

SAN LUIS VALLEY COMMUNITY FOOD & AGRICULTURAL ASSESSMENT

Community Survey Report

Surveys were made available between October 2022 and March 2023 online via the SLVLFC website, multiple listservs related to food system efforts in the region, distribution by project stewards, promotion on social media, and outreach at food system events. To encourage participation, survey respondents were offered the chance to win a \$100 gift card.

In addition to online surveys, paper surveys were made available to residents without access to smart phones or computers. Also, the Promotores del Valle de San Luis provided survey support and interpretation services to reach out to Spanish and Q'anjob'al (a Mayan language)-speaking community members.

The community survey was widely marketed to be taken by anyone that “eats or buys food in the San Luis Valley.” It included questions about community members’ ability to access healthy food, their values when it comes to the food they want to eat, perceptions of the healthfulness of their food options, interest in learning more about gardening or cooking, their food waste practices, and their trusted sources of information when it comes to food.

Q1

Q1. Please select the top three places you get food.	Count	%
Grocery store (City Market, Safeway, etc.)	921	91%
Walmart	601	59%
Farmers' market, farm stand, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program	274	27%
Restaurant or diner (sit down, carry out or delivery)	254	25%
Dollar store (Dollar Tree, Family Dollar, Dollar General)	228	23%
Specialty food stores (natural, ethnic markets, bakeries, etc.)	192	19%
Grow your own, hunt, fish, etc.	162	16%
Fast food restaurants	138	14%
Food pantry or food bank	114	11%
Food Hub	52	5%
Other (please specify)	26	3%
Cafeteria or dining service (school, workplace, hospital cafeterias, senior center, health care center, residential care facility)	48	5%
Online (Amazon, etc)	46	5%
Gas station or convenience store	32	3%
Meal or grocery home delivery	31	3%
Total Respondents	1011	
Other:		
Amish run stores (damaged goods and bakery)		
Bountiful Meats		
Cactus Hill		
Commodities		
Community garden		
Costco		
Crestone Mercantile		
Elephant Cloud		
Food stores with organic options outside of the Valley because there aren't options		
Food that my neighbors give me.		
Food trucks		
Local farmers		
Locally owned grocery (not corp chain)		
Misfits Market, it rescues food that would get thrown away and sells for discount.		
Salazar's		
SLV foods coalition		
Thrive		
Top Value		

Q2

Q3

Q3. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements by checking the box: Note: Healthy foods generally include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, meat, legumes, dairy and water.	Strongly agree	%	Agree	%	Neutral	%	Disagree	%	Strongly disagree	%
Overall, I eat healthy foods.	345	34%	494	49%	129	13%	25	2%	17	2%
In general, my community has sufficient options for healthy eating.	168	17%	396	39%	210	21%	187	18%	47	5%
I have access to fresh fruits and vegetables in my community.	147	15%	569	56%	167	17%	95	9%	29	3%
I know where to access locally-grown foods in my community.	146	14%	450	45%	198	20%	172	17%	42	4%
Total Respondents	1011									

Q4

Q4. Do you agree with the following statements?	Yes	%	Somewhat	%	No	%
I know how to cook.	871	86%	130	13%	7	1%
I have enough space to cook.	847	84%	128	13%	32	3%
I have enough propane/natural gas/wood/electricity to cook.	913	90%	74	7%	19	2%
I have the tools I need to cook (ie. knives, pots, pans, stove, etc.)	900	89%	93	9%	16	2%
I have enough time to cook.	605	60%	329	33%	74	7%
I have a safe place to cook.	944	93%	51	5%	8	1%
Total Respondents	1011					

Q5

Q5. I would like to learn more about how to cook. Check all that apply.	Count	%
Healthy foods	563	56%
Low-cost meals	526	52%
Simply, easy meals	497	49%
Locally-grown foods	432	43%
Culturally appropriate/ heirloom/ traditional foods	346	34%
None of the above	176	17%
Total Respondents	1011	

