

For Immediate Release
Western Colorado Food and Farm Forum
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Conference Creates Healthy Land, Food, People

Montrose, CO – December 2, 2016 – Passionate about raising the most nutritious food possible, in the best soil possible, for the healthiest people possible? Head to the state’s premier sustainable agricultural gathering, the Western Colorado Food and Farm Forum, in Montrose January 20-21, 2017. Registration is open for half-day pre-conference workshops Friday and the Forum all day Saturday.

The Forum celebrates its 5th anniversary with nationally known speakers, such as Ray Archuleta, Greg Judy, and Andrew Smith of the Rodale Institute. Twenty-two workshops designed for advanced to beginning producers include sessions on maximizing vegetable production in saline soils, innovative livestock management, soil and livestock health, organic and hemp research, food safety, organic standards, water law, orchard management, marketing strategies, grants and more. Limited tours of South River Aquaponics are also on the agenda.

Saturday, keynote speaker Ray Archuleta addresses *Understanding the Social, Cultural, and Ecological Context of Soil Health*. “Ray the soil guy” promotes local and global movement toward regenerative agriculture based on internalizing how wholes relate and how humans think. “The human mind is one of the biggest obstacles to improving soil health and regenerative agriculture. To make small changes, change how you do things. To make major changes, change how you see things!”

Greg Judy, author of *No Risk Ranching* and *Comeback Farms*, hosts a half-day pre-conference workshop on profitable ranching and mob grazing techniques. At the conference he leads a session on how production increases when more solar energy is harvested using multi-species grazing.

Rodale Institute, the oldest organic research organization in the US, presents a half-day workshop, *Maximizing Nutrient Density to Improve Production and Health Outcomes*, led by Andrew Smith, PhD. The interactive session at the Montrose County Fairgrounds covers the effect of nutrient decline on health, balancing soil minerals to increase nutrient density, crop selection, foliar feeding and interpreting soil tests.

The National Young Farmers Coalition hosts a half-day *Water Boot Camp*. Topics include the history of Colorado water law, ins and outs of local irrigation administration, policy and funding that impact your irrigation decisions, and what you need to know about water when looking for land.

“The conference is designed to provide a rich menu of options and to encourage networking among participants during a chili dinner Friday, a farmer-to-farmer invention convention, roundtable sessions and a post conference bowling night,” says organizer Carol Parker. Valley Food Partnership producers provide local food throughout the day.

The educational conference offers discounts to those registering by December 19th. Attendees receive discounts when they attend both the pre-conference workshop and the Forum. Scholarships are available by application to FFA, 4H, and beginning farmers or ranchers.

The Valley Food Partnership, CSU Extension, Rocky Mountain Farmers Union, National Young Farmers Coalition and Shavano Conservation District organize the conference collaboratively. For a complete list of topics or to register please visit: foodfarmforum.org or call 970-249-3935.

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