



COLORADO FOOD SYSTEMS ADVISORY COUNCIL

January 2015 Annual Report

CC:

Governor John Hickenlooper

Commissioner of Agriculture

House Public Health Care and Human Services Committee

Senate Health and Human Services Committee

House Agriculture, Livestock, and Natural Resources Committee

Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council

www.cofoodsystscouncil.org

Council Members

Shawnee Adelson, Board Member, Colorado Farmers' Market Association
Jane Brand, R.D., S.N.S., School Nutrition Director, Colorado Department of Education
Mary Lou Chapman, President & CEO, Rocky Mountain Food Industry Association
Steve Ela, M.S., Producer, Ela Family Farms/Silver Spruce Partners, LLC
Karen Falbo, C.N., Nutrition Program Manager, Natural Grocers by Vitamin Cottage
Trudy Kareus, State Director, USDA Rural Development
Pat Kendall, Ph.D., R.D., Professor Emeritus, Food Science and Human Nutrition, Colorado State University
Jill Litt, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of Environmental Health, Colorado School of Public Health; Assistant Professor, Environmental Studies, CU-Boulder
Levetta Love, Director, Office of Economic Security, Colorado Department of Human Services
Barbara Marty, Producer
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Tracy Miller, MSPH, RD, Manager, Child and Adult Care Food Program, Prevention Services Division, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
Louis Swanson, Ph.D., Vice President for Engagement and Director of Extension, Colorado State University (Appointee: Dawn Thilmany McFadden)
Linda Yoder, Producer

Staff

Wendy Peters Moschetti, Principal, WPM Consulting LLC

Staff is funded and managed by LiveWell Colorado through June 2015.

Per the requirements of Senate Bill 13-174, this update on the work of the Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council (COFSAC) is being provided to update Governor John Hickenlooper and his office, the Commissioner of Agriculture, and the House Public Health Care and Human Services Committee, Senate Health and Human Services Committee, House Agriculture, Livestock, and Natural Resources Committee, and Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee.

Meetings & Events

The COFSAC held their last quarterly meeting of 2014 on December 10th at the Colorado Department of Agriculture. The COFSAC hosted and facilitated a conversation that included food retail, food rescue, and food banks. Participants discussed the current status of food rescue and food distribution efforts, particularly as it relates to the distribution of fresh, healthy food items. The group also discussed primary barriers and opportunities to encourage direct, immediate distribution of fresh, healthy foods from retailers (who would otherwise throw away items like produce) for preservation or immediate distribution to food assistance organizations, housing developments, and other community locations that serve other food insecure stakeholders.

Six COFSAC members participated in the October 14th & 15th Colorado Food Policy Network planning retreat. See summary of this event, below.

On an October 22nd, 2014 Food Day webinar organized by the Center for a Livable Future and the Center for Science in the Public Interest, COFSAC staff Wendy Peters Moschetti presented on the COFSAC mission and its efforts to develop issue briefs and network with local food coalitions. Over 700 people registered for the webinar, which focused on various food policy council models.

COFSAC staff Wendy Peters Moschetti was the invited keynote speaker at a December 4th-5th gathering of food policy councils in North Carolina. She discussed the COFSAC history, approach to developing issue briefs, and the development of a broad, statewide network of local and state food coalitions.

For a summary of other 2014 meetings, events, and conferences, please see the October 2014 COFSAC report and the January 2014 COFSAC report, available here:

www.cofoodsystmscouncil.org/annual-reports-to-governor--general-assembly.html.

Member Updates

The COFSAC welcomed new member Cate Blackford, the Child Nutrition Program Manager with Hunger Free Colorado.

With the support of the Colorado Department of Human Services (a member of COFSAC), the Colorado Farmers Market Association (also a COFSAC member organization) submitted a

proposal for a USDA Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive grant to expand the use of double-voucher SNAP benefits to purchase produce at farmers markets across the state. This project would implement recommendations raised in the 2013 COFSAC issue brief “Increasing SNAP at Farmers Markets” if successful in securing resources. Boulder County Public Health also submitted a grant application from Colorado, with support from CDHS.

