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**CSU Food Systems Spotlight**



## Caroline Conley Norris

Graduate Student at Colorado State University

Caroline is a PhD Student in the Department of Agriculture and Resource Economics (DARE) at CSU. In 2020, Caroline received her MS degree in DARE. During her time in the program, she worked on issues related to food insecurity and food access. Following graduation, Caroline joined the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond where she began working on issues related to the impact of climate change on the economy. In 2022, she joined the Federal Reserve Board to work exclusively on climate-related topics. After completing coursework in politics and public policy, Caroline returned to DARE in 2025 as a PhD student.

Caroline's research interests include the economic impacts of climate-related hazards, the drivers of economic resiliency to climate hazards, and the interactions between natural capital and climate change. Caroline plans to focus her PhD research on these topics and is passionate about connecting her research to policy initiatives which are relevant for community and economic development.



## Mark Your Calendar



## Third Semi-Annual Southwest Colorado Food and Agriculture Summit

The SW Colorado Food and Agriculture Summit brings together all voices of the region's food and agricultural system to foster connections, understand challenges, identify opportunities, and elevate stakeholders. The Summit aims to develop a shared vision for issues relevant to southwest Colorado to bring forward at **CSU's 2025 Food Summit**. To convene diverse food system partners, people representing all sectors of agriculture, food retail, and food access, in addition to policymakers and funding entities, are encouraged to attend.

The event will take place in Hesperus on **April 2nd, from 9am-1pm**. There will be several facilitated conversations and a locally-sourced lunch for all attendees. Attendance is free, and gift cards for childcare, interpretation, and gas are available. Contact [rachel@goodfoodcollective.org](mailto:rachel@goodfoodcollective.org) with questions.

[Register here.](#)

## Empower Your Community's Farmers Markets: Data-Driven Marketing Insights

The Community, Local and Regional Food Systems (CLRFS) National Cooperative Extension Project Team is hosting an online open forum on **Wednesday, April 2nd at 10am MST** to explore findings from a national study designed to improve farmers market success.



The webinar will equip Extension professionals with:

- National Survey Data: Survey results regarding consumer motivations, barriers to attendance, and desired experiences at farmers markets.
- Social Media Strategies: Findings from paid social media tests conducted with 12 markets across six states.
- Practical Tools and Resources: Preview of the Farmers Market Communication Toolkit intended for market operators.

[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 \$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 and to learn more, [check here.](#)

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

- April 17th, 12:00pm-3:30pm, online, [register.](#)
- April 25th, 9:00am-12:30pm, online, [register.](#)
- April 26th, 9:00am-1:00pm, online, [register.](#)
- May 15th, 12:00pm-3:30pm, online, [register.](#)
- June 6th, 9:00am-12:30pm, online, [register.](#)
- June 19th, 9:00am-1:00pm, online, [register.](#)



## Tools to Enhance Your Business Management Webinar Series

Join the Center for Farm Financial Management (CFFM) team at the University of Minnesota for a weekly webinar series aimed at enhancing business management skills. Throughout the series, the CFFM team will guide participants through the process of creating a business plan, providing tools they have developed to advance farm operations.

### Upcoming topics:

- April 10th: Where should I market my products?
- April 17th: How much did that market make?
- April 24th: FSA Programs, Farm Answers, and USDA Beginning Farmer Programs
- May 1st: Putting it all together

The webinar takes place every Thursday at 1pm MT.

**Register for the webinar here.**

## Gluten-Free Grains Virtual Panel

The Colorado Grain Chain and the UCCS Grain School are hosting a virtual panel on gluten-free grains, featuring industry leaders like Holidaily Brewing, Haxtun Heritage Mills, and Snacktivist. Topics to be discussed include climate-smart crops, product development, and market trends. The panel will take place on **Tuesday, April 15th at 4:30pm.**

Register for the panel **here!**



## RFBC Learning Series: Visualizing Food Systems Data

The RFBC Learning Series is a space for Centers to learn about research, technical assistance tools, programs, and other resources. This edition of the series is Visualizing Food Systems Data, highlighting data visualization as a useful tool to simplify complex information and share key insights. The webinar will focus on the **Food**

and **Agriculture Mapper and Explorer (FAME)** and **Data Warehouse** with presenters discussing recent updates, exploring new capabilities, and reviewing practical uses of these tools.

This webinar will take place on **April 23rd, 12pm-1pm MST**.

