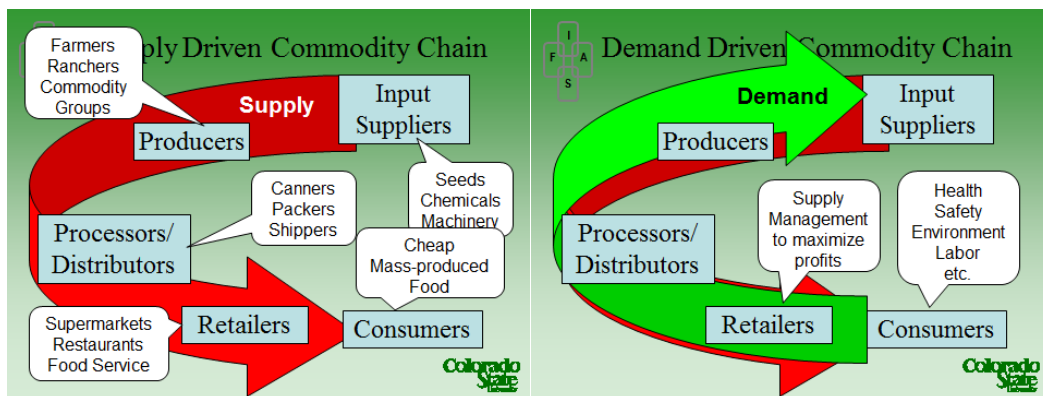


Consumer Health and Wellness and Demand Driven Food Systems

Food systems are societal cultural imperatives; how these systems are organized shapes this portion of their identity and security. The West's highly diverse food systems are expressed through the technological and business sophistication of traditional production agriculture sectors, as well as through the emergence of urban CSAs, direct markets, and the explosion of new farmers (mostly part-time) among the West's metropolitan centers, where the great majority of its population reside. In recent decades, nationally we have witnessed the emergence of consumers demanding and directing their retail food choices and dollars toward more culturally- and wellness-oriented restaurants, and locally grown food that meets their personal standards for sustainability and health. Large food retailers have reorganized their floor plans to embrace consumer demand. Over the last half century, the United States has moved from policies ensuring a cheap and abundant food supply for all to today's highly differentiated consumer-driven food system. Today's food system continues to be a high profile cultural imperative, particularly in the Western Region.

The diagrams below illustrate how the shift from a supply driven to a demand driven commodity chain is shaped by consumer preferences, particularly for their health and wellness concerns and values.



Understanding how consumer values for health and wellness shape the West's agriculture and food systems, particularly as a cultural imperative with impressive economic impacts on local and regional economies, is a priority for research, extension, and curricula at LGUs.

Below is a summary of role of nutrition and the food system in health.

1. Prevention of chronic disease by diet and other lifestyle choices. There are clear links between diet and exercise, and metabolic syndrome and obesity. Chronic health problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and some cancers are outcomes of these interactions. There is also great interest in how a nutritious diet and other lifestyle choices contribute to optimum health. This provides an outstanding opportunity to further integrate research and public outreach in the land grant community.

- a. Approaches to improving nutrition in demand driven agriculture.
 - b. Association of wellness lifestyles and new opportunities for Western producers.
2. Socioeconomic factors influencing availability and selection of nutritious foods across society.
 - a. Health care costs containment. Recent estimates of health care costs in the United States are in the \$2.5 to 3.0 trillion per year range. Disease prevention can reduce human suffering and yield great cost savings. The land grant universities are in a strong position to pursue research and outreach that can identify, validate, and communicate the health benefits of nutritious whole foods. They can also enhance the nutrient value of whole foods through research, help integrate nutritious foods into the food system, and influence consumer choice.
 - b. Feasibility for changes considering market conditions/drivers.
3. Net social benefits.
 - a. Reduction in chronic disease. Foods rich in antioxidants, fiber, vitamins, and other desirable nutrients offer great potential for prevention of chronic diseases.
 - b. Increase diversity and profitability within the food system.
4. Key features of consumer characteristics and food system structure in the Western US.
 - a. Demographics for the next 30 years. The Baby Boom generation is transitioning from late middle age into senior citizens.
 - b. Market conditions, food distribution, and profitability of nutritious foods.
5. Issue is global in scale, but there are unique situations across the Western US. Food production in the West involves a greater diversity of crops than perhaps any other region in of the United States. This provides an opportunity to provide the public a broad array of nutritious whole foods. The land grant universities can promote this opportunity through their research and outreach networks.