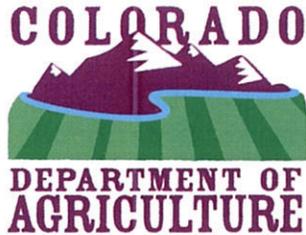




**COLORADO FOOD SYSTEMS
ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**Annual Report
January 31, 2013**

Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council
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John T. Salazar, Commissioner
Ron P. Carleton, Deputy Commissioner



John Hickenlooper
Governor

January 31, 2013

The Honorable:

Gail Schwartz, Chair, Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Randy Fischer, Chair, House Agriculture, Livestock and Natural Resources
Committee
Irene Aguilar, Chair, Senate Health and Human Services Committee
Dianne Primavera, Chair, House Public Health Care and Human Services
Committee

Dear Committee Chairs and Members:

On behalf of the Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council (COFSAC), it is an honor to submit to you the Council's 2013 annual report presenting our findings and recommendations pursuant to Senate Bill 10-106.

This has been an extraordinarily busy and productive year for the COFSAC. With the dedicated and committed service of the Council's members, we have had the opportunity to examine Colorado's food systems and the many factors that influence them. As you will see in this report, the Council has devoted considerable time to meeting with stakeholders throughout the state to learn their views and interests in improving our food systems to better enable our state's agricultural producers to thrive and bring healthy, fresh foods to all Coloradoans. You will read about the work of the Council and its Subcommittees, as well have an opportunity to review our recommendations.

While we are excited about the progress we have made, it has become clear that much work remains in order to accomplish the tasks set out for the Council by Senate Bill 10-106. We are developing an aggressive agenda for the coming year, and look forward to continuing working with you on ensuring access to healthy foods for all Coloradoans.

Thank you for allowing the members of COFSAC to serve you and our great state.

Sincerely,

Ron P. Carleton

Deputy Commissioner, Colorado Department of Agriculture
Chair, Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council

Council Members

Jane Brand, R.D., S.N.S., Director, Office of School Nutrition, Colorado Department of Education
Ron Carleton, Deputy Commissioner, Colorado Department of Agriculture
Mary Lou Chapman, President & CEO, Rocky Mountain Food Industry Association
Patricia Daniluk, M.S., R.D., Nutrition Services and WIC Director, Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment
Steve Ela, M.S., Partner and Manager, Ela Family Farms and Silver Spruce Orchards LLC
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Jim Isgar, Former State Director, USDA Rural Development
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Staff is funded and managed by LiveWell Colorado

Summary of Recommendations

Based on findings gleaned from the Council's activities in 2011 and 2012, the Council is pleased to present these six high-priority recommendations. They are explained in greater detail in the following pages.

A. Direct Market Technical Assistance

Continue and increase investment in technical assistance to support direct markets in Colorado with a focus on business development for food and farming organizations and food safety best practices throughout the entire food system. For more details, see page 7.

B. Colorado Proud

Continue to support the Colorado Department of Agriculture's Colorado Proud marketing program, including the possibility of exploring a mechanism for differentiating food products consisting solely of Colorado grown ingredients. For more details, see page 8.

C. Food Safety Regulations

Promote consistent interpretation of state and local food handling and marketing regulations to strengthen ease of access for Colorado growers to all Colorado markets. For more details, see page 9.

D. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Continue technical assistance, training, and other resources to increase Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) infrastructure and supporting programs at direct markets and other Colorado Proud retail markets. This should include nutrition education on opportunities to purchase Colorado-grown foods as well as efforts to increase SNAP (formerly known as food stamps) participation at all markets. For more details, see page 10.

E. Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council

Extend the tenure of COFSAC and expand membership to best support its mission. For more details, see page 11.

F. Colorado Farm to School Task Force

Extend the tenure of the Task Force and support recommendations coming forth from that Task Force through education, stakeholder engagement, and programming. For more details see page 12.

Per the requirements of Senate Bill 10-106, this report on the activities of the Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council (COFSAC) is provided to update Governor John Hickenlooper and his office; Commissioner of Agriculture John Salazar; the House Health and Human Services Committee; Senate Health and Human Services Committee; House Agriculture, Livestock, and Natural Resources Committee; and, Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee.

