

Missoula Food Policy Advisory Board Newsletter

Missoula's food system in focus



Source: Destination Missoula

THANK YOU TO OUR AMAZING SPRING SEMESTER INTERNS!

We are so grateful to Erin and Kyla, who interned with us during the Spring semesters of their graduate program in Environmental Studies at the University of Montana. Thanks to Erin and Kyla, we were able to learn more about Missoula's food system, better understand recent trends in agriculture in Missoula County, and generate a stronger evidence base for future food policy recommendations.

With their help, we were able to do the following in just a few months:

- Conduct and analyze our third Missoula rapid community food assessment survey;
- Dig into the recently released USDA 2022 Census of Agriculture data for Missoula County and Montana;
- Identify recent community food assessment efforts in other Montana communities and further our understanding of the value of a community-wide food assessment.

Thanks, Erin and Kyla!

RAPID COMMUNITY FOOD ASSESSMENT SURVEY



Our third iteration of the rapid community food assessment survey for Missoula County was open from March 28 through April 30th and received a total of 289 responses from County residents. The purpose of the survey was to gather feedback from Missoulians to inform the board's work while also increasing our visibility and engagement with the Missoula community. Survey questions focused on the following topics:

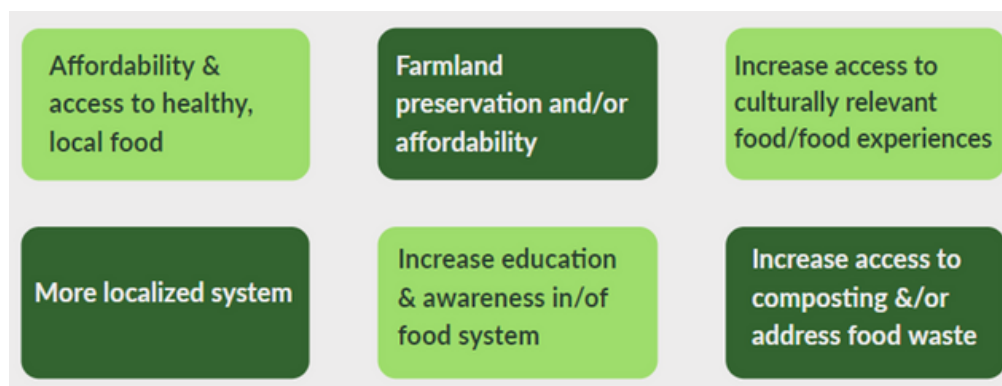


- Food consumption attitudes and behaviors
- School meals participation
- Food access
- Important farming and agriculture issues
- Important food systems issues
- Food policy priorities
- The future of Missoula County's food system

The most commonly identified farming/agriculture issue among participants was **“the sustainability of farming practices,”** with 41% of participants ranking it as a top issue. The most common food system issue among

participants was **“the lack of affordable healthy, nutritious food,”** with 39% of participants selecting it as a top issue. The most commonly identified food policy priority among participants was **“protecting agricultural lands from development,”** with 40% of participants selecting it.

When asked about what changes they would like to see to Missoula's food system, participant feedback focused on the following key themes:



For full survey results check out our presentation [here](#), or read our intern Erin's detailed summary from her graduate work [here](#).

The board will be presented survey results, along with information from our analysis of USDA Census of Agriculture data during the Western Montana Fair! Join us on Friday, August 9th at 3:30pm in the Gerald W. Marks Exploration Center at the Missoula County Fairgrounds.

USDA CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE DATA BRIEFS



As part of their internships, Erin and Kyla reviewed recently published Census of Agriculture data from the United States Department of Agriculture National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS) and generated data briefs on key trends and patterns in agricultural activity and producer demographics within Missoula County and Montana between 2002 and 2022.

Land in farms in Missoula County (NASS, 2022)



606
farms



339,770 million
acres



561 acres
average farm size

Based on their research, Erin and Kyla provided the following policy recommendations to Missoula Food Policy Advisory Board and Missoula City and County:

1. Complete an updated Community Food Assessment in Missoula
2. Build relationships: Implement policies and programs that ensure land access and tenure
3. Policy and programs with the direct goal of helping women succeed in the agricultural sector.
4. Policy and programs with the direct goal of helping Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) succeed in the agricultural sector.
5. Continue utilizing Census of Agriculture data, with a focus on New and Beginning Producers and Young Producers to make policy recommendations in these areas.

