SAN LUIS VALLEY COMMUNITY FOOD & AGRICULTURAL ASSESSMENT

Food Business 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.

This food business survey was targeted to business owners and operators of food-related businesses in the San Luis Valley. This survey was distributed to chefs, restaurant workers, food truck operators, grocers, market managers, and other small food businesses in the region. It included questions about their current food business, future business goals, the challenges they face when operating a food business in the region, and their interest/challenges when it comes to sourcing product locally from farmers in the Valley.

Q1

Q1. Do you currently operate a food business (grocery, restaurant, catering, value added, food truck or cart, bakery, etc)?	Count	%
Yes	34	59%
No, but I would like to start a food business in the future	12	21%
No, but I am ready to launch one	6	10%
Other (please specify)	6	10%
Total Respondents	**58**	
Other:		
A non-profit natural food grocery store		
Aggregation and distribution		
Bar		
Private chef		
Worker		

Q2

Q2. Select the option below that best describes the type of food business you operate.	Count	%
Other (please specify)	18	32%
Restaurant	12	21%
Specialty product / consumer packaged goods (i.e. pasta, sausage, granola, etc.)	9	16%
Food truck/cart	7	12%
Catering	6	11%
Grocery store	5	9%
Total Respondents	**57**	
Other:		
Aggregation/distribution		
Bar		
Casa Familiar		
Cheese processing		
Cotton candy		
Farmers Market		
food bank		
Food cooperative		
Food Hub and producer		
Food pantry		
Food service for seniors at KV HOA		
Meal prepping on the go meals and catering		
N/A		

Private chef
School cafeteria
U-pick garden, produce stand, hydroponics, educational outlet, and mushroom cultivation.
Vigi
Wholesale & Market Bakery

Q3

Q3. Which county is your business located in?	Count	%
Alamosa	19	33%
Rio Grande	14	25%
Saguache	13	23%
Mineral	5	9%
Conejos	4	7%
Costilla	2	4%
Total Respondents	**57**	

Q4

Q4. Where do you currently produce your goods?	Count	%
A commercial kitchen on-site	16	28%
At home	14	25%
I am not current producing	10	18%
Other (please specify)	8	14%
A food manufacturing facility	5	9%
A shared kitchen / incubator kitchen (please indicate location in the comments section)	2	4%
I am not currently producing	2	4%
Total Respondents	**57**	
Other:		
Farm		
In the process of building		
Inside greenhouses, hydroponics, and grow tents		
On private locations		
Pickled beets, onions		
Reseller		
USDA meat processing facility		
Valley roots food hub kitchen		

Q5

Q5. Where do you you currently sell your products? Check all that apply.	Count	%
My own store, business, or food truck	23	40%
Farmers market	20	35%
Restaurants and cafes	16	28%
Other (please specify)	14	25%
Retailers, grocery store, cooperatives	12	21%
My e-commerce shop	11	19%
Distributors	7	12%
My farm stand or CSA	5	9%
Institutions (schools, hospitals, etc.)	5	9%
Food hub	5	9%
Online grocers	2	4%
Total Respondents	**57**	
Other:		
Alamosa for Free		
Bar		
Direct to members		
N/A		
Feed children enrolled in our school district.		
Festivals and events around colorado		
Gyms		
Home		

Q6

Q6. If you were to expand, where would you like to sell your products? Check all that apply.	Count	%
My own store, business, or food truck	28	49%
Retailers, grocery store, cooperatives	22	39%
Farmers market	21	37%
Restaurants and cafes	21	37%
Distributors	16	28%
Food hub	15	26%
Institutions (schools, hospitals, etc.)	14	25%
My e-commerce shop	13	23%
Online grocers	11	19%
My farm stand or CSA	9	16%
Other (please specify)	7	12%
Total Respondents	**57**	
Other:		

N/A
San Luis

Q7

Q7. What are your top growth goals for your business? Choose your top three.	Count	%
Turning or growing a profit	20	49%
Sourcing more ingredients or items locally	18	44%
Increasing local ingredients on my menu	16	39%
Increasing local products in my store	15	37%
Offering more to employees (wages, benefits, etc)	15	37%
Getting stocked at a large grocery store	10	24%
New or expanded marketing campaigns for community reach	10	24%
Launching a new product line or offering	9	22%
Selling products online	4	10%
Other (please specify)	4	10%
Total Respondents	**41**	
Other:		
Bartering with groups for foods, i.e. exchanges fresh eggs for fresh beef etc..		
Increasing awareness of the benefits of local products		
Increasing production/unit without increasing herd size.		
Offering the SLV with fresh gourmet mushrooms we grow at our bakery.		

