



FOOD SYSTEMS INSTITUTE
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

Colorado blue corn tostada prepared for the CO Food Summit by Bin707 featuring products grown and raised on CO's West Slope.

2022

ANNUAL REPORT

The **Food Systems Institute (FSI) at Colorado State University (CSU)** was approved with unanimous support by Faculty Council in the spring of 2022, establishing it as a CIOU (Centers, Institutes, and Other Special Units). Building on years of successful research and engagement initiatives, including as part of the Catalyst for Innovative Partnership program, the FSI conducted a university-wide assessment of the food systems ecosystem at CSU upon its official launch. The assessment identified assets throughout the institution that, with coordinated effort, would propel CSU as a leader in food systems-related research, teaching, and engagement throughout not only Colorado but nationally and internationally. Accordingly, the FSI provides a formal structure upon which to build a robust program of engaged research and experiential learning for food systems researchers, professionals, and students by catalyzing efforts that span all CSU colleges and the Office of Engagement and Extension.

The activities covered in this annual report represent our inaugural year of connecting, learning, and building our Institute's foundation. As part of that process, we have identified and clarified our Institute's specific contributions to both the mission of CSU and the food systems research, engagement, and education sectors.

FSI's goal is to serve as a catalyst for change, creating a place where everyone with a stake in the future of food systems can join us in creating solutions based in science and practice. We work to achieve this ambitious goal in three important ways:

- We engage communities to identify ongoing challenges and stubborn problems. By working with them and using the resources of campus and Extension, we'll ensure that solutions will have immediate application and impact.
- We bring diverse voices to the table to tackle issues. In the process, we'll break down barriers between disciplines, partners, communities, and food system sectors to create holistic interventions and system-level outcomes.
- We engage students as we bring innovative approaches to transdisciplinary research, as well as new and novel sources of data. This will create cutting edge scholarship and problem solving while building new generations of food systems leaders and thinkers.

ENRICHING THE CSU COMMUNITY

INSTITUTE FACULTY LAUNCH

The FSI hosted a faculty-focused strategic visioning event in June 2022, with 36 participants from 14 departments. FSI presented its vision at the event and facilitated discussion to understand current incentives, barriers, and aspirations of food systems faculty, while generating new connections, insights, and relationships among interested faculty and eliciting buy-in for next steps. Participants were tapped as panelists for the campus event series and continue to provide valuable guidance and support for the Institute.





Institute Faculty Launch

STUDENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

In spring 2022, FSI conducted a university-wide needs assessment to map assets and opportunities across the institution for students interested in food systems-related professional development opportunities. This process resulted in numerous outputs, including lists of relevant clubs, courses, and faculty and students who self-identified as having a strong interest in food systems. We have leveraged these lists to promote FSI-sponsored events, including the 2022 CO Food Summit. The data generated from the needs assessment are also informing promotional materials for student recruitment. One overarching theme from the assessment was a desire to have more food systems-related events that bring students and faculty from across the university together. In response, we are launching an annual student engagement symposium this spring.

EVENT SERIES

FSI hosted an inaugural event series over the fall 2022 semester to engage on- and off-campus community members in timely and inspiring food systems exploration. The four-part series featured speaker panels with CSU faculty and graduate students, as well as nationally recognized, Colorado-based leaders, chefs, and artists. Attendance was strongest from students, indicating a demand for transdisciplinary programming of this kind.

FSI faculty and staff also contributed to a number of guest lectures and seminars, including the food systems and community development seminar series, SoGES seminar series, InTERFEWS courses, and One Health Institute Symposium.

AG AND FOOD MEDIA IN CONTEXT: TO WHICH WE BELONG



Thursday
October 20th

The Lyric Theater
1209 N College Ave
Fort Collins

3:30-4:30
Panel discussion

5:00-6:30
Film screening

FALL 2022

The first in a regular installment, our Ag and Food Media in Context panel will discuss the award-winning documentary *To Which We Belong*, a documentary about a community of farmers, ranchers, and scientists seeking ways to mitigate climate change while improving agricultural production

Our students and our communities often learn about agriculture and food system issues from popular media and film. Our panelists will provide reflections on the film, and perspectives on how to effectively engage with and evaluate agriculture and food media.

FREE EVENT
Please RSVP!
<https://forms.office.com/r/Xxa2EST8Aq>

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FSI Inaugural Event Series

CSU EXTENSION INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

During the summer of 2022, the FSI coordinated sessions and panel discussions for 48 interns from five colleges who were focused on agriculture, food systems, and natural resources. These sessions gave students a better sense of the breadth of food, agricultural, and natural resource issues across which CSU Extension and CSU researchers support stakeholders. Additionally, we designed these sessions so students could consider how their projects fit within bigger picture issues, such as climate change. Students reported that the meetings were useful in expanding their networks of students interested in similar topics and helped them consider how their more narrowly scoped efforts fit into systems-based challenges.

