

Healthy Kids, Healthy Farmers

Results from the 2008 Colorado Producer Survey

In cooperation with: The Colorado Institute of Public Policy, Western SARE, Rocky Mountain Farmers Union, Colorado Department of Agriculture, Colorado Farm Bureau and Colorado Organic Producers Association

Purchasing locally grown food supports local farmers and ensures the long-term heritage of small scale agriculture in Colorado.

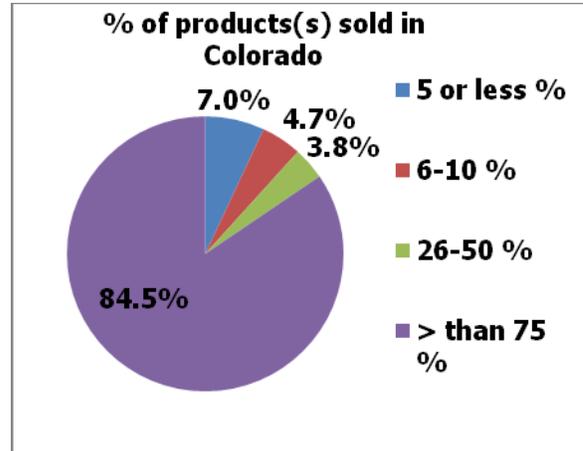
Colorado contains roughly 31 million acres of farmland, representing almost half of the total land in the state. Although Colorado is best known for its cattle country, it is one of the leading states in production of potatoes, onions, lettuce and sweet corn. Colorado is also well known for its tree fruits grown on the Western Slope

Findings from a previous survey (Singley, 2006) found that K-12 schools are interested in integrating high-quality locally-grown products into school cafeterias. Of highest interest are apples, lettuce, carrots, spinach, tomatoes, and onions – all of which are abundantly produced in Colorado.

Our state produces quality fruits, vegetables, meat, and dairy products. Creating new policies to ensure that all of our residents, particularly children, have access to healthy foods are critical to our future. - Barbara O'Brien, Lieutenant Governor

Key findings from the 389 Colorado producers that responded to the 2008 Colorado producer survey:

Products are sold in Colorado. 85% report that more than 75% or more of their products are sold in Colorado.



Producers are concerned about the future of agriculture. Of highest concerns were water, fuel, and competing land uses.

Producers are interested in selling products directly to consumers and schools.

Would like to sell	Direct to Individuals	C.S.A.'s	K-12 Schools
More	77%	31%	89%
Less	2.2%	1%	0%
Same	21%	7%	11%

Producers respond positively to selling products locally. 50% report that selling locally is important. 41% strongly agreed that selling products locally is important for economic health.

Producers are interested in selling to schools. 5% of respondents report that they have sold some products to schools and 18% are interested in selling to schools.

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For each county that contained a producer interested in selling to schools, there was a school or school district interested in buying local products. The greatest interest in selling to schools was concentrated in the Front Range, Western Slope, and Southwestern regions of the state.

Producers have a wide variety of products to sell to schools. The top three categories included packaged meat, cool season vegetables, and dairy and eggs.

Products are of high quality. While only 4% of survey respondents identified their product as “certified organic”, >50% identified their product as differentiated by other qualities such as “natural”, “grass-fed” (beef), or “organic not certified”.

Products are insured. 56% reported having liability insurance for their products – an important factor for schools when deciding where to purchase their products.

If we could provide as much food as possible locally for our K-12 students, they would have access to safer and more nutritional food... – Colorado Producer

Recommendations

- **Coordinate efforts between schools and producers.** Many producers and schools were unaware of opportunities to purchase/sell foods locally and were also unfamiliar with the farm-to-school concept.
- **Develop tools and resources.** Provide schools and producers with information that will aid in the development of a farm-to-school program.
- **Determine a fair price.** Schools have tight budgets, which could restrict them from making local purchases. For producers to make a profit, they typically need to sell at wholesale price or above.
- **Establish statewide policies in support of farm-to-school programs.** Schools need to have access to more flexible spending so they can support alternative markets.
- **Start small.** Begin with a handful of local products and slowly scale up, allowing schools to learn more about what products are locally available.

For more information about the National Farm to School Program and Colorado projects:

<http://www.farmtoschool.org>