



# Colorado State University

## PhD and MS Research Assistantships in areas of Economics of Food Systems available at Colorado State University

**Areas of Study:** \*Food security, diet, and health outcomes of at-risk populations  
\*Economic analysis of alcoholic beverage industry and related marketing  
\*Economic effects of specialty certification programs in U.S. Agriculture  
\*Economics at the nexus of Food Energy Water system.

**Deadlines:** Application deadline is February 15, 2020, start date is August 2020.

**Apply online:** <https://gradadmissions.colostate.edu/apply/>

**Contact:** Chris Goemans, Chair of the Graduate Program  
(970) 491-7261  
[chris.goemans@colostate.edu](mailto:chris.goemans@colostate.edu)

The Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics (DARE) at Colorado State University (CSU) has openings for at least 3 PhD/MS students in different specialty areas within the broad umbrella of the economics of food systems. Specifically, we are recruiting students interested in supporting the following new/ongoing research areas:

### **Food security, diet, and health outcomes of at-risk populations**

Certain households are more vulnerable when it comes to managing their diet. As such, common public welfare programs may not provide sufficient support. We are looking for a graduate student to examine how food security impacts at-risk populations such as the elderly, households with children, and immigrant households. In addition, this work will evaluate how this affects relation health and diet outcomes. We anticipate funding this work with current and future grant awards. The research will involve managing and analyzing extensive household data sets.

*Main supervisors: Dr. Berning, Dr. Bonanno, Dr. Cleary*

### **Economic analysis of alcoholic beverage industry and related marketing**

Alcoholic beverage industries have been experiencing tremendous growth and transformation to their marketing channels. This is especially prevalent within the craft beer industry, which has grown at an exponential rate over the past decade. Graduate students in this field have the opportunity to examine a variety of issues such as: the impact of state and federal policies on alcohol sales and distribution; changing consumer preferences, market structure and marketing tactics; ripple effects through the supply chain and economic development. CSU is well-positioned to support such research with its newly established Field to Foam team; a multi-disciplinary collaboration working with industry leaders.

*Main supervisors: Dr. Berning, Dr. Costanigro*

### **Economic effects of specialty certification programs in U.S. Agriculture**

The recent rise of market-based social certification efforts designed to improve conditions for agricultural workers in the US has yielded new initiatives. We are looking for a graduate student to work closely with a team of inter-disciplinary researchers and industry stakeholders to

examine the impacts of two of these initiatives – the Equitable Food Initiative (EFI) and Fair Trade USA (FTUSA). The student will explore the comparative short and medium-run impacts of these programs on workers, growers, and rural communities. Part of this work will involve assisting with analyzing data from certified farms, designing a survey to be administered to farmworkers and farm operators, and organizing a workshop with stakeholders from EFI and FTUSA.

*Main supervisors: Dr. Berning, Dr. Hill.*

### **Economics at the nexus of Food-Energy-Water-Systems (InTERFEWS Graduate Program)**

The Interdisciplinary Training, Education and Research in Food-Energy-Water Systems (**InTERFEWS**) Program brings together PhD students from traditionally disparate disciplines to conduct research on key problems in the Food-Energy-Water nexus; focused on arid and water-scarce regions. Students in the in the Food System group will be able to apply and develop projects within the InTERFEWS program.

*Main supervisors: TBD*

Within each of these research areas, selected students will work closely with a team of faculty involved in applied research. The student will develop a skillset in the areas of applied policy analysis and micro econometric modeling. Additionally, the selected students may have the opportunity to perform both primary data collection as well as empirical analyses of secondary, restricted-access data. Direct interaction with diverse stakeholders will provide an opportunity to understand and evaluate the importance of applied research for effective policy recommendations. To learn more about the scope of our work, please visit:

<http://foodsystems.colostate.edu>.

The research team of supervising faculty for these positions include:

**Josh Berning**'s research interests include food and beverage marketing, how such marketing impacts consumer choices and their health outcomes, and the effects of related policy measures. Specific research topics include alcohol policy, nutrition labeling, and food marketing promotions. He also works with issues related to household food security. More recently he is involved in research on the US beer industry. He works with a variety of data including experiments, surveys and secondary data sets.

**Alessandro Bonanno**'s work uses applied micro-econometric models to address research questions at the intersection of empirical industrial organization; food marketing; economics of food retailing; and food, health, and policy. He studies how consumer demand differs across products, "health content" and consumer types, and how agents in food systems can strategically use quality to compete with one another. He also investigates policy-relevant aspects of traditional and non-traditional food systems (retailers / food distribution channels), and their effects on different outcomes (food security, obesity, etc...).

**Rebecca Cleary**'s research interests include food and health policy and food marketing. She is currently investigating food access issues, healthy food acquisitions among at-risk populations, and regional food systems. She also studies the food-purchasing behavior of households participating in food-assistance programs, and how these programs may improve their dietary quality.

[Marco Costanigro](#)'s research agenda encompasses multiple aspects of the economics of information in food markets; more specifically, how information is transferred from producers to consumers, and its effects on consumer behavior. His most prominent work relates to the study of reputation effects of brands and geographical indications, and the marketing/policy implications of food labeling. His research couples experimental methods and advanced econometric analysis while establishing a good reason to go wine or beer tasting.

