

5

**local food
& agriculture**



INTRODUCTION

Climate change and agricultural lands are directly linked. Agricultural lands contribute and are sensitive to a worsening climate, but they can also be a key part of the solution.

The agricultural lands of Boulder County are under increased pressures from climate change, including rising average temperatures, erratic weather patterns, and impacts to the hydrological cycle. These changes in environmental patterns can lead to grassland fires, loss of productivity,

soil degradation, and desertification. 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.

Boulder County promotes a locally based food and agricultural system that advances economic, environmental, and social well-being through the conservation of lands that would otherwise get developed. We also encourage and support food markets and practices that improve the availability and accessibility of local, healthy, and safe foods by participating in regional and state agricultural efforts.



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

COUNTY OPERATION STRATEGIES

Maintain and enhance viability and sustainability on Boulder County Parks & Open Space agricultural properties through management planning, infrastructure improvements, and stewardship practices

- Work with tenants to identify outcomes that address the long-term management and resilience of the property, including infrastructure needs (e.g., storage facilities, water improvements, etc.) that support sustainable farming and ranching operations.
- Identify potential infrastructure projects and create an operating plan for each agricultural property.
- Promote long-term agricultural stewardship and sustainability practices that enhance soil health and regeneration, reduce erosion, and conserve water. For example:
 - Incentivize water-efficient production systems.
 - Work with local universities, tenants, and other organizations to pilot carbon sequestration practices.
- Continue to promote dialog between farm operators and local beekeepers to evaluate bee health and identify opportunities for dedicated pollinator habitat on county agricultural properties.
- Continue implementing a strategic, integrated pest management program.

Support Boulder County’s farm and ranch economy

- Streamline and clarify local policies and regulations to reduce misconceptions by farmers and the public, and improve constraints on business growth.
- Maximize the amount of food, fiber, and forage that is available locally by investing in farm and ranch infrastructure, food processing facilities, and food distribution channels.
- Work to nurture relationships among local producers, distributors, and potential buyers for the purpose of supporting business relationships and initiatives.

Boulder County is committed to working with tenants, private landowners, educators, researchers, and other organizations to find the best strategies for local agricultural land stewardship.



COMMUNITY STRATEGIES

Develop a suite of resources for producers that supports the social, environmental, and economic viability of the agricultural community

- Determine where the Boulder County Land-Use Code can better serve the needs of the agricultural community to help producers optimize economic opportunities and support diverse business models.
- Foster practical education opportunities for beginning farmers, and encourage mentorship and training among multigenerational farmers and ranchers.
- Coordinate farmer trainings through Colorado State University (CSU) Extension and other educational outreach and technical support providers.
- Provide succession planning assistance for local farm and ranch business owners.
- Collaborate with private tenants, subject matter experts, and applicable organizations to explore best strategies for adaptive land stewardship practices that conserve agricultural lands while promoting a local, sustainable agricultural economy.

Support access to safe and healthy agricultural products produced on lands in Boulder County

- Prevent foodborne illnesses by continuing to partner with retail food establishments, to encourage them to implement Active Managerial Control Practices and to become Partners for Food Safety.
- Educate at least 200 food safety workers on five key foodborne illness risk factors per year.
- Explore opportunities to assist local producers in complying with the FSMA and develop partnerships with CSU to provide education for compliance assistance.
- Continue to implement the Food and Drug Administration’s voluntary national retail food program standards and the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) for produce growers and processors.

COMMUNITY STRATEGIES

Prioritize opportunities for organic operations and support expansion of soil health and regenerative agriculture principles on county agriculture lands

- Provide incentives to county agricultural tenants pursuing organic certification through rent reductions during the three-year transition period to organic production, as well as pay certification fees for the initial year following the transition.
- Share local and regional in-person and self-guided education opportunities on organic production and regenerative agriculture strategies through local information distribution channels.
- Provide incentives, such as the Boulder County Food and Agriculture Fund, to help producers adopt more soil health and regenerative agriculture principles, and build a more sustainable food system.
- Leverage nature-based solutions and foster collaboration among local municipalities to accelerate land restoration, biodiversity, carbon sequestration, and water retention on agricultural lands.
- Participate in regional agriculture efforts to help implement appropriate recommendations at the local level. One such effort is Restore Colorado, a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)-funded public-private collaboration to improve resilience and tackle climate change by growing good food in healthy soil on local farms and ranches.

Increase accessibility of local food for historically and currently marginalized communities

- Support donations of locally grown food when feasible.
- Explore local markets with producers and buyers.
- Support charitable groups that are producing and creating access to food for historically and currently marginalized communities.
- Invest in programs such as Double Up Food Bucks (DUFb) that make low-cost, locally grown fruits and vegetables available to historically and currently marginalized communities.



