



FARM Farms.
CONNECT Farmers.
MONTANA Food for All.

Farm Connect Montana's 2024 Impact Report

First, a Big Change at Farm Connect Montana!

Community Food & Agriculture Coalition (CFAC) changes name to Farm Connect Montana!

New name, new branding, new website, same organization and programming that has been creating lasting food system impact for the past 20 years!

New Logos:



**FARM
CONNECT
MONTANA**

Old Logo:



**Community Food &
Agriculture Coalition**

New Website: www.farmconnectmontana.org

New Office: Come visit us at the historic LaLonde Ranch at 5404 W. Harrier St. in Missoula (currently leasing office and barn from Missoula County) in an exciting partnership that will tell the history of agriculture in Western Montana past, present and future. We are honored to be in this new, very fitting, space! (Note: Our mailing address is still P.O. Box 7025, Missoula, MT 59807.)

Same Tax ID/EIN: 26-3991288

2024 Signature Program Updates: A Year-at-a-Glance for core programs that have been expanding and making more impact each year for over a decade!

Beginning Farmer & Rancher Education & Support Programming

Farm Connect's Beginning Farmer and Rancher work consists of the following programs:

- **Certified Farm Startup Course** – 8-week course for aspiring agricultural business owners to gain experience, mentorship, land access, finance, marketing and other business education essentials resulting in a final business plan to start their new farm business

- **Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship Program** – paid & experienced farmer mentors work with beginning farmers to help start or improve new agricultural business ventures across the state
- **One-on-One Technical Assistance** – free technical assistance to farmers (virtual & in-person) for any issue relating to production, land access, financing, grants, marketing, and more!
- **Farmer Tool Library** – membership-based farm equipment rental library for tractors and implements to reduce cost barriers for beginning farmers to start farm businesses
- **Land Link** – land listing resource for landowners to list farmland for lease or sale and farmer to find land for lease or sale
- **Work Link** – work listing resource for farmers to both list employment opportunities and find on-farm/ranch employment
- **Transition to Organic Training & Education** – in-depth workshops and education opportunities for farmers seeking organic certification for their ag operation.



Farm Connect just wrapped up a 3-year program plan for this suite of program offerings and gathered evaluation data to see what impacts these programs made from 2021-2024. The results have far surpassed our initial goals across every metric. Here are the highlights:

- **47** new farm startups established (Amazing!)
- **80** new farmland listings on our Land Link program, matching landowners with farmland for lease or sale with farmers and ranchers looking for land
- **317+** hours of farmer-led mentorship and training
- **157+** one-on-one technical assistance hours
- **300+** farmer participants across various farmer/rancher workshops, trainings and events



**FIND
WORK**



**OFFER
WORK**



**FIND
LAND**



**OFFER
LAND**

Learn more about these programs here: <https://farmconnectmontana.org/farmer-support>

Testimonials From Certified Farm Startup 2025 Cohort:
“Fantastic. Truly appreciated the time, knowledge and expertise shared and the understanding and desire of wanting other new farmers to succeed.”

“Thank you so much for this opportunity! I love that the course was free! It's so amazing to offer this opportunity, and I'm so grateful to have been included. The staff at Farm Connect did such an awesome job! It must be so much work to coordinate and present all of this. Thank you all so much. And thank you, especially to Britta, for all the clear feedback and communication throughout the course.”

2024 Farmer Tool Library Press (Missoulian article):

https://missoulian.com/news/local/business/farmer-tool-library/article_7da3fe6c-1ea5-11ef-8601-1bffc632ae8.html

Farm Connect's Food Access Signature Programs

Over the past 3 years, Farm Connect MT operated three food access programs that provided local food products to **10,575** Montanans who redeemed **\$926,583** in benefits, recirculating approximately **\$1,204,558** into the local agricultural economy. Montanans could access these three programs in **79 locations** in 2024!



These three programs are:

- Double SNAP Dollars (DSD)
- Senior Farmer Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)
- Montana Produce Prescription Collaborative (MTPRx)



Double SNAP Dollars (DSD)

Since 2015, Farm Connect has administered the statewide Double SNAP Dollars (DSD) Program, allowing Montanans who receive SNAP benefits to double their benefit dollars at farmers markets, farm stands and select grocery locations, increasing their access to fresh, local food. This program provides a 1:1 match for SNAP benefits redeemed at farmers market up to \$20 or \$30/day depending on location!

