Colorado State Agriculture Commissioner John Salazar, whose family has been farming for 14 generations, says: “We’ve seed potato growers and work with CSU Extension and their research center here. They’ve had a huge, huge impact in rural communities; we couldn’t do it by ourselves.

“I was a member of Congress, serving for six years in Washington, D.C., including on the Agriculture Committee that crafted the 2008 Farm Bill. When you look at the 435 members of the U.S. House of Representatives, only four of us – four – were farmers. Most had no experience or idea of what it was, but they were the ones making farm policy.”

This small percentage in the House can make a difference. “What’s important is creating the bridge between the land-grant University and the community. Our role is helping citizens succeed. A Professor of Sociology, Swanson reads the confluence of Extension history and current events for patterns; what seems like unrelated patchwork is a roadmap to him. “The social movements of necessity of the 1930’s are reemerging and pop culture society is a big driver of this; people like the feeling of digging their own potatoes, there’s a desire to bring that back into the home. We have a lot of expertise to help those who want it. Then we provide a new way of thinking about old ideas.”

Urban agriculture is one new face on an old field, with people interested in using intensive cultivation of backyard farmcapes (where more than 60-percent of the landscape is devoted to production), urban land repurposing, and community gardens to generate income. Though they want to earn a living, this way, they don’t want to move to a rural area to do it, says Blake Angelo, Urban Agriculture Education Coordinator in Denver. “Extension is leading the movement; we’re providing resources and advice. We have more skill in translating and applying research than (you can get) just reading it on a Google site. The greatest impact I can make is helping people think through issues, because it’s not just about putting carron into the ground and watching them grow. Instead, it’s about labor, taxes, liability, post harvest handling – all the planning that goes into this. Extension is the only agency teaching the business of urban farming.”

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