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Tools for Community Self-determination

Southeast of the Triangle Region (Montana) Local Farm & Food Economy

Highlights of a data compilation

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for

Montana Farmers Union
September 6, 2011

*Covers Blaine, Fergus, Golden Valley, Judith Basin, Meagher,
Musselshell, Stillwater, & Wheatland Counties in Montana*

Southeast of the Triangle Region (Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2009)

38,139 residents receive \$1.2 billion of income annually. The two largest sources of personal income are capital income (interest, rent or dividend income), at \$300 million, and transfer payments (from government programs such as pensions), at \$280 million. These capital transfers account for nearly half of personal income.

The largest source of personal income from employment is government jobs, where workers earn a combined \$150 million. Other private sources of income cannot be reported fully since so much of this data has been suppressed to protect the confidentiality of local firms.

The region's population rose 4% from 36,585 in 1969. Forty years ago, the Southeast of the Triangle region held 5% of the state's population; now it has 4% of the Montana population. Personal income has risen 69% during the same period (adjusted for inflation). Despite these increases in population and income, and rising consumer expenditures for food, farm income is falling, and very little planning has been devoted to ensuring a secure food supply for Southeast of Triangle residents.

¹ Nick Wojciak, intern for Crossroads Resource Center, contributed considerable research to this report.

Issues affecting low-income residents of the region:

13,138 Southeast of Triangle residents (36%) earn less than 185% of federal poverty guidelines. At this level of income, children qualify for free or reduced-price lunch at school. These lower-income residents spend \$27 million each year buying food, including more than \$5 million of SNAP benefits (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps) and additional supplements in WIC (Women, Infants and Children) coupons. The region's farmers receive a combined total of \$68 million in subsidies (thirty-one-year average, 1979-2009), mostly to raise crops such as wheat and barley that are sold as commodities, not to feed local residents. *Data from Federal Census American Community Survey, 2005-2009, Bureau of Labor Statistics, & Bureau of Economic Analysis.*

9% of Southeast of Triangle households (3,400 residents) earn less than \$10,000 per year. *Source: Federal Census; American Community Survey, 2005-2009.*

23% of adults aged 18-64 in Montana have no health insurance (2010). *Source: Centers for Disease Control. Data on health conditions is reported for the state and for metro areas only.*

Food-related health conditions:

7% of Montana residents have been diagnosed with diabetes as of 2010. *Source: Centers for Disease Control.* Medical costs for treating diabetes and related conditions in Southeast of Triangle are estimated at \$22 million per year; for the state of Montana the total is \$563 million. *Source: American Diabetes Association cost calculator.*

62% of Montana residents were overweight (38%) or obese (24%) in 2010. *Source: Centers for Disease Control.*

59% of Montana adults reported in 2009 they have at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity five or more days per week, or vigorous physical activity for 20 or more minutes three or more days per week. *Source: Centers for Disease Control.*

26% of state residents reported in 2009 that they eat five or more servings of fruit or vegetables each day. 74% do not. This is a key indicator of health, since proper fruit and vegetable consumption has been connected to better health outcomes. *Source: Centers for Disease Control.*

The region's farms (Census of Agriculture, 2007)

Census of Agriculture data for 2007 were released February 4, 2009

The Census of Agriculture defines a “farm” as “an operation that produces, or would normally produce and sell, \$1,000 or more of agricultural products per year.”

Land:

- 3,295 farms. This is 11% of Montana’s farms.
- The Southeast of Golden Triangle region had 8% more farms in 2007 than in 2002. Some of this may be due to census takers making better contact with small farms.
- 1,484 (45%) of these are 1,000 acres or more in size.
- 434 (13%) farms are less than 50 acres.
- Average farm size is 3,008 acres, significantly more than the state average of 2,079 acres.
- The region has 9.9 million acres of land in farms.
- This amounts to 16% of the state’s farmland.
- Southeast of Golden Triangle region holds 1.2 million acres of harvested cropland.
- 206,000 of these acres are irrigated.
- Average value of land and buildings per farm was \$2.2 million. This was more than the Montana average of \$1.6 million.