- **In 2024, 40 sites offered DSD and participants redeemed \$132,960.00 for fruits and vegetables, with \$177,626.00 spent directly on local food through the program.**
- By the end of the 2024 season we now have 19 total retail locations participating in the program, up from 5 retail locations in 2023. The majority of DSD locations are at farmers markets, but Farm Connect has learned that in food deserts and many tribal communities across Montana farmers markets are scarce and the local grocery stores are the only place for many Montanans to purchase food and participate in the DSD program.
- Since 2015 when the program started, \$1.3M has been recirculated back into the local economy through the program and over 14,000 Montanans have been served.

MT Produce Prescription Collaborative (MTPRx)

In 2024, in the third year of this program, over 374 households were served across 14 counties with prescriptions from healthcare professionals for FREE fresh fruits and vegetable vouchers to be used at local farms, farmers market and CSA programs. Each of the 9 clinical healthcare partners involved in MTPRx implement separate and unique programs but share the common goal of providing fresh and locally grown fruit and vegetable nutrition incentives to low-income patients diagnosed with diabetes and hypertension to spend at local retail stores and farmers markets. In 2024, \$97,350 in fresh fruits and vegetables were prescribed.

In 2024, Farm Connect brought together 100 Montana professionals working in the produce prescription field for the first time in MT history at a *FoodRx Summit* to learn, share information and build partnerships for the future of Produce Prescription programs in the state. Clinics involved in the MTPRx

Collaborative include Bar1Wellness, Logan Health/Land to Hand MT, All Nations Health Center, Bozeman Health, FAST Blackfeet, Providence St. Patrick's Hospital, St. Peter's Hospital, Northwest Community Health Center, Partnership Health Center Refugee Program, and Missoula Public Health. Numerous state-wide organizations MT-PECH and DPHHS also support MTPRx.



News coverage of the 2024 FoodRx Summit and MTPRx program:

Missoulian: https://missoulian.com/news/local/business/produce-prescription/article_8750f73e-79eb-11ef-ac5b-870af3b8580e.html

MTPR: <https://www.mtpr.org/montana-news/2024-09-23/prescription-produce-program-aims-to-help-montanans-in-need-of-special-diets>

Billings Gazette: https://billingsgazette.com/news/local/article_519d333d-03a1-5189-9abd-6422d9b6fd51.html

Independent Record: https://helenair.com/news/state-regional/produce-prescription/article_cc8a7976-dbc9-5f6d-8c0d-c2db18991143.html

Daily Montanan

<https://dailymontan.com/2023/03/22/fresh-produce-is-an-increasingly-popular-prescription-for-chronically-ill-patients/>

Missoulian: https://missoulian.com/news/local/missoula-nonprofit-wins-500k-grant-to-share-fresh-produce/article_ba870119-2b74-5500-b9c3-26f668a54b85.html

Montana Standard:

https://mtstandard.com/lifestyles/health-med-fit/fresh-produce-is-an-increasingly-popular-prescription-for-chronically-ill-patients/article_b31e478d-af64-5f1f-9abc-691a0d223f37.html

Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)

Farm Connect's third year of the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) was a success! Under this program the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) awards grants to states and Indian tribal governments to provide qualifying seniors with up to \$50 in coupons redeemable at local farms and farmers markets from June 1st to October 31st. Benefits can be used to purchase MT grown fresh fruits, vegetables and raw honey.

Montana's Department of Health & Human Services (DPHHS) asked Farm Connect for a third year to partner with Agencies on Aging and Senior Centers as well as farmers markets and 186 farms across the state of Montana who accept the coupons and distribute food to qualifying seniors (60+) for the 2024 farmers market season to administer this program. There were over 2,000 Montana seniors served across 17 counties in 2024.

“For many years, the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) has offered an opportunity for our older adults to access wonderful local produce and honey at its freshest and the farmers a chance to be part of this exchange. It has been my absolute pleasure and passion to be involved in SFMNP these many years. Upon my recent retirement, I cannot think of a more well-suited organization than Farm Connect Montana (formerly CFAC) to pass the baton to. Farm Connect has the connections, resources, and knowledge to implement and expand this program within the markets, local farmer and community engagement, and the ability and motivation to build and continue partnerships with those programs that cater to our older adults. I wish them the best.” – Jacqueline Stoeckel, MSW Aging Program Specialist DPHHS, Aging Services (retired), Adjunct Professor, Carroll College and Helena College (UM)

In 2025 Farm Connect will remain an advocate and partner for Montana’s SFMNP, though implementation remains unknown due to funding limitations at the federal and state levels.

NEW! “Kids Who Cook!” Nutrition Education Program

Each of Farm Connect’s Food Access Programs above, require extensive evaluation and data collection from participants. Farm Connect identified a need through survey data to both raise more awareness about the availability of food access programs that can multiply an individual’s access to local, fresh produce and to break down barriers to cooking fresh produce by providing the cooking equipment, tools and fun hands-on nutrition education and recipes needed to confidently purchase, store and cook with fresh, local fruits and vegetables.

