

LOCAL FOOD & AGRICULTURE



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INTRODUCTION

The Boulder County Commissioners (BOCC) have identified the preservation and improved viability of county agricultural lands as a high priority. Agricultural lands not only preserve the rural character and quality of life that are important to Boulder County residents, but local food markets are critical economic drivers for the county. In addition, supporting sustainable farming practices and local agriculture is a critical step in reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, which ultimately makes for a healthier place to live.

The BOCC promote a locally based food and agricultural system that advances Boulder County's economic, environmental and social well-being through research, education and public policy recommendations. The BOCC seek to improve the social well-being, including health and nutrition, of all Boulder County residents, and to improve the economic viability of current and future agricultural and local food-related industry within the county, while protecting and restoring the environment.

Boulder County also encourages and supports practices and food markets that improve the availability and accessibility of local, healthy and safe foods. Moreover, Boulder County promotes sustainable agricultural practices on publicly owned lands and encourages them on private lands. Sustainable practices include production methods that:

- are healthy and safe
- have low environmental impact
- are respectful to workers
- are humane to animals
- provide profitable agriculture opportunities to farmers
- support farming communities

The county also participates in regional agricultural efforts and implements recommendations at a local level to the extent appropriate and possible. Ultimately, Boulder County encourages the preservation and sustainable use of agricultural lands for their contribution to cultural, environmental and economic diversity.



LOCAL FOOD & AGRICULTURE GOAL

Ensure a sustainable, local, safe and healthy food supply that is accessible to all and supported by our community

INTERNAL

TARGET 1

Prevent food-borne illness

SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

STRATEGY 1

Prevent food-borne illnesses by continuing to partner with retail food establishments to implement Active Managerial Control Practices and become Partners in Food Safety

STRATEGY 2

Conduct inspections at all retail food establishments based on risk

STRATEGY 3

Educate at least 200 workers on 5 key food borne illness risk factors

STRATEGY 4

Educate consumers on four key food safety practices (Clean, Cook, Separate, Chill)

STRATEGY 5

Continue to implement Food and Drug Administration's Voluntary National Retail Food Program Standards

INTERNAL

TARGET 2

Write an operating plan for each agricultural property owned by the county

SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

STRATEGY 1

Meet annually with tenants to identify conservation goals and share sustainable practices

STRATEGY 2

Ensure that we are meeting the goals of the operating plan

INTERNAL

TARGET 3

Support locally grown products and maximize the amount of food, fiber and forage that gets used locally

SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

STRATEGY 1

Explore local markets with producers and buyers

STRATEGY 2

Work to nurture relationships among local growers, distributors and potential buyers for the purpose of supporting business relationships and initiatives

STRATEGY 3

Hire staff to explore the creation of a local Boulder County or regional label

STRATEGY 4

Invest in local food infrastructure, such as farmers markets, food processing facilities, food distribution channels

INTERNAL

TARGET 4

Prioritize opportunities for organic operations on public agriculture land and support expansion of certified organic production on public agriculture lands, with a goal of 20% of cropland certified organic or in transition by 2020 if market forces allow

SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

STRATEGY 1

Work with buyers and growers to identify organic markets

STRATEGY 2

Provide incentives to organic producers and support organic producers pursuing organic certification through rent reductions during the three-year transition period

INTERNAL

TARGET 5

Maintain and enhance agricultural infrastructure and use technologies that improve sustainability as well as promote long-term agricultural stewardship practices

SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

STRATEGY 1

Meet with tenants and local food growers to identify potential infrastructure needs (e.g. storage facilities) that are important to achieving local food production and sustainable farming practices

STRATEGY 2

Hold annual staff meetings to identify potential infrastructure projects

STRATEGY 3

Improve sustainability on Boulder County agricultural lands through the use of technology such as water-efficient irrigation systems, precision farming using GIS and GPS, data recorders for water usage, and soil moisture monitors

STRATEGY 4

Promote long-term agricultural stewardship practices that promote soil fertility, reduce erosion and conserve water

EXTERNAL

TARGET 6

Expand education and outreach on local food and agriculture

SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

STRATEGY 1

Provide virtual and actual tours of agricultural land

STRATEGY 2

Develop and implement a comprehensive social media plan

STRATEGY 3

Meet with school groups and develop a robust volunteer program on agricultural lands

Boulder County is committed to working with growers, researchers, crop consultants and other agencies to find the best strategies for local Agricultural Lands.

