Produce Safety Symposium Set for June 20-21

Early registration rates end April 30, CFVGA Grower Member

Scholarships to Cover up to 70 Percent

The Center for Produce Safety (CPS) will be bringing its annual Research Symposium to Denver June 20-21 at the Hyatt Regency. Denver Tech Center. It is the first time ever CPS, whose goal is to fund research that will give produce growers practical solutions and technology to prevent or minimize produce safety vulnerabilities, will bring its symposium to Colorado.

“We feel so strongly about the value of this event to growers that we requested and were awarded money from the Specialty Crop Block Grant to help growers attend,” said Colorado Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association (CFVGA) President Robert Sakata. “The grant money along with our organization’s commitment will allow us to offer grower members scholarships that can potentially reimburse over 70 percent of the symposium registration and lodging costs.”

CFVGA is encouraging growers to attend the conference and to register before May 1 when rates go from $475 to $575. More information on food safety training, including the CPS scholarships and online application is available here: [https://coloradoproduce.org/food-safety/](https://coloradoproduce.org/food-safety/)

Among the symposium agenda items is an overview of four CPS-funded research projects on water, designed to help growers and others better understand the factors involved in sourcing, sampling, testing and treating specific types of agricultural water.

Sakata will be on a panel to discuss the water presentation.

“As Colorado growers, we are focused on making sure the water we use is safe,” said Sakata, who is chair of the CFVGA Water Committee. “I am anxious to learn about the latest findings and how they could help my operation.”

Also on the draft agenda are research results in the areas of produce packing house/supply chain food safety, validation of new Food Safety Modernization Act regulations, processing and many other hot topics. CPS funds a variety of research, including a project in the San Luis Valley of Colorado focused on wildlife and foodborne pathogens of leafy green crops. For more symposium details, including an agenda [www.centerforproducesafety.org](http://www.centerforproducesafety.org).
Are You Ready for a Recall?
By President Robert Sakata, Sakata Family Farms, Brighton, Colo.

I am writing this in the terminal of the Orlando airport, where I am waiting to board a plane to return home after attending a recall readiness training for the past two days. Did you know that there are more fresh fruit and vegetable recalls than ever before?

Advances in technology to identify site specific pathogens and then the tracking that is now done by FDA, the Center for Disease Control, local health departments and even doctors is leading to an era where sources of food borne illnesses will be identified like never before.

Do you know if your operation must be registered in the FDA Food Facility Registration? Do you know when you have to make a report to the Registry? Do you know what rights and responsibilities you have if FDA contacts you about a positive pathogen test from a sample of your product that they could have taken from a random retail test? Do you know the difference between a recall and a product withdrawal and what the implications for your operation are for each?

This and more was covered in the recall readiness training. When you have a fire it is not the time to finally think about buying a fire extinguisher. The same principle applies to responding to potential food contamination.

Although on our farms we think we deal with crises each and every day, the type of confusion, uncertainty, public pressure, and regulatory obligations that come flooding down during a recall can easily take down an operation, whether big or small.

Consider if you are ready and watch for CFVGA to be working on programs to give practical assistance to members to prepare them for such a crisis.

Colorado Legislative Report
CFVGA has been at the State Capitol this session on your behalf in discussions about a wide-ranging list of topics including everything from funding highway construction to water rights administration. Things move fast, especially towards the end of the session. If anything critical comes up, we will email you for your input. As always, feel free to contact us on any issue about which you have concerns or suggestions.

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From the Executive Director

Much to Toot our Horn About

By Marilyn Bay Drake, CFVGA Executive Director

Some time ago in one of those blast from the past articles that weekly newspapers run, I recall reading that sometime in the 1950s, the winning Colorado beef cook-off recipe was beef brownies. I certainly have nothing against beef, in fact, I consume a fair amount of it. But, I sure am glad that fruits and vegetables are so versatile and fit well in to so many dishes.

We have color, variety and nutrition on our side, and we will continue to tout these characteristics as we move into the growing season. Look for CFVGA produce promotion posts on Facebook and articles in your local newspapers. I would GREATLY appreciate any photos of your family working, your beautiful produce, visitors to your farms or any other everyday task that is immensely interesting to the public. Please email me photos, short videos or news of your operation.

As growers and the allied industries that support them move into this busy time, I want you to know you have elected a great board of directors. These men and women donate their time and talent to see that CFVGA is run with efficiency and wisdom. Their contact information is listed above. Please give them your ideas, suggestions and THANKS!

