



Section 1: Study Process

A food system assessment is the first, baseline step in understanding the components and interrelationships of the regional food system to strengthen it through enhanced coordination. The food system touches many aspects of a community's quality of life. Local food production relates to land use and agriculture, environmental stewardship, open space, cultural aspects of food and culinary arts, as well as food transportation issues. Moreover, food production, processing, distribution and marketing make important contributions to regional economic vitality. Finally, the absence or abundance of available supplies of healthy, nutritious food has profound effects on public health outcomes.

An assessment cannot completely address the development of a vibrant and sustainable regional food system. Rather, it identifies the current condition of the regional food system and work that will need to be accomplished in the coming years to strengthen it. The study provided an opportunity for the community to come together to understand the regional food system. The area is fortunate to have both strong agricultural roots and an awareness of the benefits of local food. This study identified the many ties between those assets.

The Northern Colorado Regional Food System Assessment involved Boulder, Larimer and Weld Counties working cooperatively with Colorado State University. Funding for the work was provided by the three participating counties, the Fort Collins Downtown Development Authority, CSU, and a State of Colorado Department of Local Affairs Heritage Planning grant. The work began in early 2010 and was completed in January 2011. A more complete description of the study process and schedule was as follows:

Study Goals and Objectives

The overall goals of the assessment were to:

- Develop an understanding of the existing state of the local food system in relationship to public health, economic development, and quality of life.
- Identify economic development opportunities related to agricultural production resulting from gaps in the local food system and evolving market venues.
- Document needs and possible projects to fulfill those needs in anticipation of forthcoming state and federal programs for funding designed to strengthen local/regional food systems.

Each County developed individual objectives within these broader goals which are listed below:

Boulder County Objectives

Primary Objective - To build upon the 2009 analysis of Boulder County's farm and food economy and determine how to increase local food production and consumption. This overall objective required the collection and analysis of data (numbers are not intended to convey priority, but used for reference):

1. Current agricultural production on public and private land in the County, including a focus on food production for personal consumption or direct sales;
2. Existing conditions (e.g., land and water access or labor shortages) that affect how much of what type of food is produced;
3. Existing food sales within the County, with specific attention to direct market sales (including retail, wholesale, and donations);
4. Institutional (e.g., hospitals, schools, corporations) direct purchasing of local foods;
5. Consumer buying behaviors and attitudes;
6. Existing and potential resources and assets available for production, processing, and distribution.

