



COLORADO FOOD SYSTEMS  
ADVISORY COUNCIL

# ANNUAL REPORT

2022

Presented to:

Governor Jared Polis

Kate Greenberg, Commissioner of  
Agriculture

House Agriculture, Livestock, and  
Natural Resources Committee

Senate Agriculture and Natural  
Resources Committee



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[www.cofoodsystemscouncil.org](http://www.cofoodsystemscouncil.org)

# | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2022, the Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council (COFSAC) used the occasion of our sunset review to undergo a comprehensive evaluation and strategic planning process. This process clarified the unique contribution of COFSAC to the food systems landscape and charted a path forward for the council's effective engagement with state agencies, legislators, and other policy-driven food systems initiatives.



**MISSION: COFSAC PROVIDES COMMUNITY-INFORMED, RESEARCH-BASED POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO STATE LEADERS TO ADDRESS COMPLEX FOOD SYSTEMS CHALLENGES.**

**VISION: COFSAC IS A TRUSTED PARTNER COLLABORATING WITH POLICY MAKERS, THOUGHT LEADERS, AND COMMUNITIES TO CREATE A HEALTHFUL, PROSPEROUS, EQUITABLE, AND RESILIENT COLORADO-BASED FOOD SYSTEM.**

Our issue-based working groups also continued to provide research-based recommendations and facilitate cross-agency and cross-sectoral collaboration on issues of universal school meals, institutional food procurement, and conserving agricultural lands and water.

The council's most significant contribution in statewide engagement was our coordination and facilitation of four regional food systems convening in areas not currently served by an existing council as part of a broader initiative to engage regional perspectives in statewide food systems efforts and inform the design of the 2022 Colorado Food Summit. In addition to serving as lead organizers of the summit, along with the CSU Food Systems Institute and the Colorado Department of Agriculture, our council working groups organized and facilitated two sessions and our members served as speakers and facilitators in several others.



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## | PRIORITIES FOR 2023

### Strengthening Key Stakeholder Relationships

Our newly formed Strategic Relationships working group focuses on establishing clear, regular, and high-value channels of communication and consultation with lawmakers and state agencies.

### Supporting Universal School Meal Implementation

Findings and recommendations from the issue brief published by our Universal School Meals working group informed ballot proposition FF, Health School Meals for All, which was approved by the citizens of Colorado in November of 2022.

In 2023, we will engage our state agency and NGO partners to identify where our council's unique capacities can best support the successful implementation of this landmark initiative.

### Harmonizing Food Systems Planning

The council continues efforts to identify and develop strategic partnerships with other food-system aligned initiatives, councils, institutions, and organizations. Through this work, we have identified a number of completed, in-process, or soon-to-renew plans and 'blueprints' that touch on food systems issues of interest to the council.

In the coming year, COFSAC will collaborate with the CSU Food Systems Institute to identify ways in which we can support the inclusion of a food systems perspective in sector-specific efforts and support collaboration and mutually beneficial and reinforcing strategies.



# ANNUAL REPORT 2022

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

## APPOINTED COUNCIL MEMBERS

(AS OF 12/22)

### **Chair, Julie Moore, Aurora**

Rep. food wholesalers or food retailers, direct market retailer

### **Vice-Chair, Laurian Unnevehr, Grand Junction**

Rep. academic specialist in economic systems, agriculture, or health care

### **Ann Cooper, Grand Junction**

Rep. institutional procurement, educational setting

### **Caroline Bushnell, Boulder**

Rep. local, non-profit, community organization with farm-to-school program/local food system

### **Wendy Moschetti, Boulder**

Rep. statewide healthy food systems organization

### **Elizabeth Marron, Saguache**

Rep. expertise in rural community and regional development, or community and economic development programs

### **Marci Cochran, Pueblo**

Rep. of federal food assistance program

### **Derrick Hoffman, Greeley**

Rep. agricultural production, sells AG products to public schools/school districts

### **Tessa Hale, Boulder**

Rep. institutional procurement, healthcare setting

### **Tamaan Osbourne-Roberts, Denver**

Rep. nutrition expert, licensed physician, or registered dietitian

### **Michelle Bradford, Monte Vista**

Rep. recipient of supplemental nutrition assistance

### **Al Goodman, Aurora**

Rep. food wholesalers or food retailers

### **Nicholas Marquez, Aurora**

Rep. expertise in federal food nutrition service programs

### **Effie Rorke, Colorado Springs**

Rep. statewide anti-hunger organization

### **Michele Meyer, Steamboat Springs**

Rep. of food distributor or food hub

## STATE AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES

(AS OF 12/22)