Another category of CFVGA members that makes it possible for us to carry out the programs we do is our 2017 Sponsors. These folks contribute financially and with their ideas and expertise. We so appreciate their decision to partner with us.

A huge thanks to all who have renewed their memberships or joined as new members. Working together gives us greater power.

CFVGA continues to work to bring you great member programs and services. On the food safety front, there is the CPS Symposium, Produce Safety Rule Training and USDA Mock Audit, all opportunities coming in the next few months. (See page 1.) To help meet labor challenges, we have FREE job postings for members. See next page for details. In addition, CFVGA’s website is packed with tons of great material, including webinars.

My parting advice: Avoid beef brownies.
Earlier this year, the Brighton Economic Development Corporation (BEDC) approached CFVGA about how best to support growers in their area through the association. BEDC opted to become a 2017 CFVGA Silver Sponsor and to attend the CFCVGA conference. The idea of an economic organization supporting growers in this manner was novel and worthy of a mention in this newsletter.

“Local, family-owned farms are a major part of Brighton’s heritage, culture and economy,” said Patrick Giron, BEDC assistant director. “Agriculture is an industry that is vital to Brighton in so many ways. Because we exist to support our Brighton businesses in any way we can, it makes sense for us to partner with CFVGA. We look forward to a great relationship.

Through its association with CFVGA, BEDC hopes to gain a better understanding of the challenges faced by growers in order to identify possible opportunities to better support the local agriculture industry.

BEDC’s mission is to “enhance Brighton’s quality of life by fostering and supporting economic growth that will ensure Brighton as a desirable place to live, work, learn, and play. BEDC is committed to supporting economic growth and improving the quality of life for all residents of Brighton.”

CFVGA’s hat is off to this innovative organization!

Find Farm Input Products and Services on CFVGA Website

As a new member benefit, CFVGA now features a categorized online directory of Allied Members with contact information, description of goods/services and links to their websites. It is easy to find specific goods and services for all Allied Members who opted to list their goods/services in the directory.

Growers, this is a great way to find businesses ready to serve you.

Allied Member who have not created a listing in the directory, email admin@coloradoproduce.org to request access to the online form.

Find the directory in page navigation under the “Resources” tab or use this link: https://coloradoproduce.org/allied-member-directory/ Browse today!

Helping you solve labor challenges is a primary goal of the Colorado Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association. As a member you can post any and all labor needs FREE of charge on our website. AND, beginning in May, we will be running statewide advertisements with Latino radio stations, thanks to a Specialty Crops Block Grant, to drive potential employees to the Job Postings section of our website. It is vital we populate this section with a robust number of job postings while and after this advertising airs.

PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE, list your labor needs TODAY.

You will need your Grower or Allied Member log in.

https://coloradoproduce.org/job-postings/

Need help? Contact us at admin@coloradoproduce.org or 303.594.3827

Brighton Economic Development Corporation Supports Growers

The Brighton Economic Development Corporation is shown left to right: Patrick Giron, assistant director; Teri Sanchez, program coordinator; Michael Martinez, executive director; Amy Coffey, administrative assistant; and Erika Reese, marketing & economic development specialist.
David Asbury, Full Circle Farms, Didn’t Intend to Become a Farmer....

David Asbury operates Rocky Mountain Pumpkin Ranch, doing business as Full Circle Farms, in Longmont. He raises wheat, corn, alfalfa and a variety of vegetables but is most known for his outstanding chilies and bountiful fall squash.

The operation markets its crops through a distribution network and also through farmers markets. Rocky Mountain Pumpkin Ranch has become a local landmark with a seasonal produce market and an annual fall festival.

David grew up farming, but never thought it would turn into a career. As a boy, he worked for his dad’s farming businesses around Longmont.

“I started farming when I was only 11 years old. We lived in town, but my father farmed in the country,” he said. “Dad was a farmer, but his heart really wasn’t in it.”

Growing up, David never seriously considering becoming a farmer, but he says his “fate was sealed” when a gentleman farmer who was a neighbor put the young man in charge of his prized tomatoes. Local tomato legend Lowell Phillips spent his winters in the south and left David to tend the greenhouse.

“It was a big responsibility for a kid who didn’t know anything,” laughs David. “I did a good job, and Lowell told me I had “the touch” and a future in farming if didn’t mind the hard work...but I didn’t take him seriously.”

