

The Ag & Food Lab

ANNUAL REPORT

2025

**Restoring People,
Land, and Economies
Through Local Food
Systems**



ABOUT THE LAB

Vision: To build a resilient local food ecosystem where farmers are valued, land is honored, and nutritious food is affordable and accessible to all.

Mission: To equitably resource farmers and food businesses with land access, shared infrastructure, and wrap-around services to foster resilient local food ecosystems.

Our commitment: to equity, accountability, and stewardship.



PROGRAM AREAS

The Farm:

Supports regenerative agriculture through hands-on projects and land stewardship.

The Hub:

Strengthens mid-chain local food businesses through collaboration and technical assistance.

The Market:

Expands equitable access to local food through community-based markets.

The School:

Builds food system knowledge through education and hands-on learning.



2025 AT A GLANCE



6

NEW ACRES IMPROVED

with infrastructure and irrigation planning in Bennett.



2

FARM BUSINESSES SUPPORTED

with hands-on technical assistance.

~30

SMALL RETAILERS SUPPORTED

with outreach and technical assistance

~10,650

LBS OF FOOD DISTRIBUTED

to Jefferson County families thorough



1,080

NO-COST GROCERY BOXES

with food sourced from

16

COLORADO PRODUCERS

supplying produce, eggs, and tofu.

GIS MAPPING LAUNCHED

to improve food distribution to independent retailers and rural farmers.

CIRCULAR FOOD SYSTEM COLLABORATIVE CREATED

connecting producers, processors, and distributors.

FARMERS MARKET EXPANSION PLANNED

to increase local sales opportunities.



2

EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS LAUNCHED

with Denver University and St. Mary's.



3

ADVISORY COUNCILS FORMED

supporting community-driven decision-making at The Farm.

8

NEW PARTNERS ENGAGED

across The Lab programs.

THE FARM PROGRAM

Advances regenerative agriculture through hands-on production, demonstration, and conservation projects that support producers, applied learning, and land stewardship.

KEY 2025 OUTCOMES:

- Initiated Councils focused on
 - Agricultural Operations
 - Conservation
 - Education



to guide development and operations on the Farm by involving partners, community members, farmers, and staff.

- Developed a 6-acre irrigation plan to support incubator farmers.
- Created a plan to upgrade the existing well and add a second well, ensuring **water resilience** for future production.
- Provided **technical assistance** to two farm businesses, strengthening planning, production, and market access.
- Engaged **Spirit of the Sun**—an Indigenous women-led organization—as one of our **accountability partners** guiding land stewardship decision-making.



THE FARM PROGRAM

In 2025, The Farm strengthened its role as The Lab's agricultural operations and innovation backbone by advancing regenerative land care, essential infrastructure, and **direct support for local producers.**

Guided by three new Councils—Agricultural Operations & Infrastructure, Conservation, and Education—and in partnership with **Spirit of the Sun**, our land stewardship approach increasingly reflects community accountability.

This year we developed a 6-acre irrigation plan, created a strategy to upgrade the existing well and add a second, and provided targeted technical assistance to two farm businesses, helping **Lmeana Organic Farm** and **Las Aguilas Ranch** refine their business plans and increase market access as they grow their operations.



THE HUB PROGRAM

Strengthens mid-chain local food businesses by advancing collaboration, coordination, and technical support for middle-of-the-supply-chain partners.

KEY 2025 OUTCOMES:

- **Co-founded the Colorado Circular Food System Collaborative**, bringing partners together to create a regenerative, closed-loop food economy focused on reducing waste, reusing materials, and sharing resources



- **Partnered with CU Denver Geospatial Analysis and Mapping Laboratory (GAMLab)** to design a GIS mapping system enabling route optimization, resource tracking, and deeper analytics to support local farms and small independent retailers in the Northeast region of Colorado

THE HUB PROGRAM

In 2025, The Hub advanced local food system innovation by **co-founding the Colorado Circular Food System Collaborative**, a convening of food businesses strengthening economic stability and climate resilience through circular practices that reduce waste, reuse materials, and share resources across the supply chain.

Recognizing that data is essential to building an efficient and equitable local food economy, we also partnered with **CU Denver Geospatial Analysis and Mapping Laboratory (GAMLab)** to develop a GIS mapping tool that will optimize distribution routes, improve resource tracking, and provide analytics to better serve farms and small independent retailers in Northeast Colorado.

Together, these partners bring **technical expertise, community insight, and systems-level strategy**, positioning the region for smarter planning and a more regenerative, closed-loop food economy.



THE MARKET PROGRAM

Increases equitable access to local food by strengthening market pathways that connect regenerative producers to consumers through community-centered distribution models.

KEY 2025 OUTCOMES:

- **Partnered with Kaizen Food Rescue** to distribute 1,080 food boxes over an 18-week period.
- **Developed an expansion plan for a Farmers Market in Bennett, CO**, building on the success of a summertime pilot popup market.
- **Created a plan to distribute affordable food boxes through small independent retailers with SNAP authorization**, supporting both food access and local business stability.



THE MARKET PROGRAM

In **2025**, The Market advanced access to healthy, local food by partnering with **Kaizen Food Rescue's no-cost food shares** to distribute **1,080 boxes filled with local produce** and staple food items over an 18-week period, and collecting data showing the tangible impact on families experiencing food insecurity. We also developed plans for an **expanded Farmers Market in Bennett, CO**, with the goal of creating a vibrant, rural, community-centered hub that connects residents directly with hyper-local producers.

Additionally, we've designed a system to **distribute affordable food boxes** through **small independent retailers with SNAP authorization**, which we hope to implement in 2026 through The Market, strengthening local procurement, supporting farmer incomes, and **ensuring that fresh, healthy food reaches more households while sustaining small businesses across the region.**



THE SCHOOL PROGRAM

Advances understanding, knowledge, and hands-on experience across the food ecosystem by integrating education, demonstration, and community engagement.