Q8

Q8. What are the main challenges you face in growing your business? Choose your top three.	Count	%
Lack of capital	30	68%
Limited time for sales and marketing	22	50%
Limited physical infrastructure / space (processing, kitchen, restaurant space)	17	39%
Recruiting/retaining employees	16	36%
Sourcing quality or local ingredients	16	36%
Other (please specify)	10	23%
Permitting challenges	6	14%
Limited outlets to sell my product	5	11%
Total Respondents	**44**	
Other:		
Alamosa is over 45 minute drive and our local stores charge and arm and a leg		
Competition, cross competing with producers, customers finding us too expensive and not valuing what we do. It’s pretty wild to literally see producers we work with drive all over the valley and deliver direct when that’s exactly why we are here. Producers not understanding our value and therefore that no we cannot accept farmers markets prices for their products.		
Cost of food products		

Low traffic in the off season
New to the area
Personal capacity
Refrigeration
Rising food costs
Seasonality of customer base
Want to increase production without increasing size

Q9

Q9. What types of business support services would help you reach your business goals? Choose your top three.	Count	%
Financing and funding opportunities	24	57%
Accounting or business development training	21	50%
Networking with other local food businesses and local producers	18	43%
Marketing training	14	33%
Support with recipe or product development	12	29%
Workforce development to build the employee pipeline for my industry	12	29%
Food safety training	8	19%
Navigating permit,licensing, and packaging requirements	8	19%
Other (please specify)	3	7%
Food safety	0	0%
Total Respondents	**42**	
Other:		
A chef exchange		
Affordable local ingredients		
Quality employees		

Q10

Q10. What types of infrastructure would help you reach your business goals? Choose your top three.	Count	%
More suppliers selling local foods	25	66%
Additional meat processing facilities	19	50%
Commercial or incubator kitchens for food production	19	50%
Potato value-added processing (chips, fries, milk)	14	37%
Additional poultry processing facilities	11	29%
Other (please specify)	7	18%
Hemp value-added processing (food, fiber, medicine)	6	16%
Biodiesel plant for biomass	3	8%
Total Respondents	**38**	
Other:		

12x12 Walk in cooler
Almost any local foods processing is helpful to my business.
Facilities that can process domestic elk
More local greenhouses that grow food in the winter
Packaging facility
Storage
Trucking infrastructure such as a lease

Q11

Q11. How would you describe the market for locally grown and raised products? Please rate the following statements from agree, neutral, disagree.	Agree	%	Neutral	%	Disagree	%
Shoppers and diners seek out locally-produced products	28	49%	24	42%	5	9%
Tourists are seeking a "taste of place" experience.	45	79%	10	18%	2	4%
Shoppers and diners are willing to pay more for locally-produced products	29	51%	13	23%	14	25%
Shoppers and diners who reside in the San Luis Valley need education on the value of buying locally-produced food	41	72%	14	25%	2	4%
Institutional buyers seek out locally-produced products	16	28%	20	35%	19	33%
Institutional buyers are willing to pay more for locally-produced products	11	19%	25	44%	19	33%
Farmers have the opportunity to sell large quantities of locally-produced products	19	33%	28	49%	9	16%
Farmers have the opportunity to grow and sell a diverse set of products	24	42%	25	44%	7	12%
Farmers have a diverse choice in customers to sell to	21	37%	13	23%	21	37%
The demand for local product exceeds supply	14	25%	21	37%	21	37%
The demand for local product is weak considering the SLV abundant supply.	27	47%	25	44%	5	9%
Total Respondents	**57**					

Q12

Q12. Approximately what percentage of your annual spending (in dollars) on food ingredients is for items produced in the San Luis Valley?	Count	%
Less than 5%	11	19%
5-10%	10	18%
11-20%	13	23%
21-30%	7	12%
31-40%	8	14%
More than 40%	8	14%
Total Respondents	**57**	

Q13

Q13. Who are your primary suppliers of local farm products? Check all that apply.	Count	%
Farmers and Ranchers	39	68%
Retailers (i.e. other grocery stores)	25	44%
Food Hub	24	42%
Traditional Wholesalers (i.e Sysco, USFoods, UNFI, etc.)	19	33%
Farmers Markets and CSA's	19	33%
Your own farm or ranch	15	26%
Agricultural Cooperative	9	16%
Other (please specify)	2	4%
Produce auctions	2	4%
Total Respondents	**57**	
Other:		
Supplies for cheese production (cultures, rennet, seasonings, boxes, labels come from places outside the valley		
Value added producers		

