

# *Cultivating* COLORADO

Feeding your family,  
growing our resources

2022 EDITION | COagriculture.com

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**COLORADO  
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**PLUS**  
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Drought

Local Producers  
Receive Vital  
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Youth Find  
Hands-On Ag  
Opportunities

## *Rallying* Resilience

Colorado agriculture perseveres  
in the face of adversity

# COLORADO'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

## *Leaders for a Sustainable Future*

Together with our consumer-members, Colorado's electric cooperatives are leading our state towards a sustainable future. We will continue our commitment to maintaining reliable electricity at the lowest possible cost, while also advancing innovative solutions that sustain co-op communities now and into the future.



### Maintaining Reliability & Affordability

We are working to decarbonize energy resources while maintaining a dependable grid and keeping costs reasonable.



### Advancing Innovative Solutions

We will continue to support local projects that employ new technologies to meet the specific needs of individual co-ops.



### Enhancing Community Resilience

We support energy solutions that strengthen communities now and into the future.



How can you help us move to a more *sustainable future* in Colorado?  
*Electricity is the answer.*

Visit [CREA.COOP](http://CREA.COOP) to learn more about our path to creating a sustainable future.



#### WHO ARE COLORADO'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES?

Colorado's electric cooperatives work together through CREA, the statewide organization which represents the 22 electric distribution cooperatives and one generation and transmission association in the state of Colorado. CREA fosters unity among and provides service to all of its members. The mission is serving member cooperatives through collaborative leadership and expertise.



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*Photo by Chelsea Ellingson*

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# Cultivating COLORADO

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Kate Greenberg was appointed as Colorado's first female Commissioner of Agriculture in December 2018. She is a strong advocate for conservation, agriculture education and farmland affordability.

## Welcome to our latest edition of *Cultivating Colorado*.

In this magazine, you'll read about the people and places that make up Colorado agriculture. From rural farming traditions rich in history to brand new ventures that support growing spaces in urban areas, all are part of the evolving face of our state's ag industry.

These past several months have been extremely challenging for all Coloradans. We have faced drought, wildfire and the consequences of a global pandemic. Yet, through it all, we have grown and strengthened our networks of support so that we not only survive but thrive.

Soil and water are always at the forefront of our minds. We know without them, our state wouldn't have the ability to provide the safe, necessary food, fiber and fuel for our growing population. The impacts of climate change are making this task much more difficult. That's why we focus on resilience, diversity and adaptability in the programs and services we are building and shaping for agriculture's future.

Our farmers, ranchers and agricultural workers are the frontline stewards of these resources. We want to take this opportunity to share the stories of conservation and natural resource stewardship led by Colorado agriculture and shine a light on the excellent work being done across all sectors.

When you read *Cultivating Colorado*, you'll see exactly how that happens with farmers and ranchers mitigating the impacts of a drier climate through voluntary soil health initiatives, food nutrition students forging connections between crop production and human dietary needs, producers and food organizations supporting their community, and leaders advancing environmental stewardship through creative partnerships.

We hope you join us in appreciating Colorado's rich agricultural history while we build a brighter future.

Sincerely,

Kate Greenberg  
 Commissioner of Agriculture



## GIVING BACK TO THE LAND

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# Colorado Ag

An overview of the state's food, farming and agribusiness sectors

## 195,000

Ag jobs in Colorado



**95%** of the state's farms are family owned.



**CROPS VS. LIVESTOCK\***

**29% crops**

**71% livestock**

\*based on cash receipts

## \$47B

Yearly economic impact of Colorado agriculture



Colorado consistently ranks as one of the nation's **top five** sheep and wool producers and **No. 1** in the U.S. for wool production.



## 20,405

principal female producers in the state



## 38,800

Farms and ranches in Colorado with an average farm size of 820 acres

Sources: Colorado Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture Census of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service



Update your plate with

## THE nutritious EGG!

### DGA SCIENTIFIC REPORT RECOMMENDS EGGS

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans Advisory Committee recently issued recommendations for **birth to 24 months old** and specifically recommended eggs as an important first food for **infants** and **toddlers**, as well as for **pregnant** and **lactating women**.

The DGA's Scientific Report also highlighted the importance of a nutrient plentiful in eggs – choline – while recommending eggs as a **first food for babies** to reduce the risk for an egg allergy. The Advisory Committee additionally encourages eggs for **pre-teens** and **adolescents**.



Learn more about our organization and more about the incredible, edible egg at [www.coloradoeggproducers.com](http://www.coloradoeggproducers.com)



Find even more online about Colorado agriculture, from education to agritourism and more.



### Shop in Season

When will your favorite fruits and vegetables be available? Download a produce calendar showing what's ripe right now.

## Read the Digital Magazine

### Optimized for Online:

Each article can be read online, as a web article or within our digital magazine.

### Share the Content:

Embed our digital magazine in your website to offer compelling information about Colorado agriculture to your site visitors.



### Stay Informed

Discover facts and stats about agriculture in Colorado, including the average farm size and the number of family farms.



### Cook With Colorado Products

Find tasty recipes using Colorado's top products such as cheese and more.



### Have a Field Day

Discover agritourism destinations from dairies to farm-to-fork restaurants.





## Challenge Accepted

The competition was stiff at this year's inaugural Governor's Plate challenge at the Colorado State Fair in Pueblo.

As a way to showcase the state's delicious local ingredients, which were prepared in a variety of innovative and mouthwatering ways, the Governor's Plate Challenge featured five food truck competitors who were tasked with creating two appetizer-sized items using Colorado-grown ingredients, including the Pueblo chile.

The first-ever winner was Papa Mario's Grilled Cheese Food Truck, which prepared a Panfili grilled cheese using local ingredients from Musso Farms and Springside Cheese. Papa Mario's swept the competition, winning accolades from Gov. Jared Polis with the Governor's Plate award, the People's Choice and the Best Truck awards. More than 200 tickets were sold for this new and extremely popular event.

The Governor's office and the State Fair are excited to continue this new tradition of celebrating Colorado agriculture. Attendees and competitors are already looking forward to next year's challenge. Learn more at [coloradostatefair.com](http://coloradostatefair.com).



## Safety First

Food safety should be a top priority at home to keep your family happy and healthy. Follow these simple guidelines to make sure your food is safe to eat:

**Clean:** Wash your hands and surfaces often. Make sure to wash fresh fruits and vegetables before eating or cooking.

**Separate:** Don't cross-contaminate foods. Especially with raw meats, make sure to clean your prep surface before using it for any other food prep.

**Cook:** Prepare foods at the right temperature. Make sure foods, especially meats, have reached a safe temperature before eating.

**Chill:** Refrigerate foods promptly. Once you've finished cooking, refrigerate leftovers promptly as well.

## Colorado Proud Recipe

### Mexican Cheesy Squash *Prep time:* 5 minutes | *Cooking time:* 25 minutes | *Makes:* 10 servings

#### Ingredients

- 1 ½ teaspoons ground paprika
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon ground ancho chili powder
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 small yellow onion, diced
- 1 ounce garlic, minced
- 1 medium-to-large zucchini, diced
- 1-2 medium-to-large yellow squash, diced
- 1 ½ tablespoons vegetable oil, divided
- 2 ears sweet corn, cut off cob
- 4 ounces mozzarella cheese, shredded

#### Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees convection or 425 degrees conventional. If your oven runs hot, start between 350 and 375 degrees. Line a sheet pan with parchment paper and set aside.
2. In a bowl, combine all spices.
3. In a separate bowl, mix the onion, garlic, zucchini and squash together with about ¾ of the spice blend. Drizzle with 1 tablespoon oil and mix well.
4. In another bowl, toss the remaining spice blend with the corn kernels, then drizzle with ½ tablespoon oil and mix well.

