

## **Colorado State Fair: Shaping the Future of Agriculture**

**By John Salazar, Commissioner of Agriculture**

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Later this month, Coloradans from across the state will converge on Pueblo for the 141<sup>st</sup> Colorado State Fair. While the event promises a top notch carnival, national recording artists, and entertainment galore, don't forget the true mission of the fair is based on agriculture and education.

The Colorado State Fair is the centerpiece of our effort to educate the public on the importance of, not only the food system, but on the efforts of the entire agricultural community and the Colorado Department of Agriculture. It's more than a state fair—it's Colorado's premier celebration of agriculture.

Don't overlook the importance of agriculture. It is one of the most important, vibrant industries in our state. It contributes more than 40 billion dollars to our state's economy, and it supports over 170,000 jobs. The Colorado State Fair is a valuable partner in that effort. The Fairgrounds provides nearly \$34 million in economic activity to Colorado throughout the year; \$29 million of that activity is driven by the annual State Fair event. During the annual event, the State Fair also expands to a tremendous job creator; the jobs provided by the Fair equates to 371 year-around positions.

This industry doesn't just impact our economy-- it impacts you. Our Colorado farmers and ranchers help feed you, your family, your friends and the world. The Colorado State Fair provides the opportunity to educate fairgoers on this amazing industry. Intertwined between the carnival rides and funnel cakes, are livestock, rodeos, crops and youth who have dedicated their lives to this vital industry. The Fair provides \$340,000 of its annual budget and facilities for the FFA and 4H organizations. These organizations do more than teach students about agriculture, they provide valuable lessons in leadership, animal husbandry, and becoming the future leaders of our state.

This year, the Colorado State Fair is celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> annual Colorado's Touchstone Energy Cooperative Junior Livestock Sale. The Sale is instrumental in supporting the future of Colorado's agribusiness as it demonstrates to youth the importance of raising quality livestock and the work required of those who pursue careers in agriculture. Over the past 33 years the Colorado State Fair Junior Livestock Sale has raised a combined total of \$7,801,265 for the youth involved in 4H and FFA; proceeds from the sale go to the education funds of youth exhibitors or towards reinvestment in future agriculture projects.

The importance of teaching new generations about agriculture and where their food comes from is priceless. To take it one step further, you can visit the Colorado Building and support local agriculture at the Colorado Proud Store. All the products here are made by Colorado businesses, in Colorado.

As you enjoy the full array of entertainment at this year's State Fair, be sure to absorb its true mission. The Colorado Department of Agriculture fills the Agriculture Pavilion every year with educational fun and excitement designed to entertain and educate the young and young-at-heart. Take this opportunity to learn as much as you can about the Colorado Department of Agriculture and role the agricultural community plays in your way of life.

### **Item of Interest**

Our fair has earned its place in history. Before Colorado became a state, approximately 2,000 people converged on what is now Pueblo for a horse exhibition and from that was born the Colorado State Fair. The Fair continues to call Pueblo home, and in fact, has only cancelled the fair once during its entire history. In 1917, during World War I, the

Fairgrounds' horse stables and open space offered an ideal training facility for the Army National Guard, thus cancelling the Fair for that year.

The Colorado State Fair runs August 23-September 2, 2013. For more information, visit [www.ColoradoStateFair.com](http://www.ColoradoStateFair.com).