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Colorado Proud Launches *Choose Colorado* Tour: A Community-to-Community Road Trip across State's Agricultural Landscape

DENVER, Aug. 1, 2013 – Government officials, agricultural experts and members of [Colorado Proud](http://www.coloradoproud.org) just launched the *Choose Colorado* tour to celebrate food and agricultural products grown, raised or processed in Colorado, by literally “driving home” the impact the agricultural industry has on Colorado’s economy, from jobs to income. *Choose Colorado* is a three-week, statewide road trip to educate consumers and stimulate pride for local goods.

“Agriculture is a vital part of Colorado’s future – providing more than 170,000 jobs and contributing more than \$40 billion to the state’s economy annually, while also feeding the world with more than \$1 billion in exported products,” said Colorado Commissioner of Agriculture John Salazar, who spoke at today’s kick-off event at Safeway in Denver, held intentionally on Colorado Day, which celebrates the past, present and future of the Centennial State. “The *Choose Colorado* tour is an interactive expedition to connect our agricultural regions and salute the farmers, ranchers, retailers and businesses that significantly help our state thrive.”

Colorado’s agricultural industry continues to overcome adversity from drought, fires and recession, and consistently earns its ranking as one of the state’s top industries. Colorado also ranks in the top ten nationally for production of a variety of agricultural products.

While buying local has proved its positive impact on the economy, it also is better for the environment – helping keep farms and ranches profitable, thereby maintaining open space and wildlife habitat, while lowering the carbon footprint and saving energy. Buying local also supports Colorado’s western heritage, preserving the farms, ranches and land that define the state.

“Safeway is honored to host eight stops on the *Choose Colorado* tour to help promote Colorado growers like Sakata Farms and Petrocco Farms, which have partnered with Safeway for more than 60 years to provide customers with fresh, superior quality produce like corn, cabbage and green beans,” said Al Duran, Safeway’s Denver division president. “We take great pride in supporting our Colorado economy and offering customers hundreds of Colorado Proud products and produce.”

At this morning’s event, Commissioner Salazar read a proclamation from Governor John Hickenlooper declaring the month of August as “[Colorado Proud Month](#),” and praised the value of the program for “promoting the freshest, locally-grown agricultural products in the state; helping more than 1,900 Colorado companies market their food and products; encouraging the state’s chefs and schools to use Colorado-grown items in their daily menus; supporting local businesses and our state’s economy; and ensuring the future of our agricultural industry.”

The *Choose Colorado* tour will travel the agricultural landscape that makes up nearly half of Colorado's 66-million acres. The expedition was created to integrate the communities that comprise the Colorado Proud program, while educating and influencing consumers along the journey.

Unveiled at the kick-off event, a Colorado Proud-branded [car](#) will depart Denver today for the *Choose Colorado* road trip to Grand Junction, Durango, Alamosa, Salida, Greeley, Vail, Glenwood Springs, La Junta and Pueblo; and will complete the three-week tour on Aug. 23 at the [Colorado State Fair](#). Upon arrival in each location, residents, farmers and businesses will join together for a community finish-line crossing; presentations by local officials, Chamber of Commerce representatives, farmers and businesses; celebration for consumers that includes local foods and giveaways; and other events that commemorate each community's diversified [commodities](#), including livestock, grains, dairy products, fruits, vegetables, horticultural products, and manufactured goods. Consumers everywhere can follow the tour through pictures, stories, profiles and experiences shared on the Colorado Proud [Facebook](#) page.

"Colorado Proud helps spread statewide awareness for local products that are 'better for you and better for Colorado.' And, this pride has indeed become contagious, locally and nationally," added Salazar.

Today's speakers included:

- Colorado Commissioner of Agriculture, John Salazar
- Safeway Vice President of Marketing, Joe Perry
- Michael Hirakata of Hirakata Farms
- Robert Sakata of Sakata Farm

About Colorado Proud

The Colorado Proud Program was created by the Colorado Department of Agriculture in 1999 to promote Colorado food and agricultural products. One of the goals of Colorado Proud is to make it easier for consumers to identify and purchase Colorado products by labeling them with the Colorado proud logo. In 1999 the program started with 65 companies, and now the Colorado Proud Program has over 1,900 members that include growers, processors, restaurants, retailers and associations statewide.

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