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February 2025 || Newsletter Edition 174

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CSU Food Systems Spotlight



Sabina Regmi

Graduate Research Assistant, Colorado State University

Sabina is a first-year PhD student in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics. Originally from Nepal, Sabina earned her undergraduate degree in Agriculture from Tribhuvan University, Nepal. She holds a master's degree in Agricultural Economics from Mississippi State University, where her thesis employed meta-

analysis to investigate consumer willingness to pay for broadband in the United States. Sabina also engaged in extension projects on broadband adoption in Mississippi, focusing on disparities between urban and rural areas and across income groups. Building on her master's studies and work experience in rural agricultural development in Nepal, her current research interests lie in regional economics, rural development, and community economic development.



Mark Your Calendar



2025 Colorado Regional Food Convenings

The goal of the Colorado Food Summit is to bring together diverse food system stakeholders in order to find opportunities to leverage food policy in support of a shared food vision for Colorado. In

order to raise awareness of and lift regional voices in statewide food and agricultural visioning processes, we are holding regional gatherings across Colorado throughout 2025. Themes emanating from these conversations will be used to guide the content of the statewide Colorado Food Summit, which will be held in December 2025. Find the most up to date information [here](#). Scheduled convenings include:

- February 1st, **Front Range Region, Denver, CO**
- February 5th, **Western Region, Grand Junction, CO**
- February 6th, **Eastern Region, Fort Morgan, CO**
- March 5th, **Western Region, Craig, CO**
- March 7th, **Mountain Region, Salida, CO**
- March 11th, **Eastern Region, Sterling, CO**
- March 14th, **Southern Region, Pueblo, CO**



Online Farm Planning Course with Spanish Interpretation at Old Fort at Hesperus

The Old Fort is offering a virtual Farm Planning course on **Tuesdays from 1-3pm, from Feb. 11th to April 22nd.**

This course is aimed to help vegetable farmers entering at least their second year of farming who have started an independent farm business or have the goal to do so. Topics include: visioning, crop planning, recordkeeping, accessing resources, branding, soil health, high elevation production, business basics, and land access.

Live Spanish interpretation will be available for all classes. Additionally, all classes will be recorded, with links distributed to registered participants.

The course is \$100 for all 10 classes. Scholarships are available to reduce the cost of attendance. **Register here.** Contact farmertraining@fortlewis.edu for more information.

USDA AMS Local and Regional Foods Resources and Research Webinar Series



A monthly webinar series highlighting local and regional foods research projects, resources, partnerships, and programs.

Upcoming Webinar:

- **Feb. 20, 2025** - Visualizing Food Systems Data: With the increasing reliance on data for decision making, data visualization can be a useful tool to simplify complex information and share insights in a way that can be easily understood by many audiences.
- This month's webinar will highlight the Food and Agriculture Mapper and Explorer (FAME) and other data visualization tools that focus on local and regional food systems. The presentation will include some specific use cases to illustrate practical uses of these tools for food systems practitioners.

Click here to register.

Past Webinars:

- The Promise of Urban Agriculture: Courses for Growers and Planners
- Key Findings from the Consumer Food Insights Series
- The Local and Regional Food Systems Resilience Playbook

The recordings of these past webinars are available **here.**



What: LoProCO is a farm-to-institution initiative that provides the tools and training for partners to procure, prepare, and serve food from local farmers and ranchers. In this workshop, farmers and producers will learn how to break into the school and institutional market, while schools and institutions will learn how to integrate more local food into their menus. Together, everyone will learn about the economic, health, and community benefits of investing in local agriculture.

See the agenda [here](#) for more detailed information.

Who: Agricultural producers, food service directors, kitchen leads, local leaders and food partners, extension specialists, teachers, and youth representatives are invited to attend this workshop; organizations interested in sharing information and resources are encouraged to host a table.

When: February 21st, 8am-3pm

Where: Pueblo, CO

Registration is free. Nourish Colorado can provide participants with travel support for lodging, mileage, and childcare stipends. Contact Jessica at Jessica@NourishColorado.org with any questions.

