

AERO's Vision for Montana Agriculture:

Our collective desire is for owner-operated, family-sized farms to thrive and for locally-owned processing enterprises to revitalize our communities. We want our urban centers to be surrounded by small farms, reconnecting consumers to rural life and land, and to Montana-grown fresh and processed food. We want our grain farmers and cattle ranchers to have access to locally-owned processing facilities, giving them more market options and enabling their neighbors, local retailers, restaurants and institutions to be among their customers. We envision consumers who value high quality, locally grown food that meets environmental and social goals. We want farmers, processors and retailers working together in support of one another's interests and to provide consumers with quality, fairly priced food. We want marketing alternatives that give us prosperity without human or environmental degradation.

Achieving this vision will require that:

1. Farmers and ranchers are respected as skilled artisans or craftsmen producing beautiful, high quality, essential products. Consumers demand, support, help organize and participate in farmers markets and CSA networks.
2. Everyone in Montana has an adequate, nutritious, safe diet.
3. Family-sized, owner-operated farms are valued, supported and nurtured. State and federal farm and rural development policy supports farmers who provide all or most of the labor for the farm and whose livelihoods are adequate and secure. Farmers receive fair and adequate prices that reflect not only their labor and investment but the cost of protecting and enhancing natural resources.
4. Public and private agricultural research and education, including that of the land grant university and Extension, commodity boards and associations, support development of agricultural production and marketing systems that reward more environmentally sound practices to achieve both sustainable agriculture and rural development. Public and private lenders support development of locally-owned processing enterprises and market alternatives.
5. Everyone has access to seeds and breeding stock that are not genetically engineered or patented and owned, and that will naturally reproduce.
6. The average age of Montana farmers drops 10 years, from 55 to 45, as hundreds of young people are attracted to agriculture.
7. Farmers--and all landowners--recognize their responsibility to the land. Farming is regarded as a high use of good land and local and state governments take effective action to protect not just open space but the infrastructure and support that working farmers require. Farmers take great pride in creating diverse wildlife habitat and in protecting water quality and soil productivity. Grass and legumes are universally used in rotations and farms and ranches integrate trees and shrubs into the agro-ecological system. The distinction between organic and conventional ag diminishes as everyone improves their stewardship.
8. A new generation of locally-owned processing and marketing cooperatives makes Montana ag products available to Montana consumers and to a wider array of markets. Montana agricultural products are recognized for their quality. Montana farmers and ranchers receive a premium for protecting the environment.
9. A strong sense of community, a return to cooperation, a commitment to social and economic equity, respect for diversity and respect for nature characterize our state.

For more information about AERO please contact us at: 406-443-7272, aero@aeromt.org

Where does YOUR FOOD come from?



Local food means:

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Superior Freshness and Taste



Stronger local economies



Healthy families

"Food that comes from a farmer
you can know and trust"



Sustaining Family farms



Healthy environments

Preserving open space



Reducing fossil fuel use

Conservation practices:

protect water, soil
and wildlife habitat