SUCCESSES IN IMPROVING NUTRITION SECURITY

Established in 2017, the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) provides access to fresh produce to low-income pregnant and postpartum mothers, families, and children. Boulder County WIC families can receive coupons at the Boulder or Longmont farmers' markets or receive a home delivery of fresh produce.

Participants have said, "This is by far the most helpful of all the government programs from which we receive support," and "I don't know if we'd have the opportunity to be involved in a local food system without this program."

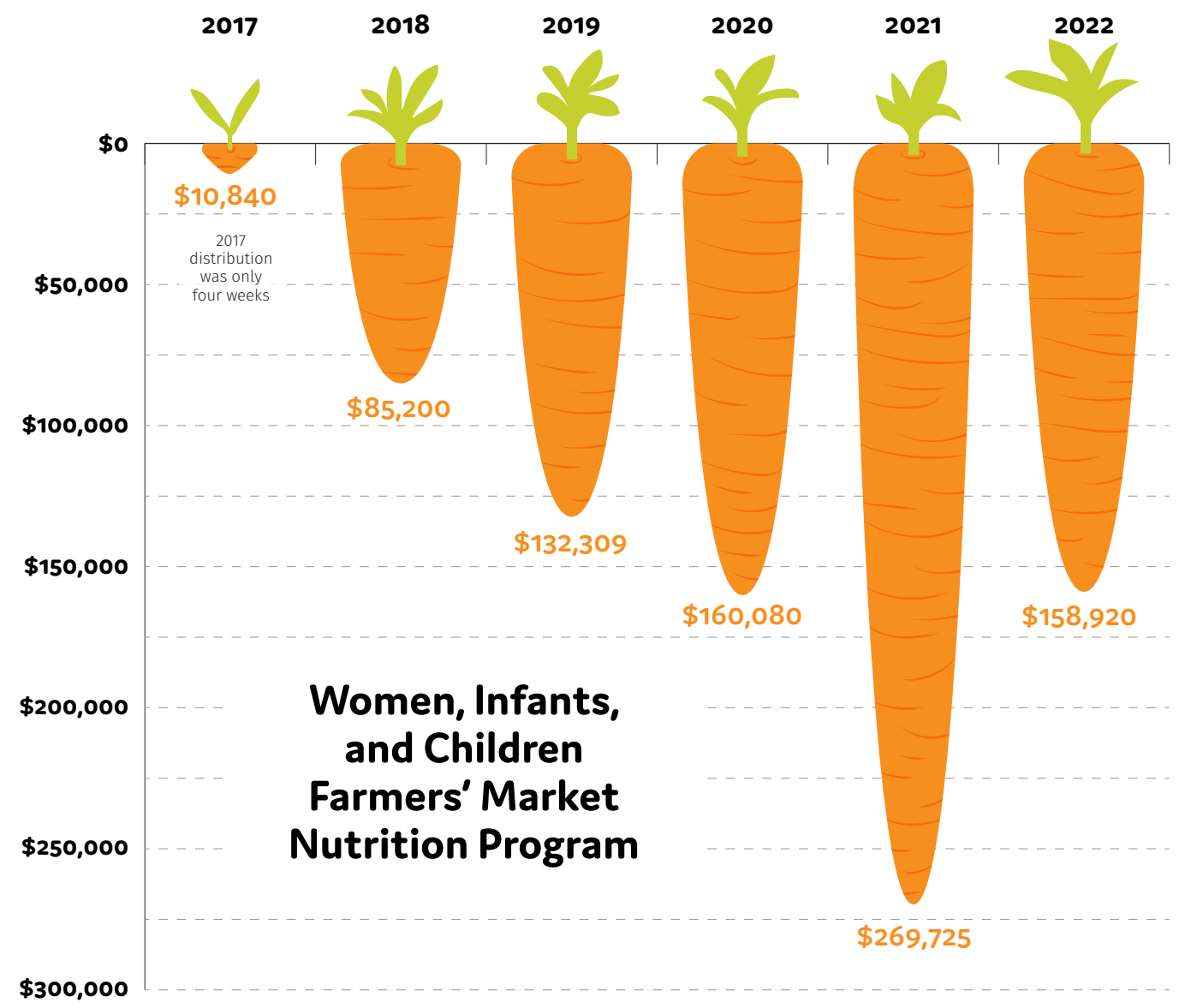
The DUFB program provides people who have Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits with matching dollars to purchase locally grown, fresh produce from farmers' markets in Boulder, Longmont, and Lafayette. The DUFB program

is a triple win, increasing the purchasing power of SNAP shoppers to purchase fresh and local produce, funneling dollars to local farmers, and stimulating the local economy.

