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August 2025 || Newsletter Edition 179

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CSU Food Systems Spotlight



Christian Gomez-Navarrete

USDA Northwest and Rocky Mountain Regional Food Business Center, State Coordinator

Christian Gomez-Navarrete joins the USDA Northwest and Rocky Mountain Regional Food Business Center as the State Coordinator for Colorado. He brings a strong commitment to supporting small and mid-sized farmers, advancing equitable food systems, and building regional resilience through agricultural education and industry collaboration.

Christian's passion for food production began early and developed into a mission-driven career focused on empowering producers and communities. He holds a B.S. in Agricultural Science and an M.S. in Agricultural Education from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, bringing a practical, community-centered approach to his work. Christian has extensive experience in agricultural education, program development, and climate-resilient farming. He has led the design and implementation of innovative curricula in food science, regenerative agriculture, and agribusiness, while also expanding youth engagement in hands-on agricultural programs. His work includes securing significant grant funding to develop farm and laboratory infrastructure, fostering industry partnerships to support workforce development, and mentoring youth in leadership, research, and sustainability practices.



Mark Your Calendar

COLORADO BEEF FESTIVAL

The Colorado Beef Festival is where Ranch Meets Kitchen! This event is a celebration of Colorado's beef heritage, where local chefs partner with multi-generational ranching families to transform premium cuts into culinary masterpieces. Attendees will connect directly with families who dedicate their lives to ethical ranching and the talented chefs who honor their work through innovative cooking techniques.

What to Expect:

- Live Chef Battles

- Meat Market
- Craft Beer Pairings
- Live Country Music and Line Dancing
- Western Costume Contest

The CO Beef Festival will take place on **Saturday, August 9th from 3-11pm in Denver. [Learn more and get tickets here.](#)**

On-Farm Energy Workshop



Farmers, ranchers, landowners, and dairy operators are invited to a one-day workshop hosted by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) and American Farmland Trust (AFT) focused on on-farm energy technologies. This event aims to facilitate open and honest conversations about on-farm energy technologies and their potential outcomes for farmers.

Workshop Includes:

- Solar Site Visit
- Educational Sessions
- Case Study Panel
- Dinner and Refreshments
- Networking and Open Discussions

When: Tuesday, August 19th from 3:00pm-7:30pm

Where: 4492 East County Road 56, Fort Collins, CO 80524

[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:

- August 14th, 12:00pm-3:30pm, online, **[register](#)**
- August 22nd, 9:00am-12:30pm, online, **[register](#)**
- September 11, 12:00pm-3:30pm, online, **[register](#)**



Experiential Short Courses with Pueblo Seed & Food Co.

Come join Pueblo Seed & Food Co. in the Canyon of the Ancients! Throughout the year, they are offering 3 courses and 1 field day in southwest Colorado.

Upcoming courses:

- 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** is \$100, with add-on activities available. For questions, contact info@puebloseed.com.

2025 Collegiate Policy Challenge: Improving Health Outcomes

All current CSU students are invited to compete in the Collegiate Policy Challenge focused on improving health outcomes. Participants are instructed to take on a healthcare issue and produce a program to address it. Policy proposals should explain how you'll pay for the program, address any legislative action to make it happen, and outline your political strategy for bringing it to life.



**COLORADO STATE
UNIVERSITY**

Each member of the winning team be invited to present their policy proposal at the national meeting at the University of Chicago in February 2026. Travel costs for this trip will be fully covered. If you win the national policy challenge each member of your team gets \$500. Reach out to Sam.Houghteling@colostate.edu with any questions.

Key Dates:

- August 27th – CSU Mentor Meeting (4pm on Teams)
- September 3rd – Student Open House
- September 17th – Sign Up Deadline for student participants
- November 19th – CSU Policy Challenge Pitchfest Event
- February 9th – Winning CSU Student Team competes at National Competition at UChicago
- March 9th – CSU Democracy Summit to showcase all CSU student finalist teams

Mentors will serve as a resource for the teams. If you are interested in being a mentor, contact Sam.Houghteling@colostate.edu.



2025 Colorado Food & Agriculture Collision Pitch Competition

Join us for the **3rd Annual Colorado Food & Agriculture Collision Pitch Competition**

—a dynamic, in-person event celebrating the creativity and innovation of Colorado’s food and agriculture entrepreneurs. This statewide event brings together top businesses from six Colorado regions—from the western mountains to the eastern plains—to pitch their ideas on one stage. It’s a great opportunity to connect, get inspired, and support the future of Colorado’s food and agriculture industries. The event will take place on **September 12th from 4:30pm-7:30pm at CSU Spur in Denver.**

Registration is \$25, which includes appetizers and one drink ticket. To secure your spot at this event, [get tickets here.](#)

Agrivoltaics Farm Tours and Volunteer Days: How to Plan Your Agrivoltaics Project

The Colorado Agrivoltaics Learning Center is hosting a series of public tours of an agrivoltaic farms in CO. The tours will take place at Jack's Solar Garden in Longmont between August and 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.](#)



University of Idaho
Extension

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:

- September 23 – Foundations of Safe Food Handling
- 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 the following dates:

- **September 23-24:** 10am-12pm and 2pm-4pm (both days), **Register here**
- **November 18-19:** 10am-12pm and 2pm-4pm (both days), **Register here**



ANNIE'S PROJECT
EMPOWERING WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

Registration is free but limited to the first 20 participants. All 8 hours must be completed 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.