### **Krista Garand**

Rep. Colorado Department of Education

### **Hollis Glenn**

Rep. Colorado Department of Agriculture

### **Joan Brucha**

Rep. Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment

### **Karla Maraccini**

Rep. Colorado Department of Human Services

### **Dawn Thilmany**

Rep. Colorado State University Extension

### **Greg Thomason**

Rep. Office of Economic Development and International Trade

## STAFF

The council received staff support from Dr. Lilian Brislen and Alex DeJoy, as Coordinator and Administrator, respectively. Both Dr. Brislen and Ms. DeJoy are CSU employees in the College of Agricultural Sciences. This year, the council also enlisted consulting support for key council activities, as discussed in the appropriate sections of the report.



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# | MEETINGS & EVENTS

The Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council held four quarterly meetings during the 2022 calendar year in February, May, August, and November. It hosted three of the meetings as online public meetings using Zoom, and held an in-person meeting on the CSU SPUR campus in August. The in-person meeting was immediately followed by COFSAC's Strategic Planning Retreat. All meeting dates/times were published via the COFSAC website: <https://cofoodsystemscouncil.org/>

Additionally, COFSAC's working groups held 25 public working group meetings in 2022: four on Strategic Planning & Internal Assessment, eight on Institutional Procurement, seven on Conserving Agricultural Land and Water, one on Federal & State Stimulus Dollars, and five on Universal School Meals. COFSAC also worked with Government Performance Solutions for six planning sessions to develop a new Strategic Plan.

# | MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

A number of seats were replaced, reappointed, or filled in 2022. A total of 5 seats became open due to resignation or expiration in October of 2022 and were reappointed on October 28th. One vacant seat for a representative of agriculture production that is a specialty crop producer remains as of December 2022.

## Members appointed to partial terms:

**Cydne "Michelle" Bradford**, of Monte Vista, Colorado, to serve as a recipient of supplemental nutrition assistance in a term ending October 31, 2025, occasioned by the passing of Tonatiuh Diaz

**Tamaan Osbourne-Roberts, MD**, of Denver, Colorado, to serve as a licensed physician or registered dietitian in a term ending October 31, 2025, occasioned by the resignation of Todd Dorfman of Boulder, Colorado

**Michele Meyer**, of Steamboat Springs, Colorado, to serve as a representative of a food distributor or food hub in a term ending October 31, 2025, occasioned by the resignation of Brian Coppom of Longmont, Colorado

## New members appointed to full terms ending October 31, 2025:

**Al Goodman**, of Aurora, Colorado, to serve as a representative of food wholesalers or food retailers

**Nicholas Marquez**, of Aurora, Colorado, to serve as a representative with expertise in federal food nutrition service programs

## Members who were renewed to full terms ending October 31, 2025:

**Effie Rorke**, of Colorado Springs, Colorado, to serve as a representative of a statewide anti-hunger organization

**Michele Meyer**, of Steamboat Springs, Colorado, to serve as a representative of a food distributor or food hub

# | AREAS OF FOCUS FOR 2022

While the Institutional Procurement, Universal School Meals, and Conserving Agricultural Lands and Water working groups continued ongoing research and engagement efforts, the council committed to making a comprehensive strategic planning effort the focus of our efforts for the year at the first quarterly meeting of 2022. Additionally, COFSAC underwent sunset review with the Department of Regulatory Agencies, requiring significant administrative time and input from the council.

## Strategic Planning

With the support of a consulting team from Government Performance Solutions, we underwent an inclusive, comprehensive process of engaging the council, partners, state thought



leaders, policy councils, and other stakeholders to identify challenges and opportunities. Insights gathered through that process allowed us to craft a refined vision and a set of high-priority efforts that establish COFSAC as a force for food system transformation in our state and region.

**MISSION:** COFSAC provides community-informed, research-based policy recommendations to state leaders to address complex food systems challenges.

**VISION:** COFSAC is a trusted partner collaborating with policy makers, thought leaders, and communities to create a healthful, prosperous, equitable, and resilient Colorado-based food system.

This process initiated renewed energy and strategic action on the part of the council. We retained two topical areas of focus from previous work (Institutional Procurement and Conserving Agricultural Lands and Water), initiated two internal/administrative working groups (Strategic Relationships and Communications), identified other topic areas to monitor, and developed consulting or supportive relationships with other councils and initiatives.