Q6

Q6. Do you agree with the following statements?	Yes	%	Somewhat	%	No	%
I currently garden and know how to grow food	362	36%	339	34%	307	30%
I participate in a community garden	82	8%	94	9%	827	82%
I raise animals in my yard/on my land (e.g., chickens)	161	16%	59	6%	784	78%
I know where the community gardens are in my community	417	41%	300	30%	292	29%
I know where other points of sale are for local food in my community ie. farmers' markets, CSAs, farms, farm stands, food hub etc.	476	47%	340	34%	190	19%
I currently forage, hunt or fish for food	188	19%	197	19%	618	61%
I would like to learn more about how to forage/grow/hunt/fish for my own food and regulations about these activities.	413	41%	268	27%	326	32%
Total Respondents	1011					

Q7

Q7. "The food that we purchased didn't last, and we just didn't have money to get more." Was that often, sometimes, or Never True for your household in the last 12 months?	Count	%
Often True	101	10%
Sometimes True	363	37%
Never True	527	53%
Total Respondents	991	

Q8

Q8. "We couldn't afford to eat balanced meals." Was that often, sometimes, or Never True for your household in the last 12 months?	Count	%
Often True	106	11%
Sometimes True	431	43%
Never True	454	46%
Total Respondents	991	

Q9

Q9. In the last 12 months, since last October, did you or other adults in your household ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?	Count	%
No	727	73%
Yes	264	27%
Total Respondents	991	

Q10

Q10. In the last 12 months, since last October, did you or other adults in your household ever provide groceries to others?		Count	%
Yes		618	62%
No		373	38%
Total Respondents		991	

Q11

Q11. How did the COVID-19 pandemic impact your ability to buy food?	Count	%
The pandemic made it more difficult for me to buy food.	503	51%
No Change.	384	39%
Not Applicable	56	6%
The pandemic made it easier for me to buy food.	48	5%
Total Respondents	991	

Q12

Q12. Please select the reason(s) that best describe why you or your household doesn't always have the kinds of food you want to eat. Check all that apply.	Count	%
Kinds of food we want not available in stores or pantries	376	38%
Not enough money for food	331	33%
Not enough time for shopping or cooking	236	24%
Not applicable	232	23%
On a special diet	175	18%
Too difficult to get to the store	166	17%
Not able to cook or eat because of health problems	39	4%
No kitchen equipment available to cook (stove, pots, knives)	25	3%
Other (please specify)	19	2%
Total Respondents	989	
Other:		
Age or illness		
Don't know how to cook the food		
Food allergies		
Food bank shut down where I live past month		
Food from the Dollar Store		
Foods with lower glycemic impact for Diabetics		
Food goes bad too fast		
It would be good to have a comprehensive source list of local producers who sell to the public, eggs, meat, milk, produce, even ethnic prepared foods like tamales.		
Lack of knowledge or motivation		
More job opportunities		
My appliances are lost in the supply chain		

Need more gluten free egg free options
No collaboration with others for deciding on, buying, cooking, and enjoying foods
Struggle with the cleanup after meal prep in a small kitchen space

Q13

Q13. In the past 12 months what resources have you accessed to get free or reduced cost foods? Check all that apply.	Count	%
Food pantries or food banks	297	30%
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	239	24%
I do not have a need for these resources	227	23%
Not applicable	218	22%
Free communal meals	202	20%
School lunch/breakfast or summer feeding programs	135	14%
Churches/spiritual centers	110	11%
Women, Infant, Children Program (WIC)	97	10%
Neighbors	88	9%
Double Up Food Bucks at the farmers' market	81	8%
Senior meal sites	48	5%
Other (please specify)	38	4%
Total Respondents	989	
Other:		
Friends and Family	11	
I would use, but don't qualify for any.	10	
Community garden	3	
Discounts at stores	3	
Food box through AHEC	2	
P-EBT card	2	
Commodities		
More Jobs		
Online meal kit deals this summer were cheaper than shopping locally		
Started growing my own food		
TEFAP		
Veterans Coalition of the San Luis Valley		

