

March 2016



Growing Food Businesses: Opportunities Under Montana's New Food Law

Montana's food entrepreneurs have gained important new opportunities resulting from changes in state law passed by the 2015 Montana Legislature. This April, the Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO), along with the Montana Food and Agriculture Development Centers, will co-host four workshops around the state that will explain these new opportunities and their governing regulations. Following a two-year study of the state's food laws and much public comment, Montana's retail food laws have been significantly rewritten, including changes to allow cottage food operators to make low-hazard food products in their home kitchens, and sell them directly to consumers year-round in any direct venue. The law also clarifies and offers additional opportunities for temporary and mobile food service operations, for farmers direct-marketing their raw agricultural products, and more.

This workshop is designed for food entrepreneurs, direct market farmers, state and local health officials, business and economic development educators, local food non-profits, & folks with cottage food business ideas. Workshops will create opportunities to build relationships and networks, and offer strategies and assistance to continue growing our local food economy. Come with your business ideas, plans, and big questions about how to operate under the rules and regulations of Montana's new Food Policy Modernization Law.

These five-hour workshops will be held in four locations: Bozeman on April 5, Billings on April 7, Arlee on April 13, and Great Falls on April 15. The workshops are for retail food businesses and entrepreneurs, direct market farmers, market managers, state and local health officials and educators, business and economic development professionals, local food non-profits, and folks with cottage food business ideas. Each workshop will provide participants with the information needed to succeed at starting or expanding a food business, as well as help ensure the law's successful implementation. "A real bonus of these workshops is the chance to network with other food entrepreneurs, food regulators, economic developers, and more," according to Jennifer Hill-Hart, Executive Director of AERO, the workshop sponsor.

Presenters will include staff from the Food and Consumer Safety Section of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, and AERO.

Registration is free and lunch will be provided. Register at aeromt.org/workshops. Each workshop is limited to 30 people. For more information contact Corrie Williamson of AERO at (406) 443-7272 or cwilliamson@aeromt.org.

These workshops are funded by AERO and grants from the Montana Department of Agriculture's Growth Through Agriculture Program, the High Stakes Foundation, and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture's Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program.



Promotional Gift for 2016 Food Hub Membership

The Rocky Fork Food Hub is giving away a shopping tote with each annual membership purchased or renewed in 2016. The generous-sized bag is made of durable cotton canvas, with a hand-screened Hub logo. Show your support for local food whenever you take it shopping! We're pleased to offer an eco-friendly alternative to disposable bags, in line with our mission of supporting sustainable practices.

For those of you who have not yet joined, Rocky Fork Food Hub is your connection to locally grown foods – a year-round, online Farmer's Market, representing anywhere from 6-12 local growers and producers at any given time. Local meats and seasonally available produce, as well as jams and locally made health and beauty items are available for purchase every other week. The buying pages are open every other Saturday thru Monday (dates are on the website.) Make your selection, place your order and pay online. Order pickup is the following Wednesday between 3:30 and 5:00 pm at Honey's Cafe.

Go to rockyforkfoodhub.com to learn more. You can register as a user without purchasing a membership (leave that field blank) to start receiving informational emails and to view the shopping pages, and then purchase your membership when you are ready to start buying.

Internship Opportunity

Shoshone River Farm has partnered with University of Wyoming and Colorado State University in helping to develop methods for using nitrogen-fixing bacteria in small scale commercial farming. We have a summer intern position available. Travel to CSU in May will be required (paid) to learn the available methods and then will return to Cody and with the help of Professor Jay Norton study these methods. There is housing available at the UW research farm in Powell. This position will be growing cyanobacteria and vegetables. Contact Scott Richard at (307) 899-6316 or shoshoneriverfarm@gmail.com.



Little Hands in the Garden

By Beth Williams

This month, students at Mountain View Elementary, Beartooth Billings Clinic Children's Center, Head Start, and Mountain Bluebells Preschool began spring planting! Most students planted kale, spinach, chard, and lettuce in the hoop house while others planted peas. At the Children's Center they started plant starts in milk cartons in their classroom. While nothing has sprouted quite yet, it is still exciting for the



students to be back outside working in the garden. The most exciting part of being outside was the great variety of bugs in the hoop house. Everything from worms to beetles created lots of excitement among the classes. Garden volunteers Robin Taylor and Tricia Decker have helped immensely in prepping the beds for planting and working with students in the garden. The Youth Garden would not be where it is today without its committed volunteers. We look forward to an exciting spring of more gardening!