Register to attend or host a table by **February 7th** using [this form](#).



Food Safety Training for Colorado Cottage Foods Producers

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

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

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

- February 5th, 1:00pm-4:30pm, online, [register](#).
- February 21st, 9:00am - 12:30pm, online, [register](#).
- February 27th, 12:00pm - 3:30pm, online, [register](#).
- March 5th, 2025, 1:00pm - 4:30pm, online, [register](#).

Old Fort at Hesperus 2025 Farmer in Training Program

The Old Fort at Hesperus is now accepting applications for the 2025 Farmer in Training (FIT) program. Work and class schedules require at least a 22-hour work week.



- Program graduates complete:
 - Six farming courses (T/Th, 1-3 pm)
 - Over 200 hours of paid field work (on T/W/Th mornings)
 - Participate in four field trips throughout the program (W 1-4 pm)
- Field work and compensation available through Americorps or through a direct stipend. Applications close February 15th.

See [the webpage](#) for additional information. [Apply here.](#)

UCCS University of Colorado Colorado Springs

COURSE STARTS FEBRUARY 3, 2025
Have ACCESS ALL YEAR
Includes all parts of UCCS Grain School with Kick Off Orientation Session Feb 4, 2025 at 4:30 - 6pm MST

Farming & Processing February
Nutrition & Health March
Community April

Rocky Mountain Farmers Union UCCS Grain School COLORADO grain & grain

University of Colorado Colorado Springs (UCCS)
Grain School Online 2025
Take the Full Course (\$395) starting February 3, 2025
LIMITED SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE FOR PRODUCERS AND MAKERS. PLEASE INQUIRE NMeyer2@UCCS.EDU

University of Colorado, Colorado Springs Grain School

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

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

Register [here](#).



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:

- Feb. 6th: Why Business Planning?
- Feb. 13: Business Planning - Operations
- Feb. 20th: Business Planning - Marketing
- Feb 27th: Business Planning - Management & Organization

The webinar takes place every Thursday at 1pm, with classes running from February 6th through May 1st.

Register for the webinar here.

Naturally Rising: The Conscious Business Pitch Competition



Naturally Rising invites emerging, purpose-driven brands in the natural product's industry to apply for their Conscious Business Pitch Competition on April 2nd. At the competition, entrepreneurs from CO will present their innovative product companies for the chance to win prizes at the regional Naturally Rising chapter competition and advance as a national finalist. The national competition will take place in Denver on August 20-22, 2025.

Naturally Rising focuses on retail readiness and highlights companies that show passion and commitment to people and the planet. The application deadline for the Colorado chapter is **February 14th**.

Click here to learn more and apply.



Colorado Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association (CFVGA) Annual Conference

Join the 11th Annual Conference hosted by the **CO Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association**. This event will include two days of business networking with over 30 exhibitors and 25 buyers, 19 educational sessions, and social events.

When: February 18-19th

Where: 10600 Westminster Blvd, Westminster, CO

Register for the event here!

CFVGA grower members get a free membership with reduced registration at member rates. To do this, first join as a member and then register for the event.

Additionally, a limited number of beginning farmer conference scholarships are available for free registration.

Learn more about the conference [here](#). For any questions regarding registration, contact Marilyn Bay at admin@coloradoproduce.org or **303-594-3827**.



Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training

The Produce Safety Collaborative along with 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 over two half days: Feb 25: 7:30am-12:30pm, and

Feb 26: 7:45am-1:30pm. The cost is \$75 and includes materials, a workbook and a certificate of completion. Registration for this course closes after Feb. 15, 2025.

This course will provide 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. Individuals are expected to gain a basic understanding of:

- Requirements in the FSMA Produce Safety Rule and how to meet them;
- Microorganisms relevant to produce safety and where they may be found on the farm;
- How to identify microbial risks, practices that reduce risks, and how to begin implementing produce safety practices on the farm; and
- Parts of a farm food safety plan and how to begin writing one.