David went to college to become a diesel mechanic but had a change of heart and transferred to Colorado State University to study agriculture. He liked the idea of teaching but soon realized that wasn’t his passion either. Shortly thereafter, he landed a job with a friend’s wholesale produce business. Fifteen years later, David bought five acres just off Highway 66, named the business Rocky Mountain Pumpkin Ranch and began hosting fall harvest festivals.

“There were no real pumpkin patches back then and I thought it would be a good idea to start one,” he said. “We started with one tractor; now we have quite a few more.”

It was a good idea, indeed. Twenty years later, he farms over 2,000 acres of combined county and private land, all of it certified organic or transitional.

Not unlike other growers, David lists labor, government regulations and price deflation as his greatest challenges.

What advice would he offer new growers? “Be open to new operational ideas and be prepared to work long days,” he said.

In January, David was voted to fill the vacancy when Jason Condon resigned from the CFVGA Board of directors. He sees “helping growers navigate the regulations that are sure to come” as an important role for CFVGA. He also reminds us that while it is easy to feel crushed by the challenges, growers need to remember that people need to eat and it is the job of growers to grow healthy, safe food.
Food Safety Committee
Chair: Dominic DiSanti, Co-Chair Martha Sullins

Save the date for two educational events:
1. Produce Safety Rule Grower Training, May 11 from 8am-5pm, at the Colorado Department of Agriculture;

Check the CFVGA website or Weekly Scoop for registration information for both events, which will be offered free or discounted to CFVGA members!

The committee is also planning a fall workshop on preparing for a recall and has several webinars in development, including a webinar on cleaning and sanitizing bins used for tree fruits and a follow-up to our March 23 webinar presentation on Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Implementation in Colorado, which is archived here: https://youtu.be/Qdri_fsQcFI on the CFVGA Food Safety Resources page.

Nutrition & Health Committee
Chair: Roger Mix, Co-Chair Wendy Peters Mochetti

The Nutrition and Health Committee serves as a link between CFVGA, Colorado produce growers and the groups and agencies that provide science-based information on the health benefits of fruits and vegetables. The committee is comprised of members from LiveWell Colorado, growers, and Colorado State University professionals.

The committee is seeking new members and has recently recruited additional members from CSU Extension as well as dietitians who work across the state. If you are interested in the committee, please contact committee co-chair Wendy Peters Moschetti, Food Systems Director at LiveWell Colorado at wendymoschetti@livewellcolorado.org. The committee will focus its efforts on developing a plan of action for the coming 12 months.

Labor Committee
Chair: Reid Fishering

CFVGA will be advertising the job postings feature of the CFVGA website on Entravision Spanish language radio beginning next month. It is VERY important that grower and allied members use this free service to list all their employee needs. Use this link: https://coloradoproduce.org/ to submit a a FREE job posting for your farm or company.

Business Development Committee
Interim Chair: Robert Sakata
Submitted by Shaina Knight, Committee Co-Chair

The Business Development Committee is starting off this season by finalizing a long-awaited project, our updated webpage. We are all excited to share fantastic business development resources offered in the State all in one place, our webpage.

Other projects we are looking forward to taking on this year will include crisis management training and succession planning.

Next committee meeting will be on April 17. We hope for the best this season.
Emerging Technologies in Fruit and Vegetable Production

The other day, as I clumsily tried to figure out a new feature on my smartphone, it occurred to me just how drastically and suddenly technology has changed the way we go about our daily lives. In the same way, technology has made and will continue to make dramatic changes in the fruit and vegetable industry. As growers in Colorado and across the nation face challenges from labor to water use, technological solutions are emerging to help address those issues.

Many new technological advancements revolve around the use of Global Positioning Systems (GPS). Today, GPS-based applications are being used for farm planning, field mapping, soil sampling, tractor guidance, crop scouting, variable rate applications of chemicals and fertilizers, and yield mapping. Each year, more and more applications are developed. The technology, as a whole, has advanced to the point where even the smallest growers can afford and benefit from some of the applications.

Additional technologies pertain to monitoring and predicting weather. Although, technology has not allowed us to control weather (and maybe thankfully so), using weather data to model water use and pest development has advanced tremendously in recent years. One state specific example is the Colorado Agricultural Meteorological Network (COAGMET). COAGMET is a network of automatic weather stations distributed across the state with the stations being particularly concentrated in irrigated production areas. Data collected by the network are available on the internet at www.coagmet.com. That weather data is now being used to help predict water use for numerous crops. Further, additional models are being developed that will predict the development of various pests. All of that information is and will be available at your fingertips.