Sales:

With the exception of foods sold directly to consumers (see below), farmers typically sell commodities to wholesalers, brokers or manufacturers that require further processing or handling to become consumer items. The word “commodities” is used in this report to mean the crops and livestock sold by farmers through these wholesale channels. The term “products” encompasses commodity sales, direct sales, and any other sales.

- The region’s farmers sold \$359.8 million of crops and livestock in 2007.
- Farm product sales increased by 52% from 2002 to 2007.
- \$125.4 million of crops were sold (35% of sales).
- \$234.4 million of livestock and products were sold (65% of sales).
- 1,509 (46%) of the region’s farms sold less than \$10,000 of products in 2007.
- Total sales from these small farms were at least \$2 million. *Note that data for sales less than \$10,000 in Golden Valley, Judith Basin, and Meagher counties were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality, so this total is incomplete.*
- 888 (27%) of the region’s farms sold more than \$100,000 of products.
- Total sales from these larger farms were \$343 million, 95% of the region’s farm product sales.
- 44% of the region’s farms (1,460 of 3,295) reported net losses in 2007. This is less than the Montana average of 49%.
- 1,680 (51%) of Southeast of Golden Triangle region’s farmers collected a combined total of \$27 million of federal subsidies in 2007.

Top farm products of Southeast of the Triangle region

	\$ millions
Cattle & calves	213
Wheat	91
Forage**	10
Barley**	7
Sheep & goats**	5
Milk & Dairy**	4

*Note that the total value of products marked with asterisks (**) are incomplete due to data suppression by USDA intended to protect confidentiality. Because of limited data availability, the chart above shows only 92% of the value of farm products sold by Southeast of the Triangle farmers in 2007.*

Production Expenses:

- Depreciation was the single largest expense for Southeast of Golden Triangle region farmers in 2007, totaling, \$41 million (14%).
- Livestock and poultry purchases ranked as the second most important expense, with \$39.7 million (13%).
- Land and building cost farmers \$32.6 million (11%).
- Gasoline, fuels, and oil costs totaled \$29.5 million (10%).
- Feed purchases totaled \$28.8 million (9%).
- Supplies, repairs, and maintenance cost farmers \$28.2 million (9%).
- Interest expenses totaled \$26 million (9%).
- Fertilizer, lime, and soil conditioners cost farmers 24.5 million (8%).

Cattle & Dairy:

- 1,778 farms hold an inventory of 4.5 million cattle.
- 276,000 cattle were sold by farmers in 2007 for total sales of \$213 million.
- 1,648 farms raise beef cows.
- 61 farms sold \$3.5 million of milk and dairy products.
- 22 farms produced corn for silage.
- 1,710 farms produced 1 million tons of forage crops (hay, etc.) on 566,000 acres.
- 813 farms sold forage crops.

Other Livestock & Animal Products:

- 55 farms hold an inventory of at least 494 hogs and pigs. *Note that data for inventory numbers of hogs and pigs in Blaine, Golden Valley, Meagher, Stillwater and Wheatland counties were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*
- 66 farms sold at least \$79,000 worth of hogs and pigs in 2007. *Note that data sales of hogs and pigs in Blaine, Golden Valley, Meagher, Stillwater, and Musselshell counties were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*

- 231 farms hold an inventory of at least 59,000 sheep and lambs. *Note that data for inventory of sheep and lambs in Meagher County were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality, so this total is incomplete.*
- 229 farms sold at least \$4.8 million worth of sheep, goats, and lambs in 2007. *Note that data for sales of sheep, goats, and lambs in Stillwater County were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality, so this total is incomplete.*
- 154 farms hold an inventory of at least 34,000 laying hens. *Note that data for inventory of laying hens in Blaine, Golden Valley, Judith Basin, and Meagher counties were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality, so this total is incomplete.*
- 17 farms raise broiler chickens. *Note that data for sales of broiler chickens was suppressed in 7 of the region's 8 counties.*
- 2 farms engage in aquaculture.
- 174 farms raise horses and ponies.

