

SPEAKER BIOS

(Alpha Order)

SOUTHEAST FOOD REPRESENTATIVE:

Mike Bartolo, Horticulture and Landscape Architecture - CSU Extension

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Mike was born and raised on a small irrigated farm east of Pueblo, Colorado and currently has small farms or ranches in Otero, Crowley, and Pueblo counties, Colorado.

After attending graduate school, he assumed the position of Vegetable Crops Specialist with Colorado State University at the Arkansas Valley Research Center in Rocky Ford, Colorado. His primary responsibilities are research, extension, and outreach activities to support commercial crop production in the state and region. His research encompasses many irrigated crops including alfalfa, corn, onions, melons, peppers, and other fresh market vegetables. For the past 30 years, his research has been centered on different aspects of crop production including irrigation efficiency, soil fertility, plasticulture (drip irrigation and mulches) and pest management. He has also helped develop several pepper varieties adapted to Southern Colorado.

Mike sits on numerous boards and committees including the Palmer Land Trust Board of Trustees, Colorado Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association Board of Directors, and the Arkansas Valley Super Ditch Board.

METRO FOOD REPRESENTATIVE:

Matt Berry, Chief Development Officer, National Western Center

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Matt Berry serves as Chief Development Officer at the National Western Center Authority leading new business development and building local, regional and global partnerships with organizations to deliver programming in service of its mission to advance global food solutions. Formerly, Matt served as Chief Impact Officer at Gary Community Investments where he was responsible for developing strategy and advancing a data-driven, impact investment strategy through the measurement of social impact and risk across philanthropic and market rate investments. He also co-led the design of the organization's innovation practice, including the development of a local ecosystem to support entrepreneurs and ventures focused on addressing social issues.

More broadly, Matt is committed to advancing social change by designing solutions, inventing, imagining, and innovating, ultimately leaving the world in a better place than when he arrived. Matt holds a master's degree in Urban Planning and Regional Development from the University of Colorado-Denver.

SOUTHEAST FOOD REPRESENTATIVE:

Liza Marron, Director, San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition

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Liza is the founding director of the San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition in rural southern Colorado. She has been a community organizer with a focus on social justice, wellness, and prevention for many years. Ms. Marron has a master's degree in Community Counseling and a bachelor's degree in Spanish. Her skill set includes grant writing, government, visioning and strategic planning, non-profit management, finance, coalition building, economic development, education, fund raising, public speaking, and managing a budget. Liza is an avid gardener, horsewoman and student of life.

NORTHEAST FOOD REPRESENTATIVE:

Keith Maxey, County Director – Livestock, CSU Extension

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Keith Maxey is the County Director for Weld County Extension. He has been with Extension for 25 years, focusing mainly on dairy and livestock.

NORTHWEST FOOD REPRESENTATIVE:

Michelle Meyer, Executive Director, Community Agriculture Alliance

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Michele has worked at CAA since 2010 and assumed the Executive Director role in 2018. She brings over 15 years of professional fund raising and marketing experience to the CAA. Michele previously worked for United Way, Hospice of Larimer County and has her own business as a personal trainer/yoga and spinning instructor. With a diverse background, Michele comments, “I am thrilled to be a part of the Community Agriculture Alliance. I truly believe in the organizations mission of preserving, promoting and supporting agriculture. One of the main reasons we moved here, and I think a very common one, is the western culture and heritage. The natural beauty of the area and working landscapes are critical to keeping the Yampa Valley so unique and special. I am honored to work on their behalf.”

Toby Rittner, President & CEO, CDFA

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Toby Rittner is the President & CEO of Council of Development Finance Agencies (CDFA), a national association dedicated to the advancement of development finance concerns and interests. CDFA is comprised of the nation’s leading and most knowledgeable members of the development finance community representing hundreds of public, private, and non-profit development entities. Members are state, county, and municipal development finance agencies and authorities that provide or otherwise support economic development financing programs. Mr. Rittner runs the day-to-day operations of the Council including the organization’s various educational, advocacy, research, resources, and networking initiatives.

Prior to joining CDFA, Mr. Rittner was the Director of Legislative Affairs for the International Economic Development Council (IEDC). Mr. Rittner has also worked for the Franklin County, Ohio Board of Commissioners and the City of Gahanna, Ohio. Mr. Rittner previously served on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Environmental Financial Advisory Board and is a member of the Advisory Board for the National Community Fund I. Mr. Rittner holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and a Master's of City and Regional Planning degree from The Ohio State University. Mr. Rittner was awarded the Ohio State University College of Engineering Distinguished Alumnus Award in 2016.

Allison Rowland, Manager of Research and Technical Assistance, CDFA

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As Manager of Research and Technical Assistance for the Council of Development Finance Agencies (CDFA), Allison oversees all of CDFA’s food systems finance work, including the W.K. Kellogg Foundation-funded initiative to “define the food system asset class” to advance opportunities and leverage existing financing streams to scale local and regional food systems by increasing access to healthy foods and creating new living wage jobs in communities across the country.

Throughout this work, Allison has collaborated with hundreds of stakeholders and co-authored the CDFA Food Finance White Paper Series. Allison also is working alongside five food system pilot projects across the country, leads the Food Systems Finance Advisory Council, and is initiating a variety of technical assistance projects to

help position communities, their resources, and their financial products to support equitable, local food economies.

SOUTHWEST FOOD REPRESENTATIVE:

Dawn Thilmany, Extension Specialist – Agribusiness, CSU Extension

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Dawn Thilmany McFadden is a Professor of Agribusiness and Agribusiness Extension Economist with Colorado State University, serving in that role since 1997, and specializes in economic development related to local, organic and other value-added food market segments, as well as food market analysis and consumer behavior. She has published over 90 journal articles on consumer behavior, agricultural markets and food systems, and presented similar material to over 230 Extension audiences.

She is co-Director for CSU's Regional Economic Development Institute, is on the leadership team for CSU Extension Food Systems program and is currently on sabbatical at the USDA Economic Research Service from 2017-18. She has Chaired the Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council and served on the US Dept of Agriculture's Advisory Board on Research, Extension, Education and Economics. She has also served in leadership positions with the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association, the Western Agricultural Economics Association, the Food Distribution Research Society and several regional research committees.