5. Pour the squash mixture evenly onto the prepared baking sheet. Roast for 10 minutes.

6. After 10 minutes, add the seasoned corn, stir to combine, and return to oven for another 10 minutes.

7. Sprinkle the shredded mozzarella cheese on top and cook for an additional 2 to 5 minutes, or until cheese is melted.

*Colorado Proud's monthly recipes help you go from farm product to plate, such as this summer recipe featuring squash and zucchini. Visit [coloradoproud.com/recipes](http://coloradoproud.com/recipes) to find a new recipe featuring local ingredients to enjoy every month.*

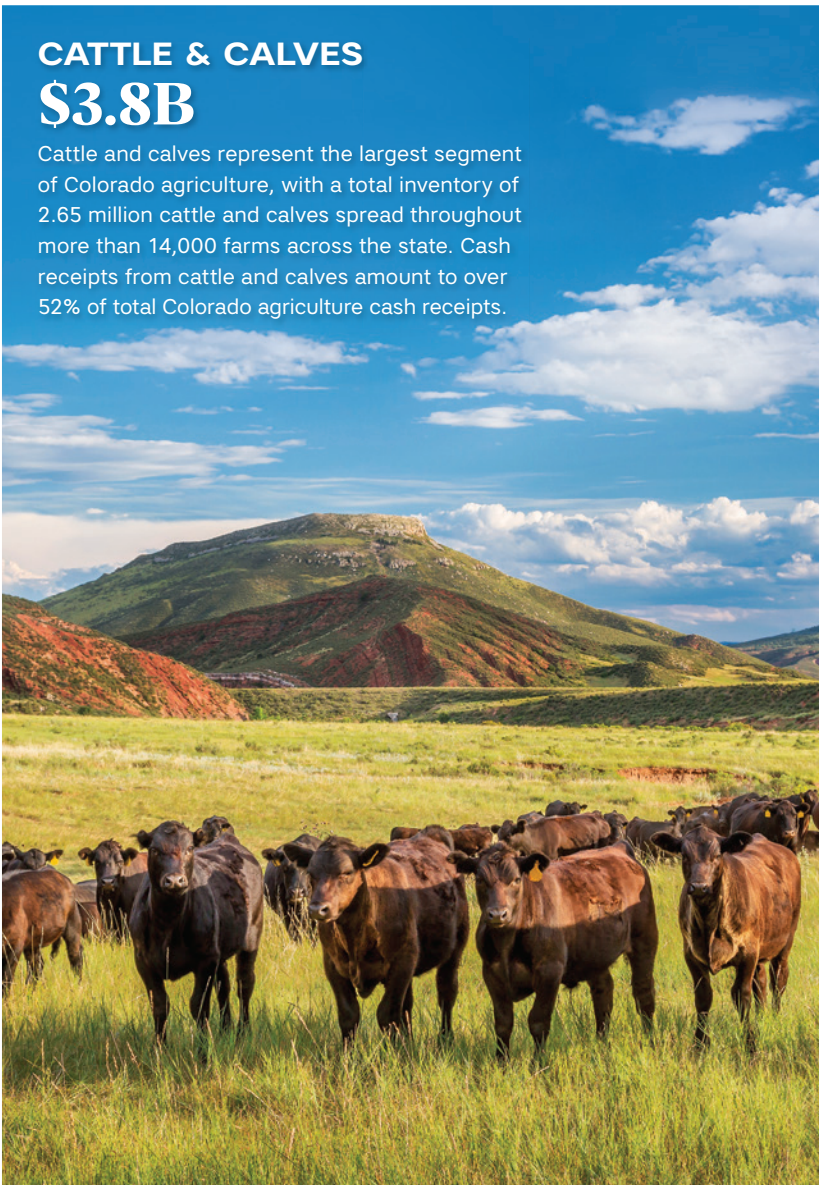


# What's Growing in Colorado

A glimpse at the state's leading ag products based on cash receipts\*

## CATTLE & CALVES \$3.8B

Cattle and calves represent the largest segment of Colorado agriculture, with a total inventory of 2.65 million cattle and calves spread throughout more than 14,000 farms across the state. Cash receipts from cattle and calves amount to over 52% of total Colorado agriculture cash receipts.



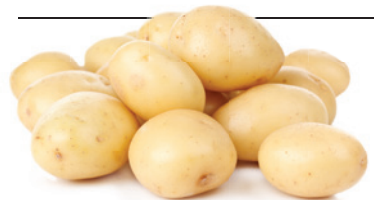
### \*WHAT ARE CASH RECEIPTS?

Defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service, cash receipts refer to the total amount of crops or livestock sold in a calendar year.



## DAIRY PRODUCTS & MILK \$892M

Colorado produced more than 5.1 billion pounds of milk in 2020 (that's almost 60 million gallons), with Weld County ranking as the state's No. 1 county in dairy production.



## POTATOES \$208.7M

Colorado's San Luis Valley, the largest alpine desert in the world, creates the perfect environment for growing potatoes. In 2020, Colorado farmers harvested 53,800 acres of potatoes, producing more than 23 million hundredweight of the crop, which put Colorado in the top five potato-producing states.

PHOTOS, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: ISTOCK.COM/MAREKULASZ, FCFOTODIGITAL, TURNERVISUAL

## HAY \$419.4M

Colorado ranks 16th in U.S. hay production. Farmers in the state harvested 1.38 million acres of hay in 2020, including 700,000 acres of alfalfa, and produced more than 3 million tons of hay.



## WHEAT \$267M

Ranking No. 8 in the U.S. in winter wheat production, Colorado's winter wheat harvest covered more than 1.5 million acres and produced 41 million bushels of the crop in 2020.



## PROSO MILLET \$60.8M

Colorado ranks No. 1 in the nation for the production of proso millet, a grain crop used for human consumption, livestock feed and birdseed. In 2020, Colorado farmers harvested 310,000 acres of proso millet, resulting in a yield of more than 4.5 million bushels.



## HOGS \$114M

With an estimated 1,200 pork producers across the state, Colorado's hog inventory totaled 630,000 as of Dec. 1, 2020. The state ranks 16th in the nation for hog production.

## CHICKEN EGGS \$84.8M

With more than 5.4 million laying hens, Colorado farmers produced 133.7 million dozen eggs in 2020.



## CORN \$516.9M

In 2020, Colorado farmers harvested more than 1 million acres of corn for grain, producing 123 million bushels of the crop. Colorado's corn for silage harvest spanned 230,000 acres and resulted in the production of over 5.3 million tons.



### **Find more online**

Learn more about agricultural crops and commodities in Colorado online at [coagriculture.com](https://coagriculture.com).



## FLORICULTURE \$102.1M

Home to more than 100 floriculture operations, Colorado's nursery and greenhouse industry contributes more than \$2 billion to the state's economy each year, including over \$100 million in floriculture cash receipts in 2020.



# Climate Smart CHAMPIONS

Colorado farmers lead on climate-smart agriculture

**C**limate and farming can't be separated, positioning the agricultural community at the forefront of the fight for a sustainable future. Farmers in Colorado are creating trailblazing environmental stewardship opportunities that support natural resources and yield productive returns.

## High-Tech Greenhouses

Climate-smart innovators like Gotham Greens are bringing fresh solutions to food production. The company is reimagining urban landscapes and empowering its farmers with complete environmental control inside sun- and wind-powered buildings. The indoor farming company boasts the largest network of high-tech, climate-controlled hydroponic greenhouses nationwide, including a greenhouse in the Denver Metro area.

Co-founder and CEO Viraj Puri says there are substantial benefits to this type of unconventional farming.

"Our expert farmers work with



ideal conditions for plants to thrive, resulting in consistent, reliable yields of nutrient-dense and long-lasting produce," Puri says, which adds to the productivity, nutrition and energy advantages. "Our unique greenhouse technology enables us to conserve 300 acres of land and 270 million gallons of water annually compared to conventional farming."

Understanding the challenges that open-field farming faces, Gotham Greens sees a bright and promising future for the greenhouse-grown

produce category. Recently, the organization earned recognition as a Certified B Corp, joining the ranks of vetted companies that demonstrate the highest measure of social and environmental impact.

"When we first started the company, we began with smaller footprints to prove the concept," Puri says. "We've expanded our presence in response to overwhelming consumer and retail demand. Each new greenhouse project brings us closer toward achieving our sustainability goals."

## Soil Health Solutions

Unlike hydroponic farming, open-field farming relies on healthy soil to maximize yield and product quality.

Erin Nissen, a fourth-generation potato grower and farm manager at Nissen Farms in Mosca, in the San Luis Valley, says her family changed operational practices for the better.

"The biggest change we made was six years ago – we split our fields into thirds, and we farm each of them separately, which helps to fight microscopic pests

Gotham Greens co-founder and CEO Viraj Puri, above, is proud of his company's greenhouse solutions and fresh food production. The indoor farming operation uses greenhouse technology to conserve land and water.

among other things,” Nissen says.

The farm’s cover crop rotates each year, and Nissen says this strategy helps conserve the water pumped on each crop circle.

“Everything we do is water-driven,” she says.

Access to groundwater in the San Luis Valley is dwindling, and farmers like Nissen are working to recharge the depleted unconfined aquifer beneath the valley’s main surface water system, the Rio Grande River.

“On top of our progress in conserving water, all of our soil health practices have really helped our yield and quality rates,” she says. “We’re actually selling more potatoes than ever on fewer acres. That’s a good change for us.”

Nissen isn’t alone in harvesting abundance out of changing soil health practices. The Colorado Department of Agriculture funds soil health programs across the state to help producers improve their land and bottom lines.

Third-generation farmer Roy Pfaltzgraff of Pfaltzgraff Farms in Haxtun, on Colorado’s Northeastern

Plains, says there are unprecedented advantages to his evolved practices in regenerative farming.

“The land is paying us back because of the way we’ve taken care of it,” Pfaltzgraff says. “Average organic matter in this area is about 1%. The average for many of our fields is 2% to 2.5%.”