Grains, Oil Seeds, & Edible Beans:

- 619 farms produced 17 million bushels of wheat worth \$91 million 546,000 acres.
- This includes 12 million bushels of winter wheat produced on 327,000 acres, at least 4 million bushels of spring wheat produced on over 182,000 acres, and at least 23,000 acres of durum wheat produced on over 1,380 acres. *Note that data for bushels and acreage of spring and durum wheat in Fergus County were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality, so these totals are incomplete.*
- 13 farms produced corn for grain. *Note that there was considerable suppression of data for tons and acreage of corn for grain produced.*

Vegetable & Melons

(some farmers state that Ag Census data does not fully represent vegetable production):

- 18 farms produced vegetables, representing a 13% increase in the number of farms (from 16), over 2002 levels.
- 8 of these farms raised potatoes.
- *Sales data for vegetables were not reported.*

Fruits

(some farmers state that Ag Census data does not fully represent fruit production):

- 2 farms in the region have orchards. *Note that data for acreage of orchards are suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*
- 5 farms sold fruits, nuts and berries. *Note that data for acreage of fruits, tree nuts, and berries are suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*
- *Sales data for fruits were not recorded.*

Nursery & Greenhouse Plants:

- 14 farms sold at least \$1.1 million worth of ornamentals in 2007. *Note that data for sales of ornamentals in Blaine and Wheatland counties were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality, so this total is incomplete.*
- This represents a decrease of 26% in the number of farms (from 19) since 2002.

Direct & Organic Sales:

- 98 farms sold at least \$629,000 of food products directly to consumers. This is a 29% increase in the number of farms (76 in 2002) selling direct over 2002. *Note that data for direct sales in Golden Valley, Meagher, and Wheatland are suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality, so this total is incomplete.*
- This amounts to 0.1% of farms sales, one quarter the national average of 0.4%.
- Judith Basin County leads the region in direct sales, with \$194,000. *Note Judith Basin County leads in direct sales subject to the fact the 3 of the 8 counties in the region did not report direct sales.*
- 21 farms in the region sold at least \$1.4 million of organic products, accounting for 16% of Montana's organic sales. *Note that data for organic sales in Judith Basin, Musselshell, Stillwater, and Wheatland counties were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality, so this total is incomplete.*
- For comparison, 207 farms in Montana sold \$8.8 million of organic food products.
- 11 farms market through community supported agriculture (CSA).
- 150 farms produce and sell value-added products.

Conservation practices:

- 823 farms use conservation methods such as no-till, limited tilling, filtering field runoff to remove chemicals, fencing animals to prevent them from entering streams, etc.
- 996 farms practice rotational or management intensive grazing.
- 60 farms generate energy or electricity on the farm.

**Limited-resource farms and others in the Southeast of Golden Triangle region
(Census of Agriculture, 2007)**

	Farms	Percent	Acres	Percent
Small Family farms				
Limited Resource	425	13%	301,650	3%
Retirement	547	17%	608,692	6%
Residential/lifestyle	882	27%	527,671	5%
Farming occupation/lower sales	540	16%	917,645	9%
Farming occupation/higher sales	425	13%	2,302,740	23%
Large family farms	226	7%	2,017,077	20%
Very large family farms	123	4%	1,836,808	19%
Nonfamily farms	127	4%	1,312,545	13%
Totals	3,295		9,824,828	

Following are the definitions used by USDA in reporting data for the table above.

1. Rural residence farms. Specific typologies included in rural residence farms are *limited-resource, retirement, and residential lifestyle farms*.

- *Limited-resource farms.* Small farms with sales less than \$100,000 in 2003 and low operator household income in 2003 and 2004. Household income is low if it is less than the poverty level in both 2003 and 2004 or if it is less than half the county median income both years.
- *Retirement farms.* Small farms whose operators report they are retired (excludes limited-resource farms operated by retired farmers).
- *Residential/lifestyle farms.* Small farms whose operators report they had a major occupation other than farming (excludes limited-resource farms with operators reporting a non-farm major occupation).