Participants have said, "This program has changed my life for the better, since I no longer have to worry about food or stress when at the store or market," and "My children now want fresh produce over 'junk food.' They see that they feel better."

The FMNP serves families who are unable to qualify for SNAP or WIC, yet are experiencing nutrition insecurity.

In summer 2022, the WIC program served 769 families (2,994 total people).



MEETING OUR GOALS

Sustainable Food & Agriculture Fund

In 2020, Boulder County launched the Sustainable Food and Agriculture Fund. This grant program provides funding opportunities for projects that fall in the following categories: (1) regenerative agriculture and soil health, (2) regenerative agriculture education and outreach, (3) farm equipment and infrastructure, (4) local food production, and (5) support for frontline farm workers. The goal of the program is to support a local, sustainable food system in Boulder County.

From 2020 to 2022, Boulder County allocated \$1,015,000 of sales tax revenue to 32 farmers, agriculture

producers, nonprofits and private sector entities. To date, the program has impacted more than 2,300 acres of land, sequestered carbon, increased crop resilience, and advanced regenerative agriculture knowledge in the community. A few winning projects are described below.

- The Project Protect Promotora Network serves frontline agricultural workers across six different agricultural regions in Colorado, helping to provide resources, clothing, and supplies needed to remain safe.
- SkyPilot Farm executed rotational grazing across 800 acres of land.

Funding supported the purchase of mobile shade, water, and fencing to aid in moving pigs, sheep, and cattle around the pasture. This process helps fertilize the land, keeps animals healthy, and yields more nutritious crops.

- Masa Seed Foundation is advancing Colorado's ancient and heritage grain movement by bringing a wider diversity of grains into production. The foundation uses regenerative methods and works with regional partners to share best practices through a series of educational events.



GOING DEEPER

Restore Colorado

In 2020, through a public-private partnership, the Office of Sustainability, Climate Action & Resilience; Zero Foodprint; and Mad Agriculture were awarded funding from the USDA Composting and Food Waste Reduction Agreement to launch Restore Colorado.

Restore Colorado connects restaurants with farms to fund climate-beneficial agricultural practices. Specifically, participating restaurants add a 1% charge on customers' checks, or donate 1% of sales toward the effort, with the revenue going to regenerative agriculture in the community. More than 32 Colorado restaurants and businesses, like Annette, Dry Storage, River and Woods, Somebody People, and all Boulder Subway locations are collecting a few cents per meal for Restore Colorado grants. As of 2022, these grants have funded projects at 10 Colorado farms and ranches, such as Grama Grass and Livestock, which are applying

compost to 40 acres of degraded pasture to improve soil health and sequester carbon. The program has been so successful that the Colorado Department of Agriculture is engaging in a partnership to expand reach across the state. Furthermore, Restore Colorado received \$7 million in funding from the Federal Climate Smart Commodities Grant, \$3 million of which will go toward expanding Restore Colorado statewide. This is an excellent example of a small pilot program in Boulder County that's scaling past our borders and having a profound impact.





TAKE ACTION

Be a Boulder County Locavore

The concept of eating local is an old idea that is having a resurgence. To assist you, we offer our guide³¹ on how to eat locally in Boulder County:

PARTAKE IN THE LOCAL FOOD ECONOMY

- Join a Community-Supported Agriculture program and shop at your local farmers' market for produce and meat. Ask for and buy local food products at your grocery store. Learn about the food loops happening in Boulder County.

LEARN MORE ABOUT FARMERS AND RANCHERS IN BOULDER COUNTY

- Say hello to farmers at your local farmers' market, farmstands, or the Boulder County Fair or other community events. In the summer, Boulder County has 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.

- Learn about the farming activities happening around you. From small, quarter-acre vegetable farms to medium-sized cattle operations to large-scale wheat producers, Boulder County farmers produce a variety of foods for you to enjoy year-round.

GROW AND PRESERVE YOUR OWN FOOD

- Small ideas to get you started producing some of your own food include planting herbs in a window box, turning over a patch of grass for starting a small garden, or having a few chickens that lay eggs. Reach out of Boulder County's CSU Extension Office to learn about upcoming classes on becoming more self-reliant.

RESOURCES

More Information

31 Double Up Food Bucks

bouldercounty.gov/families/food/double-up-food-bucks/#:~:text=Program%20Details,be%20used%20at%20Whole%20Foods

Educational Services and Tours

bouldercounty.org/open-space/education

Food Assistance

bouldercounty.gov/families/pregnancy/women-infants-and-children/

Boulder County Sustainable Food and Agriculture Fund

bouldercounty.gov/environment/sustainability/ag-grant-program/

