



# Crossroads Resource Center

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## **Tools for Community Self-determination**

### **San Luis Valley Region (Colorado) Highlights of the Local Farm & Food Economy**

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for  
**San Luis Valley partners**

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*Covers Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Mineral, Rio Grande, & Saguache Counties in Colorado*

#### **San Luis Valley Region (Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2011)**

46,555 residents receive \$1.4 billion of income annually. Personal income tripled from 1969 to 2011, after dollars were adjusted for inflation.

Although population has increased 21% since 1969, there has been only limited public planning to assure a secure and stable food supply for Valley residents.

#### **Balance of Cash Receipts and Production Costs (BEA):**

*Note: data on farm revenue and expenses does NOT include Mineral County, because considerable data is missing from county reports, due to the limited amount of agriculture in the county (the 2007 Census of Agriculture lists 15 farms in Mineral County, selling \$126,000 of products).*

1,724 Valley farmers sell \$347 million of food commodities per year (1989-2011 average), spending \$333 million to raise them, for an average gain of \$14 million each year. This is an average net cash income of \$8,121 per farm. *Note that these sales figures compiled by the BEA may differ from cash receipts recorded by the USDA Agriculture Census.*

Overall, farm producers earned a net cash income of \$327 million by selling crops and livestock over the years 1989 to 2011. Yet farm production costs exceeded cash receipts for twelve years of that 23-year period (the years 1999 to 2010, moving just barely positive to \$7 million in 2011 when prices were high). Moreover, 55% of the region's farms reported that they lost money in 2007 (Ag Census). This is less than the state average of 60%. San Luis Valley farmers and ranchers earned \$12 million less by selling commodities in 2011 than they earned in 1969 (in 2011 dollars).

Farmers and ranchers earn another \$27 million per year of farm-related income — primarily custom work, and rental income (23-year average for 1989-2011). Federal farm support payments are often a more important source of net income than commodity production, averaging \$7.5 million per year for the region for the same years.

**The region's consumers:**

San Luis Valley region consumers spend \$129 million buying food each year, including \$75 million for home use. Most of this food is produced outside the region, so the region's consumers spend about \$115 million per year buying food sourced far away. Only \$865,000 of food products (0.3% of farm cash receipts and 0.7% of the region's consumer market) are sold by farmers directly to consumers.

**Farm and food economy summary:**

Farmers earn \$12 million each year producing food commodities, and spend an estimated \$200 million buying inputs sourced outside of the region. Even when farmers make money, these input purchases result in substantial losses to the region as a whole. Overall, farm production creates a loss of \$185 million to the region.

Meanwhile, consumers spend \$115 million buying food from outside. Thus, total loss to the region is \$300 million of potential wealth *each year*. This loss amounts to almost as much as the value of all food commodities raised by the region's farmers.

**Consumer Spending**

**San Luis Valley region: markets for food eaten at home (2011):**

San Luis Valley region residents purchase \$129 million of food each year, including \$75 million to eat at home. Home purchases break down in the following way:

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$15.5
Fruits & vegetables	14.8
Cereals and bakery products	9.6
Dairy products	8.2
“Other,” incl. Sweets, fats, & oils	26.5

If San Luis Valley region residents purchased \$5 of food each week directly from farmers in the region, this would generate \$12 million of new farm revenue for the region's farmers.

*Note: data in this section of the report does not include food purchases by tourists, which may be substantial, but are compiled by other data sources.*

*Note: this data is based on regional averages for the Western U.S., and does not reflect actual measurements in each of the counties.*

**Alamosa County: markets for food eaten at home (2011):**

Alamosa County residents purchase \$43 million of food each year, including \$25 million to eat at home. Home purchases break down in the following way:

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 5.2
Fruits & vegetables	5.0
Cereals and bakery products	3.3
Dairy products	2.8
“Other,” incl. Sweets, fats, & oils	8.9

**Conejos County: markets for food eaten at home (2011):**

Conejos County residents purchase \$23 million of food each year, including \$13 million to eat at home. Home purchases break down in the following way:

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 2.8
Fruits & vegetables	2.6
Cereals and bakery products	1.7
Dairy products	1.5
“Other,” incl. Sweets, fats, & oils	4.7

**Costilla County: markets for food eaten at home (2011):**

Costilla County residents purchase \$10 million of food each year, including \$6 million to eat at home. Home purchases break down in the following way:

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$1.2
Fruits & vegetables	1.2
Cereals and bakery products	0.8
Dairy products	0.6
“Other,” incl. Sweets, fats, & oils	2.1

**Mineral County: markets for food eaten at home (2011):**

Mineral County residents purchase \$2 million of food each year, including \$1 million to eat at home. Home purchases break down in the following way:

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$0.2
Fruits & vegetables	0.2
Cereals and bakery products	0.1
Dairy products	0.1
“Other,” incl. Sweets, fats, & oils	0.4

**Rio Grande County: markets for food eaten at home (2011):**

Rio Grande County residents purchase \$33 million of food each year, including \$19 million to eat at home. Home purchases break down in the following way:

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 4.0
Fruits & vegetables	3.8
Cereals and bakery products	2.5
Dairy products	2.1
“Other,” incl. Sweets, fats, & oils	6.8

**Saguache County: markets for food eaten at home (2011):**

Saguache County residents purchase \$17 million of food each year, including \$10 million to eat at home. Home purchases break down in the following way:

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 2.1
Fruits & vegetables	2.0
Cereals and bakery products	1.3
Dairy products	1.1
“Other,” incl. Sweets, fats, & oils	3.5

**Key data sources:**

**Bureau of Economic Analysis data on farm production balance**

<http://www.bea.doc.gov/bea/regional/reis/>

**Food consumption estimates from Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Expenditure Survey**

<http://www.bls.gov/cex/home.htm>

**U.S. Census of Agriculture**

<http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/>

**USDA/Economic Research Service food consumption data:**

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/data/foodconsumption/>

**USDA/ Economic Research Service farm income data:**

<http://ers.usda.gov/Data/FarmIncome/finfidmu.htm>

**For more information:**

To see results from *Finding Food in Farm Country* studies in other regions of the U.S.:

<http://www.crcworks.org/?submit=fffc>

To read the original *Finding Food in Farm Country* study from Southeast Minnesota (written for the Experiment in Rural Cooperation): <http://www.crcworks.org/ff.pdf>

To view a PowerPoint presented in March, 2008, by Ken Meter at Rep. Collin Peterson's (D-MN) Minnesota agricultural forum, called the "Home Grown Economy":

<http://www.crcworks.org/crcppts/petersonkm08.pdf>

For further information: <http://www.crcworks.org/>

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