Larimer County Objectives

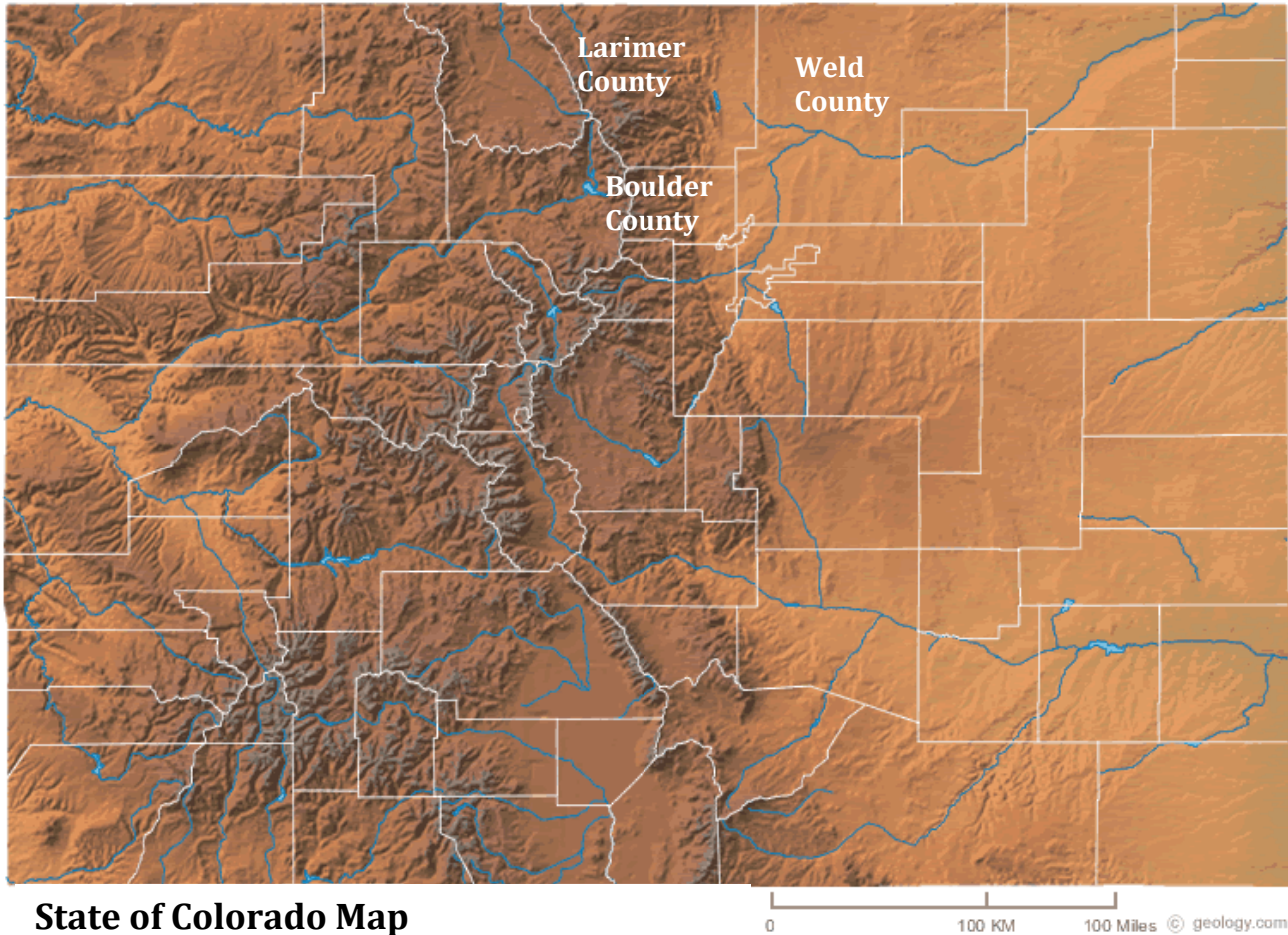
1. Identify ways to enhance the economic vigor of all elements of the local food system;
2. Explore options for long-term viability of agricultural operations (generational transfers, linkages, etc.);
3. Quantify consumer preferences for local food production;
4. Strengthen and expand connections among elements of the food system.

Weld County Objectives

1. Quantify information that can be used by local policy makers to guide land and water use decisions that will enhance the local agricultural economy;
2. Identify projects needed to connect agricultural producers with the retail food system (groceries, schools, farmers markets);
3. Determine the feasibility of a year around Farmer's Market in Weld County;
4. Determine the sustainability of the food system in an emergency when normal supplies may be limited.

Study Area

The study area consisted of three counties in north central Colorado. All of Weld County and the eastern portions of Boulder and Larimer Counties lie in the plains. The western portion of Boulder and Larimer Counties extend into the foothills and mountains. Refer to the map below:



Some basic information about the three counties studied in the assessment is included in the table below. This data was taken from the U.S. Census Bureau website.

County	County Seat	Land Area in Square Miles	Population 2009 Estimate	Persons Per Sq. Mile	Median Household Income 2008	% Persons Below Poverty Level 2008
Boulder	Boulder	742.46	303,482	392.6	\$66,760	10.3
Larimer	Fort Collins	2,601.30	298,382	96.7	\$56,701	11.6
Weld	Greeley	3,992.45	254,759	45.3	\$55,845	12.0

These simple statistics provided some insight into the degree of urbanization (persons per square mile) and relative affluence of the three counties.