EXTERNAL

TARGET 7

Develop a suite of tools to support a thriving agricultural community on Boulder County open space and private lands

SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

STRATEGY 1

Identify and encourage a pool of qualified agricultural producers and maintain a strong agricultural community

STRATEGY 2

Coordinate farmer training through Colorado State University Extension

STRATEGY 3

Initiate succession planning program for farm operators

STRATEGY 4

Work with growers, researchers, crop consultants and other agencies to find the best strategies for agricultural practices, and hire staff to compile locally relevant information and practices

STRATEGY 5

Implement a Boulder County pollinator protection project that includes promoting dialog between farm operators and local beekeepers, participating in research projects to evaluate bee health, and developing dedicated pollinator habitat on open space agriculture properties

STRATEGY 6

Use information and research to develop and implement a Strategic Integrated Pest Management program

EXTERNAL

TARGET 8

Increase accessibility of local food for low-income populations

SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

STRATEGY 1

Promote access to agricultural land or local crops to groups not traditionally served by current market opportunities

STRATEGY 2

Look for opportunities to make plots of land available to low-income groups

STRATEGY 3

Allow access for charitable groups to produce food on open space

EXTERNAL

TARGET 9

Develop a program to evaluate the environmental impact of agricultural operations and mitigate these impacts

SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

STRATEGY 1

Use existing or new data to evaluate the carbon footprint of various crops and agricultural operations

STRATEGY 2

Work with local universities and other agencies to understand the carbon sequestration associated with perennial crops, such as grass, alfalfa, range land and orchards

STRATEGY 3

Work with the Boulder County Transportation Department to continue the current use of locally sourced biodiesel and work to incorporate local feedstock into the system

STRATEGY 4

Continue to support current local biodiesel programs and seek further opportunities to use local biodiesel in agricultural equipment

EXTERNAL

TARGET 10

Develop a long-term county- and community-based planning tool for local food and agriculture

SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

STRATEGY 1

Develop internal needs assessment and initiate an internal scoping process with staff

STRATEGY 2

Hold community stakeholder meetings and meet with local experts to help evaluate future agricultural needs

> For more information, please see Farmland.org/Programs/LocalFood and for a full list of strategies and descriptions of these strategies, please see BoulderCounty.org/OpenSpace

Boulder County is committed to exploring local markets with producers and buyers.

POLICY PRIORITIES

Boulder County Supports Requirement of Mandatory Labeling of Use of Genetically Engineered Organisms in Food Products

Consumers have the right to know what is in their food in order to make informed choices about whether or not to purchase genetically engineered food. Therefore, Boulder County supports state and/or federal legislation to require the mandatory labeling of food and food products derived from or containing genetically engineered organisms prior to sale to consumers.



Sustainability Success!



KEITH BATEMAN

Keith Bateman is proud to call himself a fifth generation Boulder County farmer. Keith's great-great grandfather homesteaded in Boulder County in 1859, and Keith's father farmed around Waneka Lake when Keith was a child. However, when Keith was 15 years old, his father sold all of the family's farm equipment and was preparing to move to Oklahoma in response to the increased development occurring in Boulder County.

In the end, Keith's family didn't move, and the next year Keith borrowed \$800 to buy a tractor and leased 40 acres of land to begin his own farming career. The old-timers thought he was crazy for going into farming at that time. Keith now farms on a number of properties across the county—many of which he leases from Boulder County Parks and Open Space (POS). Along with being the largest wheat producer in the county, Keith also raises barley, corn, alfalfa, grass hay, oats (for both grain and feed) and millet.

