Food Systems Stakeholders Across Colorado

AS COLORADO'S LAND-GRANT UNIVERSITY, COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY MUST BE RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS, THE STATE'S VARIED FOOD industry, and consumers who are increasingly interested in where their food comes from and how it was produced. One of the ways in which CSU addresses issues raised by these groups and many others is by deploying the expertise of CSU's food systems faculty members, a group that includes a number of faculty members from departments within the College of Agricultural Sciences as well as from some of the University's other colleges. The food systems team also works closely with several federal (USDA, FDA) and state agencies (including the Colorado departments of Agriculture and Public Health) in collaboration with CSU Extension and county agents.

"Watching the food systems research team evolve alongside CSU Extension's food systems team is exciting," said Dawn Thilmany, a professor in CSU's Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics. "The land-grant mission is well aligned with this team's commitment to research issues identified by our stakeholders through outreach and engagement, completing relevant research, and then translating it back through Extension, as well as in the classroom and via experiential learning."

"One reason for our team's successes to date is our broad collaborations – not just across the Fort Collins campus, but inclusive of the Agricultural Experiment Station Research Centers, Extension, industry, commodity groups, nonprofit organizations, and all levels of government," said Becca Jablonski, an assistant professor in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics. "Through meaningful engagement in the field, we can better understand research needs and draw upon our interdisciplinary colleagues to address relevant and timely issues and work to support our stakeholders throughout the state and beyond."

Many of these projects bring CSU faculty members and expertise directly to communities through workshops, panels, and community forums. In addition to engaging directly with stakeholders, numerous academic and industry-focused articles have also been published as part of this food systems research. Meagan Schipanski, an assistant professor in the Department of Soil and Crop Sciences, published "Realizing Resilient Food Systems" in the journal *Bioscience,* a study that presented a set of strategies to address these complex challenges of producing food for a growing global population, while reducing environmental impacts and increasing resilience in the face of climate change.

THE CSU TEAM HAS SEVERAL PROJECTS UNDERWAY:

- Consumer research on the product attributes (cultivars, nutritional content, taste), certification programs, direct-to-consumer marketing strategies, and labeling choices that may help Colorado farms and food businesses to secure premium prices and loyal customers
- Investigation of the economic viability of farms participating in local and regional food systems, complemented by a market channel assessment tool that enables farmers to more easily evaluate their markets
- Translating research to support the Colorado Building Farmers program, designed to help new farmers and ranchers explore farming as a business and enhance their business management, production, and marketing skills
- Examining nutrition and physical activity behaviors and environments in early childhood through the Health Behavior Laboratory
- Conducting the first national evaluation of Farm to School Programs, which recently received a nearly $500,000 grant from USDA
- Research examining the relationship between food systems-led development strategies and rural wealth creation
- The Colorado Blueprint Project is fostering a discussion about the role and vision for food and agricultural programming at CSU and many partner organizations
- A USDA-supported toolkit that helps communities reliably evaluate the economic impact of investing in local and regional food systems

For more information on the food systems team and their work, visit foodsystems.colostate.edu.