History

The Council was formed in 2010 when Governor Bill Ritter signed into law Senate Bill 106: Creation of Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council. Senate Bill 106 was sponsored by Senator Bob Bacon (D-*District 14*) and Representative Marsha Looper (R-*District 19*). The creation of the bill was based on recommendations included in two reports: *Food Policy Blueprint*, a report commissioned by LiveWell Colorado in 2009; and *State Indicator Report on Fruits and Vegetables*, a September 2009 report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The latter report suggested the development of food policy councils as a key strategy for increasing community food access. COFSAC submitted a report on October 1, 2011, which outlined COFSAC activities from December 2010 through August 2011.

Mission and Purpose

COFSAC is charged with fostering a healthy food supply available to all residents while enhancing the state's agricultural and natural resources, encouraging economic growth, expanding the viability of agriculture, and improving the health of our communities and residents. Senate Bill 10-106 specifically outlines the following purposes and duties:

- Purpose A.** Identify and use existing studies of the food system and examples of best practices, whenever possible;
- Purpose B.** Work with other task forces, committees, or organizations that are pursuing initiatives or studies similar to the purposes and duties outlined in this article and develop relationships with other task forces, committees, or organizations to collaborate on similar efforts;
- Purpose C.** Develop local food recommendations that promote the building of robust, resilient, and long-term local food economies;
- Purpose D.** Develop recommendations regarding hunger and food access;
- Purpose E.** Collaborate with, serve as a resource to, and receive input from local and regional food policy councils in the state;
- Purpose F.** Collaborate with the department of agriculture in promoting the marketing program known as "Colorado Proud", which helps consumers, restaurants, and retailers to identify and purchase Colorado food and agricultural products; and
- Purpose G.** Develop recommendations for actions that state and local governments, businesses, agriculturists, and consumers can take to build robust, resilient, and long-term local food economies.

Summary of COFSAC Achievements

As discussed in detail in the COFSAC October 2012 Report (available here, <http://www.cofoodscouncil.org/october-1-2012.html>), the three subcommittees of the COFSAC have devoted significant time and effort to identifying key needs and opportunities for creating new production and marketing possibilities for agriculture in Colorado and for improving healthy food access for all Coloradans.

Collectively, the three subcommittees (Communications, Economic Development, Healthy Food Access) achieved the following through their efforts in 2011-2012:

- Convened over 300 diverse stakeholders through various listening sessions and summits. These meetings often brought stakeholders together from all aspects of the food system that had not previously collaborated.
- Inspired multiple new projects and initiatives through their gathering of stakeholders, including new connections between food retailers and municipalities, farm to school leaders and food hub facilities, and state food vendors and new procurement guidance.
- Developed, vetted, and built momentum around a comprehensive vision of “healthy food access” in Colorado as well as 12 conditions needed to achieve it.
- Provided the opportunity for several COFSAC members to develop a new collaborative between farmers markets, state institutions and anti-hunger groups, which has led to significant expansion of EBT at markets, SNAP redemption at markets, and evaluation efforts of such programs.
- Surveyed and interviewed over 50 local and regional food systems coalitions to inventory the “state of the state” and document opportunities for supporting peer connections and local-state collaborations.
- Informed the 2013 work plans of many partner organizations, including LiveWell Colorado, which will be supporting both regular networking opportunities for local food systems coalitions as well as a state food policy summit.
- Advised new focus areas of work with organizations such as Colorado Environmental Health Association (expanding a focus on agriculture) and Rocky Mountain Farmers Union (advising new projects on food systems funding).

Detailed reports of activities, findings, achievements, and recommendations from each subcommittee are also available here: <http://www.cofoodscouncil.org/event-summaries-and-reports.html>.

Recommendations in Detail

Introduction

The recommendations presented in the following pages reflect and integrate findings from all three COFSAC subcommittees. Together they represent a set of related, coordinated, high-priority recommendations. Collectively, they address both direct market agriculture and healthy food access. Throughout, these recommendations stress the need for tools as well as training and technical assistance to support implementation.