When Pfaltzgraff took over the family’s no-till farming operation, his specialty crop experimentation and meticulous analysis of farm activity led to a discovery.

“By increasing our diversity of plants we are changing plant exudates,” Pfaltzgraff says. “That diversity is feeding more microbes. When you start feeding these microbes, they start producing nutrients that greatly improve soil health.”

It’s this unusual but beneficial finding that Pfaltzgraff says produced another desirable outcome.

“We have tripled our annual average gross revenue,” he says.

### Greenhouse Gas Reduction

Introducing renewable energy into ag production is another way

Colorado is encouraging producers to reduce the state’s greenhouse gas emissions. The Colorado Department of Agriculture works with the Colorado Energy Office to provide energy audits and recommendations to producers looking to improve the energy efficiency of their operations.

Aurora Organic Dairy distributes its organic milk nationwide and operates two farms in Colorado that promote and enhance soil health through a holistic ecosystem approach to organic farming.

In addition to participating in a Joint Institute for Strategic Energy Analysis study on methane digestion, the organization’s sustainability manager, Candice Stacey, says the dairy company is farming in new ways.

“We’ve reduced our greenhouse gas emissions by investing in third-party carbon reduction and renewable energy projects and have installed solar arrays at our High Plains and High Ridge Dairies in Colorado. We have an agreement with our local electric utility whereby we sell the renewable energy certificates (RECs) we generate on-site and, in exchange, purchase ‘replacement RECs’ to cover the electricity we generate with our solar arrays,” Stacey says. “We also support innovation in organic feed additives that reduce enteric methane emissions. We’re always looking for ways to improve our sustainability performance.”

CDA also has programs available to help producers reduce their GHG emissions through the use of agrivoltaics, anaerobic digesters and other energy efficiency programs. The Department also launched the Agricultural Drought & Climate Resilience Office to provide assistance to farmers and ranchers looking to increase their climate resilience practices.

– Rachel Akers



Nissen Farms uses a rotational system to help promote soil health.

# PLANTING

## for the Future

CPAC paves the way for tomorrow's potato growers



Colorado is the country's second-largest shipper of fresh potatoes.

Mitchell, who sits on the CPAC Board and chairs the research committee, says they reduced pumping significantly by changing their rotation crops.

"We used to be potatoes and barley," he says, "but we cut out barley altogether because it takes a lot of water."

### Sustainable Practices

One of the first sustainable practices the Mitchell farm implemented was vertical tillage, which is completed in one pass and is better for the soil.

"We started applying compost about that same time and other biological

soil amendments," Mitchell explains.

The farm's current crop rotation includes quinoa and "green manure," a multispecies ground cover that is worked back into the soil to enhance it. While there is some cost, Mitchell says the changes have also paid dividends.

"Our crops have improved every year," he notes.

Ehrlich says putting best practices in place benefits both the land and the farmers, who are seeing higher yields per acre.

"Farming less land but producing more is the very definition of sustainability," Ehrlich concludes.

Learn more about sustainable farming at [coloradopotato.org](http://coloradopotato.org).



As a third-generation potato grower in the San Luis Valley, Tyler Mitchell wants to ensure the family farm he co-owns with brother Clay remains viable for generations to come.

"Farming is a very stressful profession, but it's very rewarding," Mitchell says. "I enjoy it, and I'd like my kids and grandkids to have the opportunity, as well."

Between the region's natural advantages and the brothers' commitment to sustainable practices, that goal is becoming a reality.

Jim Ehrlich, executive director of the Colorado Potato Administrative Committee (CPAC), says the state

is the nation's second-largest shipper of fresh potatoes

due, in part, to geographic advantages.

"At this altitude and being surrounded by mountains, it's a natural barrier to a lot of insects and pests," Ehrlich explains, adding that those factors cut down on the need for chemical inputs. "Our production here is friendlier to the environment."

### Conservation Innovation

A 20-year prolonged drought has forced farmers to look at water conservation. Ehrlich notes legislation enacted in 2002 allowed for the creation of subdistricts to self-manage water use.

"The farmers created a program where they taxed themselves to try to curb pumping," he says. "We're pumping 30% less water than we did in 2002."



# *Fields of* OPPORTUNITY

Hands-on opportunities  
grow the next generation  
of agriculturists



**A** century ago, about 30% of the U.S. population lived on farms. Today, direct on-farm employment accounts for less than 2% of U.S. jobs, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The average American farmer is 58 years old, with one-third over the age of 65.

These numbers were “a huge flashing light” to the Quivira Coalition, a group of ranchers and environmentalists working to preserve the future of agriculture in the West.

“There is a diminishing number of people who have the knowledge of how to produce food and how to read, interpret and manage land,

and there is a finite period of time to transfer that knowledge to someone else,” says Sarah Wentzel-Fisher, Quivira Coalition executive director.

To address the issue, Quivira is creating several opportunities to develop new agriculturists, including their New Agrarian Program (NAP), which allows skilled ranchers and farmers to offer paid, eight-month apprenticeships in

full-immersion settings.

Founding NAP mentor George Whitten is a third-generation San Luis Valley rancher and a member of the Colorado Agricultural Commission. Whitten runs San Juan Ranch with his wife Julie Sullivan and two former apprentices, Sam Schmidt and Noelle McDonough, who now work as managers. This success story is mirrored

**“ We teach cooking skills in our commercial kitchen...and will be helping with soil prep and planting in the spring.”**

Nikki Kasper, *Adams State Food Studies program assistant professor*





Quivira Coalition's New Agrarian Program allows skilled ranchers and farmers to offer paid apprenticeships to help train the next generation of agriculturists.

throughout NAP, Wentzel-Fisher says. More than 80% of the NAP apprentices completing the program are still working in agriculture.

### Funding Futures

Through the Colorado Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Workforce Development Program (AWDP), qualified agricultural businesses may be reimbursed for up to 50% of the cost of hiring an intern in exchange for providing an educational experience with hands-on training. Since the program was created in 2018, a total of 50 internships have

been funded, with 28 different businesses hosting interns, some of them every year. Over 90% of interns who have completed the program say they would like to pursue a career in agriculture.

The program also helps ag-related businesses obtain a trained workforce.

"We get well over double the number of applications we have the ability to fund, so the need is out there," says Jennifer Benson, AWDP lead.

### Modern Management

Growing up dryland farming on the Navajo Nation, Brandon Francis'

longtime goal was to work in agriculture, but his life took some occupational turns before the opportunity arose. Through Fort Lewis College, Francis completed an internship and apprenticeship in sustainable agriculture at the Old Fort at Hesperus, a growing and multifaceted answer to farmer training in the Four Corners region. After graduating with a degree in environmental studies, Francis joined the Old Fort Incubator Program, which provides access to land, water and infrastructure in addition to classes and marketing assistance.

"I grew traditional crops like

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corn, beans and squash and built up a seed bank,” Francis says of his experience. “[I had firsthand experience with] the ins and outs of running a modern farm, especially learning about modern irrigation, which we didn’t have access to as dryland farmers.”

Francis now shares his knowledge as the educational resources coordinator at New Mexico State University’s Agricultural Science Center at Farmington. Managing a project called Yéego Gardening, he’s working with Navajo third through fifth graders to cultivate a school garden, which helps teach them about healthy eating and how to grow their own food.

“A lot of what I’m doing now is related to what I learned at the Fort, especially when it comes to water efficiency, which is very important in the Four Corners area,” Francis says.

### Hand-On Training

Not everyone interested in food has the capacity to grow it themselves. But everyone who wants to work with food should understand the process of planting, growing and harvesting.

That’s part of the premise of a

new Food Studies program at Adams State University. Courses in the interdisciplinary program draw from agribusiness, health and nutrition, environmental impact and social justice, says Nikki Kasper, an assistant professor who helped develop the program. The Adams State initiative differs from other food studies programs by emphasizing hands-on skills.

“We teach cooking skills in our commercial kitchen,” Kasper explains. “We also learn through hands-on work with the San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition. We harvested in the fall and will be helping with soil prep and planting in the spring. Such experiences help students understand the cycle of raising local food.”

Programs like this help make the connection between the food on the table and the fields where it grows.

“Food touches every part of our lives, so we need to look more at the food system as a whole,” she says.

– Kim Hill

### 🔗 Find more online

For more information about other programs that support the future of ag, visit [coagriculture.com](http://coagriculture.com).

Brandon Francis manages Yéego Gardening, a project working with Navajo third through fifth graders to cultivate a school garden.



# Paving the Way **FORWARD**

JBS offers employees two investment initiatives

**W**hen the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, protein food processor JBS saw an opportunity to make an impact in the communities where it has facilities and employees.

“The Hometown Strong initiative was launched in June of 2020,” says Tim Schellpeper, CEO of JBS USA, which has its national headquarters in Greeley.

