
SAN LUIS VALLEY LOCAL FOODS COALITION

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

SAN LUIS VALLEY LOCAL FOODS COALLITION

The San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition is dedicated to fostering an equitable local food system that restores the health of the people, community, economy and ecosystem. Founded in 2009, the San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition brings together producers, consumers, and organizations to collaborate on innovative solutions to local food access and sustainability. Our core programs include Rio Grande Farm Park, Mercadillo en el Rio, Valley Roots Food Hub, Cooking Matters, Local Foods Local Places including Community Food and Agricultural Assessment.



MESSAGE FROM
THE DIRECTOR

MAX GIBSON

"I am honored to step into this leadership role"

Dear Friends,

Local food is about connection - with the plants and animals that sustain us, with the land and weather cycles that sustain them, with our ancestors who saved seeds and passed down recipes, with our neighbors who weed and water, drive trucks, cook meals, and break bread beside us.

I am honored to step into this leadership role, and grateful for the connections that have been entrusted to me. After many years of hard, joyous work building and leading this organization, Liza Marron spent 2023 sharing her wisdom, giving me room to learn, and introducing me to the circles of people that made everything possible. I have been warmly welcomed by the staff, board of directors and advisory committees, the farmers and volunteers at the Rio Grande Farm Park, producers and customers of the Valley Roots Food Hub, partner organizations across the state, and community members from Saguache to San Luis.

The LFC is growing, with new and expanded programs, a strengthened administrative team, expanding partnerships, and an endowment for the Rio Grande Farm Park. Change can be hard, but it is a beautiful thing, full of opportunities. And throughout it, we find the web of connections that give us guidance, strength, and reassurance.

With gratitude and excitement,



COMMUNITY FOOD & AGRICULTURE ASSESSMENT

In 2023, the San Luis Valley Community Food & Agriculture Assessment completed its data collection and analysis, aimed at developing an understanding of what's working and what's not working in the SLV's food system. The assessment focused on understanding the producer opportunities, healthy food access, diversity, equity and inclusion, the environment and water, and emergency food planning. Building on the 2022 summits for Conejos, Rio Grande, and Saguache Counties, the LFC engaged 65 participants from Alamosa County,

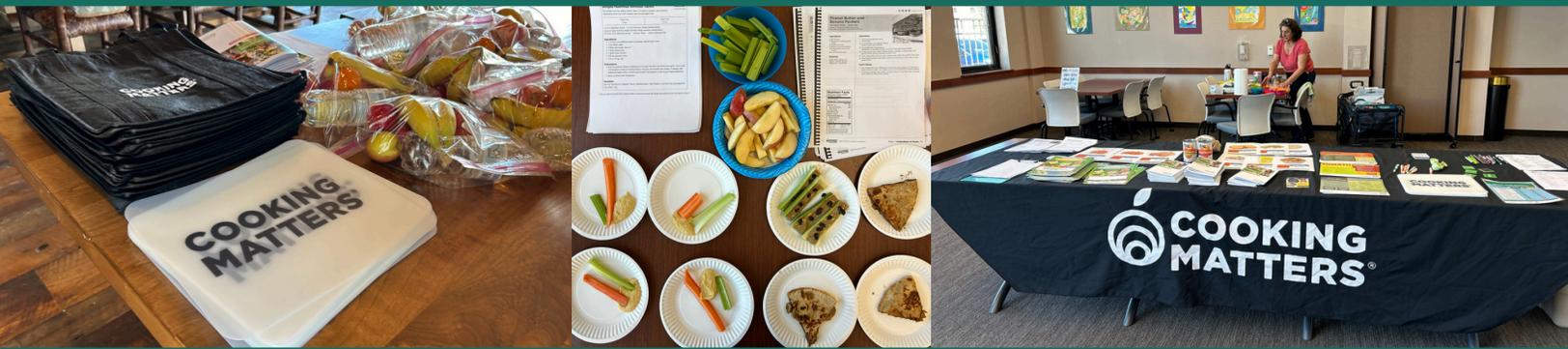
22 from Costilla County, and 17 from Mineral County. Findings from these summits were combined with those from the 1,153 people who participated in bilingual surveys of farmers/ranchers, food businesses, and community members. With the assessment complete, the team will be working on action planning in 2024 and 2025, facilitating the community and partners in shaping a resilient and sustainable food and agricultural system for the San Luis Valley.