Study Process

The devotion to local food issues shared by a small number of citizens launched the Northern Colorado Regional Food System Assessment. These individuals met informally for more than a year to discuss local food issues, the idea of a food policy council, and a desire to conduct a comprehensive study of the food system. The group decided to solicit the help of county government staff who found regional partners and funding to launch the study. The regional nature of the food system is characterized by the production focus in Weld County, the consumer concentration in Boulder County, and blend of conditions in Larimer County. These create interdependences that make the food system more regional than county concentric and led to the three counties combining forces with Colorado State University (CSU) to approach the work.

Lead staff members from the three counties and CSU worked together to draft goal statements for the assessment and seek a Heritage Planning grant from the State of Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA). Each of the three counties drafted objectives to fit within the broader goal statements and to address specific interests. All three Boards of County Commissioners endorsed the regional assessment concept and the grant application to DOLA and appropriated matching funds for the grant. Colorado State University also supported the grant application and agreed to provide financial support. Larimer County invited the Fort Collins Downtown Development Authority (DDA) to participate because they were studying the feasibility of a year-round market place in downtown Fort Collins. The DDA supported the grant application and provided matching funds.

Larimer County agreed to act as lead agency for the assessment. The project coordinator and fiscal agent for the grant were Larimer County employees. Larimer County agreed to host the project webpage, providing both an address to house the site and staff resources to design and post the information.

Citizen Committees

Because the effort sprang from community members, and because the food system is a community resource, each of the three counties appointed a diverse citizens group to oversee the study effort. These citizen committees were called Project Advisory Teams (PATs). The make-up of each PAT combined representatives from the four elements of the food system: 1) agricultural inputs such as natural resources and commercial goods and services; 2) agricultural production; 3) food processing, distribution and marketing; and 4) consumer choices, nutrition, and public health. The PAT meetings were chaired by the County staff member serving as lead in that county. Minutes of the meetings were taken, reviewed and adopted by the group. The three county PATs selected representatives to serve on a regional steering committee. The Steering Committee ensured the assessment honored its regional focus without straying off course in pursuit of a single county's objectives. The lead staff members from each county and CSU representatives also participated in the Steering Committee. The project coordinator chaired the sessions. Minutes of the meetings were taken, reviewed and adopted by the group. The members of each of the PATs and the Steering Committee are attached.

The three county PAT's developed slightly different working cultures and the segment of the appointed group who remained active throughout the process also varied between counties.

The Larimer County PAT was quite participatory, preferring to work in sub-groups at their meetings and craft direct input for the study. Working protocol was established for the group from the onset and local food was provided at all of the meetings. A core group of 10-12 members remained very active,

emerging from among the 25 original appointments. This core group included representatives from the all four of the food system elements.

The Boulder County PAT was developed from a core working group composed of three members of the Boulder County Food and Agriculture Policy Council (an advisory committee to the Boulder County Commissioners) and its coordinator. The four general elements of the food and agriculture system formed the basis for recruitment of the work team. Twenty individuals were seated to the Boulder County PAT. Of those twenty, fourteen participated in meetings, with about ten working with the project through its completion. PAT members who had some direct vested interest in the results of the Regional Food System Assessment tended to remain engaged in the process. All of the meetings were working meetings and food was provided for every meeting. The group developed some new relationships amongst themselves but generally came together to review the work and provide their input. There were never any instances where consensus could not be reached on how to proceed with the process or with the ground truthing of the data brought to the group. This was a great opportunity for PAT members to learn from other members of the local food and agriculture system.

