Advancing Colorado’s Food System: Issue Briefs from the Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council

Food Systems Toolbox Webinar Series
Thursday December 12th, 2013
1-2p.m.
WELCOME!

Lisa Walvoord

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Objectives

- Discuss updates on the work of the COFSAC
- Learn about two key issues to advancing food systems issues in CO
- Hear about the next steps of the COFSAC moving forward and how to stay involved
Agenda

- Welcome & Background on the COFSAC
- Presentations:
  - SNAP at Farmers Markets
  - Direct Market Technical Assistance
- Closing Thoughts
- Open Q&A
Today’s Presenters

Lisa Walvoord
LiveWell Colorado

Ron Carleton
Colorado Department of Agriculture

Julie Kerksick
Colorado Department of Human Services

Dawn Thilmany
CSU Extension
About the COFSAC

- Legislatively mandated through 2010 state bill
- Volunteer-based
- 15 members of state agencies and diverse food systems stakeholders
- First meeting held in Jan. 2011, (at least) quarterly ever since
- COFSAC continuation bill passed in 2013, next sunset review Sept. 2018
COFSAC Charge

The COFSAC charge is to advance recommendations that strengthen healthy food access for all Coloradans through Colorado agriculture and local food systems and economies.
COFSAC Member Seats

- Anti-Hunger and Food Assistance
- Agricultural Production
- State Agency
- Food Wholesaler/Retailer
- Nutrition and Health
- Academic
- Extension Services
www.cofoodsystemsCouncil.org

COLORADO FOOD SYSTEMS ADVISORY COUNCIL

About COFSAC  Local Food Coalitions  Healthy Food Access Vision  Reports and Documents  Contact Us

We Want to Hear from You! Please Visit our Issue Submission Page!

What is the Food Systems Advisory Council?
The Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council (COFSAC), established through the LiveWell Colorado-initiated Senate Bill 10-106, is a legislatively-mandated, volunteer-based, 15-member body of state agencies and diverse food systems stakeholders. The COFSAC held its first meeting in January 2011 and has met at least quarterly since (see 2014 meeting schedule under About COFSAC).

The COFSAC charge is to advance recommendations that strengthen healthy food access for all Coloradans through Colorado agriculture and local food systems and economies.

Passed in 2013, Senate Bill 13-174: Concerning the Continuation of the Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council allowed for the continuation of the COFSAC until September 1st 2018 when the next sunset review will occur. The bill also allowed for additional member seats, adding two new members to the Council. Council membership now totals fifteen with representation from diverse geographies and sectors, the public and private sector, and academic institutions.
COFSAC Website

- Background information: Council members, Council description
- Issue Submission Page
- Directory of local food coalitions and related documents
- Healthy Food Access Vision
- Annual Reports, Event Summaries and Reports – including issue briefs!
COFSAC Briefs

1. Enhancing Direct Market Technical Assistance
2. Increasing SNAP at Farmers Markets

Contents:

🔹 Issue Background: current status, nationally & locally
🔹 Role of State Government: how the state of Colorado is or could be involved
🔹 Opportunities for Colorado: how public and private sectors can further support these issues
Advancing Food Systems
Issues in Colorado:
Increasing SNAP at Farmers Markets
ADVANCING FOOD SYSTEMS ISSUES IN COLORADO: INCREASING SNAP AT FARMERS MARKETS

In order to grow the state’s economy and support access to healthy foods for all Coloradans, the Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council (COFSAC) recommends an expansion of services for both producers and consumers to increase the use of SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly food stamps) benefits at farmers markets across the state. Such services should include training, education, outreach, and evaluation.

I. INTRODUCTION

SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly food stamps) benefits play an important role in meeting the food needs of low-income Coloradans. A federal program funded in the Farm Bill, it is administered in Colorado by the Department of Human Services (CDHS). Farmers markets provide a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables direct from the farm to consumers in small settings (one or more produce stands) to large (multiple vendor, year-round markets) in both urban and rural settings. These markets can accept SNAP benefits where the necessary equipment is in place and the implementation and administrative costs are met.