SUMMITS IN 2023

- Alamosa County - 65 attendees
 - Conejos County - 22 attendees*
 - Costilla County - 22 attendees
 - Mineral County - 17 attendees
 - Rio Grande County - 32 attendees*
 - Saguache County - 27 attendees*
- 1,153 surveys were filled out
*took place in late 2022

COOKING MATTERS



San Luis Valley Cooking Matters has had a great year in 2023. With its in-person and online nutrition programs, Cooking Matters has reached 780 participants this year, expanding its effect to include the Spanish-speaking community and other families facing food insecurity, such as the elderly, the retired, young adults, and people experiencing homelessness. Cooking Matters provided on-site programming for the agricultural community, which included seasonal migrant workers, contracted H2A visa workers, and local agricultural workers. With pride, the program offered its

information in Spanish and English, making it accessible to individuals from diverse backgrounds. Cooking Matters furthered its support for local food systems and community well-being by purchasing 252 dozen locally produced Amish eggs to feed 252 families at the Community Pantry. Cooking Matters also strengthened its relationship with Rocky Mountain Service, Employment and Redevelopment, and Los Promotores del Valle de San Luis through collaboration at the Community Food Pantry, along with other agencies in the SLV.

**COOKING MATTERS REACHED 780 PARTICIPANTS
ACROSS THE SAN LUIS VALLEY WITH IN-PERSON
AND ONLINE NUTRITION PROGRAMMING**

**LOCAL: PURCHASED 252 DOZEN LOCALLY
PRODUCED AMISH EGGS TO SUPPORT AND SERVE
252 FAMILIES AT THE COMMUNITY PANTRY**

MERCADILLO EN EL RIO

150

AVERAGE
ATTENDEES AT
EACH OF 12
WEEKLY
MARKETS

4,130

SNAP AND
DOUBLE FOOD
BUCKS REDEEMED

30+

FARMERS AND
VALUE-ADDED
VENDORS,
INCLUDING 10 RIO
GRANDE FARM
PARK FARMERS

The Mercadillo Farmers Market is strong, representing its dedication to natural farming and sustainable agriculture. It began as a little farm stand at the Rio Grande Farm Park, and has developed into a lively marketplace that acts as a hub for the community and a source of fresh produce farmed on-site. The Mercadillo attracted a varied mix of community members, local artists, musicians, performers, and artisans, averaging 150 weekly guests at each of the twelve weekly Wednesday afternoon markets. More than \$4,130 worth of SNAP and Double Food Bucks were used this year, showing how important it is to give everyone access to affordable, wholesome food options. To maintain a robust local food economy, the Mercadillo worked with over thirty farmers and value-added vendors, ten of which are from the Rio Grande Farm Park. The Mercadillo demonstrated the community's commitment to sustainable food systems and its economic impact and provides a both food access and community-building in East Alamosa



RIO GRANDE FARM PARK

The Rio Grande Farm Park is tucked away in the center of San Luis Valley in East Alamosa was humming with activity in 2023. In addition to encouraging organic and ecological agricultural methods, this 38-acre farm acts as a bustling hub for social interaction and the preservation of regional culinary customs. With fifteen distinct trainings and conferences and fifty-one rental days, The Park's Education Center was humming with activity. Additionally, six high school students were involved in the Rising Steward Program, providing valuable hands-on agricultural education. With the completion of the greenhouse, farmers had a place to start their seeds in the spring, and through the winter staff grew 54 pounds of fresh produce, primarily lettuce. Rio Grande Farm Park continues to enhance soil health, conserve water, promote biodiversity, and strengthen community bonds through these initiatives.



RIO GRANDE PARK BY THE NUMBERS:

- 51 EDUCATIONAL CENTER TOTAL RENTAL DAYS-**
- HOSTED 15 UNIQUE TRAININGS AND CONFERENCES-**
- GREENHOUSE: 54 LBS OF PRODUCE GROWN-**
- RISING STEWARD PROGRAM: 6 HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS PARTICIPATED-**
- COMPOST: 38.5 TONS SOLD-**

VALLEY ROOTS FOOD HUB

\$2M IN GROSS SALES, WITH ~\$1.3M (65%) GOING BACK TO THE FAMILY RANCHERS, FARMERS, AND MAKERS WHO PRODUCED THE FOOD.