CSU'S RURAL INITIATIVE: INVESTING IN RURAL COLORADO

In June 2021, the CSU System Board of Governors voted to invest \$8.58 million over three years as expanded support for rural Colorado students and communities, making the FSI the co-lead of the



Thriving Economies/Food and Agriculture goal area. FSI co-Director Jablonski led the successful hiring of three regional specialists (Mountain, Western, and Southern Regions) and two statewide specialists. These new specialists are linked to campus via the FSI, and they are being supported by the FSI in developing plans of work that will result in evidence-based programming throughout the state.

CONTRIBUTING TO THE SPUR CAMPUS

The FSI worked to establish a presence at the SPUR campus in 2022, including directly supporting SPUR administration and events, bringing outside events to SPUR, and promoting the SPUR campus in program development with internal and external stakeholders. FSI Program Director Brislen served on the hiring committee for the CSU SPUR Food Innovation Kitchen Manager, including developing the position description, selecting candidates, and conducting interviews. The FSI's food systems and engagement expertise were specifically sought out to guide the creation, selection, and onboarding of this first-of-its-kind position. FSI also held COFSAC's in-person meetings at SPUR, bringing 22 statewide leaders to the Terra building for a full day retreat that included a tour of the facilities.

ENGAGING EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

STATEWIDE EFFORTS

Coordinating the Governor's Food Policy Council

The Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council (COFSAC) is a legislatively created and Governor-appointed council with 22 members, including representatives from five state agencies. CSU is awarded the funds to administer the Council. In 2022, the FSI took on the responsibility of providing staff and administrative support. To this end, Brislen contributed 25% of her effort to COFSAC, and FSI administrative

assistant DeJoy dedicated 50% of her time to Council administration.

With focused staff support from FSI, COFSAC underwent both a significant overhaul of operations, including a comprehensive strategic planning initiative, and successful completion of the formal process of a sunset review. This year, we dedicated significant effort to reorganizing and updating COFSAC's internal administrative procedures and external communications, which improved administrative procedures, such as providing quarterly Council budget updates, as well as a redesign of the website and resource database, which resulted

in improved transparency and public engagement with Council activities. COFSAC also completed an internal equity assessment and capacity building process, culminating in an equity coaching and assessment process with Leanne Allman of Embodied Contributions.

To support more effective dissemination of COFSAC efforts and research, FSI staff developed executive summaries for existing white papers, infographics, and videos geared

toward general audiences and encouraged working groups to develop sessions based on the Council's focus areas and research for the Colorado Food Summit. Notably, the Council's research and outreach for universal school meals informed the development of ballot measure Prop FF, which was approved by the citizens of Colorado in the November 22 vote.

To learn more about COFSAC'S 2022 activities, please see the Council's annual website: <https://cofoodsystemscouncil.org/>

2022 Colorado Food Summit

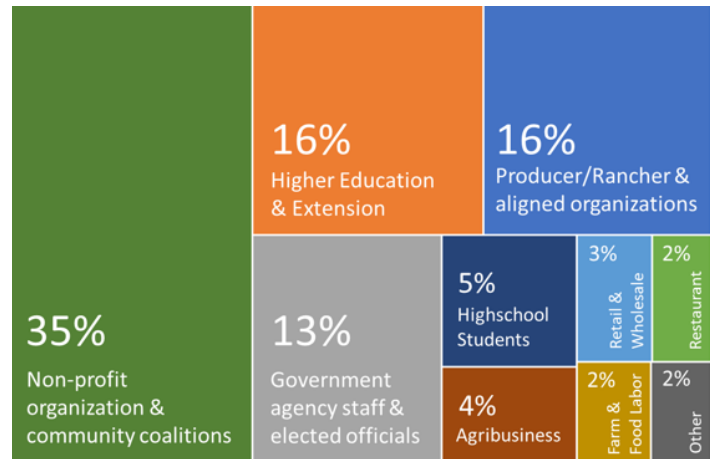
The FSI spearheaded the 2022 Colorado Food Summit with the support of the Colorado Department of Agriculture, the Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council, and 12 regional food policy councils and coalitions. The Summit hosted 480 participants from across the state and representing all parts of the food system, including 40 youth and FFA State Officers,



who took part in the CDA Youth Summit (a series of youth-led and focused sessions embedded within the Summit). We livestreamed the opening session of the Youth Summit to dozens of classrooms across the state. The content for the day was built from feedback from 12 FSI-facilitated regional convenings that took place across the state in the lead up to the statewide event.