Native Grown & Gathered Food Expo

Join Tahoma Peak Solutions in Seattle, Washington for a vibrant gathering celebrating Native food systems and Tribal Food Sovereignty. This event unites Tribal nations, food producers, chefs, and advocates across the Northwest, Rocky Mountains, and beyond. Native

entrepreneurs and businesses, buyers, conscious consumers, the Tribal community, Native nonprofits, and grassroots advocates are invited to attend.

Visit the webpage to learn more.

The Food Expo will take place from **October 1st through October 3rd**. Key events include breakout sessions, panels, and marketplace exploration featuring Native producers, artisans, and vendors. Registration is \$550 before July 15th and \$600 before October 1st. Purchasing a pass to access only the food marketplace costs \$10. Limited scholarships are available.

Register here.

2025 National Sorghum Producers Yield Contest

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. 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](#).



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.

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 helping producers account for their costs of production and product-market-fit. The training will take place on **September 18th from 2:00pm-4:00pm**, online. [Register here](#).

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 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](#).



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

AMS Seeks Peer Reviewers for Grant Applications



The USDA Ag Marketing Service is seeking subject matter experts to serve as peer reviewers to evaluate applications for the LAMP and other AMS programs for the FY2025 grant cycle. The current programs seeking reviewers are:

- Acer Access and Development Program (Acer)
- Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP)
- Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP)
- Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP)
- Regional Food System Partnerships (RFSP)

AMS grant peer reviewers should have knowledge or experience in agricultural systems. Producers and those with first-hand experience in food and farm businesses are encouraged to participate. Reviewing applications takes approximately 6 weeks. For more information, view the [How to Become an Application Reviewer](#) webpage.

Register [here](#).



News, Resources & Reading



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: Eastern Colorado — "Soil to Supper"

Eastern Colorado's "Soil to Supper" events, held in Fort Morgan and Sterling, brought over 100 local producers, ranchers, and food advocates together to build connections and strengthen the regional food economy. Participants highlighted priorities such as expanding producer education, creating stronger market access, and increasing visibility for local businesses. The Grower Showcase sparked new partnerships and led to direct retail opportunities for businesses like Country Road Vines and Wines. Yet, persistent challenges remain from limited access to capital and infrastructure, to the need for sustained collaboration in rural areas. Despite these hurdles, the events ignited enthusiasm and a shared commitment to building a vibrant regional food system—one rooted in connection, equity, and long-term resilience. Additional resources including a 2-page summary and [the full eastern 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](#).

Upcoming Governance Process

Complete the following survey if you are interested in participating in the upcoming governance process. This will likely include three meetings (1-2 hours each). Anyone participating outside of a paid role can opt to receive a \$200 stipend for their time. [Complete the survey here](#).

Introducing the Poudre Valley Community Farms Land Access Bulletin

The 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](#).



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 are published in the annual *Prospective Plantings* and quarterly *Grain Stocks* reports. Learn more about farmer responses in the posted reports.

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.



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 summer or 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.](#)



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



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:

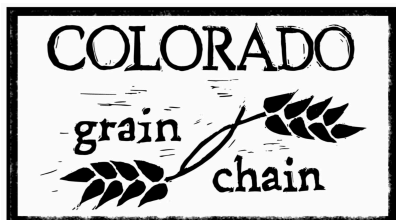
- Sign up for a 1-hour Zoom Meeting where a facilitator will lead you through a management survey for 2 or 3 fields
- Grant access to fields for hand-probe soil sampling 2 or 3 sampling sites from each field. Normally this will happen 3-6 months after the survey; you will be notified beforehand

**All contact information, farm management, and soil health data for participants will be kept confidential. The data that is 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

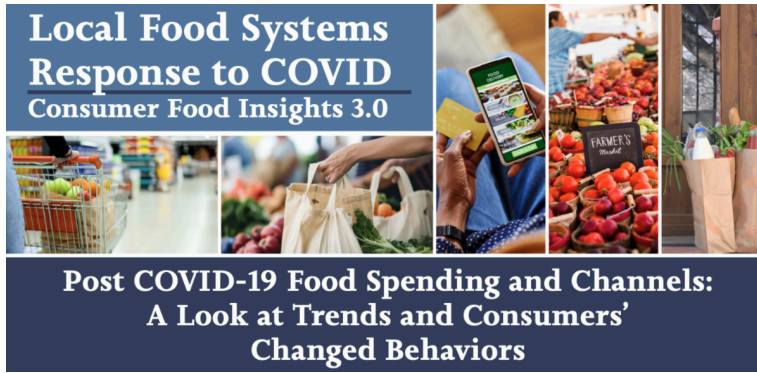
Co-Brand strategy, the Colorado Grain Chain supports producers and makers with co-branded marketing materials, grain chain business access, and networking opportunities.

For more information, contact Audrey Paugh at connect@coloradograinchain.com or apply to become a member [here](#).

New Consumer Food Insights Series Available

A series of [Consumer Food Insights](#) was published in late 2024. 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 series providing regional data on market usage, including the Rocky Mountain Northwest region.



**Post COVID-19 Food Spending and Channels:
A Look at Trends and Consumers'
Changed Behaviors**



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

Unfortunately, CSU received a modification letter from the USDA terminating the Northwest Rocky Mountain Regional Food Business Center award, with the exception of the Business Builder component of the award. The university is working directly with the impacted staff and subcontractors to determine next steps.

The Northwest and Rocky Mountain USDA Regional Food Business Center (RFBC) was fortunate to reward over 130 farms and food enterprises with Business Builder grants, and will remain open to honor those commitments. Stay tuned for other Center 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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Food Systems CSU | <https://foodsystems.colostate.edu>



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