“The majority of the areas where we operate are rural, and they were hit especially hard by the pandemic,” he continues. “We felt like this would be a meaningful way to invest in our

communities and benefit our team members who live and work there.”

Through Hometown Strong, JBS is investing \$100 million for a variety of projects that have long-lasting impacts.

In Greeley, projects include aiding the agriculture program at Greeley West High School and purchasing a truck for the Weld Food Bank.

Schellpeper says the company wants the contributions to align with each community’s specific needs without putting strict guidelines on requirements.

“We have funded more than

200 projects around the country to date, and we will continue building on the Hometown Strong investment,” he says. “From education and recreation to health care and social services, we are committed to making a difference.”

Along with Hometown Strong, Schellpeper says the company wanted to make sure it was doing as much as possible for its own team members, and Better Futures was born.

The program allows JBS employees to pursue their higher education dreams and create opportunities for themselves and their children that they might not have otherwise.

“What sets our program apart is that there are no parameters on what you can study,” Schellpeper says. “We have local partnerships with community colleges across the country, including Aims Community College in Greeley. Better Futures is focused on creating opportunities for our people.”



JBS is involved in numerous projects across the country.

# Digging Into Learning

FARMERS AND PROGRAMS PROMOTE AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION WITH LEARNING EXPERIENCES



**In the San Luis Valley,** schoolchildren look forward to the annual field trip to a local farmer's pumpkin patch, where they get to select their own pumpkins. But recently, this trip has expanded to include an additional destination: the carrot fields at Grimmway Farms.

Grimmway farmer Clint Kerrick suggested the idea to the event coordinator while chaperoning a field trip for his own kids. From that conversation, a new fall field trip tradition began.

Now, every September, Kerrick welcomes San Luis Valley's

elementary school students to the farm, where each child brings their own grocery bag to fill up with carrots they pick themselves.

"We talked to them beforehand about how we planted the carrots, how they grew, how we harvested them and all that," Kerrick says.

The older children tend to ask a lot more questions – the younger kiddos were just excited to get their hands dirty and dig – but one thing that ran true with all ages was the desire to find the biggest carrot.

"A lot of the kids here do grow up on farms, but it's all potatoes, alfalfa, grains or cattle," Kerrick

says. "The whole carrot thing was completely new to them. It was great to see their excitement."

Kerrick feeds his community in other ways, too. He donates carrots to his kids' school during harvest season, following the lead of local potato farmers who do the same.

## A Community Food Project

In Gunnison Valley, Mountain Roots Food Project is a major partner in fostering the connection between education and local food. Launched in 2011, Mountain Roots has grown their farm-to-school program, created two on-site

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Grimmway Farms welcomes San Luis Valley's elementary school students to the farm to learn how carrots are grown and try their hand at harvesting them. Grimmway Farms also donates carrots for school lunches.

school gardens and developed an environmental science curriculum with experiential learning. Besides serving as a hands-on learning ground for students, the school gardens also provide fresh produce to the schools' cafeterias.

"For the past 10 years or so, we've been working to get more local, fresh food into the cafeteria," says Holly Conn, executive director of Mountain Roots. "Our garden staff meet with cafeteria managers and discuss what to plant, so more of the things our students and volunteers grow can be incorporated into the menus."

At the beginning of the 2021 school year, Mountain Roots also stepped up to help when one of the schools didn't have enough staffing to run the cafeteria. They crowdsourced school lunches with a "Buddy Box" program, which ran for eight weeks. Families and business owners made extra lunches and dropped them off at the school to ensure the kids who would normally have free lunch had something nutritious and delicious to eat.

Beyond its educational endeavors, Mountain Roots helps local farmers establish and scale up their farms to bridge the gap between producers and community members who experience food insecurity. When the pandemic hit, Mountain Roots went into overdrive with its efforts.

"Everyone everywhere needed food," Conn says. "We doubled our own growing space and helped other farmers increase their growing spaces. Then we began purchasing food from local farmers, which helps keep their business running, and we distribute fresh food weekly for free to people in need."

– Kelly Rogers

### **Find more online**

To learn more about Mountain Roots Food Project, visit [mountainrootsfoodproject.org](https://mountainrootsfoodproject.org).



Mountain Roots Food Project in Gunnison Valley works to connect education and local food through on-site school gardens and hands-on learning.



# A *Budding* INDUSTRY

Colorado leads the charge with alternative uses for hemp



**W**orking in construction, Eric Milburn had a firsthand look at the amount of waste produced by the industry. According to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, 23% of the nation's waste comes from construction and demolition. Looking for a solution, Milburn turned to an unlikely material: hemp.

Milburn founded Healthy Hemp Homes with his father, David, who also serves as the chief architect. The two were inspired to use this alternative building material when Milburn's grandmother returned from a trip to Laos. There, she saw centuries-old homes built with hemp.

The father-son team makes what's called hempcrete, created from hemp hurd derived from the plant's stalk. As the

price of lumber continues to skyrocket, hempcrete fills a need in homebuilding.

"Hemp can replace almost every part of a home, from the two-by-fours and the hardwood flooring to the insulation and even the interior walls," Milburn says.

Using hempcrete in his homebuilding business not only simplifies the building process, it also eliminates the need for drywall, fiberglass insulation and other chemical-based substances common in homes as it naturally provides insulation and is strong, durable, nontoxic and pest resistant.

## **Cultivating Opportunities**

The hemp industry is growing in Colorado, especially with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's approval

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Eric Milburn, founder of Healthy Hemp Homes, uses hempcrete as a natural alternative to other building materials.



Using hempcrete, created from hemp hurd, eliminates the need for drywall, fiberglass insulation and other chemical-based substances common in homes.

of the Colorado State Hemp Management Plan in the summer of 2021, which provided a framework for practices and procedures while also opening more opportunities for farmers, producers and businesses to enter the growing field. The approval came after a years-long pilot program that launched in 2014. At the ceremony unveiling the approval, even singer and American icon Willie Nelson sent a statement, saying, “Colorado should be proud of leading the charge

for the hemp industry.”

From the 1970s until the passage of this watershed legislation, the cousin of the marijuana plant was illegal. However, Colorado advocates knew hemp had much to offer to both the public and farmers, who could take advantage of another plant to produce and sell. Now, hemp testing below 0.3% THC is an official crop in Colorado.

Ed Lehrburger, the founder and president of PureVision Technology, had hemp on his radar



for years because of its versatility. Hemp can be used to make rope, clothing, paper products, biofuel, insulation and more. In 2010, he started working behind the scenes to put hemp on the ballot. Amendment 64, which legalized the cultivation of both cannabis and

hemp, passed in 2012, and the Colorado legislature invited Lehrburger to sit on the Industrial Hemp Advisory Committee to assist with writing the hemp growing rules in the state.

PureVision Technology first focused on utilizing agricultural residues such

Bill Althouse focuses on creating opportunities in the hemp industry to ensure a new generation of Colorado farmers.



## Farm Facts: Hemp

**1 acre** of hemp produces **2x** as much oil as 1 acre of peanuts and **4x** as much fiber pulp (used for paper) as 1 acre of trees.

Evidence of hemp fabric dating back **8,000 years** has been found in Turkey.

Hemp paper that is **hundreds of years** old has been found in museum archives without yellowing, unlike wood-based paper.



Betsy Ross used industrial hemp to make the first American flag.

From 2014 to 2019, registered hemp areas in Colorado exploded from 1,811 to **88,743** acres.

Sources: Guinness Book of World Records, National Hemp

Association, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Colorado State University

as corn stalks and cobs, wood and triticale straw. In 2014, they moved to processing hemp stalks as well as making CBD and cannabinoid products. Two years later, they began producing paper and boxes made from hemp to sell their CBD products. The company has been working with Colorado farmers to supply hemp stalks to make pulp and paper products as well as hurd for uses in different industries.

“The sustainably conscious consumer would rather have hemp paper versus tree paper,” Lehrburger says. “Now there are farmers in Colorado and a growing number of farmers all over the country who have success growing hemp.”

### Farmers First

Bill Althouse, the founder of the workers cooperative Fat Pig Society, has the success of farmers at the forefront of his mind. With the goal to pump revenue into family farms, he turned to hemp. The energy engineer understood the value of hemp in all of its forms, and he says he produced the first commercial CBD strain while working at a small dispensary in New Mexico.

Althouse used his experience in plant genetics and research and development to find a variety of hemp that would not break the 0.3%

threshold of THC. Out of 12,000 genotypes, he found four meeting that criteria. Althouse took his findings directly to interested farmers to give them more opportunities with lower risk.

“I’m really worried when I see more and more farms dropping out, going belly up, the kid moves away, the next generation’s not interested,” he says. “We’ve worked out and developed not just the genetics, but the entire path for the small farmer to make sure they’re producing the highest quality hemp [without breaking state laws]. I want to see revenue go to our farmers.”

