“Traditionally all land based people grew food and used a bartering economy in New Mexico, sharing communal lands and acequias,” explains AFSC co-director Don Bustos, who farms his ancestral land. “In the rise of agribusinesses and federal subsidies, we’ve seen a shift to a more aggressive and competitive model of agriculture.” Yet the communal values of land based people is evident in the recent creations of farmer cooperatives in New Mexico and cooperation to aggregate between farmer cooperatives.

The farmer cooperatives and beginning farmers who have graduated from the AFSC farmer training program are selling to grocery stores and co-ops in Espanola, Los Alamos, Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and Las Cruces; three public school districts; the Mora senior citizen center; and a daycare in El Paso as well as numerous restaurants and farmers markets throughout the state.

AFSC provides logistical support to the cooperatives by helping with sales, invoicing and delivery, as well as technical assistance to incubate the farmer networks in their infancy. AFSC also brings together the farmer cooperatives and farm trainees once a year for a two day meeting to discuss potential collaboration, including sharing knowledge, farm materials, transportation, and markets.

Shoppers can find organic produce from La Cosecha del Norte at the La Montanita in Santa Fe, the Los Alamos Cooperative, and the Espanola Community Market; Sol y Tierra Growers at the Mountain View Co-Operative and Beneficial Farms CSA; and Agri-Cultura Network at the Rio Grande La Montanita in Albuquerque. To learn more go to: www.afsc.org/newmexico.