Keith says that farming is in his blood. "I grew up farming and it was the only thing I wanted to do." Keith's son, Cory, now farms with Keith, and Keith hopes that his grandchildren will become seventh generation farmers in Boulder County.

Sustainability Success!



MARK GUTTRIDGE

As a child, Mark Guttridge lived a typical country kid's life on his grandmother's six acres of land off of Hover Road. He played in the creeks and ditches; raised sheep, chickens, rabbits and vegetables for 4H to show at the Boulder County Fair; and participated in his family's self-sufficient lifestyle by preserving food. Yet like most children, Mark couldn't wait to move away from home, and he left to study Environmental Engineering at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. After travelling around the world, Mark returned to Colorado to get his Master's degree in Water Resource Engineering at the University of Colorado.

Mark and his wife, Kena, along with their two older daughters, moved back to his grandmother's property six years ago.

While Mark worked 40 hours a week as an environmental consultant, the family planted what turned out to be an oversized vegetable garden in an effort to live more sustainably on their property. After sharing the resulting abundance of vegetables with all of their friends and neighbors, Mark and Kena turned to the Niwot Market to help distribute the remaining produce. The following year, the Guttridges began selling at the Longmont Farmers' Market, and three years ago, they started leasing 18 acres that surround their farm from Boulder County Parks and Open Space (POS).

Mark categorizes the POS leasing program as "unique" in that it supports the creation of new farms and gives beginning farmers the chance to start and expand their farming operations. With the additional acreage from POS, Ollin Farms is now a growing venture for his family, which has grown to include two more daughters, and is further providing the local community with fresh vegetables that are available at the Longmont Farmers' Market, the seasonal farm stand at Ollin Farms, and through the sale of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares to individuals and families. While Mark has yet to quit his environmental consulting job, he does plan to "farm for the rest of my life or until I can't move."

TAKE ACTION

Locavore: *A person who endeavors to eat only locally produced food*
—New Oxford American Dictionary 2007 Word of the Year

HOW TO BE A BOULDER COUNTY LOCAVORE

The concept of eating local is an old idea that is suddenly very new again. Yet if you were to ask 10 different people what their definition of local food is, you likely will get 10 different responses. One person may think a food is local only if it was produced four miles from where he or she is standing, while another might think that anything grown or produced within 400 miles counts as local food. To assist you, we offer our guide on how to eat locally in Boulder County:

1. Live in the right place:

Thanks to the foresight of its leaders and the generosity of its citizens, Boulder County has permanently preserved nearly 25,000 acres of land suited for agricultural production.

2. Learn about the farming activities happening around you:

From small, quarter-acre vegetable farms to medium-sized cattle operations to large-scale wheat production, Boulder County produces a variety of foods for you to enjoy year-round.

3. Participate in the local food economy:

Join a CSA and shop at your local farmers' market. Buy your meat from a local producer. Ask your grocer to stock more local food products. Learn about the food loops happening in Boulder County. For example, did you know that all of the wheat grown in Boulder County is processed only 40 miles away and returns to Boulder County labeled as 240 different brands of flour?

4. Learn more about the people who farm and ranch in Boulder County:

When they're not in their fields, you can find them at the farmers' market or hanging out at their farm stands or attending the Boulder County Fair. Stop to say hello. Each summer, Boulder County Parks and Open Space (POS) offers a number of farm tours where you can meet the many farmers and ranchers who lease county properties and hear from them firsthand what it is like to be a Boulder County producer.

5. Grow and preserve your own food:

Plant basil in a window box, turn over a patch of grass for a small garden, or buy a few chickens for your north 40 (feet that is). Don't have the skills for growing and preserving all of that food? Talk to Boulder County's Colorado State University Extension office to learn about classes they offer in all things self-reliant.

6. Participate in Boulder County's "Food Day." Food Day is a national effort to promote local agriculture; to curb obesity by promoting a healthy and safe diet; and to address hunger and food deserts. Visit **FoodDayBoulderCounty.org** to learn more.

Now take the time to enjoy the food growing around you!