



**COLORADO FOOD SYSTEMS
ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Annual Report

2021

Presented to:

Governor Jared Polis

Kate Greenberg, Commissioner of Agriculture

House Agriculture, Livestock, and Natural Resources Committee

Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

Annual Report 2021

Per the requirements of House Bill 18-1236, this update on the work of the COFSAC is being provided to update Governor Jared Polis and his office, the Commissioner of Agriculture, and House Health and Environment Committee, Senate Health and Human Services Committee, House Agriculture, Livestock, and Natural Resources Committee, and Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee.

Appointed Council Members as of 12/2021

- **Chair**, Julie Moore, Aurora
Rep. Food wholesalers or food retailers, direct market retailer
- Gabriel Disbrow, Franktown
Rep. Food wholesalers or food retailers
- Effie Rorke, Colorado Springs
Rep. Statewide anti-hunger organization
- Marc Jacobson, Denver
Rep. Expertise in federal Food nutrition service programs
- Tonatiuh Diaz,
Rep. Federal food assistance program, recipient of supplemental nutrition assistance
- Brian Coppom, Longmont
Rep. Food distributor or food hub
- Joseph Conrey, Fort Collins,
rep. agricultural production, specialty crop
- Laurian Unnevehr, Grand Junction,
Rep. Academic specialist in economic systems, agriculture, or health care
- Ann Cooper, Boulder
Rep. Institutional procurement, educational setting
- Caroline Bushnell, Boulder
Rep. Local, non-profit, community org. w/ farm-to-school program/local food system
- Wendy Moschetti, Boulder
Rep. Statewide healthy food systems org
- Elizabeth Marron, Saguache
Rep. Expertise in rural community and regional development, or community and economic development programs
- Marci Cochran, Pueblo
Rep. Federal food assistance program
- Derrick Hoffman, Greeley,
Rep. Agricultural production, sells ag products to public schools/school districts
- Tessa Hale, Boulder
Rep. Institutional procurement, healthcare setting
- Todd Dorfman, Boulder
Rep. Nutrition expert, licensed physician, or registered dietitian

State Agency Representatives as of 12/21

- Kristi Brennan
Rep. Colorado Department of Education
- Hollis Glenn
Rep. Colorado Department of Agriculture
- Jennifer Dellaport
Rep. Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment
- Karla Maraccini
Rep. Colorado Department of Human Services
- Dawn Thilmany, Fort Collins
Rep. Colorado State University Extension
- Greg Thomason
Rep. Office of Economic Development and International Trade

Staff

The council was staffed by Blake Angelo from January until his resignation in August. At that time Colorado State University (CSU) shifted the staffing strategy so that the one full time employee required by the legislation was split between multiple employees. This approach was determined based on discussions with the Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council (COFSAC) Executive Committee and CSU leadership. From August until November, temporary support was provided by Dr. Becca Jablonski. She led the search committee to hire Dr. Lilian Brislen and Alex DeJoy, as Coordinator and Administrator, respectively. Both Dr. Brislen and Ms. DeJoy are CSU employees in the College of Agricultural Sciences.

Meetings and Events

The Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council met 5 times during the 2021 calendar year in: January, March, June, July, and December. The meetings were hosted as online public meetings using Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic. All meeting dates/times were published via the COFSAC website: <https://cofoodsystemscouncil.org/> Additionally, COFSAC's working groups held an additional 40 public working group meetings in 2021, including: Strategic Planning - 1, Institutional Procurement - 10, Conserving Agricultural Land and Water - 9, Federal & State Stimulus Dollars - 8, and Universal School Meals - 10.

Membership Updates

A number of seats were replaced, re-appointed, or filled. A total of 8 seats were open due to resignation or expiration in August of 2021 and were reappointed on December 15th.

Members appointed to partial terms:

- Tonatuih Diaz of Denver, Colorado, to serve as a recipient of a federal food assistance program and as a recipient of the supplemental nutrition assistance program, occasioned by the resignation of Mary Sanders of Denver, Colorado, term expiring August 31, 2022
- Laurian Unnevehr of Grand Junction, Colorado, to serve as an academic specialist in economic systems, agriculture, or health care, occasioned by the resignation of Nicole Civita of Berthoud, Colorado with a term expiring August 31, 2023

New members appointed to full terms ending August 31, 2024:

- Todd Dorfman of Boulder, Colorado, to serve as a nutrition expert, licensed physician, or registered dietitian
- Tessa Hale of Boulder, Colorado, to serve as a representative of institutional procurement in a healthcare setting
- Derrick Hoffman of Greeley, Colorado, to serve as a representative of agricultural production and as a member who sells agricultural products to a public school or school district

Members who were renewed to full terms ending August 31, 2024:

- Marci Cochran of Pueblo, Colorado, to serve as a recipient of a federal food assistance program
- Elizabeth Marron of Saguache, Colorado, to serve as a member with expertise in rural communities and regional development programs or community and economic development programs,
- Julie Moore of Aurora, Colorado, to serve as a representative of food wholesalers or food retailers and as a direct market retailer, reappointed.

