

For Immediate Release – Dec. 6, 2018 - Western Colorado Food and Farm Forum
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Locals Headline Agriculture Conference with Nationally Known Speakers

Montrose, CO – December 6, 2018 – Local farmers and ranchers take center stage with nationally known speakers at the 7th Annual Western Colorado Food and Farm Forum, Jan 25-26, 2019 in Montrose. Friday half day sessions are held at the Montrose Fairgrounds and Saturday workshops at the Montrose Pavilion.

The conference theme of *Healthy Fields, Farmers, Futures* provides focus to 20 workshops on crops, livestock, water rights, ag management and marketing. Farmers, ranchers, gardeners and those interested in local agricultural issues will find sessions geared to their interests.

Using the theme of Healthy Fields, Farmers, Futures Joel Salatin, known as the “most famous farmer in America” kicks off the conference. His hilarious and insightful delivery illuminates how farmers can create a healthy bottom line and still manage to create balance between life and work. The author of 12 books, Salatin also presents a session called, *Dancing with Dinner: Healing the Nutritional Deficit in the Urban Rural Divide Rural*. This session is open to the public and will begin at 4:30 pm on Saturday.

The Healthy Fields theme features sessions highlighting local innovative soil health practices. George Rosenbaum of Olathe details his innovative use of cover crops to build soil health on his hog farm. Bill Parker of Gunnison offers the half-day session, *Performance Based Planned Grazing* and Paonia producer, Jacob Gray presents, *Pastured Poultry Principles*. Jen Mueller of Yurtstead Farm near Olathe presents *Low Tech Low Cost Season Extension*. With 30 years of local experience, Dave Dearstyne looks at the benefits of integrating livestock with cover crops to build soil health. Creating a habitat for pollinators and managing risks from invasive species is the topic of Mesa County entomologist, Meredith Schrader.

The Healthy Farmers theme acknowledges the fact that agriculture is a stressful, risky business that involves long hours and the pressures of managing relationships while typically running a family business. The recent drought put even more pressure on local producers. Sessions addressing this theme include Ben Hartman, author of *The Lean Farm*, who delivers a plenary session titled, *What’s Wrong with A Farmer Working a 35 Hour Week?* Additional sessions include *The Power of Healthy Teams*, and *How to Enjoy Farming Again*, presented by the Center for Mental Health. These sessions deal with how to manage stress through improving communications, managing teams, and developing coping skills.

Healthy Futures takes a look at the relevance of the emerging technology, including Blockchain for the family farm. Additional future forward topics include *Top Ten Mega Trends You Can Use: Predicting the Future in A Fickle Market* with Sylvia Tawse and Kenny Meyers, local forager for Whole Foods Markets. Dr. Janelle Peck looks at future weather patterns specific to Western Colorado, climate change predictions, and creating weather ready operations. Land Link helps producers create

a future by helping farmers access land for lease. This theme is rounded out by a session on the future of cider making in Colorado with heirloom apples and how to plan a secure future with local financial planner, Lisa Isaacson, CPA Teresa Campbell and Jim Plumhoff, Attorney.

Friday's half-day sessions offer an opportunity for in-depth learning and include *The Western Colorado Water Workshop*, hosted by the National Your Farmers Coalition. Colorado's chief water engineer presents at this timely session. In the afternoon, a session geared from crop producers is led by Ben Hartman called *Lean Concepts Applied to Crop Production*. For livestock producers, Bill Parker of Parker Pastures delves into planned grazing, how to create drought reserves and maximizing livestock performance.

"The conference is designed to provide a rich menu of workshop options and to encourage networking among participants during a free chili dinner Friday, round table discussions, a farmer-to-farmer invention convention, and a post conference bowling night," says organizer Carol Parker.

The educational conference offers discounts to those registering by January 11th. Scholarships sponsored by Montrose County are available by application to FFA, 4H, and beginning farmers or ranchers. Numerous farmers provide delicious local food throughout the conference. Concurrent translation and registration materials in Spanish are also available.

The Valley Food Partnership, CSU Extension, Rocky Mountain Farmers Union, ENGAGE, 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 970-765-6170. ###

Keynote Speaker – Joel Salatin



Special Guest speaker – Ben Hartman