In 2023, Valley Roots Food Hub achieved noteworthy progress toward creating, managing, and maintaining a regional food system that raises the demand for and accessibility of wholesome, fresh food. The Hub's remarkable \$2 million in gross sales helped to support the local agricultural economy by passing through almost \$1.3 million to the family ranchers, farmers, and artisans who produced the food. At 65%, this “farm share” far surpasses the 15% that producers earn on average from food sales. The VRFH witnessed impressive participation by both consumer and wholesale buyers. 132 shareholders were part of the Fresh Box campaign, receiving produce and a newsletter every week from late June to late-September from farms across the region, with the option to add eggs or meat as well. Beyond that, 309 individual clients placed an average of 35–45 weekly a la carte orders, demonstrating even further reach of the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program. Furthermore, Valley Roots Food Hub continued to have a significant wholesale presence, catering to 220 clients weekly and demonstrating broad institutional and business support. These accomplishments highlight the critical role that Valley Roots Food Hub plays in promoting local agriculture and improving food accessibility.

FRESH BOX 2023:
132
SHAREHOLDERS

COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE CUSTOMERS:
309 UNIQUE CUSTOMERS, WITH 35-45 ON AVERAGE EACH WEEK

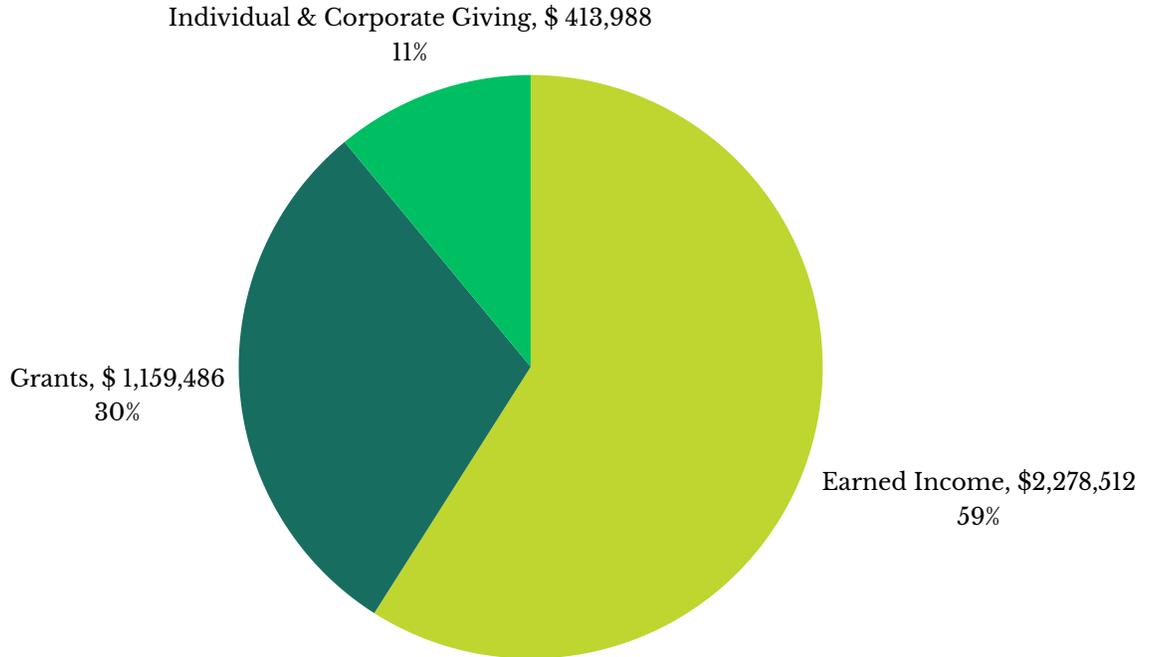
WHOLESALE CUSTOMERS:
220 UNIQUE CUSTOMERS, WITH 60 ON AVERAGE EACH WEEK



FINANCIAL SUMMARY

2023 REVENUE:

\$ 3,851,987



2023 EXPENSES:

\$ 3,892,090