# UNIVERSAL SCHOOL MEALS

## Focus and Rationale

The importance of school meals as a source of nutritional security for children and their families has never been clearer. During the months of the pandemic, one in ten Colorado households with children reported that in the past week they did not have enough food to eat in their homes, up from pre-pandemic levels of 7%. When schools

<sup>1</sup> Video available [here](#), and on the resource page of our [Council website](#).

shutdown for the pandemic, household food insecurity skyrocketed. The temporary changes and increased funding to school food programs provided the opportunity to observe the positive impacts of providing universal school meals to Colorado children.

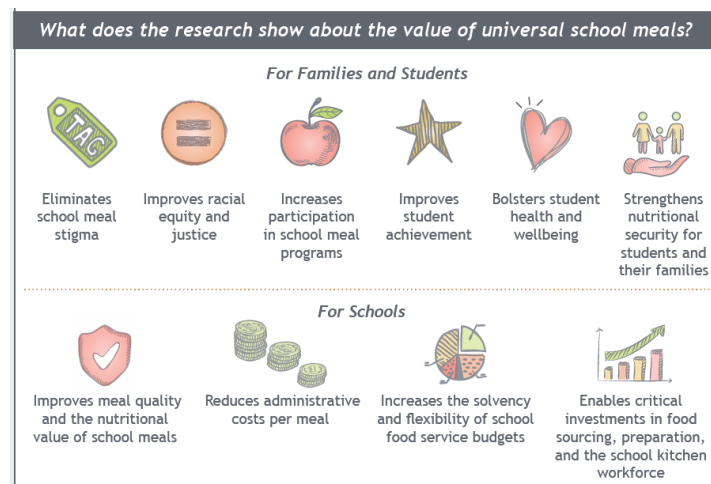


Figure 1: The value of Universal School Meals

## Research and Engagement

The research and outreach of the Universal School Meals (USM) working group were of great relevance to state policy in 2022. Recommendations from the USM were first integrated into proposed legislation HB22-087.<sup>1</sup> When efforts to pass that bill were not successful, Hunger Free Colorado and partners in the Healthy School Meals for All Coalition put forward ballot proposition FF, which would establish universal school meals, as well as robust support for local purchasing.

Recognizing that our USM research was highly relevant in the context of the ballot measure, we developed research-based outreach and education materials that we shared through council member networks and social media. This included an infographic-based one-pager (see **Figure 1**) and a video based on findings of the working group issue brief that featured directly impacted stakeholders.

## Recommendations and Next Steps

As the primary recommendation of the USM working group has been realized, it is folding into the Institutional Procurement working group.



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This will concentrate energy on supporting the successful implementation of universal school meals, with particular attention paid to local procurement and distribution as economic drivers for our Colorado food system.

## | INSTITUTIONAL PROCUREMENT

### Focus and Rationale

Colorado institutions, including schools, universities, health systems, corrections, defense, childcare, senior care, and municipal facilities, spend millions of taxpayer dollars each year to purchase food. State-sponsored institutions (e.g., schools, universities, health systems, corrections, defense, childcare, senior care, and public facilities) are major food buyers, and in most cases their procurement practices are significantly impacted by state rules, regulations, and reporting requirements administered by state agencies. It is a significant missed opportunity in institutional spending when too many public dollars leave the state rather than staying and circulating in the Colorado economy. The Institutional Procurement working group is focused on identifying opportunities to increase institutional food purchases from Colorado producers using federal, state, and other public dollars.

### Research and Engagement

The Institutional Procurement working group provided key support for convening regional food systems by identifying host communities and recruiting attendees and then organizing three sessions in a dedicated “Colorado Food for Colorado Communities” track at the 2022 Colorado Food Summit (see below). Working group members identified session topics, recruited expert speakers and moderators, developed facilitation guides, and supported pre-summit planning meetings.

Building on its 2021 recommendations to continue researching and developing policy, the working group conducted a preliminary analysis of existing sources of public procurement data. Through direct

queries to state agency staff and a CORA request (as specifically requested by a state agency partner), the analysis identified critical gaps and inconsistencies across state agency tracking and reporting of local procurement.

### Recommendations and Next Steps

Findings from the 2022 baseline study inform a new study, beginning in spring of 2023, that will be a collaboration with the Department of Education, with support from Nourish Colorado and their new Regional Food Systems Partnership Program, to complete a baseline assessment of new local procurement reporting and make recommendations for next steps.

The long-term goal of this working group is to develop a robust, actionable, and streamlined plan to conduct regular analyses of local food procurement by public agencies. By creating a baseline assessment of current procurement activities, this ongoing study will allow stakeholders to identify mid- and long-term benchmarks, assess progress over time and location, and other analysis to support positive impacts and the equity of local procurement initiatives.

