

For Immediate Release
Western Colorado Food and Farm Forum
Carol Parker, 970.209.7712 parkervfp@gmail.com
Kim Lisenby, 503.709.8558 klisenbywork@gmail.com



Sustainable Ag Conference Attracts Local and Nationally Known Speakers

Montrose, CO – January 5, 2017 – As farmers and ranchers seek innovative ways to maintain profitability while providing nutrient dense food, hundreds will converge in Montrose January 20 – 21 for the Western Colorado Food and Farm Forum. With the goal of improving the sustainable production, consumption and marketing of local food, the conference features locally and nationally known speakers.

Twenty-two workshops are offered in the areas of crops, livestock, specialty crops, marketing and management. “The diversity of topics allows us to showcase best practices in the region, state and nation. This draws a variety of producers to network with throughout the conference. Scholarships for beginning farmers, 4-H and FFA students attract a strong youth contingency that has become a conference hallmark,” says organizer Carol Parker.

Well known local producers provide a wealth of regionally relevant information. Successful organic farmer Steve Ela of Ela Family Farms in Hotchkiss will discuss how to build a marketing program, product list, and market niche. Brendon Rockey of Rockey Farms based in the San Luis Valley presents, *Carbon to Cash* and demonstrates how creating a healthy soil carbon cycle can result in economic profits. Both from Montrose County, Jim Elder shares his expertise in berry farming and Brandon Creamer of Lazy JB Angus Ranch shares innovative ways to market livestock.

Regional soil health specialist, Rudy Garcia focuses on how to improve irrigated vegetable production in saline soils and Sajun Polsom of Laid Back Ranch in Norwood presents a session on pastured poultry with an update on current regulations. Doug Wiley of Larga Vista Farm near Pueblo provides an overview on maintaining livestock health using alternative practices and Larry Traubel of Cedaredge shares tips on how to start and maintain a viable orchard. Water law, market trends, grant opportunities and food safety requirements are also topics offered as breakout sessions.

Made legal in 2012 with the passage of Amendment 64, industrial hemp production may be of special interest. Resources being developed by CSU will be presented along with practical advice from western slope producers.

On Friday, Greg Judy, author of *No Risk Ranching* and *Comeback Farms*, hosts a half- day pre-conference workshop on profitable ranching and mob grazing techniques. On Saturday Judy 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 pre-conference workshop, *Maximizing Nutrient Density to Improve Production and Health Outcomes*, led by Andrew Smith, PhD. Smith presents a session Saturday on how vegetable producers can gain a competitive edge and boost crop yields using cover crops and roller crimping technology.

Also Friday, the National Young Farmers Coalition hosts a half-day workshop *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 irrigation water.

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, scholarship applications or to register visit: foodfarmforum.org or call 249-3935.