



Spring internships

FFPAB is hosting two Spring 2024 internships for University of Montana students!

Thanks to funding from the City of Missoula and Missoula County, we are excited to host two paid internships this spring for UM students.

In partnership with Missoula County Lands and Communities and Community Food and Agriculture Coalition, interns will help us dig into research and policy ideas related to local food and agriculture.

Have ideas for internship topics? Contact erikafairb@gmail.com

FPAB Focus on Local Meat

With limited options for state or federally inspected local meat processing (required for sale to customers) in Missoula County, the costs and labor associated with getting local meat to local consumers can be prohibitive. At the same time, recent trends and the community's historic support of local foods suggest that there is a strong demand among Missoula County residents for local meat products. In our 2021 and 2022 Rapid Community Food Assessment surveys we consistently heard from participants that they would like to see improved access to more affordable local meat products.

Based on our ongoing work to understand the challenges local ranchers face and build policy solutions, we believe that addressing challenges around local processing and purchasing could provide significant opportunities for local producers and expand the accessibility of and market for locally produced meat products.

In March 2023 we hosted a roundtable discussion with ranchers, processors, health department representatives, and local leadership. Through the discussion, we identified three next steps/areas of continued focus

- Education and marketing of local meat: helping to further stimulate demand for local meat and educate the community about the benefits of supporting locally produced food.
- Explore a partnership with University of Montana College of Business: leverage existing resources within our community and capacity and innovative ideas of students to understand the what opportunities exist in Missoula County strengthen local meat production and processing.
- Understand the regulatory limitations and opportunities within Missoula County: Continue to work with county staff to understand the zoning and environmental health regulations that may impact the development of potential meat processing infrastructure.

We continue to explore these areas and are excited to share that during the Fall 2023 semester, we began a partnership with UM College of Business. Students in Professor Erik Guzik's People, Process, and Technology course conducted preliminary case studies on local meat production. Students brought forth exciting ideas to support local ranchers, and we look forward to continuing this partnership next semester.



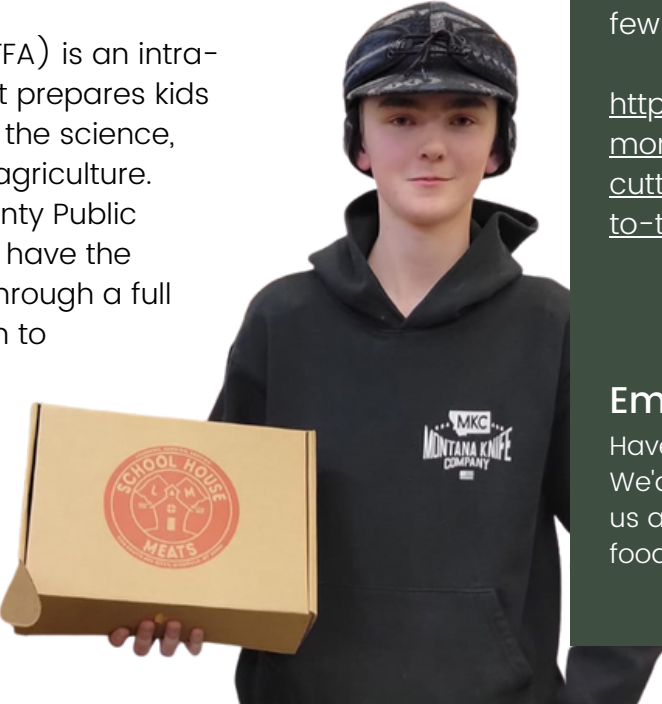


FFA Meat & Cheese Boxes

On the second Monday of December students, parents and advisors convened in the Food Science Lab of the Missoula County Public School Ag Education Center. This event is the culmination of months of work: animals raised and processed, sausages made and smoked, jams jarred, and orders collected. In quick assembly lines, more than the goal of 1000 Meat and Cheese boxes, are assembled. It is completed in record time - about an hour. Order lists are checked and checked again as boxes are loaded into vehicles and dispersed throughout the community.

While the main purpose of the Meat and Cheese Box fundraiser is to support scholarships for students participating in the Missoula FFA Program, the process of making the product is, in itself unique educational opportunity made possible because of the School House Meats facility.

Future Farmers of America (FFA) is an intra-curricular youth program that prepares kids for leadership and careers in the science, business, and technology of agriculture. Students at the Missoula County Public Schools Ag Education Center have the opportunity to see livestock through a full food cycle - from conception to consumption. Missoula is the only high school in the nation to have a state- inspected state-of-the-art meat processing facility. Here students can learn important life skills and can capture more value for the livestock they raise.



School House Meats at Big Sky High School

Did you know that Missoula County's own Big Sky High School is the only high school in the country with a state-inspected meat processing facility? This unique program offers students hands-on, technical skills in local meat production, from farm to table and everything in between, and is a great asset to the Missoula community.

Check out this article from a few years back:

<https://www.tsln.com/news/montana-state-on-the-cutting-edge-big-sky-farm-to-table-program/>

Email us.

Have a policy idea of your own? We'd love to hear about it. Email us at foodpolicy@missoulacounty.us