brought together over 1,000 community members from across the state to envision a more equitable, connected, and resilient food system. Hosted by local leaders at 15 different events, these convenings elevated local expertise and sparked collaboration across the food system. From farm tours to grower showcases, each gathering helped identify shared priorities, amplify regional perspectives, and strengthen the voices of food and farm practitioners in shaping statewide strategy.

The events were a key step in building momentum toward the next Colorado Food Summit and served as a reminder of the powerful work already happening on the ground. Together, we are cultivating change—rooted in community and growing statewide. Each month we will feature one region's report. **All the reports can be found here.**

Regional Highlight: Western Colorado

The Western Region hosted four events and convened more than 200 farmers, ranchers, food entrepreneurs, and community leaders to strengthen the region's food system. Participants identified key priorities including developing more robust processing, aggregation, and distribution infrastructure; advocating for local and state policies that sustain agricultural viability; expanding outreach and

education for producers and consumers; and addressing persistent workforce challenges around housing, retention, and youth engagement.

Conversations highlighted both the opportunities and pressures facing the region—from rising input costs and limited coordination across the food system, to water scarcity and livestock health threats. Despite these hurdles, recent successes point to a resilient and innovative spirit, with new farm-to-institution partnerships, beginning farmer programs, land stewardship projects, and creative food access initiatives gaining momentum. The gatherings fostered a sense of shared commitment to building a food economy rooted in collaboration, adaptability, and long-term resilience.

Additional resources including a 2-page summary and [the full western regional report can be found here](#).

Share Out Webinar

In this webinar, speakers share what they have learned and outline what is ahead for the Colorado Food Summit. The recording covers highlights from regional events, data and reports from across the state, feedback on a statewide report, and more. [Watch the recording here](#).

Introducing the Poudre Valley Community Farms Land Access Bulletin

Poudre Valley Community Farms is launching a bulletin designed to connect producers with land and water access opportunities across the Front Range. Each issue will feature current listings and announcements that support long-term access and stewardship, intended for producers seeking land and landowners looking to connect with growers.



[Sign up for the bulletin here](#).



Read the Report on Farmers Market Organizations

The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) partnered with Emory University and Arizona State University to research the varied structures of farmers market organizations to identify benefits, challenges, and services associated with externally managed farmers markets. The goal of the “Analyzing the Impacts of Farmers Markets Managed by Organizations” cooperative research agreement was to increase the general public’s understanding of the diverse forms that farmers markets in the United States take and the breadth of their activities.

The project was conducted over two years (October 2022 to September 2024) and used mixed methods (an online environmental scan, listening sessions, focus groups, and semi-structured interviews) to explore the structures, activities, impacts and trends shaping farmers market organizations.

[Read the report here.](#)



Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council (COFSAC) is seeking New Council Members

COFSAC is seeking nominations for our seats with terms expiring in October, 2025. These seats include:

- Member with expertise in federal food and nutrition service programs (General Assembly Appointed). [APPLY HERE](#)
- Representative of food wholesalers or food retailers (Appointed by the Governor's Office). [APPLY HERE](#)
- Representative of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (Appointed by the Governor's Office). [APPLY HERE](#)
- Representative of a food distributor or a food hub (General Assembly Appointed). [APPLY HERE](#)

The council will request to review all applications submitted by October 18th, 2025, and provide recommendations to the appropriate office. The General Assembly or the Governor will then make the final decision (over which they have full discretionary power) and inform those appointed as Council members. The Council will follow up with those not appointed to explore other opportunities for participation such as committee and working group initiatives.

Nominate yourself or bring to the attention to someone in your circle who would be a good representative.

More information is available on [our website](#).



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.](#)



From Our Communities



Natural Resources Conservation Service

National Soil Health Project: *Probing Our Country's Soil Health*

Probing Our Country's Soil Health is a project funded by the NRCS to build a national soil health database as well as new and improved tools for benchmarking and interpreting soil health metrics. Anonymous data will be used to expand a new tool called the Soil Health Assessment Protocol and Evaluation (SHAPE). This tool will provide better references for farmers looking to understand and build soil health. To learn more about SHAPE, [watch this short video](#) and [read this article](#).

The project is seeking 50 farmer and rancher participants. Each will contribute 2 or 3 fields. Those interested in participating will need to:

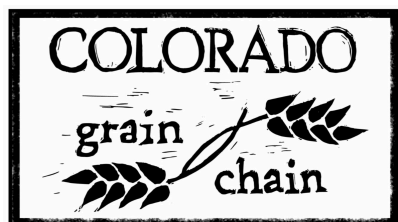
- Sign up for a 1-hour Zoom Meeting where a facilitator will lead you through a management survey for 2 or 3 fields
- Grant access to fields for hand-probe soil sampling at 2 or 3 sampling sites from each field. Normally this will happen 3-6 months after the survey; you will be notified beforehand

**All contact information, farm management, and soil health data for participants will be kept confidential. The data that are published will protect the identity of participants.

Participating landowners will receive a personalized soil health report, a book regarding soil health, and a gift card. To enroll as a landowner participant, select a time from one of the following facilitator schedule links. Once these times have been filled, more will be made available:

- <https://scheduler.zoom.us/kaitlin-flick>
- <https://scheduler.zoom.us/savannah-kitchen>

If you have questions, please reach out to Dr. Matt Yost at matt.yost@usu.edu or [435-797-4210](tel:435-797-4210).



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](#).



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

Although USDA terminated funding to the Northwest Rocky Mountain Regional Food Business Center, we are continuing to support our 131 Business Builder grant awardees in 6 states. Learn more about these grants [here](#).

Stay tuned for other Center updates here:

<https://nwrockymountainregionalfoodbusiness.com/>

as we adapt our programming and outreach to this new environment through continued collaborations with Center partners.



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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