Local Coalition Engagement

COFSAC initiated outreach to local/community food system coalitions in the summer of 2012 in order to assess their status, interest in statewide collective action, support needed, and interest in peer networking. For a detailed background and history of the COFSAC outreach and engagement of local food system coalitions, please see the January 2014 and October 2014 reports.

With funding secured by CSU from Kaiser Permanente, the COFSAC participated in a 2-day planning retreat to further develop the Colorado Food Policy Network (COFPN) on October 14th & 15th, 2014, in Brighton, CO.

Six COFSAC members including the Chair participated in the planning retreat, and all COFSAC members were engaged in the planning and preparation of the event. An additional 16 participants also attended, representing local food system coalitions from across the state as well as state partners such as LiveWell Colorado, Rocky Mountain Farmers Union, Hunger Free Colorado, and CSU-Extension (campus and field agents).

The COFSAC sees this broader network as beneficial for several reasons including:

- Enhanced representation of stakeholders across the entire food system to support and inform the 15-member COFSAC.
- Eyes and ears on the ground across the state to identify and inform COFSAC about key issues.
- A statewide network that can use and act on key recommendations, data, promising practices and other information presented in the COFSAC issue briefs.
- A statewide network that can identify, react to, and proactively engage in policy and legislative issues that COFSAC cannot engage directly in.
- Support for assessment and analysis of food system issues that COFSAC cannot lead due to limited financial and staff resources.

Retreat participants identified a common purpose for the COFPN: “To advance healthy, community-based, economically viable food systems that ensure all Coloradans have access to affordable, nutritious food”.

Participants also identified two primary goals of the COFPN:

- To coordinate collective statewide action to further the common purpose.

- To build the capacity of local coalitions to effect change at the local level that furthers the common purpose.

Participants identified primary strategies or functions of the COFPN as well, including:

- Grow the local capacity of coalitions through peer learning, peer mentoring, technical assistance from state partners, leadership development, and support of collaborative pilot projects.
- Increase education and awareness about Colorado’s food system.
- Convene and support statewide collaboration through the development of a master food system plan, shared vision and values, and key metrics to guide the group’s work.
- Develop a shared policy advocacy platform and enhance policy advocacy skills and practice.
- Build a digital platform to support the network’s activities that would include mapping of activities and projects, locally-integrated food system data as well as national data, policy adoption, funding streams, and more.

Participants identified immediate next steps from the planning retreat. Several small working groups formed to work with staff to implement the following:

- Continue shared learning and networking (book club, quarterly networking calls, etc).
- Support policy advocacy development by sharing elevator speeches, tracking relevant 2015 legislation, and engaging in specific activities to support the proposed farm to school bill.
- Refine and clarify the network governance structure, vision, values and “theory of change” model.
- Identify and respond to funding opportunities.
- Begin a collective design process for a shared digital platform of data and activities.

Progress made since the October report includes:

- Extension of staffing/coordinator contractor for the COFPN through June 30th 2015 from LiveWell Colorado.
- Invited grant proposals to fund COFPN capacity-building and coordination by The Colorado Trust and Kaiser Permanente.
- Secured \$7500 from Rocky Mountain Farmers Union to begin the collective design process of a shared digital platform.
- Formed a 6-member Advisory Body to oversee the development of the governance structure and funding opportunities.

Areas of Focus

The COFSAC is preparing three new issue briefs. For previous issue briefs, see the bottom of the COFSAC home page (www.cofoodsystemscouncil.org). COFSAC is working to engage a broader set of expertise so that these may be used as both educational and outreach briefs for multiple stakeholders as well as briefs that can highlight potential action for the Governor's Office and legislators.

The three issue briefs include:

A. Preparing for Food Security in an Age of Changing Natural Resources

In order to grow the state's economy and support access to healthy foods for all Coloradans, the Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council recommends that the State of Colorado assess and pursue opportunities to reuse our natural resources for the benefit of food production for human consumption. Using our state's resources to their full extent will foster stronger environmental stewardship and can create new opportunities for our food producers to grow more healthy Colorado products to reach more Colorado consumers at prices sustainable for both consumers and producers. Efforts should be encouraged that clarify food safety implications, research yield and cost implications for farmers and ranchers, and facilitate the policy changes that may be necessary to lower the barriers to adoption of new models.