Q14

Q14. What are the top challenges you face when purchasing local food ingredients? Choose your top three.	Count	%
Pricing - product is too expensive	38	81%
Supply - not able to consistently provide product	26	55%
Diversity of product - not enough selection	15	32%
Volume - unable to fill the quantity needed	14	30%
Timing - seasonality of produce does not align with consumer demand	13	28%
Effort - too much effort required on my part to find and source local	11	23%
Quality - product does not meet grading standards	10	21%
Professional skills of suppliers - unprofessional or poor communication	5	11%
Other (please specify)	5	11%
No major challenges at this time.	2	4%
Total Respondents	**47**	
Other:		
I need to meet more farmers , I'm just learning slowly		
Ingredients can't be purchased within the SLV		
Larger mills buying wheat at a high price forces us to play by their rules and also creates a supply issue		
Minimum order requirements and large case sizes		
Travel distance to purchase		

Q15

Q15. Which food and agriculture system goals are most important to the San Luis Valley community? Please select your TOP 3.	Count	%
Invest in a thriving local food and farm economy.	28	61%
Increase the production, sales, and consumption of locally-grown foods.	19	41%
Encourage and support youth farming and ranching programs.	15	33%
Find ways to add value to our agricultural products through farm, ranch and food entrepreneurs.	13	28%
Prepare our food and agriculture systems for the impacts of climate change.	11	24%
Reduce food waste and related solid wastes.	9	20%
Promote & build upon programs to conserve water.	8	17%
Ensure access to healthier food for all and reduce food insecurity in our community.	8	17%
Build a resilient emergency food system that can respond to challenges (i.e. pandemics, fires, floods).	8	17%
Promote conservation practices to improve soil health.	7	15%
Increase local food outlets and commercial kitchens for food entrepreneurs.	5	11%
Increase opportunities for food and agricultural education (soil health, cooking, gardening, food safety, food preservation).	4	9%
Support community health and wellness.	3	7%
Recognize and celebrate our community’s diverse food cultures.	1	2%
Address the lack of racial equity in our current food system.	1	2%
Total Respondents	**46**	

Demographics

Which San Luis Valley county do you live in?	Count	%
Rio Grande	15	27%
Alamosa	15	27%
Saguache	13	23%
Conejos	6	11%
Mineral	5	9%
Costilla	2	4%
Total Respondents	**56**	

What is your age?	Count	%
15-19 years	1	2%
20-24 years	2	4%
25-29 years	3	5%
30-34 years	6	11%
35-39 years	6	11%
40-44 years	13	23%
45-49 years	5	9%
50-54 years	6	11%
55-59 years	5	9%
60-64 years	3	5%
65-69 years	2	4%
70-74 years	4	7%
Total Respondents	**56**	

What gender category do you identify with?	Count	%
Female	40	71%
Male	15	27%
Prefer not to answer	1	2%
Total Respondents	**56**	

What is the highest level of education you have completed?	Count	%
1st - 4th grade	1	2%
7th - 8th grade	2	4%
10th grade	1	2%
High school graduate (or degree equivalent)	7	13%
Some college (1-4 years, no degree)	9	16%
Associate's Degree (include occupational or academic degree)	9	16%
Bachelor's Degree (BA, BS, AB, etc.)	14	25%
Master's Degree	10	18%
Professional Degree	1	2%
Doctorate Degree	1	2%
Prefer not to answer	1	2%
Total Respondents	**56**	

What is your total household income in the last 12 months?	Count	%
Under $15,000	2	4%
$15,000 to $24,999	7	14%
$25,000 to $34,999	5	10%
$35,000 to $49,999	7	14%
$50,000 to $74,999	10	20%
$75,000 to $99,999	4	8%
$100,000 to $149,999	5	10%
Over $200,000	1	2%
Prefer not to answer	8	16%
Total Respondents	**49**	

What race(s) do you identify with?	Count	%
White	46	84%
Two or more races	6	11%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1	2%
Asian	1	2%
Black or African American	1	2%
Total Respondents	**55**	

What is your ethnicity?	Count	%
Not Hispanic or Latino	35	66%
Hispanic or Latino	18	34%
Total Respondents	**53**	