The Weld County Project Advisory Team members were appointed by the Board of County Commissioners in February 2010. They represented different sectors of the food and agricultural system as well as different geographic regions of Weld County. Because of the characteristics of the county, several seats were held by production-scale agriculture. One County Commissioner participated directly, which did not occur in either of the other two counties. All elements of the food system were well represented among the appointments. As in the other counties, as the study progressed, a core group of PAT appointees emerged as the most engaged members. Generally speaking, the Weld County PAT was the least interactive of the three PAT groups, absorbing information presented but providing less lively feedback than the other two groups. As with the other PATs, the group operated on a consensus basis and food was provided at all the meetings. The Advisory Team's experience working with the agricultural system as a whole in Weld County along with the perspectives of local policy makers and business professionals made this a diverse and innovative group.

Study Schedule

Work on the assessment began once funding was secured through the grant process. The table below shows the sequential events involved in the assessment process.

Date or Timeframe	Milestone or Process
November 2009	Project Kick-Off meeting held with representatives from 3 counties, CSU, DOLA, and DDA (all project funders)
January 2010	Counties appoint Project Advisory Teams (PATs) and hold first meetings to explain assessment goals and process, and refine county objectives
February 2010	Steering Committee meets to get acquainted and launch data collection effort
Spring/Summer 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 PATs meet approximately monthly to review data gathered in each of elements, provide feedback on perceived accuracy and completeness of information, and make suggestions for additional research • Following each group of PAT meetings, the Steering Committee meets to ensure regional focus, agree on additional data needs, and direct study process
July 2010	Each County hosts one public meeting to introduce study process to interested citizens and encourage participation in upcoming open house meeting series. Presentations made by county lead staff member in each county using common presentation slides. CSU and project coordinator participate. Open discussion with audience conducted to answer questions and gather ideas.
August-September 2010	Series of four open house meeting held, each one focused on one element of the food system. Held in location central to region. Information presented in display and handout formats. Written feedback solicited. One-on-one conversations between study participants and public to share information. Larimer County also hosts one open house with display/feedback data from all four elements.
October 2010	Questionnaire circulated electronically to public to gather additional public input into study data and possible conclusions
Early November 2010	Three County PATs meet to analyze data collected and public input received
Remainder of Nov. 2010	Project Coordinator and CSU coalesce direction from PATs into draft study conclusions
Early December 2010	Three PATs meet together in afternoon workshop to agree on study conclusions
December 2010 or January 2011	Three Boards of County Commissioners consider draft report and conclusions
February 2011	Final Report Published
February 2011	CSU Completes templates for replicating study process
Winter/Early Spring 2011	Each County hosts event in their County to publicize study results
Winter/Early Spring 2011	Study team presents work at appropriate conferences and events

Boulder County Project Advisory Team

<u>Ag Producers</u>	
Crops Farmer	Famuer Rasmussen
Market Farmer	Amy Tisdale
<u>Land and Water Resources</u>	
Boulder County POS-Ag Division Mgr	David Bell
City of Boulder OSMP, Mgr	Jim Reeder**
<u>Equipment, Supplies, Labor Resources</u>	
Farm Machinery, John Deere	Jay Knutson
Ag input, American Pride Coop Mead	Larry Moir
<u>Processing and Distribution</u>	
Food product, Backpackers Pantry	Rodney Smith
Farmers' Market Manager, Longmont	Cindy Torres
City of Longmont Economic Dev Mgr	Doug Bene
	Longmont Economic Development Manager
	Erin Fosdick
Restaurateur and Chef, The Kitchen	Hugo Matheson
Boulder County Dept of Health, Env Health	David Baum
Commercial Processing, Mtn Valley Cannery	Andy Jesick
<u>Food Access and Security</u>	
Livewell Longmont	Wendy Moschetti
Local food advocate, Transition Colorado	Michael Brownlee
Food Pantry, OUR Center	Edwina Salazar
Boulder County Public Health, Dir of Health Programs	Heath Harmon**
Boulder County Community Services, Dir of Community Health	Robin Bohannan
<u>Members at large</u>	
Medical professional, member at large	Audrey Sheridan**
Boulder County Extension, Agriculture, Project Director	Adrian Card**
**Steering committee member	