2. Intermediate farms. Includes *farming occupation/lower-sales* and *farming occupation/higher-sales* farms.

- *Farming occupation/low-sales.* Small farms with sales less than \$100,000 whose operators report farming as their major occupation (excludes limited-resource farms whose operators report farming as their major occupation).
- *Farming occupation/high-sales.* Small farms with sales between \$100,000 and \$249,999 whose operators report farming as their major occupation.

3. Commercial farms. Includes *large, very large, and nonfamily* farms.

- *Large family farms.* Farms with sales between \$250,000 and \$499,999.
- *Very large family farms.* Farms with sales of \$500,000 or more.
- *Nonfamily farms.* Farms organized as non-family corporations or cooperatives, as well as farms operated by hired managers.

County Highlights

Blaine County highlights (Census of Agriculture 2007):

- 655 farms, 11% more than in 2002.
- Blaine County has 2.3 million acres of land in farms.
- Farmers sold \$71.6 million of products in 2007.
- \$34.5 million (48%) of these sales were crops.
- \$37.1 million (52%) of these sales were livestock.
- The most prevalent farm size is 1,000 acres or more with 325 farms (50%) in this category.
- The next most prevalent is 500 to 999 acres with 107 (16%) farms.
- 40 farms (6%) are less than 50 acres.
- 278 farms (42%) sold less than \$10,000 in farm products.
- 196 farms (30%) sold more than \$100,000 in farm products.
- 14 farms sold \$155,000 of food directly to consumers. This is a 27% increase in the number of farms selling direct (11 in 2002), and a 154% increase in direct sales over 2002 sales of \$61,000.
- Direct sales were 0.2% of farm product sales, one half the national average of 0.4%.
- The county ranks 3rd in Montana for sales of sheep and goats, with \$1.3 million.
- Blaine County ranks 8th in Montana for sales of hogs and pigs, but *sales figures were not released by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*
- Blaine County ranks eighth in Montana for inventory of cattle and calves, with 79,000.
- The county ranks 9th in Montana for inventory of sheep and lambs, with 7,311.
- Blaine County ranks 9th in the state for acreage of forage, with 83,000.
- The county ranks ninth in the state for acreage of field grass and grass seed, with 1,091.
- Blaine County ranks 9th in the state for inventory of hogs and pigs, but *inventory figures were not released by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*

Fergus County highlights (Census of Agriculture 2007):

- 898 farms, 8% more than in 2002.
- Fergus County has 2.4 million acres of land in farms.
- Farmers sold \$101 million of products in 2007.
- \$42 million (42%) of these sales were crops.
- \$59 million (58%) of these sales were livestock.
- The most prevalent farm size is 1,000 acres or more with 460 farms (51%) in this category.
- The next most prevalent is 50 to 170 acres with 118 (13%) farms.
- 116 farms (13%) are less than 50 acres.
- 337 farms (38%) sold less than \$10,000 in farm products.
- 303 farms (34%) sold more than \$100,000 in farm products.
- 22 farms sold \$136,000 of food directly to consumers. This is a 57% increase in the number of farms selling direct (14 in 2002), and a 119% increase in direct sales over 2002 sales of \$62,000.
- Direct sales were 0.1% of farm product sales, one quarter the national average of 0.4%.
- Fergus County ranks 1st in Montana, and 5th in the U.S. for acreage of forage, with 186,000.
- The county ranks 3rd in Montana for inventory of cattle and calves, with 116,000.
- Fergus County ranks fourth in Montana for inventory of colonies of bees, with 6,722.
- Fergus County ranks 4th in Montana for sales of cattle and calves, with \$56 million.

- The county ranks 4th in Montana for aquaculture sales, but *sales figures were not released by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*
- Fergus County ranks fourth in Montana for sales of agricultural products.
- Fergus County ranks 4th in the state for livestock and poultry sales.
- Fergus County ranks 5th in the state for acreage of oats, with 1,363.
- The county ranks sixth in the state for acreage of barley, with 33,000.
- The county ranks 9th in the state for sales of grains, oilseeds, and dry beans and peas, with \$37 million.
- The county ranks 10th in Montana for crop sales.