You can read Erin's USDA census brief about producer demographics [here](#), and view Kyla's storymap of agricultural land use in Missoula county [here](#).

2024 Western Montana Fair: Local Food Highlights



Support local food at the Western Montana Fair August 6-11 and the Missoula County Fairgrounds!

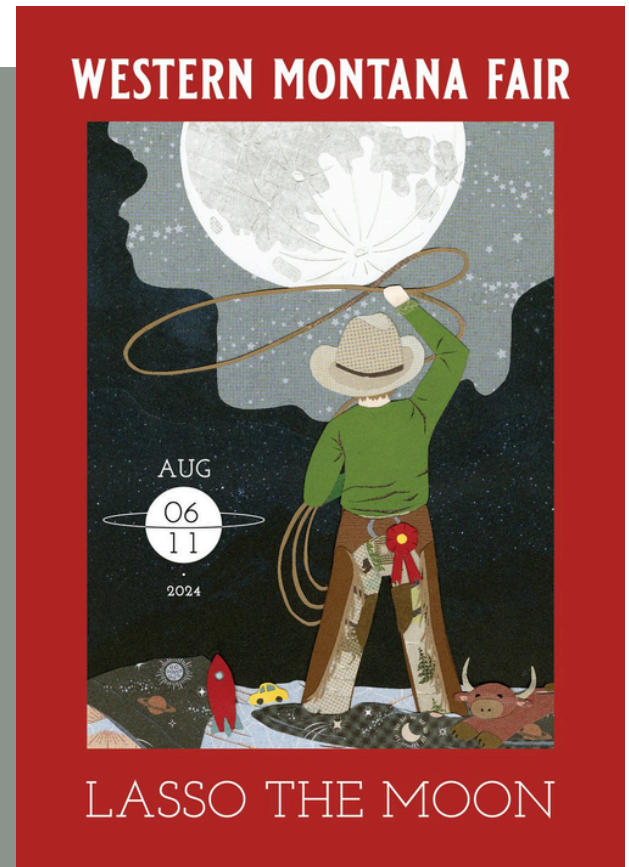
All of the food vendors at the Fair are small businesses or non-profit organizations from Missoula and surrounding communities. Come and sample some of your Western Montana Fair favorites as well as some newly featured vendors. The Missoula Future Farmers of America (FFA) will be selling FFA Tacos made with local beef that was grown, cared for, and processed on a 100 acre farm at Big Sky High School. Other mouthwatering dishes from local vendors include Slab Yo Papa BBQ, Indian Tacos from All Nations Health Center, Kamoon Arabian Cuisine, and sourdough margherita pizzas from Portable Pizza Palace. To be more inclusive of folks on a budget, everyone is also welcome to bring their own food. A complete list of vendors can be found [here](#).

Get excited about local farming with the Orchard Homes Farmers Market! Discover the fascinating stories behind local farmers, makers, bakers, and more from the Orchard Homes area. Dive into their practices, goals, handcrafted goods, and the rich history of their involvement with the market. Pick up some good local produce, too! Friday August 9th from 11am- 6pm on Fairway Plaza.

Have you ever dreamed of winning a blue ribbon for your own prize vegetables? It's free to exhibit at the fair! If you're a grower, chef, fermenter, baker, or homebrewer, consider entering your wares for cash and glory. More information, exhibition categories, and an online signup can be found [here](#). All ages and abilities are welcome. Entries are due by August 5th.

