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February 2024 || Newsletter Edition 163

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Mark Your Calendar



## Webinar on Colorado Dept. of Ag.'s Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) Program

**Department of Agriculture** On **January 17th at 5pm MST**, the Colorado Department of Agriculture is offering an informational webinar on the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program.

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZArdOugrTgsHNZ5ZpD6EKI1ezuJo5NQK-VW>

Given the goal of posting Phase 1 of the program during the first week of February, now is a good time to gather your collaborators and consider if this program may support your investment goals.

Grant funding offered through the RFSI Program supports non-meat processing and value added enterprises. The RFSI program provides funding for producers and processors to continue developing processing infrastructure for fruit, vegetables, grains, legumes, dairy, and other non-meat products. By focusing on middle-of-the-supply-chain projects that benefit a number of Colorado producers, the RFSI grant program will contribute to a more resilient food system and financially stronger producers.

Click [here](#) for more information.

## 2024 Colorado Farm Show

One of the largest — and oldest — farm shows in the nation takes place in Weld County, in Greeley at Island Grove. This annual three-day event features almost 350 ag-related exhibits and draws more than 30,000 visitors from throughout the region interested in learning more about ag products, services, and machinery. Topics covered in the farm show will include:



- **January 23<sup>rd</sup>** Topics: Beef, Colorado Produce, Water, and Agronomy
- **January 24<sup>th</sup>** Topics: Dairy, Weeds, Colorado Weather, Partners in Ag, and Small Animal
- **January 25<sup>th</sup>** Topics: Ag Outlook, Ag Education, and Equine

Click [here](#) to learn more and see the full schedule of speakers including several members of our CSU team.

## 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.

Courses will be offered online on the following dates. **Click each date below** to register and learn more about the program. For additional dates, check [here](#).

### CSU Extension Cottage Food Safety Training Online:

- **January 26**, 9:00 am - 12:30 pm, online
- **January 29**, 4:00 pm - 8:00 pm, online
- **February 23**, 9:00 am - 12:30 pm, online
- **March 2**, 9:00 am - 1:00 pm, online
- **March 12**, 5:00 pm - 8:30 pm, online
- **April 12**, 9:00 am - 12:30 pm, online
- **May 1**, 12:30 pm - 4:30 pm, online

## 2024 Western Colorado Soil Health Food and Farm Forum

The Western Colorado Soil Health Food and Farm Forum is for anyone with an interest in the future of agriculture. Whether you're looking to improve on or innovate existing practices, the Forum has resources and networking opportunities for you.



To see a list of speakers and the schedule events, learn more [here](#).

**January 26-27th** at the Montrose Pavilion. In-person tickets are sold out but virtual tickets are still available, [here](#).



**BUILDING FARMERS**  
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION

## 2024 Colorado Building Farmers and Ranchers Program

Starting **January 23, 2024 through March 12, 2024**, Colorado Building Farmers will be offering an online class that covers the principles of business management, developing a marketing plan, managing risk in your operation, obtaining financing, and more. Classes will be held on Tuesdays from 6:00-8:30 pm. This 8-week class culminates in you presenting your draft business plan to a group of your peers. The class is intended for new and intermediate level farmers

and ranchers in Colorado (0 to 10 years of experience). Cost is \$225 per participant, and \$125 for each additional participant from the same farm business.

Learn more and register [here](#).

## Course for Producers and Small Processors Launching E-Commerce for Meat



ChopLocal is offering an educational resource, which will officially launch on Feb. 1 - a **course designed to help producers & small processors set up an ecommerce store for their meat**. This course will cover everything from choosing a platform, determining which cuts to offer, writing effective copy for the online store, marketing, and shipping. Whether you already have an online store that needs a boost, or you're thinking about setting one up, this course will provide you with that information.

ChopLocal has also planned more marketing webinars for this year, including webinars on the **Value Added Producer Grant, a re-vamped shipping webinar, bringing back Matt LeRoux to talk about farmers market research, and exploring ways that AI (artificial intelligence) can assist with meat marketing**. These webinars will be held once a month starting this month.

Click [here](#) to explore these offerings.

## Grant and Grow Workshop



COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION

The Grant and Grow Workshop offered by CSU Extension will inform participants about grants and funding opportunities that will help grow agricultural production and food businesses. Topics covered will include:

- Grant Seeking 101
- Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS) Funding
- Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Farmer/Rancher Grants
- American Farmland Trust Microgrants
- Colorado Department of Agriculture Grants
- USDA Ag Marketing Service Grants
- Grant Writing Workshop

This event will take place on **February 2nd, 2024 from 8:30am-3:30pm** in Loveland, CO. **Registration is due by January 26th, 2024**. The event cost is \$30, which includes a light breakfast and lunch.

Click [here](#) for more information and to register.



