



Fact Sheet: SJ 11

Interim Study on Farmers Markets and Food Systems

Montana Farmers Market Facts

Montana farmers markets serve as community assets and business incubators while providing real income opportunities for farmers that generate jobs for Montanans.

- **4,900** people work to produce and sell the goods and services offered on one typical market day.*
- **260** full-time Montana jobs are generated over and above the **4,900** people who work to put on farmers markets.*
- On average a typical market generates \$244,000 in revenue over the course of the market season.*
- Over **70** farmers markets operate in Montana communities.

Farmers Markets

Contribute to local economic growth by supporting:

- Small-scale agriculture
- Entrepreneurship
- Small business incubation

Create strong and resilient food systems through:

- Producer to consumer sales
- Shortening supply chains

Improve public health outcomes by:

- Increasing access to fresh, nutritious foods

Persistent Challenges for Montana Farmers Markets:

- Many farmers markets are organized and managed by volunteers operating on shoestring budgets.
- Market manager turnover due to low or no pay.
- Limited produce vendors (particularly in rural communities).
- Lack of operational funding to pay market staff and develop promotional materials.
- Confusion around state and county statutes that involve homemade food and food safety practices, such as the Local Food Choice Act and Cottage Food Act.

*These statistics come from The Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER) and NCAT report, "Sustaining Farmers Market Success: The Economic Contributions of Farmers Markets in Montana." The study was conducted in 2021, before the Local Food Choice Act was codified. The study did not look at the specific economic impact of cottage food or other home-food based producers.

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To be conducted by an interim committee with collaboration from local and community food systems stakeholders. Results of the study would be reported to the 70th Legislature.

SJ 11 Would:

- Consider farmers market contributions to local and regional food system resilience, focusing on their impact on food supply disruptions and national security.
- Review barriers to growth and opportunities for farmers market success.
- Explore current statutes governing consumer protection and liability for food producers.
- Study current best practices for supporting locally sourced foods in communities.
- Evaluate the economic impact of homemade food producers selling under both the Montana Local Food Choice Act and the Cottage Food Act at farmers markets.
- Explore complications with the current definition of farmers markets as written in the Montana State Code.



Potential Outcomes of SJ 11 Include:

- Increased understanding of the economic impact of farmers markets in Montana.
- Improved guidelines on operating farmers markets in communities across Montana.
- Recommendations for supporting specialty crop farmers market vendors.
- Enhanced clarity between state and local agencies that work with farmers markets and market vendors.

GROW MONTANA is a broad-based food policy coalition whose common purpose is to promote community economic development and education policies that support sustainable Montana-owned food production, processing, and distribution, and that improve all of our citizens' access to healthy Montana foods.



For more information, please contact Kali Wicks, Grow Montana Lobbyist:

kali@treasurestatestrategies.com