His involvement has led him to testify before legislative committees prior to the passage of Amendment 64. He also served on the governor’s Hemp Advisory Committee from 2013 to July 2021.

With so many pathways cleared for hemp, Colorado growers have much to look forward to.

“As soon as I start to mention the hundreds of ways hemp can be used, people’s jaws drop to the floor,” Milburn says. “When I talk about hempcrete as a building material, they get so excited thinking of their healthy hemp home and the assurance that it will last for generations. I love teaching people about hemp because, to me, it’s the future.”

— Christiana Lilly





Corn is one of the world's most important global commodities.

# Versatile & Valuable

Corn farmers are quick to support sustainability goals

**WHEN YOU THINK OF CORN,** a steaming hot ear drenched with butter might come to mind. Or you might envision it as feed for cattle or pigs.

In fact, corn is one of the most visible and productive crops grown in the United States.

"It is used to create and support numerous food products for both people and animals," explains Jeremy Fix, president of the CCAC board of directors who farms 6,500 acres together with his father and brother south of Wray.

Food, however, is just one of the many uses for corn. It can be found

in everything from toothpaste and textiles to bioplastics, and a large percentage is grown for livestock feed and to be turned into ethanol fuel.

It takes a lot of land and water to meet the demand for this important global commodity, and farmers are the front-line navigators of these challenges.

"I believe that sustainability is going to be a key topic for years to come," Fix says, "and I think that corn will continue to be a very valuable crop because of its versatility."

Corn contributes close to \$600 million to the Colorado economy annually.

Colorado corn producers are supported through an organization called the Colorado Corn Administrative Committee, the state's checkoff organization established in 1987, to provide and take advantage of the latest research, knowledge and tools to advance the corn industry and further sustainability goals.

The National Corn Growers Association, which the CCAC supports, has outlined some major goals to significantly advance sustainability. These include everything from the use of cover crops and no-till or low-till farming practices to mitigate erosion, increase irrigation water efficiency, and even to reduce corn's carbon footprint.

"We've made incredible leaps in the past 30 years, but there's room to go further and we're willing to do so," Fix adds.

Brandon Hunnicutt, a member of the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) board of directors and corn farmer near the small town of Giltner, Nebraska, shares that sentiment.

"Our sustainability goals are important to keep the environment functioning well but also to support community and family," Hunnicutt says. "We drink the same water as our neighbors; play in the same parks. Plus, we want to pass the farms on to our families. The only way to do that is to protect the soil."

# LOOKING *for* LOCAL

Farmers, chefs, processors and retailers connect in the Colorado food supply chain

## Leaders in Colorado's

ag sector are embracing the Colorado Proud slogan, "from our state to your plate."

For Chef Jason Morse, the founder and executive chef at 5280 Culinary, it's important to use ingredients and products from local farmers. That includes sourcing beef, lamb, pork and potatoes exclusively from Colorado producers for almost two decades.

"I'm a chef. I serve our community. I serve people.

I cook food," he says. "It's not a sales pitch. It's what I believe in because I live it every day."

## Spreading the Word

As the culinary national spokesperson for Ace Hardware, Morse often uses local products in the recipes he fires up on the grill. As a BBQ and grilling expert, he also partners with the Colorado Department of Agriculture to make cooking videos and help consumers connect to Colorado Proud agricultural products.

Especially in the past two years, the Colorado Proud program has focused on creating social media campaigns and recipes to spread the word, including Super Simple Saturdays featuring easy-to-follow recipes, Facebook Live sessions with the Colorado Beef Council and Zoom cooking classes with the Colorado Potato Administrative Committee.

## Back to Basics

The Colorado Grain Chain is a nonprofit membership organization founded in 2019 by a group of farmers, millers, bakers, brewers, distillers and chefs with the common goal to bring the "grain chain" back to the state. More than 40 business members across different sectors are part of the collective.

Andy Clark, the board chair of Colorado Grain Chain and the owner and founder of Moxie Bread Co. in Louisville and Boulder, shares that farmers delivering grain to his bakery used to be conventional wheat growers, but now they're making the switch to organic and looking into heirloom varieties. With many farmers themselves struggling with food security, the chain helps to promote local grain producers and makers through centralized marketing strategies, leading to increased demand and adding value to what the organization offers.



Chef Jason Morse, founder of 5280 Culinary, focuses on sourcing ingredients and products from local Colorado farmers for all his cooking endeavors.



**Above:** Direct-to-consumer bison sales have grown due to the pandemic. **Right:** The Colorado Grain Chain helps local grain growers with promotion and sourcing.



“These connections – and the support the Colorado Grain Chain offers small growers – make it feasible for farmers to grow heritage and rare grains not available through conventional sources,” says Nels Wroe, a Colorado Grain Chain board member and co-founder of Dry Land Distillers in Longmont. “This helps to ensure the health and sustainability of our local agriculture systems.”

### Supporting Small Businesses

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Chef Morse noticed an increased interest in supporting local farmers and producers. Customers were no longer afraid to purchase “ugly produce” and were looking into where they could buy their meats locally. A friend of Morse’s used to raise bison primarily for restaurants, but once the pandemic hit, he pivoted to selling to consumers.

“He not only survived, but grew and expanded and now is a major force in direct-to-consumer bison,” he says.

Colorado Proud member LoCo Food Distribution supports local businesses and bridges the gap

between producers and consumers. Working with more than 150 Colorado vendors, the company’s goal is to make it easier for customers to purchase locally made products – everything from salsas and hot sauces to CBD-infused products, vegan jerky, local meat and seasonal vegetables. Thanks to LoCo, these items can be purchased at Whole Foods, Sprouts, Natural Grocers and Safeway, and at independent grocers, taprooms, coffee shops and other retailers.

Not only are almost all vendors small and locally owned, but about 50% of customers are also small business owners.

“I think there is a growing interest in sustainability,” founder and CEO Elizabeth Mozer says of the interest in buying local. “We all are realizing that the resources on our planet are limited, and at LoCo, we are aiming to shorten supply chains by connecting local vendors to local customers.”

– Christiana Lilly

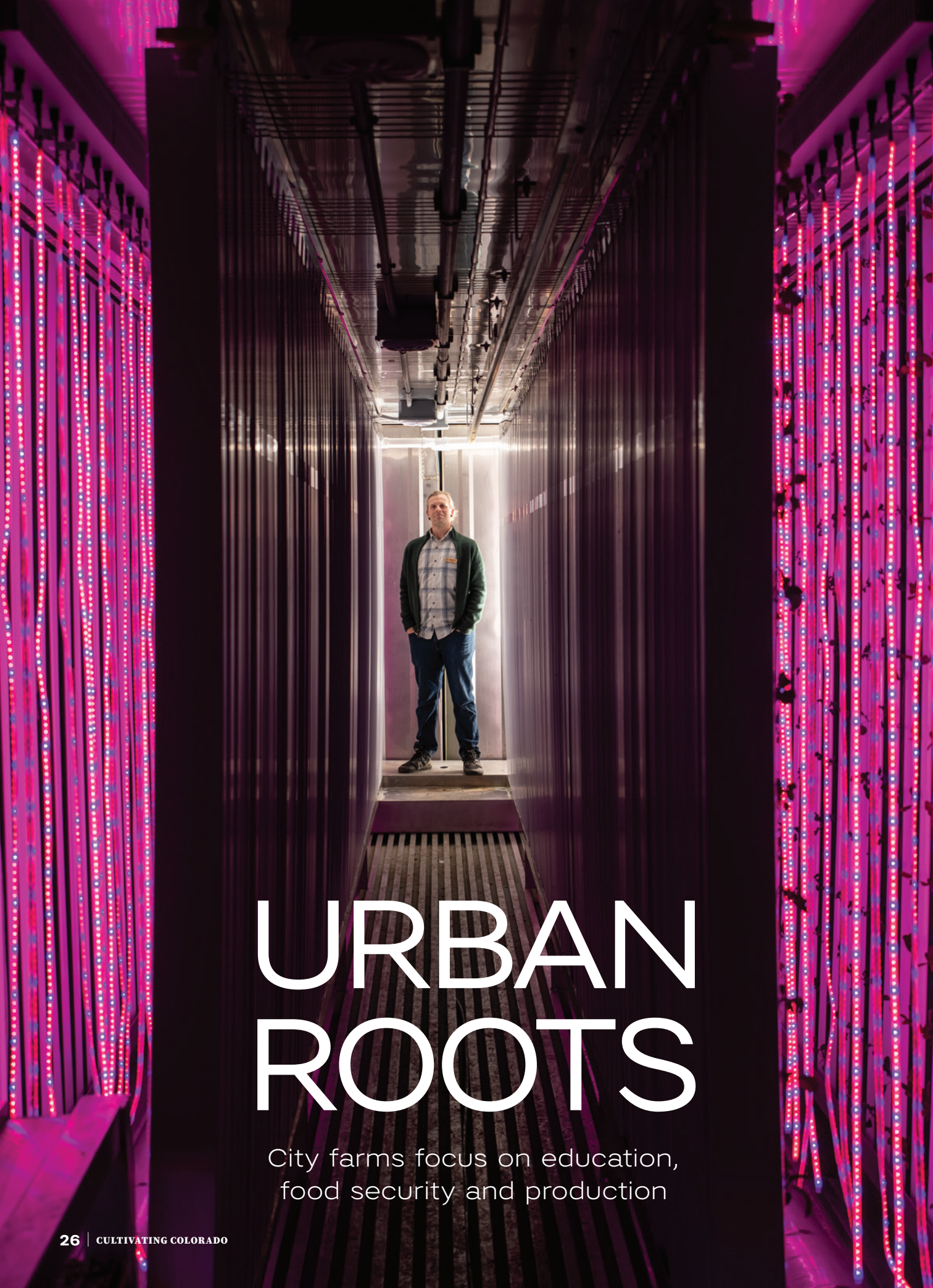
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# URBAN ROOTS