## | CONSERVING AGRICULTURAL LAND & WATER

### Focus and Rationale

This working group focuses on issues that impact and will continue to impact the intersection between Colorado’s diminishing water resources and keeping agricultural lands productive in Colorado. It requires COFSAC to gather input from diverse, representative organizations involved with these issues.

### Research and Engagement

The Conserving Agricultural Lands and Water working group led the organization of a cross-



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sector policy panel at the 2022 Colorado Food Summit. The panel brought together leadership from the Colorado Water Board, the Palmer Land Trust, an expert on water law and private equity, and former agricultural commissioner John Stulp. They engaged in a dynamic and informative conversation that set the stage for future working group efforts to serve as cross-sectoral conveners that bring a food-systems lens to ongoing land and water conservation efforts. As part of the strategic planning initiative, members of the working group conducted extensive research to identify existing and ongoing initiatives and organizations, followed by generating a plan to build relationships and explore partnerships. The working group also conducted outreach to multiple beginning farmer programs across the state and within CSU to understand current programming and with an eye towards supporting future integration and innovation with land and water conservation efforts.

### Recommendations and Next Steps

The working groups plans to conduct outreach to potential partners to assess needs and opportunities in the space, and from there it can identify where COFSAC can best serve as a thought partner, convener, or provider of other forms of support for timely initiatives. Specifically, we anticipate and will explore the need to identify points of commonality and potential collaboration across ongoing planning and blueprint efforts, as discussed further in the 2023 priority area section of this report.

## | ADMINISTRATION

Significant effort was dedicated to reorganizing and updating the council's internal administrative procedures and external communications in 2022. This included improving administrative procedures, such as the provision of quarterly council budget updates, and redesigning the website and resource database, which resulted in improved transparency and public engagement with council activities.

On a broader scale, in addition to completing a strategic planning process, the council also

completed an internal equity assessment and capacity building process, which began in 2021, culminating in an equity coaching and assessment process with Leanne Allman of Embodied Contributions.

Informed by the internal assessment, the council and staff worked with the Governor's office to revise the announcement, recruitment, and nomination protocol for open council seats in order to increase the transparency, equity, and diversity of council seat recruitment. This has resulted in greater geographic and demographic diversity of council representation. Through this revised process, council recruited, nominated, and onboarded seven new members from December 2021 to August of 2022 and negotiated the reappointment of an additional seven. (For reference, there are 22 council seats in total.) The significant rebuilding of council membership was supported by the revised appointment process.

To support broader and deeper insight into state food systems issues, the council requested quarterly updates from our state agency representatives on food system-related policies, programs, and opportunities as part of regular business in 2022. These reports are included in written minutes and constitute the first comprehensive cross-agency compilation of food systems efforts. Written versions of these updates will be shared in future council communications efforts.

Finally, the council and staff worked with the Department of Regulatory Agencies to complete the required reporting for the sunset review in 2022. In addition to providing documentation on council membership, finances, and activities, we were asked to solicit council member feedback on the value and relevance of COFSAC and whether they thought the council should continue. The two direct quotes from council members below reflect the council's consensus that COFSAC is a valuable resource to our state's food systems leaders. Headed into the final chapter of sunset review in the 2023 legislative session, we continue to see a distinct need for a cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder and multi-institution council that can provide a balanced perspective on key challenges and opportunities facing the state.





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# | COLLABORATIONS

*"YES! I truly believe that the work we have been doing is making a difference. The Universal Meals working group and the White Paper that we published with its Executive Summary have been invaluable to those supporting Healthy School Meals for All."*

**- Ann Cooper, Chef Ann Foundation**

*"I believe COFSAC should be continued. This is a trusted group of subject matter experts who can provide recommendations, advice, and input regarding all things 'food systems' in Colorado. No one entity captures the depth and breadth of this collaborative group for the benefit of all Coloradans."*

**- Joan Brucha, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment**

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Per its enabling legislation, one of the council's key duties is collaborating with local, regional, and state efforts to support Colorado's food system. To that end, the Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council and its members supported the following efforts in 2022.

## **Colorado Food Summit**

The council served as one of three lead organizers, along with the CSU Food Systems Institute and the Colorado Department of Agriculture, of the 2022 Colorado Food Summit, held on December 8th. The summit hosted 480 registered participants from across the state and our food system.

The summit also welcomed 40 young food systems leaders to the Colorado Department of Agriculture-sponsored Youth Summit. Hosted by state FFA officers, the diverse participants included students from the Campo School



District (total enrollment of 46 K-12 students) and youth from Spirit of the Sun (an indigenous-led agroecology initiative). The opening session was also livestreamed<sup>2</sup> to dozens of classrooms across the state.