## Training Offered at Western Colorado Soil Health Food and Farm Forum

January 25, 1:00pm-5:00pm

**Dive Into Cleaning and Sanitizing on the Farm** at this continuing education opportunity prior to the Western Colorado Soil Health, Food and Farm Forum. **Colorado**

**Produce Safety Collaborative** trainers will lead growers through a hands-on workshop showcasing cleaning methods, surfactants, choosing and using sanitizers, and ATP testing methods.

This hands-on workshop will help you build a more robust cleaning and sanitation program for your farm. We will cover:

1. Prepping harvested vegetables
2. Cleaning food contact surfaces (why, what and how)
3. Detergents & tools
4. Verifying your cleaning practices
5. Choosing and using a sanitizer (measuring, mixing, monitoring)
6. Tools to support your sanitation program (check out tools to make cleaning more effective and efficient)

This workshop is free thanks to a Food Safety Outreach Program grant, but you must **register in advance**.

Durante el evento tendremos traducción simultánea al Español. Esta entrenamiento es gratuito y subsidiado por los fondos FSOP. Para participar en el entranamiento debe registrar su participacion en este **link**.

## Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training for Fruit and Vegetable Producers



Colorado State University Extension, Fort Lewis College, and the Colorado Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association will be hosting an **online only** Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training Course in two parts, from 8am-1:00pm on both **February 5 and February 6, 2024**. This course provides a foundation on the FSMA Produce Safety Rule requirements, Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) and co-management information, and details on how to develop a farm food safety plan. Registration fee is \$40 which includes PSA materials and a certificate of completion as required under FSMA.

**Registration closes on January 25, 2024**. Learn more and **register here**.



## Southwest CO Wholesale Agricultural Gathering

Join the upcoming SW Colorado Wholesale Agricultural Gathering (SWAG) on **Friday, February 9** from 9am-3:00pm at the Mount Lookout Grange in Mancos, CO.

Lunch will be provided and gas cards are available to support the cost of travel. The aim of this convening is to bring together ranchers, producers, and food manufacturers from around our region who sell into wholesale markets or are interested in selling into wholesale markets to highlight three important topics:

- Meet with local School Food Service Directors to discuss 2024 local purchasing opportunities
- Inform early explorations on how to address SW Colorado's aggregation, distribution, storage, and light processing needs
- Learn about upcoming funding and resource opportunities, as well as, the technical assistance available to help you access it.

RSVP for the event [here](#).

### Colorado Grain School Online 2024 Classes held in February, March and April



UCCS Grain School Online 2024 has a new asynchronous format with the opportunity for students to dive deeply into the rich content of grains from seeds to farming and processing, health and nutrition with focus on fermentation and nixtamalization, and various community aspects related to the grain movements around the world and here in the US and Colorado.

We are pleased to offer this new format at a reduced cost. Participants are also welcome to choose a topic of interest and connect with leaders in the grain field or obtaining mentorship in their professional endeavors. The main course instructor is Dr. Nanna Meyer, University of Colorado Colorado Springs (UCCS). Limited scholarships for producers and makers are available. Please contact [nmeyer2@uccs.edu](mailto:nmeyer2@uccs.edu).

Orientation session is on February 1, 2024. Register [here](#).

### Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council Informational Webinar

This informative and interactive webinar is for anyone who wants to learn more about the Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council.



Join for this 1-hour webinar to learn more about the Council and how you can get involved. Participants will:

- leave with an awareness about COFSAC, the working groups, and how to get involved, and
- develop connections and networks with others involved in food and agriculture policy work across the state.

**February 14, 2024, 12:00PM - 1:00PM MT**

Register here: <https://bit.ly/COFSACWebinar>



## 4th Annual Sun Soil Water Ag Summit 2024

The Sun Soil Water Ag Summit will take place on **February 23rd and 24th** at Pueblo Community College.

This year's conference includes:

- **Propel: A Business Pitch Conversation | Friday, February 23rd - Afternoon** During this unique pitch competition, businesses will compete to walk away with the resources they need to get to the next level.
- **Pueblo Food Systems Leadership Awards | Friday, February 23rd - Evening** Join us for an evening of celebration as we honor leaders in the Pueblo Food System and announce our pitch competition winners. We will enjoy local food, drinks, and music. Sponsorship packages are available. Seating is limited.
- **Sun Soil Water Ag Community Led Summit | Saturday, February 24th - All-Day** This day-long conference will include key note presentations, panel discussions, hands-on breakouts, and delicious food to enjoy. All are welcome! Our focus of this year's conference will be People Power!
- **Makers' Market and Idea Fair | Saturday, February 24th - Afternoon/Evening** Conference participants will get to explore ideas, try products, and support local food business at the Maker's Market and Idea Fair. Share your products, and your ideas. **APPLY HERE!**

*\*Scholarships available for Awards and Summit. Dual translation offered for all events.*

Check [here](#) for more information and to register.

## Colorado Fruit and Vegetable Growers Annual Conference

Registration is now open for the 10th Annual CFVGA Conference, the Colorado produce event of the year where growers and supporting companies and institutions gather for education, inspiration and networking!