City farms focus on education,  
food security and production



The popular impression of Colorado agriculture may be big barns and sweeping fields hemmed in by mountains, but over the past decade, increasing numbers of farming operations have taken root in the state’s urban communities. Occupying relatively small footprints, urban farms’ missions often extend beyond production into the arenas of sustainability, food justice, community-building and education.

“Just like in traditional rural agriculture, there’s such a diversity of what urban farms look like,” says Dan Goldhamer, county director and horticulture educator for Colorado State University Denver Extension.

Denver metropolitan-area farms run the gamut, he says, from large-scale production greenhouses and aquaponics operations to

community gardens and teaching farms. But they all face similar challenges, including long cash cycles, risk and – particularly in urban growing – stiff economic competition for land and labor.

The Denver Extension Office supports urban growers through technical assistance and education as well as facilitating relationship-building.

“An interesting thing about Front Range Denver Metro area urban agriculture is that people are pretty well organized,” Goldhamer says, pointing to Mile High Farmers, a grassroots collective that brings together diverse Denver-area farmers to share resources and advocate for policy change.

### Sowing Seeds of Knowledge

Located at Warren Tech, a designated Career and Technical Education (CTE) center for Jeffco Public Schools in the suburban community of Lakewood, ACRES (which stands for agriculture, community, research, education, and sustainability) Farm specializes in market vegetables, which it sells through tailgate markets, a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) and direct vending to restaurants. But as a principally CTE program,

**Above:** ACRES Farm, located at the Warren Tech campus, offers students hand-on experience. **Opposite:** Stephen Cochenour, ACRES horticulture instructor and farm manager, stands inside a shipping container, which doubles as the hydroponic growing area.



Stephen Cochenour

## ACRES of Specialty Crops

One of the two greenhouses at ACRES Farm at Warren Tech is devoted to growing nursery stock for the program's annual spring plant sale and for selling to local growers. The other greenhouse, an in-ground operation for production growing, is helping the farm gain a following for tasty tomatoes.

"They have some pretty fantastic flavor, and we gain the benefit of having a really long season with them," says Stephen Cochenour, instructor and farm manager.

In 2021, ACRES began harvesting tomatoes at the end of April and didn't wrap up its season until the end of November.

"That's something we're pretty proud of, being able to have those tomatoes for our customers," Cochenour says.



horticultural skills and career readiness are ACRES' principal goals.

Although the high school juniors and seniors at ACRES attend traditional lectures and labs, they also do hands-on farm work on the 3-acre property, says horticulture instructor and farm manager Stephen Cochenour.

During the school year, students find themselves doing anything from starting seeds for ACRES' hydroponic growing system to interacting with customers at CSA distribution points or preparing seedlings in one of the farm's two greenhouses for its annual spring plant sale. In addition, through a summer internship program, students can earn school credit for keeping the farm running through the heart of the growing season.

One of the challenges at ACRES is balancing production capacity with teaching, Cochenour says. He notes that life lessons on dealing with the uncertainty of farming – especially in an era of climate change – are part of that education.

Acknowledging that not all ACRES students will pursue farming careers, Cochenour emphasizes the importance of guiding young people to become lifelong ag advocates.

"I think this is just as important as growing out a new generation of farmers," he says.

## Food Justice for All

FrontLine Farming is a BIPOC- (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) and women-led food justice and farmer advocacy organization whose co-founders help lead Mile High Farmers and serve on the Jefferson County and Denver food policy councils. FrontLine grew about 27,000 pounds of fresh produce in 2021 using regenerative farming methods on 2 acres across three urban plots. But production isn't FrontLine's sole focus. Its three-pronged mission is to achieve food security, equity and sovereignty across the Front Range food system.

To address local food needs, FrontLine reserves a portion of the shares of its CSA program for SNAP and WIC recipients.



PHOTOS: COUNTERCLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: THEO STROOMER; ISTOCK.COM/ELL\_ASENOVA; LINDA STORM (3-4)

**“Even though we’re a small organization, we’re driven to make real, positive change on a tangible level in people’s lives, both one-on-one and on systemic and cultural levels as well.”**

JaSon Auguste, director of farming at FrontLine Farming’s Celebration/Sister Gardens

They also partner with area nonprofits to offer a no-cost grocery program. Through its Healing Foods program, FrontLine donates more than a quarter of the food it grows to the local community through food banks, churches and other organizations.

To tackle food segregation and encourage food sovereignty, FrontLine established the Center for Food Justice and Healthy Communities, helped launch the Colorado Water Equity Partnership and is one of the main conveners of the advocacy group Project Protect Food Systems Workers.

FrontLine’s BIPOC Beginning Farmer Apprenticeship Program teaches farming skills to growers from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

JaSon Auguste, director of farming at Celebration/Sister Gardens has full faith that these efforts can have major impacts on the community.

“Even though we’re a small organization, we’re driven to make real, positive change on a tangible level in people’s lives, both one-on-one and on systemic and cultural levels as well,” Auguste says.

– Gina Smith

Director of Farming JaSon Auguste believes FrontLine Farming’s efforts to tackle food segregation and food sovereignty have a major impact on the community.



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# Withstanding the Test of Time

Centennial farmers and ranchers find new niches in the 21st century

In the early 20th century, many Colorado ranchers still relied on the horse and buggy to maintain their land, and electricity didn't exist in rural areas until the mid-1930s. Colorado's cold temperatures and high elevations created challenges, meaning ranching was often a more lucrative enterprise than farming. But today, two family-owned ranches in southern Colorado established more than 100 years ago have adapted to the times by shifting from selling cattle to selling their breathtaking views.

Owned and operated by third-generation rancher Richard Parry, Fox Fire Farms in Ignacio, not too far north of the New Mexico border, takes pride in the hard work and sacrifices his family has endured to hold onto the 106-year-old property, which over its lifetime has been a farm, a sheep ranch and now even a winery.

More than 200 miles east in Aguilar, fourth-generation rancher Gretchen Sporleder-Orr, who runs

## 100 Years & Counting

Centennial farms in Colorado are keeping traditions alive in innovative new ways.

### Fox Fire Farms Winery

Location: Ignacio  
[foxfirefarms.com](http://foxfirefarms.com)

### Sporleder Centennial Ranch

Location: Aguilar  
[spanishpeaksweddings.com](http://spanishpeaksweddings.com)

To learn more about the Colorado Centennial Farms and Ranches Program, visit [historycolorado.org/centennial-farms-ranches](http://historycolorado.org/centennial-farms-ranches).



**Above:** Established in 1915, the fourth and fifth generations now run Sporleder Centennial Ranch.  
**Right:** Sporleder Ranch circa 1920

Sporleder Centennial Ranch with her brother, Karl Sporleder, is passionate about preserving her family's 1915 ranch in a way that would make her great-grandfather proud.

Both ranches began as mainly cattle and sheep operations in the early 1900s and have more recently shifted to recreation and tourism enterprises, such as hosting weddings, concerts and more.

According to Parry, the market for wool was huge in his grandparents' day but is not as lucrative today.

"You have to change with the times and be flexible," Parry says.

Both ranches are in high tourism areas with priceless views helping them adapt to new ventures.

## Adapting to Modern Times

Shifting gears in 2004, Parry and his wife Linda launched Fox Fire Farms Winery after careful research to find cold-climate hybrid grape varieties that survive the Colorado climate. With seven grape varieties grown across 8 acres, the couple adds an acre each year with



proven success, receiving gold medals for two of their varieties at the Colorado State Fair competition.