Areas of Focus

At the end of 2020 a “100-day sprint” was determined to be the best use of resources by COFSAC members, which resulted in the prioritization of five working group areas: COFSAC Strategic Planning, Universal School Meals, Institutional Procurement, Grant Funded Innovations for Farmers and Food Companies, Preserving Farm Land. A brief summary of each working groups’ activities is provided below.

Conserving Ag. Land & Water

The council members established early on the need for the research of this working group to focus on two key topics: 1) Threats to Colorado’s agricultural land, and 2) A review of current programs in Colorado used to protect agricultural land.

By narrowing the focus of the working group’s scope, the group felt it was important to acknowledge the list of additional

discussion points that, while critical to the conversation, were too complex to address in detail, in this report. Discussions on strengthening agricultural viability and financial sustainability (including farm product pricing, input costs, market access, etc.), training programs supporting new and beginning farmers, educational programs facilitating farm transitions/succession, value chain infrastructure development initiatives, and on-farm natural resource conservation programs were postponed until they can be covered in subsequent council reports.

The final report, released in June of 2021, detailed programs according to their jurisdictional oversight, leading to in depth discussion around seven federally sponsored programs, 10 state-sponsored preservation programs, and three programs available for county- or municipal-sponsorship.



Recommendations and Next Steps

- Moving forward, Colorado should urgently prioritize developing the data and comprehensive planning infrastructure needed to align efforts on conserving the most important agricultural land and water resources for Colorado’s Future.
- State leaders are encouraged to “accelerate... efforts to slow down development in the clusters of the best farmlands...” through increased public funding and a review of the best public-private partnership agriculture land preservation models.

Institutional Procurement

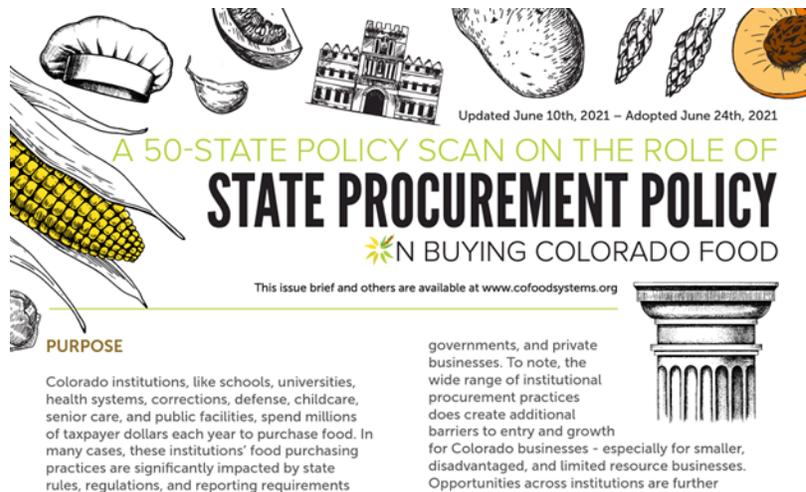
Colorado institutions, including schools, universities, health systems, corrections, defense, childcare, senior care, and municipal facilities, spend millions of taxpayer dollars each year to purchase food. Institutional spending is a significant missed opportunity when too many public dollars leave the state rather than staying and circulating in the Colorado economy. The Institutional Procurement

Committee is focused on identifying opportunities to increase institutional food purchases from Colorado producers using federal, state, and other public dollars.

Through extensive outreach to peer states and organizations and research on existing policies, programs, and funding this working group developed an issue brief that was approved in July of 2021.

Recommendations and Next Steps

- Develop common procurement metrics and collect baseline data for Colorado
 - Note that a standard unit of measure, like dollars, tons, etc. would be essential
- Complete more comprehensive literature review of value-based procurement impacts across institutional purchasing programs and values
 - Include front line labor workers’ treatment in literature review
- Support and fund state pilots with robust measurement and evaluation
 - E.g., HB 19-1132; Healthy Food Incentive Fund; Food Pantry Assistance Grant
- Continue to research and develop policy options for Colorado focusing on values, impacts, and beneficiaries
- Use issue brief for outreach with legislators, allied organizations, and other institutional stakeholders.



Federal & State Stimulus Dollars

Given the Federal and State Funding working group's mission, progress was made in each of three areas of focus. The working group made a concerted effort to compile a wide range of historical and current information on funding federal opportunities (and Colorado's success in securing those dollars). Significant advancement was made to create a summary of the full array of programs that support food systems across a wide range of USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) and other relevant government agencies, with support from CSU staff and students. In addition, historical and new funding investments made by the state of Colorado were also compiled to fully understand the portfolio of funding available.