FSI leadership secured more than \$160,000 from partners and sponsors to support the Summit. These funds allowed for an expansive equitable access initiative that included financial assistance (complementary registration, lodging, childcare, and other travel costs) for all 156 individuals who requested support, equivalent to 32% of attendees, as well as simultaneous translation and interpretation services. The day was an important step in bringing together diverse voices and perspectives, while also laying a foundation for future collaboration across our food system. Preliminary results from the Summit find that the majority of participants gained knowledge of research, programs, or policies on food system topics with which they had little or no prior familiarity (81% agreed or strongly agreed), and 78% of Youth Summit participants responded that participating in the Summit changed their perspective of the Colorado food

system. For more information, go to: coloradofoodsummit.com



2022 Colorado Food Summit Attendee Groups

STAR Soil Health Program and Expand the STAR Program Across Colorado and the West

Colorado’s state soil health program, the STAR Program (Saving Tomorrow’s Agricultural Resources), launched in 2022 as a partnership between the Colorado Department of Agriculture, Colorado State University, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and many other partners. FSI co-Director



2022 Colorado Food Summit



Carolan and FSI research scientist Hale are working with the program to better understand its theory of change, including exploring comparisons between the STAR rating system, STAR Plus, a peer-to-peer learning pilot, and a pay-for-performance pilot. They will use surveys, interviews, focus groups, and participant observation, as well as secondary data sources, to collect information about each of these programs. This work is supported by two related grant projects, including a U.S. Department of Agriculture National Resource Conservation Service grant for \$376,748, with an FSI sub-award of \$72,397, and a U.S. Department of Agriculture Partnerships for Climate Smart Commodities grant for \$25,000,000, with an FSI sub-award of \$632,438.

NATIONAL EFFORTS

LOCAL AND REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS RESPONSE TO COVID: RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

In 2022, Jablonski and Brislen served as action team research leaders on a U.S. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Marketing Service cooperative agreement investigating and developing tools and practices for fostering local and regional food system resilience. This project included development of a virtual data warehouse and a multimedia “Resilience Playbook.” Both resources are available to the public via the Local Food Economics website: localfoodeconomics.com

The one-year, \$599,000 project engaged three universities (CSU, University of Kentucky, and University of Maine), eight national NGO partners, and additional experts and consultants from across the country. In addition to research and tool development, the project delivered well-attended monthly webinars (recordings are available on the project website), two sessions at the USDA Agricultural Outlook Forum, and sessions at the USDA’s Direct Food Marketing Summit and other professional conferences and presentations.

USDA PROPOSAL: NW MTN REGIONAL FOOD BUSINESS CENTER

A team led by Thilmany, with Brislen and Jablonski as co-PIs, submitted a proposal to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Agricultural Marketing Service to create an eight-state Regional Food Business Center. If funded, this five-year, \$50M award would establish a first-of-its-kind network for direct investment and technical assistance to grow farm and food business across the Northwest and Mountain regions.

If funded, The Center will develop and provide technical assistance to a network of eight states in the Northwest and Mountain regions to elevate the connections and capacity of a diverse and inclusive set of farm and food-based enterprises operating in regional food supply chains. The proposed Northwest Mountain Regional Center will coordinate within and across states to develop, refine, and deliver professional development and technical assistance programs investing in those participating enterprises that use programs to create new, refined, and innovative plans to build their capacity in their markets. The Center will target program delivery in areas of core need within our region, including enterprises focused on meat supply chains, food entrepreneurs seeking to scale up, farms leveraging opportunities aligned with emerging climate-resilient markets, and “right sized” infrastructure investments. As detailed in our state, theme, underserved community, and regional team scopes of work, the Center will integrate multiple forms of expertise relevant to the growth of regional economies and provide the contextual insight necessary to align the Center’s programming and investments to the specific needs and opportunities experienced by historically underserved and priority communities. The centralized coordination and co-learning of the proposed Center will facilitate mid- and long-term collaborative investments in diverse expertise, networks, and financial resources across the region.



Photo courtesy of the U.S. Department of Agriculture

OVERVIEW

At the Food Systems Institute, we're committed to solving intractable problems that shape the way individuals raise, exchange, and enjoy food. We know by continuing to improve our food systems, we'll help to create the sustainable planet, good jobs and healthy communities we all seek.

Whether we know it or not, food systems have an outsized impact on the quality of our lives and communities.

Food systems drive global economies and individual jobs. They affect ecosystems. They influence and change the character of communities and help to create culture and heritage. They bear directly on the health and wellness of our individual and collective lives. And they must evolve to meet the challenges of the future.

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- We'll bring diverse voices to the table to tackle issues. In the process, we'll break down barriers between disciplines, partners, communities, and food system sectors to create holistic interventions and system-level outcomes.
- We'll engage students as we bring to bear innovative approaches to transdisciplinary research as well as new and novel sources of data. This will create cutting edge scholarship and problem solving while building new generations of food systems leaders and thinkers.

THE TEAM



Michael Carolan and Becca Jablonski
co-Directors



Lilian Brislen
Program Director



Alex DeJoy
Administrative Assistant



James Hale and Allie Bauman
Research Scientists



Libby Christensen
CSU Extension Statewide Food and Agriculture Specialist

SAVE THE DATES

April 21:

Opportunities to collaborate and support CO "farm to..." procurement efforts

April 26:

Food Systems Collaborations: 1st Annual Food Systems Institute Graduate Student Symposium

December 7-8:

2023 Colorado Food Summit



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<https://food.colostate.edu/>

Creating more sustainable and equitable communities by solving food systems challenges