In the food safety arena, sophisticated diagnostic kits are now available that allow immediate testing of a crop or food-touching surface. Researchers at Massachusetts Institute of Technology have developed a new technology to detect the foodborne pathogen Escherichia coli O157 and other potential contaminants. The new MIT test is based on a novel type of liquid droplet that can bind to bacterial proteins. This interaction induces a color-based change that can be detected by either the naked eye or a smartphone.

To address labor issues, technological advances are emerging that can assist in harvest and other labor-intensive tasks like weeding. For example, Blue River Technology, a company based in Mountain View, Calif., is developing the “Lettuce Bot” to assist in weed removal and thinning. The Lettuce Bot uses video cameras and visual-recognition software to identify different plants and, with a squirt of herbicide or concentrated fertilizer, kills unwanted lettuce plants or weeds. A similar method is being developed using video-based recognition to distinguish between weeds and the crop. In this case, weeds are removed with sand blown in an air stream or with precise flaming devices.

Harvesting certain crops with automation and technology may present the most difficult challenge. Researchers are now designing robots for the most delicate crops by integrating advanced sensors, powerful computing, computer vision, robotic hardware and algorithms, as well as high precision GPS technologies. Most agriculture robots won’t be available for ten or more years. However, if that seems like a long time, just remember how recently we were all using land lines to communicate.

Water Committee

Chair: Robert Sakata

CFVGA has been engaged with the Colorado Ag Water Alliance in outreach efforts including workshops in Alamosa, Glenwood Springs and Steamboat Springs. Watch for CAWA led water tours for the South Platte Basin this summer along with short video about ag water. If you want information on water quantity activities, including webinar topics, tours, and/or workshops please let Robert Sakata know at rtsakata@aol.com
In my last update to you in late January, I highlighted a number of issues that would be hot in Washington, D.C. this year. I promised an ambitious agenda now that Republicans control all three branches of government. Here’s an update after President Trump has been in office for three months.

Healthcare Repeal and Replace

President Trump campaigned, as did all Republicans, to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act with something better. The effort to do so collapsed in late March with congressional Republicans and the White House unable to marshal enough votes to pass a bill on the U.S. House floor.

While House leaders indicated they will try to repeal and replace the health law, Senate Majority Leader McConnell seems to have prevented the Senate from taking action on the bill. With fruit and vegetable producers being one of the few industries within agriculture to reach the 50-employee threshold that triggers Obamacare requirements, this is an issue we will follow closely.

Regulatory Reform

One area that has moved under the new administration is regulatory reform. The president signed a number of executive orders, and cabinet officers have put the brakes on dozens, maybe hundreds, of regulations. One such example is the pesticide family of chlorpyrifos, widely used by the produce industry, especially tree fruit growers. It was set to be eliminated under the Obama administration, but President Trump has reversed that.

The president also has signaled that he wants to trim the number and scope of federal regulations within every agency. While most regulations are now on hold, eventually the administration will need to establish a process to identify, sort through and then remove burdensome regulations. That will be a time-consuming process. Regulations go through a long process before they are approved, and when removing regulations, they must go through that same process to justify the regulations coming off the books. How this process is organized will be critical.

Targeting a few high-profile regulations is one thing, but putting forward a comprehensive process to weed through all government regulations requires a lot of time and a comprehensive process. Western Growers is working to identify burdensome regulations within the jurisdiction of every agency that our producers interact with, including U.S. Department of Agriculture, Interior Department, Environmental Protection Agency, Food & Drug Administration.

We will be ready when these processes are put in place.

On your behalf, Western Growers’ staff in Washington, D.C. works on federal issues in a variety of ways. First, we work with Congress on legislative activity where we try to shape bills to protect and serve the interests of the produce industry.

We also engage the administration, where we work to shape regulations as well as to secure funds for projects that benefit our members and their communities. We have been active leaders in farm bill discussions, immigration reform, tax policy, water issues, Food Safety Modernization Act (FMSA), and a variety of EPA issues as well as issues related to the Endangered Species Act. Please feel free to contact me at dnuxoll@wga.com.
Member Directory

Grower Members
Anchor Farms
Anita’s Pantry & Produce
Apex Produce
Aspen Moon Farm LLC
CC&C
Colorado Mushroom Farm
Cooksey Produce
Croft Family Farm
DenverFarmer.com
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USDA - APHIS National Wildlife Research
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Weld Food Bank
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Find the most up to date member directory and complete contact information under the membership tab at coloradoproduce.org