To better understand the food system funding landscape, the working group explored the criteria and priorities of those funding programs, how they are changing across time as new funding comes online (and responds to COVID) and how they align with COFSAC and broader Colorado food system issues. In the issue brief developed, the funding portfolio was grouped by how it aligned with target groups (producers, eaters, organizations) and priorities to help food system leaders better understand the nature of funding.

Finally, the working group assessed how Colorado has "performed" in securing federal funds and investing state funds in areas that align with COFSAC's mission, with a hope that sharing this information would increase transparency and help to target technical assistance the state's community may need to secure more funding going forward.

Universal School Meals

With pandemic waivers implemented by USDA that have allowed school districts to provide free school meals to all students, the Working Group conducted research to analyze the impact of making Universal School Meals permanent. The findings of the research were published in an issue brief in June of the year.

The study found that universal school meals in Colorado would



likely impact K12 schools by: improving meal quality and the nutritional value of school meals; reducing administrative costs per meal; increasing the solvency and flexibility of school food service budgets; enabling critical investments in food sourcing, preparation, and the school kitchen workforce; and potentially freeing up state general fund resources for alternative uses. The working group's findings argue that Colorado should lead in the research, development, and implementation of policy options at the federal and state level to provide access to universal school meals for all Colorado students.

Council and working group members used the groups findings in a number of research, policy development, and engagement efforts at the local, state, and federal level.

- Partner organizations used the findings to help advocate at the federal level for provisions that would expand access to universal school meals for more schools and districts, such as creating statewide version of the existing Community Eligibility Provision funding model.
- Hunger Free Colorado, Nourish Colorado and many other partners have developed a Healthy School Meals for All Coalition that is pursuing state legislation that would establish universal school meals, as well as robust support for local purchasing.

Recommendations and Next Steps

- A key strategy that the Colorado Department of Education is pursuing to help more schools and districts provide universal school meals is applying to join a national Medicaid Direct Certification Pilot Project that would allow Colorado to use Medicaid, in addition to SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and TANF, to directly certify students for free school meals. Medicaid direct certification would increase the number of schools and districts that would be eligible to use the Community Eligibility Provision to provide free school meals for all students.
- Continued research on the impact of the school year 2021-2022 meal waivers to assess how it has impacted children and school districts.

Strategic Planning

In second quarter 2021 the Strategic Planning group evaluated the direction of COFSAC and the progress being made during the year. The funds that could have been used to hire a strategic planning consultant and host a council retreat in mid 2021 were deemed better utilized by hiring technical experts to aid completion of the five issue briefs by fiscal year end. The strategic plan and retreat were put on hold and then formally postponed in June to focus on internal assessment efforts. At the December meeting council re-instated strategic planning efforts which will be a priority area of work in 2022.

Internal assessment:

Council approved the creation of an internal assessment working group consisting of four council members who also consulted with the executive committee and staff. The group explored multiple questions about the structure, composition, and authority of COFSAC.

The working group explored questions about what aspects of the council's make up are limited by statute and how to improve the recruitment and appointment process in consultation with the Governor's office. They also considered operational practices. In quarter four it was decided to coordinate efforts with the renewed strategic planning effort to provide internal and external strategies in preparation for the 2023 sunset review. Consultant Gretchen Gronke delivered a Diversity Equity and Inclusion training to Council on July 30th.

Issue Briefs

In 2021, six issue briefs were authored and adopted by COFSAC working groups in 2021. These Issue Briefs are intended to provide an objective review of key issues impacting the Colorado food system and to highlight policy, regulatory, and/or programmatic opportunities for improvement at the state level that could be led by the state government and partner organizations. Issue Briefs are not intended to be advocacy statements nor comprehensive recommendations.

While impressive in the scope of their research and analysis, it was proposed by Dr. Brislen that executive one-page summaries be developed for each brief with the goal of increasing use and accessibility by policy makers and to highlight policy levers and program initiatives that may leverage what was learned in the drafting of these briefs. Drafts of Agricultural Lands and Water and Institutional Procurement were reviewed and approved, and this will become standard practice moving forward.

Collaborations

Per its enabling legislation, one of the Council's key duties is collaborating with other local, regional, and state efforts to support Colorado's food system. To that end, the Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council and its members supported the following efforts in 2021:

Community Engagement Process

Working groups allow COFSAC to expand the breadth and depth of expertise and networks engaged in our work. COFSAC members engaged in active promotion and recruitment for working group membership including inclusion of working group information on the COFAC website, promotion of engagement opportunities through organization newsletters, food systems-related list services, and word of mouth recruitment through professional networks.