Larimer County Project Advisory Team (PAT)		
Main/Secondary Group	Name and Title	Representing Organization
Agricultural Producer Commodity Scale Producer	Jason Kraft**	Kraft Farms, Inc. and Agricultural Advisory Board
Agricultural Producer Commodity Scale Producer	Susan Weaver	Weaver Ranch
Agricultural Producer Commodity Scale Producer	Andy Grant	Grant Family Farms
Agricultural Producer Small Acreage	Lawrence Holmes	Cresset Farms
Agricultural Producer -- Non-Profit	Suzanne Bassinger	Rural Land Use Advisory Board
Agricultural Producer -- Non-Profit	Susan Singley	High Plains Environmental Center
Land and Water Resources Public land	Kerri Rollins, Fund Development Outreach Specialist	Larimer County Open Lands
Land and Water Resources Public land	Daylan Figgs	Fort Collins Natural Areas
Land and Water Resources Water Districts/Co/Assns	Stephen Smith, Operations Manager	North Poudre Irrigation Co.
Land and Water Resources Water Districts/Co/Assns	Brad Wind**, Deputy Manager, Operations Division	Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District (NCWCD)
Equipment, Supplies, Labor Resources Agricultural Equipment Dealer	Chase Crouch	Colorado Equipment, LLC
Equipment, Supplies, Labor Resources Agricultural Supply Business	David Seawald	Ranch Way Feeds
Processing and Distribution Meat Processor	Dean Lepore, Owner	D & T Freezer Meats
Processing and Distribution Home-based Business Scale	Hill Grimmett	Be Local/ Northern Colorado Food Incubator
Processing and Distribution Restaurateurs, Chefs	Tom Stoner, Owner	Spoons Restaurant
Processing and Distribution Food Co-ops, Grocery Store owners	Lynn Christenson	Fort Collins Food Co-op
Processing and Distribution Farmers Market managers	Duane Pond	Larimer County and Berthoud Farmers Market
Food Access & Security Food Assistance Program Managers	Robert Howe, Senior Income Maintenance Technician	Larimer County Human Services
Food Access & Security Food Bank	Amy Pezzani, Executive Director	Larimer County Food Bank
Food Access & Security Public Health Experts	Virginia Clark, CanDo Coordinator	CanDo
Food Access & Security Public Health Experts	Sarah Morales, Wellness Dietitian	Poudre Valley Health System, Comm. & Foundation Development
Members of Public At Large	Emily Elmore**	
Members of Public At Large	Melanie Sloan	
Members of Public At Large	Alex Barnett**	
** Denotes Steering Committee Member		

Weld County Project Advisory Team	
<u>Agricultural Inputs- Land, water, financial, labor</u>	
Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District**	Brad Wind
Weld County Commissioners	Doug Rademacher, Sean Conway
First Farm Bank	Tony Meyer
Land Use Attorney	Lee Morrison
CSU Extension Services Weld County	Keith Maxey
CSU Extension Services Weld County	Carrie Shimada
<u>Producers and Operators</u>	
Agland Corporation	Mitch Anderson
American Pride Coop**	Steve Stewart
Aurora Dairy	Juan Velez
Aurora Dairy**	Emily Prisco
Boyles Family Farms	Claire Boyles
Glover Family Farms	The Glover family (Art, Goldie, Mike, & Terry)
Northern Feed and Bean	Dean Larson
Rademacher farms**	Douglas Rademacher
<u>Food Market and Buyers</u>	
School District Six Nutrition Services	Jeremy West
Farm to School	
Glover 18 th Street Grocery	Glover Family
Weld Food Bank	Leona Martins
<u>Health Outcomes</u>	
Weld County Health Department**	Gaye Morrison
Weld County Health Department**	Bobbie Puckett
Weld County Health Department	Pam Smith
**Steering committee member	