Through this issue brief, the COFSAC will frame the connection between the use of natural resources and human food production as we are facing increasing land, water, and energy resource constraints that will affect if and how we will be able to feed our growing population with affordable, healthy foods. Some examples of where we see inspiration on this issue include:

- **Water:** Using recycled water for edible crops.
- **Energy:** Using alternative energies for season extension, programs to incentivize energy efficiency and sustainability through various government agencies, and technical assistance for farmers.
- **Land:** Using public or open space lands for food production, support for conservation of food-producing lands, and zoning to incentivize re-use of underutilized city lands to bring land back to agriculture.

The final issue brief, to be completed this winter, will include an overview of the issue and opportunity as well as recommendations for action for the state of Colorado.

B. Barriers to Fresh Produce Donation & Incentives to Optimize Food Recovery

At some point from the field to fork, nearly one-third of all fruits and vegetables are lost in this country. In 2012, the Natural Resource Defense Council reported that nearly 12% of grocery retailers' stock of fruits and vegetables are lost, as compared to 4% of their stocks of grains and

2% of meats. Most grocery retailers at some point every day or every week throw out or compost fresh, healthy foods – often fruits and vegetables that may be damaged or blemished but are still edible, yet according to the 2013 annual report from Feeding America, only 15% of their food donations were fresh produce. Given the increasing share of the population that is reported as food insecure, the State of Colorado has a timely opportunity to redirect this food toward hunger relief organizations and away from the landfill.

This sort of very-soon-to-expire produce cannot always be rescued by larger food banks and re-distributed quickly enough to those who could benefit from more healthy foods. The COFSAC issue brief will include sections on the current status of food rescue and re-distribution at grocery retail and food bank sites, as well as an overview of food safety issues, the economics of food waste, corporate policy that influences retailer donations, and recommendations for potential state action that could incentivize additional healthy food donations.

C. Aligning Interests Between Colorado’s Health Care and Agricultural Industries to Improve Health and Wellness

The Governor’s Office requested that COFSAC analyze the various state economic development strategic plans (Health & Wellness, Cultural Heritage & Agritourism, and Food & Agriculture) for areas of alignment that would advance the COFSAC charge. Based on that analysis, COFSAC will develop an issue brief that examines the potential to leverage the purchasing power and wellness focus of Colorado’s health care industry to increase fresh food distribution and to support Colorado agriculture.

The brief will include an overview of models from across the country (including farmers markets at hospitals, prescriptions for fruits and vegetables, community health needs assessments, etc.), recommendations for state support of such efforts, and a review of new opportunities emerging out of the Affordable Care Act community benefits provision. To comply with this provision, the Internal Revenue Service has ruled that nonprofit hospitals throughout the country will be able to claim the help they provide their communities to “ensure adequate nutrition” as part of their exemption from federal taxation.

COFSAC Recommendations

Based on findings gleaned from the Council’s activities throughout 2014, the Council is pleased to present five recommendations, detailed below.

As with all COFSAC activities, these recommendations reflect opportunities to advance the COFSAC charge – that is to both increase access to healthy foods and strengthen direct market opportunities for Colorado agriculture. All of these recommendations would require training, technical assistance, monitoring and evaluation, and other resources to be implemented well.

Also as with all COFSAC recommendations, these warrant further exploration and a coordinated effort by Colorado's policy makers and the executive branch. These recommendations presented in this report are directed not only to the General Assembly, but to the Governor and executive branch agencies, as well. This is in keeping with the Council's mandate to make recommendations to the General Assembly and to the appropriate regulatory agencies as set forth in Senate Bill 10-106 creating the Council.

A. Review and assess the merits of SB 15-1088: Concerning the Creation of the Interagency Farm to School Grant Program

Rationale: The Farm to School Task Force and COFSAC share a multi-year history of collaboration and support. The work of the Farm to School Task Force directly implements the charge of the COFSAC by expanding access to healthy foods for those who need it while improving market opportunities for Colorado agriculture. The proposed grant program could help increase the amount of fresh foods reaching our schools, and could also help address food safety training barriers to direct market opportunities that were identified in COFSAC's 2013 issue brief, "Enhancing Direct Market Technical Assistance". The proposed bill's focus on enhancing opportunities for suppliers to meet a growing demand for local, fresh foods is in line with needs COFSAC has observed across the state.