Sporleder Centennial Ranch recently launched Spanish Peaks Weddings as a new enterprise for the family ranch. They are sprucing up the original 1850s farmhouse and guest cabins, ideal centerpieces for picturesque outdoor weddings. Sporleder-Orr wants to continue using her family's land for at least another 100 years as she and Karl, along with her husband, Brian, and their four adult children, consider the many opportunities their land could offer beyond weddings.

"Our kids have great ideas for the next generation, from a Christmas tree farm to a retreat center to a hiking trail base," Sporleder-Orr says. "It's important to change and adapt to the times. If you don't, you're stuck in the past."

— Danielle Rotella Adams



# *On Common* GROUND

Drought-impacted farmers and ranchers work to keep resources from running dry



***“The most common ground of all is the ground we’re standing on.”***

That’s fourth-generation cattle rancher Janie VanWinkle’s message for all Coloradans, not just her neighboring northwestern Colorado farmers and ranchers impacted by a decades-long drought and supply chain challenge

exaggerated by the pandemic.

“We’re all in this together. We’ll find our way out, but it will mean leaving our comfort zones. It will mean advocating, educating and speaking outside agricultural circles,” VanWinkle says.

Commissioner of Agriculture Kate Greenberg says the drought illuminates what to expect in a drier future affected by climate change.

“Building resilience now is how Colorado will continue to have a viable and vibrant agriculture and economy,” Greenberg says.

**Conservation Concerns**

Greenberg’s department partnered with the Colorado Water Conservation Board and Colorado State University Water Center to co-chair the Ag Impact Task Force, a subcommittee of the state’s Drought Task Force. The task force recently brought together farmers, ranchers and elected and appointed officials for a Yampa River Basin tour.

“It was beneficial because it brought together so many

producers and local leaders of all jurisdictions,” Greenberg says. “Those leaders heard from the producers, saw the dusty soil and heard the brittleness of the grass under their feet. Those are images impossible to get across simply on a Zoom call, and that experience is likely to stay with those leaders.”

Moffat County rancher Mike Camblin, who shared his experiences as a producer during the tour, says he’s glad for the opportunity.

“It made the decision-makers more aware of what we’re going through,” he says. “I don’t know if they fully understood until they got their feet on the ground.”

For Camblin, it also illustrated he’s not alone in his challenges.

“Hearing from others and seeing others’ ranches made me realize I’m not the only one hurting – everyone is,” he says.

But the tour was a source of hope, too. “It’s a testament to how strong our local community and agricultural network already is,” Greenberg says.



### Finding Community

The Colorado Cattlemen's Association (CCA), in which Camblin and VanWinkle are active, is another organization taking a proactive approach. Camblin serves as a board member, and VanWinkle is the immediate past president.

"Who you surround yourself with matters, and I want to hang around with people who are proactive, supportive and encouraging," Camblin says.

He gets that from the CCA, he says, while having the chance to tell others about his extreme drought plan that helped him make some hard decisions.

"I culled my herd from 245 head to around 30 or 40 and sold some of the hay the ranch produced to

other local producers who were looking to other states to fill that need," Camblin says.

The VanWinkle ranch's upside is the sale of its ground beef to local customers. Pre-pandemic, the ranch sold about 1,000 pounds per year, but in 2020, it sold 12,000 pounds of beef to customers impacted by supply chain issues and curious about where their food comes from.

### Rural Mental Health

"Farmers and ranchers have always faced hardship, but there's a lot of honor and dignity in feeding people, caring for our livestock and caring for the land," VanWinkle says.

As only the third woman president in the history of the CCA,

### Find More Online

#### Yampa River Basin Tour



For more info on the Yampa River Basin tour, scan the QR code to check out the Colorado Department of Agriculture's YouTube channel.

#### Mental Health Resources



Scan the QR code or call the 24/7 Colorado Crisis Services hotline, 1-844-494-8255 (TALK), for additional resources and information concerning mental health.

she says it's important to her to be visible and approachable to both producers and consumers seeking information or resources.

The Colorado Department of Agriculture offers multiple resources to farmers struggling with mental health due to the drought and other risks that impact farming.

"Farmers and ranchers tend to be stoic, solution-oriented, strong-willed people, but part of our strength is in asking for help when we need it," Greenberg says.

– Tracey Hackett

PHOTO: THEO STROMMER



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many successes



The Colorado Water Conservation Board oversees the funding of water projects across the state.

**FOR 50 YEARS, COLORADO'S** Water Project Loan Program has provided opportunities for the state's public and private entities to design and construct new or improved untreated water infrastructure, including efficiency improvements for agricultural, municipal and hydropower projects.

And the program has been a great success, thanks to the leadership of the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB), the state's water policy agency that manages the program.

"The CWCB loan program is a shining star for Colorado," says CWCB board member Heather Dutton. "We have been able to complete so many projects as a water community because of the ability to access these funds at a low-interest rate."

In 1971, the Colorado General Assembly had a vision for a sustainable Colorado water supply and established the loan program with a \$10 million investment. Since

then, loan repayments have been continually reinvested in the program to sustainably grow its capacity. The availability of these funds for affordable loans has made it easier both for agriculture and municipal projects to be funded.

During the past 50 years, the program has committed more than \$1.2 billion for water projects across the state. These dollars have gone toward critical reservoir upgrades, environmental restoration projects and irrigation infrastructure improvements.

Some examples of the program's success include the Rio Grande Reservoir Rehabilitation, the Orchard Mesa Irrigation District's Mutual Mesa Lateral Rehabilitation, the Republican River Compact Compliance Pipeline, and the rehabilitation of diversion and headgate structures all across the state.

"This program allows the water community that includes farmers and ranchers, ditch and reservoir companies, municipalities, and

water conservancy and conservation districts to access funds for projects at an incredibly low-interest rate," Dutton says.

Looking ahead, Colorado must be prepared to provide water to a growing population while, at the same time, protecting the needs of the agricultural economy, and the Water Project Loan Program is an important tool for meeting that goal.

For 50 years, the Water Project Loan Program has brought consistency and sustainability to the funding of water projects in Colorado. Its self-perpetuating and self-regenerating approach to funding ensures it will continue to serve the state for another 50 years.



## INTEREST RATES AS OF OCTOBER 2021

Agricultural Projects: **1.10%**

Municipal Projects:  
**1.55%-2.0%**

Hydro Projects: **2.0%**

For more information, go to  
[cwcbb.colorado.gov/funding](http://cwcbb.colorado.gov/funding).



**COLORADO**  
Colorado Water  
Conservation Board  
Department of Natural Resources

# GOING GLOBAL

Colorado products can be found across the country and the world

## It's not just locals

who enjoy the many delicious products of Colorado producers – the rest of the world does, too.

Colorado exports a range of products to

127 different countries and all 50 states. The state is a leader in exports to Mexico and exports a substantial amount of beef products to South Korea.

“Exportation is about a \$2 billion industry for Colorado, and meat products make up about half of that,” says Ashley Warsh, international marketing and business

development specialist for the Colorado Department of Agriculture. “We break exports up into major industries including meat, pulses and grains, produce, value-added products, beverages and live cattle.”

Warsh and her teammate, John Addison, help Colorado companies find international markets for their products by providing export intelligence and

Ska Brewing Company in Durango started shipping products internationally several years ago, gaining significant recognition for their brand and Colorado products.

PHOTOS: SKA BREWING COMPANY



opportunities for producers to meet international clients.

“One of the biggest challenges for producers is meeting the buyers and figuring out who they should work with. So we go to trade shows and trade missions and bring buyers to them,” Addison says. “We also have buyers from other countries come to us and say what they’re looking for. We’re able to point them to the right Colorado companies.”

One such company is Ska Brewing Company, located in Durango. The brewery was founded in 1995 and began shipping products internationally several years ago.

“I met some buyers from Sweden at a brewer’s conference and sent them some samples,” says Arlo Grammatica of Ska

Brewing. “It took off and grew organically. Now we ship to Sweden, the U.K., the Netherlands, Ireland, France, Italy and Japan.”

He says in the last year, the company has made well over \$100,000 in exports, and as a small company, it’s given them significant recognition.

“It helps to grow our company and Colorado as a whole,” Grammatica says. “I think it’s helped bring Colorado to the forefront of brewing. We’ve definitely had more Swedes stop in the brewery.”

Centennial Cuts in Fowler stays a little closer to home, shipping all of their meat products throughout the U.S.

“We started out with beef sticks and summer sausage at farmers markets, but we also offer frozen beef cuts and other meat products,” co-owner Luke Larson says. “A few years ago, we started working on an online presence and shipping across the country. We set up a kiosk at the Denver International Airport and have been shipping shelf-stable products to almost every state.”

He adds that it has not only helped their direct-to-consumer margins but also gives people a taste of Colorado.

“For the people buying it, there’s always some tie to Colorado, whether they visited the state or are buying gifts for someone,” Larson says.