**Register here.**

## 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**.



COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION

## Cottage Foods Business Training: Passion Into Profits

Join CSU Extension for a training to successfully build a cottage foods business and turn your culinary passion into profit! CSU Extension is offering a short course with tools to ensure success for cottage food producers. The training provides easy-to-use resources for ensuring producers account for their costs of production and product-market-fit.

### Upcoming Training Sessions:

- May 14th, 2:00pm-4:00pm, online, **register**.
- July 7th, 10:00am-12:00pm, online, **register**.
- September 18th, 2:00pm-4:00pm, online, **register**.

## Farm to Loading Dock Webinar

On **May 16th, 2025 from 12:00 - 1:15 pm MT** please join us for an informative webinar about a research project that explored the partnerships, training, and resources needed to move food from Colorado's agricultural producers to wholesale institutional markets.



This research, which culminated in the **Farm to Loading Dock Landscape Assessment**, has been referenced in federal and state grant opportunities, informed statewide data collection strategies, and coalesced support for statewide coordination around training and technical assistance, among other applications.

This webinar will cover the why, the how, and the process of completing this research, as well as how it is being utilized within Colorado and how it could inform strategies in other states working to make farm-to-institution the easy choice. The discussion will also focus on various policy solutions currently being implemented or considered to address pain points, increase resource allocation, and strengthen and sustain Colorado's local food economy.

Please **register here** and we look forward to taking action together!



## Experiential Short Courses with Pueblo Seed & Food Co.: Southwest Foodways

Come join Pueblo Seed & Food Co. in the Canyon of the Ancients! Throughout the year, they are offering 5 courses and 1 field day in southwest Colorado. The first course is **Southwest Foodways**, taking place from **May 30th to June 1st** and focusing on ancient knowledge which

influences traditional food systems. The course includes a farm tour with lunch, a lecture paired with a tasting menu, and hands-on learning at a bakehouse.

The Southwest Foodways course costs \$695, not including lodging. If you sign up prior to April 15th, you will receive a 20% discount on registration. To register or for more information, **visit the Pueblo Seed & Food Co. website**.

### Future Courses:

- Farmer Field Day for Organic Grain & Legume (free) - June 29th, 2025
- The Whole Grain Experience - July 18-20th, 2025
- Soil, Seed, and Human Health - August 15-17th, 2025
- The Great Chile and Garlic Experience - September 26-28th, 2025
- Maize & Millets - October 31st-November 2nd, 2025

The cost without lodging for all courses (except the field day) is \$695. For questions, contact **info@puebloseed.com**.

## Farm Resilience Online Course

Please consider joining this 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. 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-stay tuned for future opportunities!



**COLORADO**  
Department of Agriculture

### On-Farm Energy and Efficiency Project Funding

The Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA) is requesting applications from farmers and ranchers for the Advancing Colorado's Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ACRE3) program. Agricultural producers can apply for funding and technical assistance for reducing on-farm energy costs through renewable energy and energy efficiency projects. The ACRE3 program guides farmers and ranchers through these projects with no-cost assessments and up to 50% cost share for the projects. The program is accepting online pre- applications through **May 31st, 2025**.

ACRE3 program staff will confirm each project's eligibility, and will then award funding for a project feasibility study or energy efficient audit report at no cost to the producer. These studies or audits will give the producer a reliable estimate of the energy- and cost-saving potential of the project. Upon completion of the studies or audits, CDA will run a competitive grant review process for applicants, awarding grants of up to 50% of the project costs. Projects not selected for funding can use their completed feasibility study or energy audit to apply for other funding options.

CDA will host a virtual informational session for questions from interested applicants on **April 8th at 2:00pm**. Register for the session [here](#).

View the grant program website [here](#) for more information on the program.



## Technical Assistance Funding to Land-Grant Universities

In 27 U.S. cities designated as urban priority locations, the USDA is funding the hiring of Urban Agriculture Extension Educators through land-grant universities' cooperative extension programs. These educators will provide technical assistance and connect producers to NRCS conservation planning and program opportunities. More details are available on the [USDA webpage](#).



### News, Resources & Reading



#### USDA Survey: Farmer's 2025 Planting Intentions

As the 2025 crop production season begins, the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) contacted producers nationwide to determine their plans for the upcoming season.

The USDA compiles the survey results into a report which provides the first estimates of U.S. farmers' growing plans for 2025. The survey results will be published in the annual *Prospective Plantings* and quarterly *Grain Stocks* reports to be released on March 31st at 12pm.