Farm Connect piloted a new nutrition education class program at DeSmet School and other Missoula locations for Montanans of all ages in 2023 called “Montanans Who Cook!”. In 2024, Farm Connect continued to partner with schools, non-profit organizations, and healthcare organizations to focus on youth through a new “Kids Who Cook!” focused program.



The “Kids Who Cook!” program is meant to empower and teach 1st – 5th graders easy, healthy, and affordable recipes they can make. Recipes have been chosen by Érica Rubino, a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist to show kids how to prepare healthy options for themselves and their families. The goal is to share recipes that use common household ingredients that are inexpensive and require little preparation. The program also hosts youth scavenger hunts for families with kids at the Clark Fork River farmers market in Missoula.

“As a school superintendent I see an aspect of housing stress that goes unnoticed by many in our community. Many parents are working two jobs. Their children are home alone and taking care of

themselves, and many times younger siblings. A nutrition program that has a hands-on component so children are learning by cooking easy, nutritious meals that they can make at home safely is a necessary skill all children should have today.” said Matt Driessen the DeSmet School Superintendent.

In 2024, Farm Connect hosted **20 cooking classes/events**, reaching **443** kids in 1st-5th grade, including programming at DeSmet, Lowell, and Hawthorne Schools.

News coverage of this program:

https://missoulian.com/news/local/nonprofit-cfac-desmet-school-kids-healthy-eating-recipes-class/article_9cdba0fc-c129-11ee-be74-8706fde23acb.html

Farm Connect will continue to seek funding for “Kids Who Cook!” programming to increase the scope and reach of the program in 2025.

To learn more about Farm Connect’s Food Access programs please visit:

<https://farmconnectmontana.org/food-access>.

Farmland Conservation and Climate Projects:

2024 Climate Impact Report Released

Farm Connect Montana continues to be a leading voice in the effort to protect farmland in Western Montana and to stay on top of the latest research on climate change impacts for agricultural producers. **In 2024, Farm Connect released [a report titled “The Economic Impact of Climate Change on Montana Agriculture.”](#)** Farm Connect Montana commissioned the report by Power Consulting Incorporated to examine the economic repercussions of climate change on Montana's important agricultural sectors. This report is preceded by Montana Wildlife Federation’s report on "The Economic Impact of Climate Change in Montana."

Drawing on a variety of sources, the report examines the impacts of a changing climate on temperature and precipitation patterns to predict impacts to agricultural operations that produce crops and livestock, particularly cattle. The report predicts a loss of more than 9,500 jobs and more than \$181 million dollars per year in labor earnings in these sectors by mid-century due to the impact of climate change.

Over 60 media outlets provided media coverage of the report. Here are some links! For the full list, please e-mail jenny@farmconnectmontana.org.

Daily Montanan:

<https://dailymontanan.com/2024/11/15/climate-change-will-cost-montana-agriculture-more-than-9000-job-losses-181m-report-says/>

Missoula Current:

<https://missoulacurrent.com/climate-change-agriculture/>

Bozeman Daily Chronicle:

https://www.bozemandailychronicle.com/townnews/agriculture/climate-change-montana-farming-ranching-drought/article_46e20672-a5d1-11ef-ab3e-93b669bfe8f3.html

KTVQ Billings:

<https://www.ktvq.com/news/montana-ag-network/montana-ag-network-montana-farmers-react-to-report-on-impact-of-climate-change>

Missoulian:

https://missoulian.com/news/local/business/montana-climate-agriculture/article_e1dca202-a2b3-11ef-82d1-db97dcc167e8.html

Small Ag Land Conservation Program Partnership w/ Missoula County Continues:

In 2024, Farm Connect continued to work closely with Missoula County staff to solidify a program to offer a lesser known conservation tool called a “servitude” to small parcel agricultural landowners in Missoula County. Farm Connect plans to pilot this tool with 3-4 landowners in 2025.

In Summary:

With exponential growth in current programs, the addition of new programs, and increasing the number of Montanans we serve each year comes a lot of excitement. **In 2025, it also comes an uncertain federal and state funding future. Private and community funding has never been more important to sustaining our organization and our important work in Montana communities.** We’re committed to working with a diverse and ever-growing list of partners and individuals from all walks of life and inviting voices to the table that have traditionally not been heard in all that we do. In order to do this, we will be looking to community supporters, private foundations and Montana businesses to help us find creative and new funding opportunities so that we can continue to meet the demand for our programs and sustain the impact that we’ve been able to achieve in these past few years. **Thank you for your support!**