Council Chair Julie Moore was an invaluable contributor to the organizing committee, and COFSAC staff provided key support to the process. Additionally, COFSAC working groups led the organization and facilitation of two sessions during the day (discussed above), and council members also participated on panel discussions, moderated sessions, and contributed to the all-summit sessions. Events of this day were important steps in bringing together diverse voices and perspectives from across the food system and laying a foundation for future collaboration.

### Community Engagement Process

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

Serving in their capacity as subject matter experts and directly impacted stakeholders, community members contribute to the working groups' efforts by actively participating in group meetings, assisting in the development and revision of issue briefs, and soliciting feedback from their broader networks, as appropriate.

The following organizations and agencies provided invaluable support to the working groups in 2022:

**Institutional Procurement:** City-County of Denver, University of Colorado-Colorado Springs, Kitchen Sync Solutions, Weld County School District, Colorado Department of Agriculture, Colorado Department of Education, Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment, Chef Ann Foundation, Nourish Colorado, Rocky Mountain Farmers Union

**Agricultural Lands and Water:** Roenbaugh Schwalb Legal

**Universal School Meals:** Chef Ann Foundation, Boulder Valley School District, Mesa County School District, Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger, Hunger Free Colorado, Colorado Department of Education, Colorado Department of Public Health, Colorado Department of Human Services, Michele Ames Consulting

CSU Extension has a dedicated seat on COFSAC, partly to assure that the work of the council connects with the campus, county-based offices, and issue teams that complement the mission of COFSAC. This has opened new lines of communication in the CSU Extension organization, both directly with COFSAC and with the state agencies and broader partners that were tapped to help with working groups during 2022.

COFSAC continues to deepen its collaboration with state agencies in support of our mission of serving as a trusted thought partner. As examples, the COFSAC staff director was called on for a number of consultative roles, including serving on hiring committees for new food systems-related hires and providing recommendations for data collection and analysis.

<sup>2</sup>The recording of this livestream is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cH3RCLMtLfo>



## Local Coalition and Partner Engagement

As discussed in the 2021 annual report, COFSAC was a lead organizer, along with the CSU Food Systems Institute and the Colorado Department of Agriculture, of the 2022 Colorado Food Summit. As part of the engagement and planning process for the summit, the organizing committee engaged 12 local food policy councils and coalitions across the state to provide direct input into the content and design of the summit. Those councils chose to organize pre-summit regional food system convenings in the fall of 2021 and spring of 2022.

COFSAC organized the convenings for regions not served by existing councils (Boulder County, Larimer County, Northeast Colorado, and Southeast Colorado). They were well-attended and identified key areas of challenge and opportunity specific to those regions. (See a visual representation of the outcome of the Lamar convening **Figure 2**. Similar graphics were made for all convenings and then displayed at the Food Summit.) To view a gallery of all of the regional graphics, visit the [virtual gallery here](#).

Through the summit, relationships formed between COFSAC leadership and staff from regional food policy councils (who collectively formed the organizing committee), establishing a strong foundation for future communication and collaboration.



Figure 2: Visual representation of the Lamar convening



# | PRIORITY AREAS FOR 2023

The council moves into 2023 with a renewed sense of purpose and focus, as well as clear priorities and strategies for realizing our mission and vision. Enacting the priorities and strategies developed through both the sunset review and strategic planning processes, the Council is pursuing the following initiatives:

## **Strengthening Key Stakeholder Relationships**

The Stakeholder Relationships working group is focused on establishing clear, regular, and high-value channels of communication and consultation with our principal stakeholders: lawmakers and state agencies.

## **Supporting Universal School Meal Implementation**

We will engage with our state agency and NGO partners to identify where our council's unique capacities can best support the successful implementation of the newly instituted Healthy School Meals For All (Prop FF) initiative.

## **Harmonizing Food Systems Planning**

The council continues efforts to identify and develop strategic partnerships with other food-system aligned initiatives, councils, institutions, and organizations. Through that work, we have identified a number of completed, in-process, or soon-to-renew plans and 'blueprints' that touch on food systems issues of interest to the council. For example, the Colorado Water Plan will be out for public comment, and leading nutrition security and anti-hunger organizations will embark on community fact finding and plan renewal. In the coming year, COFSAC will collaborate with the CSU Food Systems Institute to identify ways in which we can support the inclusion of a food systems perspective in sector-specific efforts, while also supporting collaboration and mutually beneficial and reinforcing strategies.



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