These recommendations focus on measures to grow both the supply of healthy Colorado foods as well as tools for increasing demand for such products. They therefore point the way to business development opportunities for the state. Colorado is attracting more young food entrepreneurs, and the ideas included here indicate how direct market agriculture, as well as better access to healthy food, can support these new economies.

It should also be noted that the issues raised by COFSAC and its recommendations to address them will involve a coordinated effort by Colorado's policy makers and the executive branch. Therefore, the 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 [24-37.3-102(1)].

A. Direct Market Technical Assistance

Recommendation

Continue and increase investment in technical assistance to support direct markets in Colorado with a focus on business development for food and farming organizations and food safety best practices throughout the entire food system.

Specific Opportunities to Enhance Technical Assistance Include:

- Focus support on the services already provided by CSU Extension in partnership with Colorado Departments of Agriculture and Public Health & Environment.
- Develop an FTE position within CSU Extension to provide on-farm food safety training and outreach programming across the state.
- Expand the Colorado Building Farmers Program to additional counties/regions and explore how the current 8-week short-course could be extended with resources and offerings through CSU OnlinePlus.
- Support the development and dissemination of guidelines, education and training materials regarding cottage foods for producers and farmers market managers, such as those being created by Colorado State University Extension.
- Develop a state-wide map of existing assets and infrastructure that support or could support production, processing, and sales of Colorado-grown products.

Rationale

- With increased investment in an already strong Extension network, the state could support more Colorado businesses and help meet an unmet demand for Colorado-grown foods. Doing so could help capture economic leakage – food dollars that are currently leaving the state. The most recent CDA-CSU Public Attitudes survey revealed a strong desire to support local economies through food purchases.
- A more expanded focus on direct markets could increase awareness of and support for Colorado agriculture in general.
- Increased technical assistance could prepare Colorado producers to meet stronger procurement standards put forth by state institutions (see Recommendation D) as well as the growing number of farm to school contracts.
- Additional training and capacity could help engage even more producers of all sizes and diverse crops about where they can fit into direct market opportunities in Colorado. This can also contribute to growing local economies.
- An increase in direct market food production could help bring additional fresh Colorado foods to underserved areas and populations. This could include more market vendors or CSAs that accept SNAP or WIC vouchers, or more fresh produce in a food pantry.
- Additional technical assistance can help ensure that Colorado maximizes the pool of federal funds available for the redevelopment of food system infrastructure. Colorado does not secure as many USDA grants in this area as most other states.

B. Colorado Proud

Recommendation

Continue to support the Colorado Department of Agriculture's Colorado Proud marketing program, including the possibility of exploring a mechanism for differentiating food products consisting solely of Colorado grown ingredients.

Rationale

- With increasing interest from restaurateurs and other food industries in locating to Colorado because of its agriculture and health and wellness culture, there is a significant opportunity to develop and promote a unique Colorado brand.
- With the growth of farmers markets in the state, shoppers are looking for and expecting Colorado products at those markets. Currently there are several growers-only markets, and they tend to be the largest markets in Colorado. They highlight the interest and value in having Colorado-grown products identified.
- Producers across the state have expressed an interest in obtaining assistance to enable them to better compete and to access direct markets for their products. However, this may require a portfolio of choices that leverage Colorado Proud, and extend to additional branding activities as well.
- There are frequent requests made to the Colorado Department of Agriculture for a program to distinguish between value-added products that include only Colorado grown ingredients, and those value-added products that are manufactured in Colorado, but contain ingredients grown outside Colorado.
- The Colorado Department of Agriculture is committed to maintaining the integrity of the Colorado Proud brand, while also open to considering another tier within Colorado Proud to help further brand those value-added products that contain only Colorado grown ingredients.

C. Food Safety Regulations

Recommendation

Promote consistent interpretation of state and local food handling and marketing regulations to strengthen ease of access for Colorado growers to all Colorado markets.

