Montana Farm to School Leadership Team

The Montana Farm to School Leadership Team works through partnerships across the state to build farm to school initiatives that help kids eat healthy, connect with agriculture and nutrition through education, support Montana farmers and food producers, enhance local economies, and strengthen communities.

The Leadership Team consists of 14 member organizations with statewide focus and influence that are key to the success of farm to school in Montana. In 2020, the Leadership Team embarked on a yearlong strategic planning process to identify priorities and activities for the future. Check out the Montana Farm to School Leadership Team Strategic Plan Summary. The team has 7 working groups, which are open to the public. To get involved, contact the working group chair listed on the Leadership Team webpage.

The Office of Public Instruction sponsors the Montana Farm to School Leadership Team. The team is facilitated by the Montana Farm to School Coordinator at Montana Team Nutrition Program.

2020 Member Organizations
AERO
Mission West Community Development Partners
Montana Department of Agriculture
Montana Department of Livestock
Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services
Montana Farmers Union
Montana No Kid Hungry
Montana Office of Public Instruction
Montana School Nutrition Association
Montana State University Extension
Montana Team Nutrition Program, Montana State University
National Center for Appropriate Technology
Northern Plains Resource Council
USDA Office of Community Food Systems, Mountain Plains Region

The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

What is farm to school?
Farm to school enriches the connection communities have with fresh, healthy food and local food producers by influencing food purchasing and education practices at K-12 schools and preschools. Students gain access to healthy, local foods as well as education opportunities through such avenues as school gardening, cooking lessons, and farm field trips. Through community-driven approaches, farm to school implementation differs by location but always includes one or more of the following core elements: procurement, education, and school gardens.

Why does farm to school matter?
Farm to school not only connects kids with locally grown food and food and nutrition education, but it helps foster more resilient food systems. COVID-19 has highlighted the need for farm to school to solve food supply issues and support the local economy.

Montana Farm to School Participation Rates

- **20%** SCHOOL GARDENS
  - Creating and tending school gardens

- **51%** PROCUREMENT
  - Serving local products in school meals

- **23%** EDUCATION
  - Conducting educational activities

**OVERALL PARTICIPATION**
Sites participating in at least one F2S activity

- **2020-2021** 58.6%
- **2019-2020** 57.1%
- **2018-2019** 54.8%

An estimated **21.6%** (every 1 in 5) of Montana children faced food insecurity in 2020, meaning they may not know how they will get their next meal.

Agriculture remains the leading industry sector in Montana’s economy, with a value of $4.6 billion in 2020. By connecting children with agriculture and exposing them to agricultural careers, farm to school initiatives are helping to prepare the next generation of farmers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Overall Participation</th>
<th>School Gardens</th>
<th>Procurement</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2020-21</td>
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42% of Montana students are eligible for free and reduced-price meals. Most recent data from 2019-20 school year.

60% of students ate vegetables one or more times per day in the past seven days, according to the 2021 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

49,780 students are participating in at least one F2S activity.
Montana Harvest of the Month

Each month participating sites focus on promoting one locally grown item (e.g., lentils) by serving it in at least one meal or snack, offering taste tests, conducting educational activities, and displaying or distributing Harvest of the Month materials.

Many sites reported barriers in HOM participation due to changes in school nutrition program operation, such as staffing shortages, changes to meal service, and overall uncertainty in program operation. Other challenges included changes in overall school district operation, such as in delivery of K-12 curriculum instruction.

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<tr>
<th>Training + Resources</th>
<th>Celebrating Farm to School Month</th>
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<td>There are many ways to learn about farm to school and access resources! Montana Farm to School hosts farm to school webinars and in-person trainings as well as an archive of previous webinars on the Montana Farm to School website.</td>
<td>Montana Crunch Time is a statewide event to celebrate National Farm to School Month and ‘buy local’ initiatives in Montana by crunching into locally and regionally grown apples on a designated day in October.</td>
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In school year 2020-2021

- 92 schools and afterschool programs registered
- 17,434 children reached at K-12 and Early Care + Education sites
- 98 local food producers sold to sites
- 22 early care and education sites registered
- $376,567 local foods purchased (not including fluid milk for K-12)

13 training events in 2020-2021

1,382 likes during the 2020-21 school year

1,459 engagements during the 2020-21 school year

MT Team Nutrition and Montana Harvest of the Month 4,243 views during the 2020-21 school year

Social Media Outreach

@montanafarmtoschool
@mtfarmtoschool
@mtfarmtoschool
@mtfarmtoschool

196 individuals reached

13,745 people participated in Montana Crunch Time 2020

GET INVOLVED + CONTACT

Website
Find resources and information at: www.montana.edu/mtfarmtoschool

Contact Us
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(406) 994-5996

SOURCES
National School Lunch Program Annual Sponsor Agreement Form 2020-2021, Montana Office of Public Instruction
2021 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Montana Office of Public Instruction
Map the Meal Gap: Child Food Insecurity 2019, Feeding America
Montana Farm to School Leadership Team Participation 2020, Montana Team Nutrition
Montana Harvest of the Month Participation 2020-2021, Montana Team Nutrition Program
Montana Crunch Time Participation 2020, Montana Team Nutrition
Montana Farm to School Professional Development and Technical Assistance Tracker 2019-21, Montana Team Nutrition
Montana Agriculture Statistics, 2021