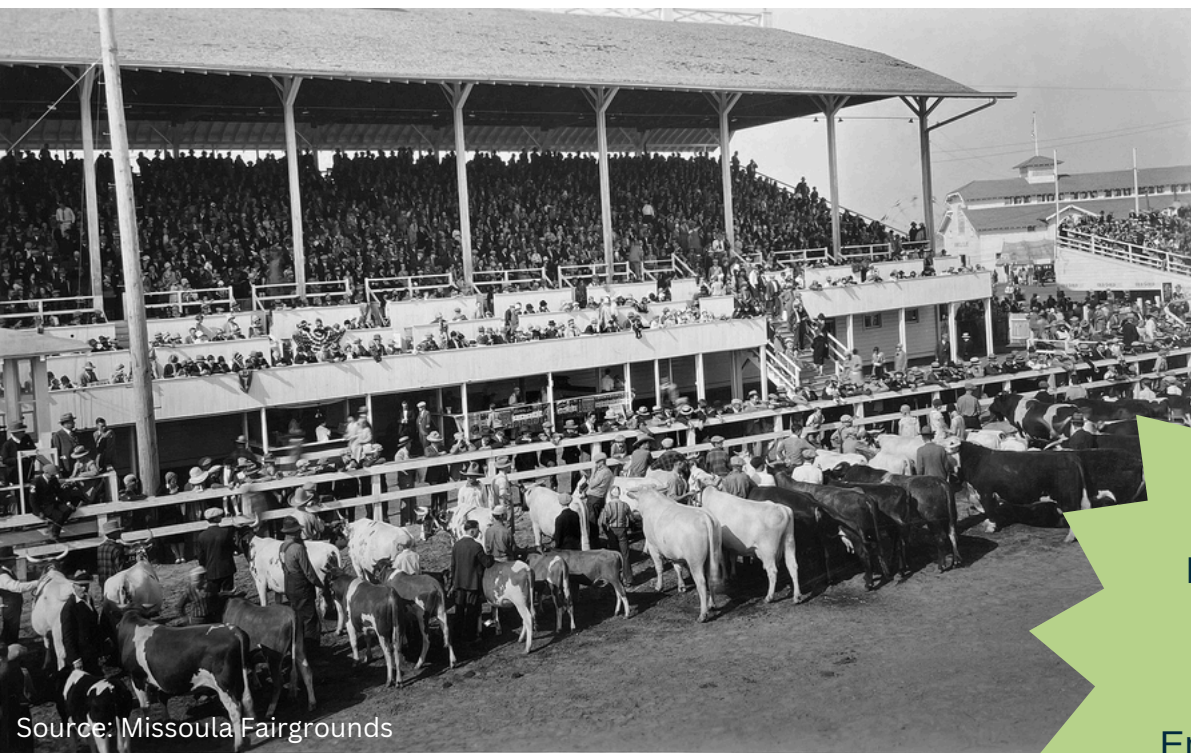
Free activity tables will offer education and demonstrations throughout the Fair. Soil Cycle will have their composting red wiggler worms on display; Wheaton Labs will offer homesteading and permaculture demos; Five Valleys Seed Library will give away free seeds; and Missoula and Mineral Farm Service Agency will provide farming and ranching expertise. More info [here](#).

The Western Montana Fair is a proud Zero by Fifty participant. The Fair requires all vendors to use only compostable or recyclable materials and was able to reduce landfill trash by 74% from 2022 to 2023. The Green Team from HomeResource is the Fair's partner in educating the vendors and public, and in trash collection and sorting. More info [here](#).





- Check out Abundant Montana’s recently released [Local Food Guide](#) for local food events, recipes, and more across Montana!
- Trust Montana’s request for Open Space Bond funds for their community land trust project, [Corner Farm](#), to protect working farmland in Missoula was recently approved by Missoula City Council
- Read about young local farmers in the [Missoulian](#)
- Read about Old Salt Co-op in Helena and the landscape of meat production and processing in Montana in this [New York Times article](#)
- August 9th - MFPAB presentation during Western Montana Fair (3:30pm at the Gerald W. Marks Exploration Center)
- August 15th – Garden City Harvest annual [Farm Party](#)
- September 23rd – Montana’s first [Food Rx Summit](#) hosted by CFAC



Source: Missoula Fairgrounds

Have a policy idea or
want to get in touch?

Email us at [foodpolicy@
missoulacounty.us](mailto:foodpolicy@missoulacounty.us)