Specific Opportunities Include:

- Work closely with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's Division of Environmental Health and Sustainability and the Farmers Market Working Group to advance this recommendation.
- Identify and support additional staffing at a level of 0.25 FTE for the Farmers Market Working Group, currently hosted by the Colorado Department of Agriculture, to lead this discussion and strategy
- Work with Colorado producer and industry associations to convene local and state elected officials, direct market organizations, state and local health agencies, and other support groups so that affected industries can communicate key barriers and opportunities directly to policy makers on a regular basis.
- Explore standardization of the definition and regulation of farmers markets across the state that could clarify and ease market entry.
- Provide training on standard regulations through the www.cofarmtomarket.com site for county public health staff and agriculture support organizations on state food retail regulations. Update the site on an annual basis.

Rationale

- Interpretation and application of state retail food regulations varies from county to county.
- Different counties define or categorize farmers markets and vendors differently with respect to licensing and equipment requirements. Not all counties commit the same resources to make sure that all vendors are properly licensed. Some products require both a state and county license to sell.
- For regulators, it is often challenging to share information about vendors who operate in multiple counties since counties handle things differently and there is no shared database of vendors.
- Producers report confusion and frustration with variation in regulations and licensure requirements across counties regarding the sale of unprocessed and processed foods.

D. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Recommendation

Continue technical assistance, training, and other resources to increase Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) infrastructure and supporting programs at direct markets and other Colorado Proud retail markets. This should include nutrition education on opportunities to purchase Colorado-grown foods as well as efforts to increase SNAP (formerly known as food stamps) participation at all markets.

Specific Opportunities Include:

- Support the efforts of the Colorado Department of Human Services staff to continue to work with local farmers markets and other direct markets to ensure proper and adequate implementation of EBT at these markets.
- Support the efforts of the volunteer-led Colorado Farmers Market Association to further distribute these programs.
- Disseminate research and best practices on how to increase and maintain SNAP participation at direct markets.
- Disseminate research and best practices on ways to integrate SNAP Outreach into direct market settings.
- Use SNAP-Ed to inform eligible clients about opportunities to purchase food at direct market outlets. Increase education about how SNAP recipients can maximize their benefits when shopping at direct markets.

Rationale

- Farmers markets and other direct markets can provide access to fresh, healthy foods to populations otherwise underserved. Market expansion, along with efforts to ensure that residents have a strong knowledge base on how to select and use fresh, healthy, safe foods is a critical component to making Colorado the country's healthiest state.
- The partnership between the Colorado Farmers Market Association, Share Our Strength Colorado, and the Colorado Department of Human Services to enhance the use of EBT at farmers markets is effective but much remains to be done to increase access.
- Examples of recent successes include an increased presence of EBT. From 2011 to 2012, the number of farmers markets able to accept SNAP benefits increased by over 19%.
- A strong SNAP-Ed model exists in our state through the Department of Human Services with collaborations between Colorado State University Extension, Share Our Strength's Cooking Matters, the University of Colorado's Integrated Nutrition Education Program and Denver Urban Gardens. These programs improve the likelihood that persons eligible for SNAP will make healthy choices within a limited budget.
- At a time when Federal cuts are being made to SNAP-Ed, there is a need for strong state support of public and private partners who implement SNAP-Ed.

E. Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council

Recommendation

Extend the tenure of COFSAC and expand membership to best support its mission.

Rationale

- In response to an anonymous Fall 2012 survey of COFSAC members, all members agreed that the Council needs to continue and members confirmed unanimous support for the original mission and purpose of the Council.
- The COFSAC is able to connect food systems stakeholders across sectors and geographies that do not otherwise intersect. Meaningful work emerges from these new partnerships.
- As a key connector, the COFSAC can act as a resource for directing state government to subject matter experts across the spectrum of food systems work.
- There is a need to designate a formal role for a faculty member from one of our state's premier research institutions so that the COFSAC can craft well-informed recommendations to our state's governing bodies based on best practices and the most current research to promote Colorado's agricultural economy and access to healthy foods for all Coloradans.
- There is a need to formalize COFSAC's relationship with CSU Extension through membership so that the COFSAC can best utilize Extension resources. Given the COFSAC's focus on convening diverse food systems stakeholders across the state and of communicating with local food systems coalitions, CSU Extension has already proven to be a significant and necessary partner to facilitate these relationships, as they have well-established relationships in Colorado's 64 counties.