However, many markets lack this equipment and the administrative capacity to manage the program. Further, many SNAP recipients are unaware that they can use their benefits at farmers markets or believe that the costs at such markets are too high. As a result, the numbers of SNAP recipients having access to fresh fruits and vegetables at farmers markets are low.
SNAP REDEMPTION IS GOOD FOR THE ECONOMY:

According to the USDA, every $5 in new SNAP benefits generates as much as $9 of economic activity.¹

Studies have shown that shopping at farmer’s markets leads to increased fruit and vegetable consumption among low-income individuals³, and farmer’s markets have a positive economic impact on individual communities and the larger economy.⁵

In FY 2012, $809 million Federal SNAP dollars were distributed in Colorado.³

$809 million

SNAP sales at farmers markets nationwide topped $1.7 million between October 1, 2010 and September 30, 2011.⁶

=$11.7 million

20% vs. 100%

The USDA has found that approximately $0.20 for every SNAP dollar spent in a community goes to a farmer,⁷ but 100% of every SNAP dollar spent at a Colorado farmers market ends up in the pocket of a Colorado farmer.

SNAP REDEMPTION AT DIRECT MARKETS IS GOOD FOR THE AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY:

75% of farmers attending farmers markets that offer SNAP incentives (or “double voucher” program that match SNAP benefits) through one national program say they make more money at markets that offer SNAP incentives than those that do not.⁸

Nationally, SNAP recipients spend over 85% of benefits on fruits and vegetables, grains, dairy, meat, and meat alternatives⁹, all which are found at CO farmers markets.

=85%

81% of SNAP customers at farmers markets offering incentives through one national program indicated that the amount of fruits and vegetables they purchase and consume increased because of SNAP incentives.¹⁰

SNAP REDEMPTION AT DIRECT MARKETS IMPROVES ACCESS TO AND CONSUMPTION OF HEALTHY FOODS AMONG LOW-INCOME POPULATIONS:

Low-income mothers at farmers markets indicated their primary reason for attending was to teach their kids about healthy eating.¹¹

SNAP REDEMPTION IS GROWING AT COLORADO’S DIRECT MARKETS BUT UNMET NEED AND DEMAND REMAINS:

There are currently approximately 70 member markets of the CFMA, with many other markets opening across the state every year.

2012=53

Approximately 22 markets first became equipped with EBT technology in Colorado in 2007 through a USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program grant. In 2012, 53 markets or individual producers across Colorado were SNAP-certified (able to accept SNAP).

$186,691

During the 2012 season, $186,691 in SNAP benefits were redeemed at Colorado farmers markets.¹⁴

5

Of these, at least 5 also ran an incentive program that matches SNAP benefits redeemed for fresh produce.¹² Nationwid, 526 markets offered such programs in 2012.¹³
Issue Brief Background

EBT working group developed content:

- Partnership between Colorado Farmers Market Association, Share Our Strength Colorado, Colorado Department of Human Services, Denver Urban Gardens, CSU Extension, USDA Food & Nutrition Services, Hunger Free CO and many others

- To enhance the use of EBT at farmers markets

- To improve education, outreach, and programs to increase access to farmers markets by people with limited resources.
Key Issues

Retailer perspective

- FNS application is difficult to complete and it takes FNS a long time to review/process
- Retailers are reluctant to provide some of the required information to the federal government

Client perspective

- Produce purchased at farmer’s markets tends to be more expensive
The Future...Where CDHS is headed...

- Recent certification workshops have resulted in the addition of approximately 100 vendors.
- There is interest for similar workshops in other parts of the state.
- FNS has contracted with an organization that will help with the certification and equipment deployment processes.
- FNS funding has been extended.
- Promotion/sign-up efforts need to begin PRIOR to the start of the season.
- EBT program will continue to support replacement of retired equipment through the payment of costs.
Advancing Food Systems
Issues in Colorado:
Enhancing Direct Market
Technical Assistance
ADVANCING FOOD SYSTEMS ISSUES IN COLORADO:
ENHANCING DIRECT MARKET TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

In order to grow the state’s economy and support access to healthy foods for all Coloradans, the Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council recommends the expansion of direct market technical assistance for all Colorado producers. Such technical assistance should focus on: clarifying farm to plate food safety regulations; supporting food and farming business development and management; and, increasing direct market access for producers of all sizes.

I. INTRODUCTION

Like many professions, the majority of America’s farmers and ranchers benefit from USDA and Land-Grant University (LGU) programs – whether loans and grants, direct payment subsidies, crop insurance programs, professional associations, research on new farming practices, or technical training to increase yield and profit. Technical training and assistance is especially critical for small, beginning, fruit and vegetable and direct market farmers who face unique challenges to entering new markets and accessing traditional USDA programs. Technical and financial assistance programs that have shown to increase entry into agricultural enterprises include business development and management courses, training in accessing credit and loans, education about and connection to viable markets (e.g., schools, restaurants), and training on safe food handling practices.