Q14

Q14. What community services would help you access food more easily? Select your top 3.	Count	%
Knowledge about how to grow, prepare, and/or preserve your own food	439	44%
Additional farmers market locations or CSA programs near me	436	44%
Community gardens to grow your own food	258	26%
Mobile pantries or markets	192	19%
Larger SNAP or WIC benefit allocations	187	19%
Not applicable	173	17%
Additional food pantries	164	17%
Additional communal meals programs	140	14%
Home grocery or meal delivery	130	13%
Universal free school meals	120	12%
Communal commercial kitchen	91	9%
Other (please specify)	26	3%
Total Respondents	991	
Other:		
A cheap grocery store with healthier local food (and gluten or sugar free options)	15	
Better wholesale distribution to local retailers.		
Food co-op		
Help cooking meals		
Later hours or weekday hours for farmers markets		
Make qualifying better for all. We have had huge medical bills that took money from my food budget.		
Someone to help me cook and clean		
Transportation		
Would like to know if there is a way to get info out on gleaning farmers fields after harvest on things like potatoes if we sign a waver		

Q15

Q15. How far do you travel to get food/groceries?	Count	%
Less than 1 mile	186	20%
1-5 miles	274	29%
5-10 miles	107	11%
More than 10 miles	376	40%
Total Respondents	943	

Q16

Q16. What are some challenges you experience when traveling to get food/groceries? Check all that apply.	Count	%
Not applicable	397	42%
The store is far from my home.	323	34%
The stores near my home do not offer fresh, healthy food options.	217	23%
Traveling to get food takes me away from job/ I don't have time	137	15%
There isn't an easy walking route to the grocery store.	103	11%
It's hard to keep my car fixed up or to pay for needed repairs.	99	11%
I can't pay for gas or ride fare.	82	9%
If I walk or bike, I can only carry a limited amount of food at one time.	82	9%
There isn't a clearly designated bike route from my home to the grocery store.	57	6%
I share rides with others, which limits when I can go.	43	5%
Other (please specify)	17	2%
Total Respondents	941	
Other:		
Groceries/grocery bags are too expensive	5	
Low temperatures/weather makes walking, biking, and roads dangerous	2	
Hard to travel with children	2	
Not fit to go to grocery store/health problems	2	
My food bank closed down (crestone)		
No transportation		
Our Manassa grocery store has closed permanently.		
The only reason that I don't shop at lowe's in Del Norte is due to the crappy manager! So I shop for groceries in other SLV towns		
Too many druggies infrastructure of the store begging for money.		
We need a seafood resource in the valley! Clean seafood, gulf shrimp.		

Q17

Q17. Within the past month, I threw food away, composted it, or fed it to animals when our household didn't/couldn't eat it.	Count	%
Never	328	35%
Once per week	414	44%
Twice per week	120	13%
More than three times per week	81	9%
Total Respondents	943	

Q18

Q18. Select the reasons you threw food away. Check all that apply.	Count	%
It was past the “best if used by” date and I threw it away.	353	38%
I bought too much food and couldn’t eat it before it spoiled.	269	29%
The food quality was questionable (i.e. the fruit was bruised).	244	26%
Our schedule changed or we were too busy and we didn’t get meals made as planned.	242	26%
Not applicable	209	22%
Restaurant portions were too big and I couldn’t eat it all.	139	15%
I didn’t know how to prepare some of the food I purchased.	68	7%
Other (please specify)	8	1%
Total Respondents	936	
Other:		
Children don't finish their food		
I eat out rather than cook the food I have at home		
I like buying up a lot of food so others can't have it.		
Not enough storage space in fridge/freezer		
We compost or give extra scraps to animals		

Q19

Q19. I currently compost at home. Compost is defined as recycling food scraps.	Count	%
No	583	62%
Yes	360	38%
Total Respondents	943	

Q20

Q20. If my city or county were to offer a food waste composting program in our community, I would participate:	Count	%
Yes	538	57%
Not sure	277	29%
No	128	14%
Total Respondents	943	

Q21

Q21. How concerned are you, if at all, that global climate change will harm your community's food system at some point in your lifetime?	Count	%
Very concerned	494	52%
Somewhat concerned	299	32%
Not very concerned	96	10%
Not at all concerned	54	6%
Total Respondents	943	