B. Support the implementation of healthy food retail incentives

Rationale: The COFSAC first identified the opportunity to expand the use of SNAP at farmers markets in its 2013 issue brief, "Increasing SNAP at Farmers Markets". In that brief, COFSAC discussed opportunities to enhance SNAP benefits at markets through programs such as "double voucher" programs that are used to increase SNAP benefits for fresh produce. In 2014, the USDA initiated the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Program (FINI) to expand just such programs. Two entities from Colorado applied for FINI grants with CDHS support. If these grants are awarded, the state can support grantee implementation of programming through enhanced outreach, training and technical assistance.

Additionally, the state can identify other opportunities to support applications for FINI grant funds in the coming years. The state could also explore potential action to create a public-private partnership at the state level to bring healthy food incentive funds to farmers markets and other healthy food retailers throughout the state beyond what is funded through federal resources.

C. Support implementation of the Charitable Crop Donation Act

Rationale: Last year's Crop Donation Act, House Bill 14-1119 (Tax Credit for Donating Food to Charitable Organizations), is now being implemented. Beginning this month, January 2015, Colorado producers can start claiming a 25% tax credit for the wholesale value of food they grow and donate to Colorado food banks and pantries. Much work remains to be done so that producers, as well as food banks and pantries take advantage of this opportunity. Ongoing outreach to both groups of stakeholders about what is allowed, the benefits of participating, and

how to get involved is critical. Education and promotion of this program and its potential benefits is recommended going forward.

D. Explore the potential for state-supported incentives for grocery retail fresh food donations

Rationale: The 2014 Charitable Crop Donation Act demonstrated some straightforward ways to connect more fresh, healthy foods with those who often lack access to such foods. There are several additional opportunities to increase fresh fruit and vegetable donations, but the current food redistribution model makes it easier to rescue nonperishable food items from retailers. Currently, the IRS provides a tax-deduction to all C-Corporations that donate surplus edible food under 170(e)3 of the tax code. Although this deduction is important in encouraging non-perishable food donations, additional incentives could encourage healthy food donations.

Given the increasing focus around the state on issues of food waste and potential food recovery, particularly of fresh produce at grocers (much of which gets thrown out while still edible), the state could consider tax or other incentives to promote grocery donations of still-edible fresh food products to direct redistribution food assistance. Many Feeding Colorado staff as well as other food rescue organizations across the state are effectively working with grocery stores already, but the opportunity to expand this work across the state could be harnessed through state incentives.

E. Consider Denver Water's request to amend state regulation 84

Rationale: Regulation 84 is a Reclaimed Water Control Regulation through the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). Denver Urban Gardens and Denver Water, with multiple other state and regional partners, are working to amend Regulation 84. Currently, State Regulation 84 does not allow reclaimed water that is treated and disinfected to the Category 3 level (the highest level of treatment by Denver Water) to be used for farms, urban gardens or greenhouses.

Currently, Denver Water is the only provider of Category 3 reclaimed water and the only entity with water treatment facilities equipped to treat water to that level of disinfection in Colorado. Therefore, the infrastructure in place exists predominantly in the City and County of Denver; as water treatment providers update their infrastructure, there is potential for producers across the state to have access to Category 3 reclaimed water.

Changing the regulation could benefit both urban and rural producers as well as consumers. If farmers and urban gardeners are allowed to use Category 3 reclaimed water to irrigate crops, this could help decrease water costs and increase food access, especially in urban areas where Category 3 reclaimed water is available, and currently used on many public properties (including schools and parks) where gardens are excluded due to the use of reclaimed water. Regulation of water reclamation and reuse could be simplified, specifying the desired quality of the product

(such as indicator levels, monitoring requirements, and reliability measures) without prescribing the specific design details to achieve that quality.

Next Steps

The COFSAC will continue to consult with the Governor’s Office around state food systems priorities. The COFSAC will report back on the outcomes of its analysis across the Economic Development Blueprint sector strategic plans.

Upon completion of the three planned “advancing food systems issue briefs”, the COFSAC will engage the executive and legislative branches to discuss additional recommendations that emerge from those briefs.