Visit the conference [website](#) for agenda, speaker bios, exhibitors' virtual booths and much more.

**Tuesday February 27-28, 2024 at the Westin in Westminster.**

## 2024 Ag Tax Update



Join ag business management specialist, Jeff Tranel, on **February 28, 2024 from 6:00pm-7:30pm** for a class on agricultural taxes.

Topics covered will include:

- Farm/Ranch (Schedule F) income & expenses
- Cost recovery (depreciation)
- Reporting on Schedule C versus Schedule F
- Tax management strategies
- Update for 2024

This class is free but you must [register](#) to attend.



## Colorado Farmers Market Association Annual Conference

The Colorado Farmers Market Association (CFMA)'s **Annual**

**Conference 2024** will be taking place on **March 8th-10th, 2024**. Early Bird ticket prices are available until February 8th.

CFMA 2023 members receive a promo code that gives access to discounted Early Bird tickets and will expire next week on Friday, January 19th at 11:59 pm MT. After Jan. 19th you'll just need to renew your 2024 membership to receive the same discount access!

[Register for the conference!](#)

## Crop Wild Relatives and Wild Utilized Plants Symposium

Please join for a symposium to assess progress toward conserving North American crop wild relatives and wild utilized plants. We invite the unique perspectives of botanic gardens, Indigenous groups, land managers, researchers, breeders, and seed and gene banks as we discuss future conservation priorities for this important group of plants.



When: **September 17-19, 2024** at the Denver Botanic Gardens, Denver, Colorado

Interested in attending? Sign up to receive symposium notifications at <https://www.bgci.org/news-events/cwr2024/>



## Funding Opportunities

### USDA FNS Announces New School Workforce Cooperative Agreement



The USDA Food Nutrition Service (FNS) announced a funding opportunity that will support research projects to better understand and generate information related to the school foodservice workforce.

The new cooperative agreement will focus on dimensions such as worker satisfaction, workforce experience, and training and development. Relevant research activities may include, but are not limited to providing information on career pathways for the school foodservice workforce, including training and skill-building opportunities, promotion potential, and tenure/retention within individual employers and the industry as a whole; identifying skills used on the job by role, including analysis of transferability of skills to other industries; identifying level of worker satisfaction and describe workplace conditions (perception and objective measures); and examining how any of the above vary across roles, demographics, school/school food authority (SFA) characteristics, and geography.

Applications are due **February 9, 2024**. Click [here](#) for more information.

### Farmer Veteran Coalition Fellowship Fund Offering Grants



The Farmer Veteran Fellowship Fund is a small grant program that provides direct assistance to veterans who are in their beginning years of farming or ranching. Awards range from \$1,000 to \$5,000 to purchase equipment or supplies that will support your farm business. The application process is extremely competitive and submitting an application does not guarantee funding. Applications are open through

**February 14, 2024.** Click [here](#) to access the application.

Additionally, you can honor our Veterans by supporting this new generation of farmers and food leaders through donations to the Fellowship Fund. Click [here](#) to donate.

## Colorado Department of Agriculture Accepting Concept Proposals for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program



**COLORADO**

Department of Agriculture

The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) managed by the Colorado Department of Agriculture is accepting concept proposals through **February 16, 2024 by 5pm MT.**

Visit the [Specialty Crop Block Grant Program web page](#) for more information and other resources to assist with completing your concept proposal.



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 at:

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-page/colorado-contacts>.

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](mailto:robert.mcelroy@usda.gov).



## News, Resources & Reading



### CSU Spur's Offal Party

Among the first things Jordan Kraft Lambert did last year as Colorado State University's new director of agricultural innovation and partnerships was create a simple spreadsheet. It was an easy way to keep track of what she learned from farmers and ranchers during a problem-finding tour of the state. As she listened, Lambert would open the file, which she'd labeled the "Problem Catalog," and document whatever came up.

Ranchers were having a hard time dealing with certain parts of their butchered cattle: organ meats, also known as offal, such as livers, tongues, hearts and kidneys. Smaller producers especially struggled. Selling ribeye direct to a consumer was no problem but getting rid of the rest was a challenge. Offal is nutritionally dense and desired by many cultures, but there are many U.S. consumers who are unfamiliar with these cuts and don't know how to properly prepare the meat.

This was the first in what the organizers hope becomes an annual event linked to the National Western Stock Show.

Read the rest of the *Source* article on this event [here](#).

### The 14th Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services Annual Meeting was recently held in Denver



Almost 200 leaders in agriculture and researchers in extension and rural advisory services attended the 14th Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) Annual Meeting. Conference participants heralded from more than 40 countries across North America, South America, Asia, Africa, and Europe to attend the three-day event, and it was the first GFRAS meeting held in the United States.

For more information, or to watch videos from the conference, click [here](#).



## From Our Communities

### 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. Recent updates include:

- our first **newsletter**
- **news and events** from across the region
- new **grant** programs

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

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