Serving in their capacity as subject matter experts or directly-impacted stakeholders, these ex-officio members contribute to the working groups efforts through active participation in group meetings, assisting in the development and revision of issue briefs, and solicited feedback from their broader networks as appropriate.

The follow organizations and agencies provided invaluable support to our working groups in 2021:

Institutional Procurement: City of Denver, University of Colorado -Colorado Springs, Kitchen Sync Solutions, USDA Regional Farm to School, Weld County School District, Department of Education, Department of Public Health, Rocky Mountain Farmers Union, Nourish Colorado, Healthcare Without Harm

Agricultural Lands and Water: Roenbaugh Schwalb Legal, CSU Cooperative Extension, Colorado Cattlemen's Association, Larimer County Natural Resource, White River & Douglas Creek Conservation Districts, Colorado Department of Agriculture, and Colorado State Board of Land Commissioners.

Universal School Meals: Byers School District, Mancos School District, Colorado Children's Campaign, Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger, Children's Hospital Colorado, Centura Health, Hunger Free Colorado, Colorado Department of Public Health, USDA Food and Nutrition Service, Colorado Department of Human Services

Federal and State Stimulus Dollars: San Louis Valley Foods Coalition, CSU Cooperative Extension, various USDA Agency representatives familiar with data sources and RFPs

CSU Extension has a dedicated seat on the COFSAC, partly to assure that the work of the council connects with the campus, county-based offices and issue teams that complement the mission of COFSAC. This has opened new lines of communication in the CSU Extension organization, both directly with COFSAC, but also, with the state agencies and broader partners that were tapped to help with working groups during 2021.

In addition to this collaboration and engagement, a number of COFSAC working groups hosted and/or participated in panel discussions offered to Colorado stakeholders over the course of 2021. For example, CSU Extension had been increasingly engaged on meat processing issues and the new options for funding by a number of stakeholder groups, and our own agents that were fielding questions. These briefs were part of the webinars offered to disseminate information on policy, funding, and programming changes under consideration. Organizers of these panels believe attendance and credibility were elevated by having both COFSAC, CSU Extension, and sometimes other ag and food leaders, as the sponsors and speakers in these offerings.

Local Coalition and Partner Engagement

The inaugural Colorado Food Summit took place in January 2020 as a collaboration between CSU Food Systems Initiative and Denver’s Department of Public Health and Environment. COFSAC served as a partner in that event. Based on feedback received from the 1st Colorado Food Summit planning committee, the Committee was reconfigured for the 2021 summit (postponed to 2022 due to the COVID pandemic), focusing on the state’s local and statewide food policy councils and coalitions.

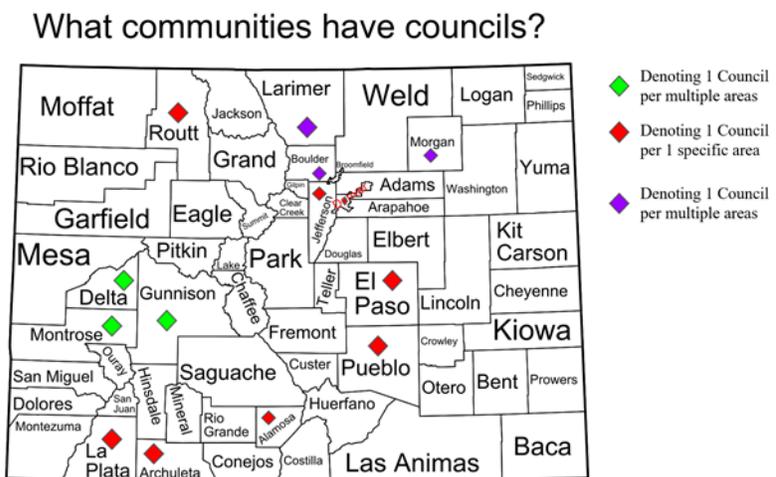


Figure 1: Map of Food Policy Councils and Coalitions by MURALS students

As the 2021 Summit had to be postponed, the local councils and coalitions chose to organize pre-summit regional food system convenings in the fall 2021 and spring of 2022. COFSAC has taken a leadership role in organizing convenings where a region is not served by existing councils (Boulder County, Larimer County, North East Colorado, and South East Colorado). COFSAC, along with CSU and the state’s other local food policy councils and coalitions were awarded >\$96,000 from a foundation to increase efforts to incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion into these events.

To support future food system professionals and our goal of supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion in all areas of food systems work, the CSU staff mentored two student interns through the Multicultural Undergraduate Research Art and Leadership Symposium (MURALS). This program intentionally reaches out to students of color in various disciplines to expose them to a variety of research opportunities. The students were mentored in conducting an inventory and preliminary analysis of the existing food policy

councils and coalitions in the state. Findings from their research were presented at the December meeting. MURAL student assessment of state-wide food policy councils