Register and learn more [here](#).

Questions? Contact [Beth LaShell](#).

Colorado Farmers Market Association Annual Conference

The Colorado Farmers Market Association (CFMA) is hosting their Annual Conference from **March 7th-9th** in Trinidad. The conference includes informational sessions, farm tours, local food and drinks, and the opportunities to connect with the farmers market community.



All events will be in-person, but purchasing access to program recordings will be possible after the event.

CFMA members receive a 20% discount on tickets. Conference tickets are on a sliding scale and limited scholarships are available. Early bird tickets are available until February 18th, with tickets ranging from \$90 to \$175.

Register on [Eventbrite](#).



10th Annual AgriSummit Conference

Guidestone is hosting the 10th annual AgriSummit Conference. This year's theme is *Nurturing Connections, Nourishing the Future*. The event will offer educational sessions, networking opportunities, and discussions focused on local food production, food access, and agritourism in Colorado. All Friday sessions will include simultaneous interpretation in Spanish.

The event takes place from **March 6th-March 7th** in Salida, CO. Scholarships are available to cover any travel, childcare, or personal costs, as well as to support beginning, young, and aspiring producers.

[Learn more, apply for a scholarship, and register here.](#)

In addition to hosting this event, Guidestone is partnering with the NWRM Regional Food Business Center and the Colorado Grain Chain for the CO Grain Summit (listed below) in Salida on March 8th. Registering for both events discounts each event by \$10.

The Colorado Grain Summit

The Colorado Grain Chain and NWRM Regional Food Business Center invite those who grow, produce, handle, and buy grain products to the Colorado Grain Summit. This conference features networking sessions, expert panels, and keynote speeches, aiming to inspire businesses using local grains to envision pathways for sustainable growth and increased market impact. The summit will take place on **March 8th** from 8am-5:30pm at the SteamPlant Event Center in Salida, CO.



[Learn more, buy tickets, or apply for a scholarship here.](#)

If you represent an organization that provides resources and information that support grain stakeholder attendees and would like to have a resource table, reach out to audrey@coloradograinchain.com for more information.



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.

- March 11th, 10:00am - 12:00pm, online, [register](#).
- May 14th, 2:00pm - 4:00pm, online, [register](#).
- July 7th, 10:00am - 12:00pm, online, [register](#).
- September 18th, 2:00pm - 4:00pm, online, [register](#).



Sun Soil Water Summit 2025

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

The community events are a fundraiser for the Pueblo Food Project. Scholarships are available for the main events only. Dual translation will be offered for all events except fly fishing. [Get your tickets here!](#)

Main Events

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

Additional Events

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

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!



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

Values-Based, Equity Centered Farm to Food Assistance Report



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!](#)

Subscribe to *Rooted* Digital Magazine

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

Rooted
in Agroecology and
Food Sovereignty

Read the first issue on Policymaking for Agroecology [here](#). In this issue, authors from Brazil, Kenya, the Indian Himalayas, and Switzerland share lessons learned and perspectives from movement leaders.

[Subscribe to the magazine here.](#)



Colorado Organic Grains Microgrant Awardees Announced

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

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

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 winter-season agritourism venture is featured on the USDA Local Food Directories! To create a new

listing, answer quick and easy questions about the status of your business so consumers can learn more about you.

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

Manager Fellowship Available for Mid-Career Agrarians



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

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

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



Promise of Urban Agriculture Courses Now Available

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

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

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

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

From Our Communities

Food Systems in the Field: Connecting Local Agriculture to Local Businesses in Montezuma County

*Submitted by Emily Lockard, County
Director & Agriculture Specialist for CSU
Extension in Montezuma County*



Work related to food systems makes for many unique and rewarding connections. Last year, through connections with Colorado Downton Inc., local town economic development directors heard about CSU's Rural Economic Development Institute. A few zoom meetings later, we had ourselves a big team of collaborators, a CSU Extension Intern and a goal of making connections between downtown economies and supporting the agricultural community. Our intern, a PhD student in economics, Sal McCollum, surveyed the needs of local producers and economic development resources to identify community needs related to agritourism and help our team identify ways to address needs that fit our capacity.