– Rachel Stroop



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# Raise a Glass to Colorado

Colorado winemakers channel creative energy to produce award-winning wines

**M**ove over, California. Colorado's wine industry is flourishing, and talented local winemakers are crafting creative, premium wines from classic grapes as well as cherries, peaches, plums and even honey. Colorado's abundance of sunny days, cool nights and low humidity make it an ideal place for vineyards to thrive, and wineries are popping up all over the state.

In 2021, the Governor's Cup Winemaking Competition received 257 wine submissions from 41 Colorado wineries, including several newcomers. Carboy

Winery of Littleton won the Cup for its 2019 Teroldego, an Italian grape relatively new to Colorado.

"Teroldego is a red grape that has enormous potential in Colorado due to its hardiness to cold and heat. As a wine, it's very complex and yet approachable to a wide array of palates," says Kevin Webber, CEO of Carboy Winery, which opened its flagship location in Littleton in 2016 and has grown to include three additional locations in Denver, Breckenridge and Palisade. "Teroldego is something different, and we're in a market where fun and different is what Colorado was built on. Teroldego is potentially one of the red grape varietals of the future, not just for Colorado,

but for the U.S. in general."

Despite challenges such as fall freezes, supply chain issues and shutdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Carboy Winery had its best year in 2021.

"It was our biggest year for growth since our inception," Webber says. "We're entrepreneurs built to innovate. It's fun to be part of the wine industry here, which is more collaborative than competitive. It's a tight-knit community where we all push one another to help grow the industry."

## Fruits of Their Labor

At Mountain View Winery in Olathe, on Colorado's Western Slope, Michael and Wendy Young grow







Carboy Winery won the Governor’s Cup for its 2019 Teroldego, an Italian grape relatively new to Colorado with enormous potential due to its hardiness to cold and heat. **Bottom left:** From left: Doug Caskey with the Wine Industry Development Board, Commissioner of Agriculture Kate Greenberg, Carboy Winery Head Winemaker Tyzok Wharton, Carboy Winery CEO Kevin Webber, Lt. Governor Dianne Primavera, Kyle Schlachter with the Colorado Wine Industry Development Board

seven grape varietals on the same orchard where Mike’s family has grown fruits since 1960.

“Moving into grape growing in 2000 seemed natural,” Wendy says. “Mike has a background in culinary arts and a love of good food and wine.”

Mountain View’s bestselling wine is Dare Devil Red, a syrah blend.

“We love to experiment with grape and fruit blends, such as our cherry merlot we call Uncompahgre Red and an apple chardonnay we

call Ash Mesa White,” Wendy says. “We also make straight fruit wines using local fruit, like apple, pear, rhubarb, cherry, peach, wild plum and apricot.”

Like Carboy Winery, Mountain View has experienced recent challenges.

“Our price for bottles – if we can even get them – has quadrupled,” Wendy says. “Our grapes have had a couple hard years as well. The off-season freezes hurt our harvest. Our whites are in short supply with the

lack of crop the past two years.”

One venture that has helped Mountain View thrive is Harvest Hosts, a membership program that allows RV owners to camp at wineries, breweries and farms nationwide with no camping fees. Mountain View was one of 14 Colorado wineries listed as Harvest Hosts in 2021.

“With COVID and folks needing to social distance, this enterprise kept places like ours afloat,” Wendy says. “We hosted at least one RV every



Patric Matysiewski and Kaibab Sauvage partnered to open Sauvage Spectrum in 2019, offering award-winning sparkling and still wines in Palisade.

single night of the summer, both in 2020 and 2021. They stay in their own self-contained units. We offer a space to park, with the suggestion that they support us by buying wine. It works well, and we have met fun people from all over the U.S.”

### A Spectrum of Sparkling Wines

In Palisade, Kaibab Sauvage has grown grapes for Colorado wineries for more than 20 years on his 60-acre vineyard. In 2019, Sauvage launched his own winemaking operation, Sauvage Spectrum, with business partner Patric Matysiewski.

“Patric has been working with our grapes for years and knew they were perfect for sparkling wine,” Sauvage says. “We wanted our wines to be expressed in a manner true to where and how they were grown, highlighting Colorado’s exquisite terroir.”

Sauvage Spectrum is best known for its Sparklet series,

a lifestyle brand focused on fun, fruit-forward and affordable sparkling wines.

“We offer a white, rosé and Candy Red, a very rare Lambrusco-inspired sparkling red wine that was recently awarded a double gold at the Governor’s Cup Winemaking Competition,” Sauvage says.

Sauvage also offers a lineup of still (non-sparkling) wine, several of which have already won awards. Their Domaine Red, Reserve Red, Reserve White and Sparklet White all received gold medals at the 2021 Sunset International Wine Competition.

Like others, Sauvage Spectrum has dealt with bottles being challenging to source and increasing in price, as well as “freight rates going through the roof.” A fall freeze reduced their 2021 harvest to 16% of normal.

“Our crews spent all their free time in 2021 reestablishing the overwintering portion on over 30,000 vines to get them back in shape to produce a crop in 2022,” Sauvage says.

Despite the risks, Sauvage

believes it’s a great time to be in the Colorado wine and grape business.

“The environment is teeming with creativity, progressive winemaking techniques and an immense collaborative spirit that is pushing the boundaries of what Colorado wine is and will be,” he says.

– Jessica Mozo

### 📍 If You Go...

#### **Carboy Winery**

Breckenridge, Denver and Littleton  
[carboywinery.com](http://carboywinery.com)

#### **Mountain View Winery**

Olathe  
[mountainviewwinery.com](http://mountainviewwinery.com)

#### **Sauvage Spectrum**

Palisade  
[sauvagespectrum.com](http://sauvagespectrum.com)

### 🔗 Find more online

To learn more about these and other Colorado wineries, visit [coloradowine.com](http://coloradowine.com).

# Moving the Needle

Grants support agricultural processors and manufacturers

**In the early** days of the pandemic, practically empty store shelves forced many consumers to turn to locally owned businesses. Unfortunately, the same supply chain and demand issues seriously impacted these producers.

In 2021, the Colorado Department of Agriculture formulated a plan to dispense the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds to develop a new grant program called Move the Needle. This program helped business owners expand their operations to meet increased demand.

Out of 64 applications, the CDA awarded \$332,000 worth of Move the Needle grant money to seven small businesses.

Two of the small businesses, Nola Naturals and Jojo's Sriracha, received Move the Needle grants because of their plans for increased production.

## Nola Naturals

Nola Naturals owner and co-founder Nicole "Nick" Perchess heard about the grant from a fellow farmer and eagerly applied. She and her partner sell frozen chicken, other cuts of meat and produce at farmers markets. During

the pandemic, the Avondale-based company experienced a surge in business when food supply was scarce.

They looked into acquiring a poultry processing facility to meet demand and a new space to house it. Right as she learned about Move the Needle, Perchess also found an existing poultry processing facility and made an offer.

"Soon after meeting the deadline for the grant, we found out that we were going to be the new owners of the land for the facility and that we had received the grant," Perchess says.

The \$20,000 grant from CDA helped Nola Naturals pay for all-electric septic and HVAC systems, a large commercial smoker, personal protective equipment, payroll and sanitation.

"Because of that grant money, this facility is completely up and operational," Perchess says.

## Jojo's Sriracha

Jolene Collins found herself in a similar manufacturing pickle during the pandemic.

Collins founded Jojo's Sriracha in 2012 after discovering most bottled



sriracha was packed full of salt, sugar and preservatives. She set out to make a higher quality version with better ingredients and less filler.

The Pueblo business ran smoothly until spring 2020 when Collins struggled to find jars and other essentials required to make her products.

"We now have to source jars and closures nine months out as opposed to three or four weeks out," she says. "The capital and risk required to do that is a big strain

on our small business."

Collins used the \$35,000 Move the Needle grant funds to purchase a food processor to chop fresh chile into a mash and a Blixer to blend the mash smooth before jarring.

"Both pieces of machinery have increased our processing capacity by 200 to 300%," Collins says.

– Kelly Rogers

## Find more online

Learn more about Move the Needle and grant winners at **COagriculture.com**.

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*“Through high school FFA, I discovered my love for animals. At CSU, I’ve explored the intersection between animal and plant sciences and how education lets you experience all of these different spheres of agriculture. With my degree from the College of Agricultural Sciences, my hope is to create even stronger connections for CSU students to partner in solving needs and building community.”*

**GARRETT FONG ('23)**

*Student, Animal Sciences and Agricultural Education  
College of Agricultural Sciences  
CSU Extension Intern, Archuleta County  
Future Farmers of America (FFA) Alum*

# CONNECTING STUDENTS AND COMMUNITIES

At Colorado State University, we learn and work together across Colorado to exchange, develop and apply knowledge, empowering individuals and communities to thrive. Pull up a chair and take a seat at our table so that together we can learn, grow, discover, and make a positive impact on the world.

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