[Find the reports here.](#)

#### Values-Based, Equity Centered Farm to Food Assistance Report



Wallace Center  
AT WINROCK INTERNATIONAL

The Wallace Center's Food Leadership Network has announced 4 years of research, peer learning, and field building in the report **"Farm to Food Assistance: A Model for Values-Based, Equity-Centered Approaches to Transforming the Food System"**. This report makes the case for how farms can transform food systems through food assistance programs. The Food Leadership Network highlights the most pressing challenges and offers recommendations for people looking to advance Farm to Food Assistance efforts across the country.

#### 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!](#)



## 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 spring-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.](#)



## Promise of Urban Agriculture Courses Now Available

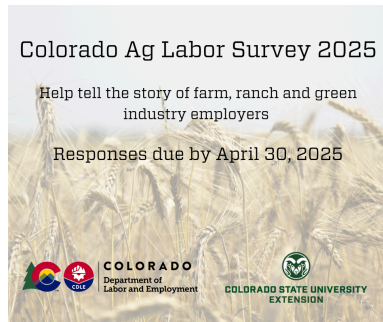
USDA AMS, in partnership with the Cornell Small Farms Program and Rooted, is offering the Promise of Urban Agriculture courses. The courses represent an innovative and holistic approach to support urban farming businesses and communities.

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



## From Our Communities



### 2025 Colorado Ag Labor Survey

Do you employ workers for your Colorado farm, ranch, or green industry business? If so, you know the challenges of recruiting and retaining employees. Solutions to Colorado Ag and green industry workforce challenges depend on an accurate data-based understanding of the situation. **This is currently the only comprehensive ag labor survey for the entire agriculture sector in Colorado.**

Please complete the Ag Labor Survey survey by **April 30, 2025**. Plan for 10 minutes if you are a vegetable producer, and 5 minutes if you are not.

**Take the survey here.**

### 2025 Shared Kitchen Operator and Member Surveys



For Shared Kitchen Operators:

The Food Corridor has launched the 2025 Shared Kitchen Operator Survey and invites operators and managers of shared commercial kitchen facilities to participate. The survey aims to gather updated information on the shared kitchen industry. Those who complete the entire survey will receive a summary of the survey findings. It is expected to take 20-30 minutes to complete.

**Take the Shared Kitchen Operator Survey.**

For Shared Kitchen Members:

The Food Corridor is also distributing a Shared Kitchen Member Survey for clients and members in order to measure the impacts of shared kitchens in communities. This form is expected to take 5-10 minutes. **Take the Shared Kitchen Member Survey.**

All those who complete the survey will get the compiled results for free to help in their own business planning.

### 10th Annual AgriSummit Conference

Hosted in conjunction with CSU Food Systems Institute and Colorado Food Summit's Mountain Regional Convening, the 10th annual AgriSummit recently

took place in Chaffee County in March 2025.

AgriSummit kicked off with tours of farms, ranches, and food businesses in Fremont, Chaffee, and Lake Counties. The tours highlighted a variety of operations, including producers raising meat and produce at 10,000 feet of elevation and distributing through a local store in Leadville, another growing thousands of pounds of produce for food banks across Colorado, a third preserving heirloom apples in Howard, and another stewarding land on a ranch in Cotopaxi.



Following this, the full day conference began with a welcome address by George Whitten, lifelong rancher from San Luis Valley and Regional Ag Commissioner for the Colorado Department of Agriculture. Breakout sessions focused on food access and cooperative farm labor systems featuring ranchers talking about virtual fencing and backyard gardeners discussing seed saving. Additionally, the sessions showcased mobile processing and farm-to-school programs, while facilitating stakeholder conversations regarding the Mountain region's food system. There was a Community Open House and Seed Swap, fostering relationships which support local and regional food system resilience.

The keynote address was delivered by Fred Provenza. Fred grew up in Salida and worked on a ranch while studying Wildlife Biology at CSU before teaching Behavioral Ecology at Utah State University and researching the connections between soil, plants, herbivores, and humans. The keynote was an inspiring talk reflecting on his lifetime of work, shifting from giving lectures to facilitating conversations where students could hear different perspectives. We are already looking forward to next year!



## 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](mailto:connect@coloradograinchain.com) or apply to become a member [here](#).

## 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 focused on regional data on market usage.



## 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](#).
- Learn about open funding opportunities through our [Biz Builder grant programs](#).
- Find an event to launch or expand your business on our [calendar](#).

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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