Sal identified community needs that include:

1. Desire for greater collaboration between farms, local businesses, and members of local governments,
2. More accessible information on available resources including clarity from local governments on event regulations and
3. Technical assistance related to the many roles needed to develop a successful and sustainable agritourism business.

Sal also identified potential ways to address needs. Our local group of Extension and town economic development directors were able to discuss our capacity and ways that we can start building towards reaching larger goals of supporting agritourism, as well as connecting agriculture and downtown tourism.

To start, we're planning a Resource Day to connect agriculture and agritourism folks to local business development resources. From these discussions and a direct as from a producer engaged in agritourism we're once again able to leverage the capacity of a CSU Extension intern to develop enterprise budgets that will support agritourism enterprises such as on farm classes and tours.

As with many projects in Extension, this began as a small ask and is developing into a deeper support of a growing part of agriculture in the Four Corners. I look forward to see what we come up with next but in the meantime come visit us for an orchard tour or a lavender distillation class!



Take the Land Rental and Custom Rates Survey

CSU Extension conducts an annual survey of custom rates charged for various crop and livestock operations and lease arrangements in the preceding year. Data is collected from agricultural producers, landowners and managers, lenders, consultants, machine operators, and Extension agents. The Land Rental and Custom Rates Report influences land appraisal values and property taxes, as well as federal, state, and local policies like crop insurance.

Take just 10 minutes to **complete the survey** before February 21, 2025.

Contact jenny.beiermann@colostate.edu or the CSU Extension Agriculture and Business Management Team with any questions.



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**.

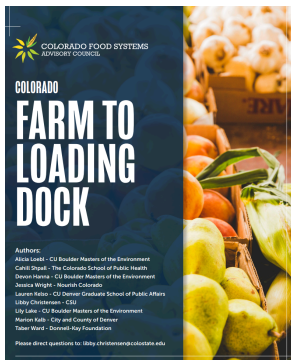
Black, Hispanic, and Tribal Producer Wholesale Marketing and Technical Assistance Survey

Farmers and ranchers who identify as Black, Hispanic, or Tribal and sell wholesale, either now or in the past, or plan to access wholesale markets, are encouraged to take this online survey. This project aims to understand the specific technical assistance needs of Black, Hispanic, and Tribal producers

when accessing and scaling into wholesale markets. Responses from the survey will support identifying best practices, challenges, gaps, and associated issues to inform technical assistance providers, programs, policies, and institutions.

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

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



Farm to Loading Dock Report

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

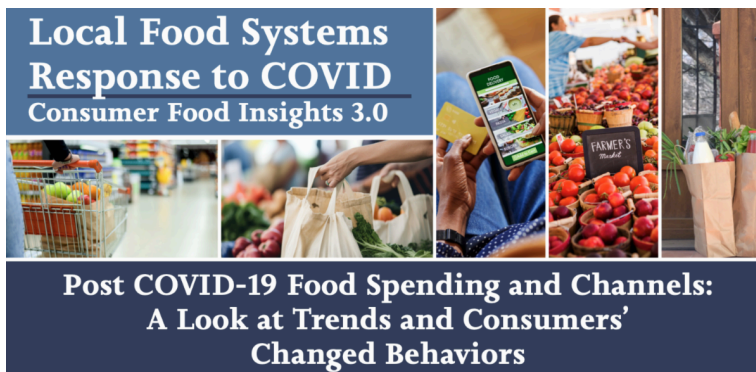


Check Out a Podcast by the North American Food Systems Network!

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

New Consumer Food Insights Series Available

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



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

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

Read our latest newsletter [here](#).

AND, several Biz Builder grant programs are now open (see above for all the details). Stay tuned for more funding opportunities in the future.

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



ABOUT FOOD SYSTEMS

at Colorado State University

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



Stay Connected

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



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



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