Such training and technical assistance is vital for direct market agriculture – the sale of Colorado grown or raised products directly to consumers and institutions that engage Colorado’s food and agriculture system. Through two years of listening sessions and site visits across the state1, the Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council has identified a need for greater technical assistance and professional development opportunities to support the growth of direct market producers.
The Need

Marked rise in direct markets in agriculture

- Signal of consumer interest in re-engagement with their food system
- Allows set of producers interested in more integrated systems to compete in local markets

Requires a refocusing and adjustment to Land Grant technical assistance capacity
Key Issues

- Food and farming business development
  - New tools for emerging strategies and models
- Guidance and clarity on best practices for food handling and safety
  - And a broader set of regulations not well-aligned with smaller, localized systems
- Market access and infrastructure
  - System level support for new projects and investments that can support different food systems models
The Trends Illustrate the Need

**DIRECT MARKET AGRICULTURE IS INCREASINGLY CONTRIBUTING TO COLORADO’S ECONOMY:**

- **+30% direct market sales**
  A CSU study found that Colorado saw 30% direct market sales growth between 2002 and 2007, and Colorado reported relatively high direct market revenues per farm compared to most other Western states.⁵

- **2x national direct market sales**
  Sales growth in direct marketing in the Rocky Mt Region is almost twice the national average and is outpacing the growth of all farm revenues by a factor of five.⁶

- **+30% farm to school**
  There are an increasing number of farm to school contracts each year. A CSU study found that new farm to school linkages could mean up to 30% more indirect economic activity (even if new local sales are simply offsetting the same $ in sales from national distributors).⁷

- **$2.2 billion tourism driven activity**
  A 2006 CSU study found that $2.2 billion of the state’s tourism activity is likely driven by experiences tied to agriculture, and food-based activities were a key interest of travelers.⁸
CSU Food Systems Team

- New tools and models for technical assistance
  - Building Farmers short courses
  - Farmers market price reporting

- Research and outreach on health implications
  - Food safety implications of changing markets
  - Connections between markets and health outcomes

- New resources for producers of all scale and orientation
  - Cofarmtomarket.com
  - Colorado MarketMaker
The Future

🌟 Many programs and resources built off grant-funded projects and efforts

🌟 More stable staffing to maintain current resources and continue to respond to emerging issues
  – Strong track record in leveraging hard dollar positions with external grants and contracts

🌟 Critical mass needed at CSU to maintain statewide coverage
  – Otherwise focused in areas with county-based agents focused on these topics
COFSAC
Recommendations
Opportunities for Enhancing SNAP at Farmers Markets

- .5 FTE with CDHS to provide technical assistance to CFMA
- State support for FTE at CFMA
- Support for organizations offering USDA funded nutrition education
- Funding for SNAP Outreach to include direct markets for local ag
- Advocate for USDA FNS application process for ag retailers of SNAP
Opportunities for Enhancing SNAP at Farmers Markets

- Permanently provide EBT equipment at no cost to ag businesses
- Increase CDA marketing and promotion of EBT
- CDHS allow SNAP dollars to promote use of EBT at markets
- Fund CSU Extension to evaluate SNAP at Farmers Markets
- Develop public-private partnerships
Opportunities for Enhancing Direct Market Technical Assistance

- Vegetable Crop CSUE state-level teaching position
- FTE position without CSUE to provide on-farm safety training and outreach programming
- Expand the Colorado Building Farmers Program
- Support for on-going business development services for producers and farmers around cottage foods
- Statewide inventory of existing assets and infrastructure to support Colorado food systems
http://www.cofoodsystemsCouncil.org/cofsAC-Issue-Submission-Form.html
COFSAC 2014 Meeting Dates and Contact Information

📅 January 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 1:30-4:30pm
📅 May 8\textsuperscript{th}, 1:30-4:30pm
📅 September 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 1:30-4:30pm
📅 December 10\textsuperscript{th}, 1:30-4:30pm

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Questions?
Speaker Contacts

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Food Systems Toolbox

www.livewellcolorado.org/foodsystems

< Food and Agriculture Coalitions
Thank you!

Thank you for joining us! Please join us for next month’s webinar:

*Increasing Fresh, Healthy Options in Early Childhood Settings*