KEY 2025 OUTCOMES:

- **Contracted with a Research & Education Specialist** to explore a new integrated program area—The School—connecting education and service learning across all programs.



- **Partnered with DU's Center for a Regenerative Future** to launch a student internship set to begin Fall 2026.



- **Collaborated with St. Mary's (K-12) to begin developing a local food system curriculum paired with monthly local food featured in student meals.**



THE SCHOOL PROGRAM

In **2025**, we established **our newest program area, The School**, creating an **integrated education and service-learning pathway** that connects students directly to real-world food system work.

By contracting a Research & Education Specialist and partnering with DU's Center for a Regenerative Future to **launch a student internship in Fall 2026**, The School **encourages young people to enter careers in agriculture and local food systems**.

Collaboration with St. Mary's (K-12) to **develop a local food system curriculum**, paired with monthly local food **featured in student meals**, demonstrates the benefits of linking classroom learning with hands-on experience.

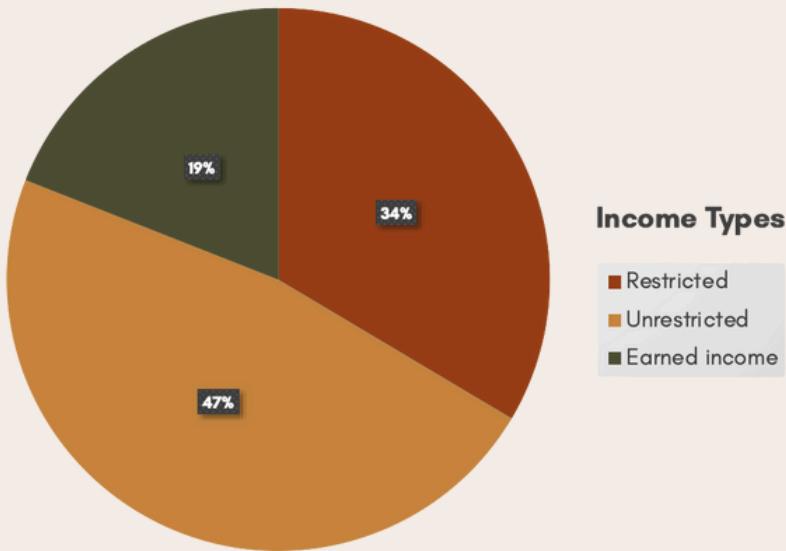
These foundational efforts set the stage for future field days and youth leadership opportunities, **preparing students to actively engage in building resilient and equitable food systems**.



2025 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Financial Overview

With a total income of **\$246,000**, we were able to offset the costs of our programs while covering essential administrative and fundraising expenses. Strategic investments in payroll, CRM, and other software, as well as communications support, ensured that we could provide essential resources to farm and food entrepreneurs.



In our second year of operations, the Ag & Food Lab successfully raised **\$199,000** in grants and donations, demonstrating strong support for our mission. Additionally, we generated over **\$46,800** in earned revenue through consulting, outreach, community engagement, and product sales—an important step toward long-term sustainability.

KEY GOALS FOR 2026

- Implementing the irrigation plan and well expansion plan
- Launching The School's experiential education offerings with St. Mary's
- Building and operationalizing GIS mapping tools for regional distribution optimization, in order to more easily connect farmers, food hubs, and small retailers
- Expanding markets in Adams County
- Scaling affordable food box distribution with small retailers
- Expanding the Colorado Circular Food System Collaborative
- Undertaking research and conservation projects at The Farm with Council guidance

2026: Building on the Foundation

Get Involved

- Volunteer: Lend your time and skills to support farm, market, and community initiatives.
- Join the Board: Be a strategic partner in guiding our mission by joining our Board of Directors.
- Partner Opportunities: Collaborate with us through partnerships that support local food systems, economic development, and community wellness.

Contact Us

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- Website: www.agfoodlab.org
- Social Media
 - YouTube: @AgFoodLab
 - Facebook: The Ag & Food Lab
 - Instagram: @AgFoodLab
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 - Bluesky: @AgFoodLab
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OUR PARTNERS MAKE IT POSSIBLE



MAD AGRICULTURE



NUDE FOODS MARKET

Emerald Gardens

DJ Sustainability



KAIZEN FOOD RESCUE



Other Partners

Adams County Office of Strategic Partnerships & Resilient Communities
Adams County Farm Service Agency
Adams County Planning and Development
Adams County Public Health
Adelante
Alliance for Collective Action
Colorado Trust
Collective Agency
Commerce City Community Well-Being
Colorado Ag Water Alliance
Commún
CSU Extension
CSU Spur
Denver Department of Public Health & Environment
Flint Ridge LLC
Halcyon Advisers
Hunger Free Colorado
Jefferson County Food Policy Council
Rocky Mountain Farmers Union
Northwest Region Food Business Center
Nourish Colorado
Provecho Collective
Sector Law Office
Start Up Colorado

St. Mary's and other Lorreto partners
Yana Ludwig Training and Consulting
Zero Foodprint

Funders

AJL Foundation
Big Green DAO
Cielo Foundation
Colorado Housing and Finance Authority
Colorado Department of Agriculture
Colorado Gives Foundation
Colorado Water Conservation Board
Denver Foundation
Denver Economic (DEDO)
Loretto Special Needs Committee
National Resource and Conservation Service
Northwest Rocky Mountain Regional Food Business Center
Office of Economic Development and International Trade
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Rose Community Foundation
The Colorado Trust
The Three Sisters
U.S. Department of Agriculture: Agricultural Marketing Service