Q22

Q22. What sources do you use to learn about food (i.e nutrition classes, diet info, cooking skills, gardening) in the San Luis Valley? Select your top 3.	Count	%
Social media	483	52%
From friends and family	434	46%
Local events	271	29%
TV	240	26%
Online news	220	24%
Newspapers	150	16%
Local classes hosted by organizations	132	14%
Podcasts	117	13%
Radio	103	11%
School/extension groups	100	11%
My doctor or health clinic	93	10%
Food assistance programs (SNAP, WIC, etc.)	92	10%
Webinars	75	8%
Other (please specify)	65	7%
The library	62	7%
County Public Health Department	56	6%
My religious/faith community	40	4%
Total Respondents	935	
Other:		
Online recipes/Internet	18	
Personal research/health/experimenting	11	
Youtube	10	
Cookbooks/Books	9	
None of the above	7	
I don't know where to get this information	3	
Email lists	2	
Magazines	2	
4-h		
Apothecary and Farm Park		
Healthcare nutritionists/local healers		
My work		
Workout programs		

Q24

Q24. Which food and agriculture system goals are most important to the San Luis Valley community? Please select your TOP 3.	Count	%
Increase the production, sales, and consumption of locally-grown foods.	450	48%
Invest in a thriving local food and farm economy.	442	47%
Encourage and support youth farming and ranching programs.	338	36%
Promote & build upon programs to conserve water.	284	30%
Ensure access to healthier food for all and reduce food insecurity in our community.	279	30%
Find ways to add value to our agricultural products through farm, ranch and food entrepreneurs.	248	26%
Promote conservation practices to improve soil health.	245	26%
Build a resilient emergency food system that can respond to challenges (i.e. pandemics, fires, floods).	231	24%
Increase opportunities for food and agricultural education (soil health, cooking, gardening, food safety, food preservation).	230	24%
Support community health and wellness.	218	23%
Prepare our food and agriculture systems for the impacts of climate change.	199	21%
Increase local food outlets and commercial kitchens for food entrepreneurs.	196	21%
Reduce food waste and related solid wastes.	154	16%
Recognize and celebrate our community's diverse food cultures.	117	12%
Address the lack of racial equity in our current food system.	92	10%
Total Respondents	943	

Demographics

Which San Luis Valley county do you live in?	Count	%
Alamosa	344	37%
Saguache	269	29%
Rio Grande	152	16%
Conejos	76	8%
Costilla	63	7%
Mineral	31	3%
Total Respondents	935	

What is your age?	Count	%
Less than 5 years	1	0%
5-9 years	1	0%
10-14 years	1	0%
15-19 years	24	3%
20-24 years	51	5%
25-29 years	84	9%
30-34 years	106	11%
35-39 years	97	10%
40-44 years	124	13%
45-49 years	87	9%
50-54 years	74	8%
55-59 years	80	9%
60-64 years	68	7%
65-69 years	71	8%
70-74 years	47	5%
75-79 years	13	1%
80-84 years	7	1%
85 years or over	1	0%
Total Respondents	937	

What gender category do you identify with?	Count	%
Female	684	73%
Male	227	24%
Prefer not to answer	15	2%
Other/ Self-Identified	12	1%
Total Respondents	938	

What is the highest level of education you have completed?	Count	%
None	9	1%
1st - 4th grade	7	1%
5th - 6th grade	25	3%
7th - 8th grade	21	2%
9th grade	25	3%
10th grade	15	2%
11th grade	23	2%
High school graduate (or degree equivalent)	162	17%
Some college (1-4 years, no degree)	159	17%
Associate's Degree (include occupational or academic degree)	90	10%
Bachelor's Degree (BA, BS, AB, etc.)	228	24%
Master's Degree	122	13%
Professional Degree	19	2%
Doctorate Degree	16	2%
Prefer not to answer	16	2%
Total Respondents	937	

What is your total household income in the last 12 months?	Count	%
Under \$15,000	136	15%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	166	18%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	136	15%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	136	15%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	124	13%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	71	8%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	51	5%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	15	2%
Over \$200,000	17	2%
Prefer not to answer	83	9%
Total Respondents	935	

What race(s) do you identify with?	Count	%
White	747	83%
Two or more races	80	9%
American Indian or Alaska Native	40	4%
Black or African American	15	2%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	7	1%
Asian	6	1%
Total Respondents	895	

What is your ethnicity?	Count	%
Not Hispanic or Latino	462	52%
Hispanic or Latino	426	48%
Total Respondents	888	