Buying Local Boosts Economy--and Residents' Well-Being

By: Ed Gulick

Why are some places crackling with energy and economic vitality, while other places seem lifeless? What qualities give long-term resilience and stability to a local economy instead of a boom-and-bust roller coaster economy?

And, looking closer to home, what can we as citizens individually do to make sure Billings is a vibrant, economically vital place?

In trying to understand the complexity of an economy, I like to imagine a local economy as a bathtub. In this analogy, water is money/value. (They're not necessarily the same, but it'll work for our purposes.) Water pouring into the bathtub from the spout comes from the collective sales of resources, goods, and services, and the level of the water in the tub is wealth, the accumulation of assets.



Read this article in its entirety at lastbestnews.com.

Featured Local Producer: Gallagher Farm, Clark, WY

Chris Mullaney has been interviewing food producers around the region and will be contributing stories in upcoming newsletters to help you get to know who is growing your food, how they grow it, and what they are passionate about. This month's interview was

with Bridget Gallagher of Gallagher Farm just over the border in Wyoming.

FPC: Tell us about your farm. Bridgett: My husband and I, along with our 9 kids, have a cow/calf ranch in Clark, Wyoming. My husband was born and raised on a farm in Michigan and we have been farming/ranching together for 18+ years. We brought our passion for growing sweet corn out to Wyoming with us, and have been selling sweet corn the surrounding area farmers' markets and grocery stores for 8-9 years now. Through the sales of our sweet corn we have come to see the growing demand for high-quality foods in the area. We have brought our non-gmo, no pesticides or herbicide sweet corn to the markets and have had great feedback!

Through this increased demand of all natural, high quality meat products, we decided to take our NHTC certified calves, that we would sell in large amounts to area ranchers, and hold some back for consumers to buy as individual cuts or in quarters and halves. We took these calves after weining them and introduced them to feed that has been raised by us, they have no outside feed/influence from anywhere other than our ranch. They graze on high-quality alfalfa/grass and then are given a conventional corn ration 8-9 weeks prior to finishing. We found that giving them this corn gives [the meat] a wonderful taste and great marbling in the steaks. We do not give our beef any hormones or antibiotics!

After two years of sales and getting rave reviews, we decided to offer pork cuts to consumers also. We knew the want for pork was there, but many people were leery to purchase it, having the concern of how it will taste and what it has been fed. We purchase our pigs from ranchers in the surrounding area that are well kept and very healthy. We get these piglets just after they are weaned. Once we have them, they are kept in a very large, well kept area that is full of room to run and has constant access to food and water. They are given a mineral in their feed, vitamins, that help with their health. They are fed conventional corn also. Because they are kept in a large area that is always clean and dry, they are all very healthy. They are not given any hormones or antibiotics.

We know the importance of having a high-quality meat product that people can trust. If you would ever like to come see our ranch, we do allow people to come and see for themselves how the animals are cared for and our ranching practices.

FPC: How did you get into the business of selling local products? Bridgett: My husband, Cecil, and I moved here with the desire to produce and supply quality products. We live outside of Clark, WY which is a great place to raise nine kids (ages 5-20).



FPC: What separates your product from mass produced? Bridgett: Taste, appearance, quality. The way we raise both our meats and our sweet corn.

FPC: What's your favorite part of the day? Bridgett: Talking to people at market and telling them what we have to offer and hearing their feedback.

FPC: What's your favorite thing to do when you have time to yourself? Bridgett: Sit down (see the reference to nine kids). Get a load of laundry done.

FPC: What's your favorite product from another local producer in our area? Bridgett: We love Kenny's salsa and Shoshone River produce.



FPC: Is there a local restaurant using your products you would like to recommend? Bridgett: We are working with some restaurants but so far we do not have one using our products.

You can find out more about Gallagher Natural Beef and Produce at their website: gallaghernaturalbeef.com. Visit and "Like" them on Facebook. You can purchase their meats at Rocky Fork Food Hub, rockyforkfoodhub.com or during the summer, at the Red Lodge Farmers' Market.

Active Transportation in Red Lodge

The Active Transportation Planning Group will have a Community Meeting on Monday, March 14th, 6-8 pm at Café Regis in Red Lodge. Learn more about the vision, policies and actions needed to complete a network of on- and off-street pathways, integrating walking and biking routes, connecting our area in Red Lodge. The consultant from Peaks to Plains Design will be gathering input from our community for this important plan. Please join us! Help Red Lodge have an improved community for residents and visitors.

Want to get More Involved?

FPC has several projects or initiatives in the works at the same time. You can get involved in whatever interests you. Contact Martha Brown at mbrown.mt@gmail.com or call (406) 445-7214.