

The Shuman Report

Executive Summary

Attentive to recent trends like rising energy prices, Transition Colorado is leading a coalition of grassroots organizations to promote food localization in Boulder County. This effort includes: creating vehicles for local capital formation to support new or expanded local food businesses; underwriting an innovative local food-distribution enterprise; and commissioning this study and a linked strategic plan to help focus these initiatives.

The study begins by analyzing the food system in Boulder County, and then examines the economic impacts of the county moving a quarter of the way toward fully meeting local demand for food with local production, processing, and distribution. It suggests that this 25% shift could create 1,899 new jobs, providing work for more than one in seven unemployed residents. It could increase annual wages in the county by \$81 million, gross county product by \$138 million, and state and local business taxes by \$12 million.

The analysis is then extended to North Central Colorado (representing two-thirds of the population in the state) and to the entire state of Colorado, and shows how a 25% shift could create 24,037 jobs and 31,022 jobs for these two areas, respectively.

At whatever scale the 25% shift is undertaken, it also delivers myriad other benefits, including: increasing the food security of people who suffer from obesity and Type-II diabetes; improving air and water quality and lowering the local carbon footprint; attracting tourists; supporting local entrepreneurship; and boosting civic pride.

Standing in the way of the 25% shift are formidable obstacles. New workforce training and entrepreneurship initiatives are imperative for the managers and staff of these new or expanded local food enterprises. Land must be secured for new farms. New capital is needed. And consumers in the region must be further educated about the benefits of local food and the opportunities for buying it. Within Boulder County, the biggest challenge is land. For the full benefits of the 25% shift to be realized in Boulder County, it will probably be necessary to convert farmland from resource-intensive commodity agriculture to bio-intensive local food growing. A shift in local diets, towards less meat, also will help make the shift more feasible.

To overcome these obstacles, we offer several ideas for programs and investment priorities. In a period of fiscal austerity, we argue, the priority must be to create “meta-businesses” that can support the local food movement on a cash-positive basis. For example, to mobilize consumers in the region to buy local food, we suggest creating local debit, credit, and gift cards, and purchasing platforms that better connect local food businesses to one another and to government procurement agencies. The final proposal we offer is a Boulder County Food Authority that might sell tax-exempt municipal bonds that in turn help to collateralize loans from local banks and credit unions to high-priority local food businesses.

- See more at: <http://localfoodshift.com/site/page?view=shuman-report#sthash.SeoCsnzC.dpuf>