F. Colorado Farm to School Task Force

Recommendation

Extend the tenure of the Task Force and support recommendations coming forth from that Task Force through education, stakeholder engagement, and programming.

Rationale

- The Task Force has a comprehensive approach to the statewide implementation of farm to school and has undertaken many key initiatives that support farm to school and its related local food system issues.
- The Task Force has established a significant track record for positive change and their work warrants additional time and investment:
 - They are actively engaged in advancing regional food hubs, most notably within the repurposing efforts of the Fort Lyon Correctional Facility in Las Animas. In partnership with many local and state partners, they will conduct a feasibility study and Health Impact Analysis of the facility in 2013.
 - Members supported CSU efforts to work with the Volunteers of America on exploring the technical and economic feasibility of a regional hub in Western Colorado that would support senior nutrition and market access for producers.
 - They have generated numerous policy and legal analyses and developed user-friendly products to help districts and producers effectively navigate farm to school rules, regulations, and practices.
 - They launched a centralized Information Hub (www.coloradofarmtoschool.org) that includes audience-specific pages (schools, producers, students, parents/community) populated with resources and links to start and ramp up farm to school efforts. This informational Hub has both documented and successfully promoted the efforts of farm to school programs around the state, providing models for new partnerships.
- To learn more about the Task Force view their roadmap, available at <http://coloradofarmtoschool.org/colorado-farm-to-school-task-force/>.



Moving Forward

The COFSAC has provided several recommendations in this report to further its expansive mission. Much work remains to be done, however, and the council has several plans in place to continue its good work into 2013. The COFSAC will continue to meet quarterly as a full council, with subcommittee meetings scheduled as needed throughout the year. Other activities will include those discussed below.

Advise and Inform Recommendation Implementation

COFSAC members are available to discuss and strategize next steps to advance the recommendations presented in this report. COFSAC members, individually or collectively as an advisory body, can strategize with legislators, the Governor's office, their own organizations, and other key partners.

Engage Partner Organizations

Many of the ideas, needs, and opportunities raised throughout the listening sessions and many meetings of the COFSAC are not included in this report to the Governor's Office and legislature. Through its work, COFSAC uncovered myriad project and program opportunities for various state and local partner organizations. Part of the Council's work in 2013 will be to continue to share these findings and opportunities with appropriate entities to help support and inform their own work plans.

Promote Healthy Food Procurement Standards

The COFSAC will explore the development of a working group of state agencies and partner organizations focused on promoting nutritional standards for healthy food procurement and vending. The working group would play a role in expanding and continuing efforts that have begun in Colorado, such as recent efforts by CDHS in working with current managers of lunch facilities in the state's Capitol Hill buildings. Such a working group would learn from existing efforts in Colorado's schools as well as national best practices for public institutions. CDPHE has already completed such a scan of best practices and this knowledge would help build the framework for Colorado. The working group would explore pilot healthy food procurement programs in public agencies and help disseminate model language for diverse institutions across the state. Related outreach and education in Colorado's public institutions would be a logical component.

Collaborate with Local & Regional Coalitions

The COFSAC will maintain a current inventory of local and regional food systems coalitions on the COFSAC website, and will integrate new accomplishments as they arise. Together with LiveWell Colorado, the COFSAC will also support activities to convene local groups, conduct monthly networking calls with these groups, and help plan a state-wide food policy summit to be held in early 2014.

Convene Food Systems Stakeholders and Legislators

In order to support regular communication between the General Assembly (particularly the health and agriculture committees) and food systems stakeholders, such as local food systems coalitions, COFSAC will consider initiating several meetings in 2013. These could include briefings on current food systems issues as well as an annual meeting in advance of every legislative session to present and discuss potential bill content and other issues that could impact direct markets and mechanisms for improving healthy food access.

Such activities could also highlight the importance of rural Colorado food systems in feeding Coloradans healthy foods and creating economic opportunity for local producers. They can also help elevate new opportunities for direct markets for healthy Colorado foods, particularly in areas such as northeast Colorado where there is currently little coordination or network-building among food system stakeholders.