[Alexandra Hill](#)'s research interests include agricultural labor, economic productivity, agricultural business management, and applied industrial organization. Specific research topics include the productivity effects of compensation policies, quality determinants in the fresh fruit industry, peer effects among agricultural workers, and understanding the effects of specialty certifications on producers and farmworkers.

[Becca Jablonski](#)'s research focuses on understanding processes of rural and regional development, with an emphasis on identifying strategies to support entrepreneurship, improve agribusiness performance and enhance regional food systems. She is particularly interested in assessing the impacts of food system initiatives and strengthened rural-urban linkages to farmers, supply chain participants, and rural/regional economies. Dr. Jablonski is a co-leader of CSU's Extension Food System Team.

[Dawn Thilmany McFadden](#) specializes in analyzing markets and consumer behavior surrounding local, organic and other value-added food market segments. She holds or has held leadership positions with the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association, the Western Agricultural Economics Association, several USDA regional research committees, and has served as a Farm Foundation Fellow. Her current projects include leading the CSU Extension Food Systems team, Colorado Building Farmers programs, Colorado MarketMaker in partnership with the Colorado Department of Agriculture and the Colorado Farmers Market Working group.

### **Requirements**

Strong candidates will possess an innate curiosity and a passion for studying the economics of food systems. Formal training in undergraduate / MS level quantitative methods (including econometrics) and microeconomics, and a demonstrated facility with mathematics and/or quantitative methods is preferred. However, strong candidates from other disciplinary backgrounds will be considered. Previous research experience, excellent written and oral communication, organizational skills, ability to work independently, and experience in any segment of the food system are desirable.

### **Graduate Assistantship**

- 2-4 (MS-PhD) years of a competitive stipend, commensurate with the student's experience and engagement in research
- 2-4 (MS-PhD) years of full tuition support
- Full medical insurance
- Potential for summer salary and travel funds to cover costs for academic conferences.

The student will be responsible for required graduate fees. CSU is an EO/EA/AA employer and conducts background checks on all final candidates.

## **DARE Graduate Program and CSU**

DARE centers its research, teaching and outreach activities in defined areas of excellence: agricultural education, agribusiness management and food systems, the economics of water, land, energy and environment, and agricultural, food and resource policy. We are dedicated to, and appreciated for, engaging stakeholders in high-quality disciplinary and interdisciplinary research, as well as the ability to effectively communicate findings to the public and peers. We believe excellence in teaching and mentoring students is created with thoughtful and innovative curricular design, emphasizing experiential learning where appropriate and fostering student achievement.

We offer rigorous coursework, coupled with training in applied research and an emphasis on close collaboration between faculty and students. Most of our students are directly involved in grant-funded research and projects derived from cooperation with government agencies and industry stakeholders. Specific information about the program can be found at:

<http://dare.agsci.colostate.edu/graduate/graduate-programs/>.

Colorado State University is located in Fort Collins, Colorado, approximately 65 miles North of Denver. Fort Collins is at the base of the Rocky Mountain foothills, with ample opportunity for outdoor recreation.

## Featured Current Students

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**Nathan Palardy, Ph. D.**

His research interests include food policy, producer decision making and applied industrial organization. Specific research topics include assessing the policy effects of expanding alcohol retail distribution on beer producers and spatial competition among firms within the alcohol retail sector.

Since moving to Colorado, Nathan has been engaged with the state's robust brewing industry. He helped facilitate the Liquid Arts Research Forum, which brought together academics and industry personnel to promote collaborative research. Recently, he conducted a survey of Colorado breweries on how a recent law permitting the sale of full-strength beer in grocery and convenience stores was affecting their businesses.

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**Caroline Norris, MS**

"Deciding to pursue my Master's degree in DARE has been one of the best decisions I have made. The faculty and students in this department are brilliant, kind, and intentional. The department fosters an environment that encourages students to engage with their own personal interests, while also providing necessary guidance. On top of the wonderful environment, the course work is rigorous, and I am confident that I will be graduating this spring with a myriad of new skills. For my master's thesis, I am investigating if cultural differences in food preferences leads to higher food insecurity among US immigrants compared to their native counterparts. This research project has served as a rich learning experience and I am thankful for it."

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**Sachintha Mendis, Ph.D.**

My research interests are food systems and food policy with an emphasis on consumer behavior, food demand, and consumer health outcomes. When choosing a program to pursue my PhD studies, the three main features I paid attention to were: program content and faculty; research opportunities; and study/work environment. The knowledge I have gained through course work, seminars, discipline-related lab meetings, and interdisciplinary work is giving me a strong foundation to become a budding economist. I have had the opportunity to be a research assistant for a well-structured project (Economic impacts of Farm to School Programs) under the supervision of expert faculties which has enabled me to improve my applied research skills and thought process, as well as organization and presentation skills, which I'm very thankful for. Additionally, there is a healthy and motivating study/work environment in the department: the faculty members are kind, approachable, and they mentor you closely. Also, knowledge sharing among graduate students is encouraged.