Golden Valley County highlights (Census of Agriculture 2007):

- 153 farms, 9% more than in 2002.
- Golden Valley County has 672,000 acres of land in farms.
- Farmers sold \$14.6 million of products in 2007.
- \$5.1 million (35%) of these sales were crops.
- \$9.5 million (65%) of these sales were livestock.
- The most prevalent farm size is 1,000 acres or more with 79 farms (52%) in this category.
- The next most prevalent is 50 to 179 acres with 28 (18%) farms.
- 15 farms (10%) are less than 50 acres.
- 74 farms (48%) sold less than \$10,000 in farm products.
- 43 farms (28%) sold more than \$100,000 in farm products.
- 2 farms sold food directly to consumers, down from 3 farms selling direct in 2002.
- *Note that figures for direct sales in Golden Valley County were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*
- Golden Valley County ranks 5th in Montana for inventory of sheep and lambs, with 14,000.
- The county ranks 7th in Montana for sales of sheep and goats, with \$887,000.

Judith Basin County highlights (Census of Agriculture 2007):

- 306 farms, 3% less than in 2002.
- Judith Basin County has 838,000 acres of land in farms.
- Farmers sold \$54 million of products in 2007.
- \$20 million (37%) of these sales were crops.
- \$34 million (63%) of these sales were livestock.
- The most prevalent farm size is 1,000 acres or more with 171 farms (56%) in this category.
- The next most prevalent sizes are 50 to 179 acres and 500 to 999 acres, both with 34 (11%) farms.
- 36 farms (12%) are less than 50 acres.
- 90 farms (29%) sold less than \$10,000 in farm products.
- 121 farms (40%) sold more than \$100,000 in farm products.
- 15 farms sold \$194,000 of food directly to consumers. This is a 150% increase in the number of farms selling direct (6 in 2002), and a 1113% increase in direct sales over 2002 sales of \$16,000.
- Direct sales were 0.4% of farm product sales, the same as the national average of 0.4%.
- Judith Basin County ranks 3rd in the state for acreage of oats, with 1,456.
- The county ranks 3rd in Montana for acreage of forage, with 102,000.

- Judith Basin County ranks seventh in Montana for sales of hay, but *sales figures were not released by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*
- The county ranks 8th in the state for inventory of sheep and lambs with 8,115.

Meagher County highlights (Census of Agriculture 2007):

- 138 farms, 1% more than in 2002.
- Meagher County has 812,000 acres of land in farms.
- Farmers sold \$25 million of products in 2007.
- \$3 million (12%) of these sales were crops.
- \$22 million (88%) of these sales were livestock.
- The most prevalent farm size is 1,000 acres or more with 71 farms (51%) in this category.
- The next most prevalent is 10 to 19 acres with 19 (14%) farms.
- 25 farms (18%) are less than 50 acres.
- 64 farms (46%) sold less than \$10,000 in farm products.
- 46 farms (33%) sold more than \$100,000 in farm products.
- 5 farms sold food directly to consumers, up from 3 farms selling direct in 2002.
- *Note that figures for direct sales in Meagher County were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*
- Meagher County ranks 8th in the state for inventory of hogs and pigs, but *inventory figures were not released by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*
- The county ranks 9th in the state for inventory of pullets for laying flock replacement, but *inventory figures were not released by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*
- Meagher County ranks 9th in Montana for sales of poultry and eggs, but *sales figures were not released by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*
- The county ranks 9th in Montana for sales of hogs and pigs, but *sales figures were not released by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*

Musselshell County highlights (Census of Agriculture 2007):

- 373 farms, 17% more than in 2002.
- Musselshell County has 1.1 million acres of land in farms.
- Farmers sold \$23.6 million of products in 2007.
- \$5 million (21%) of these sales were crops.
- \$18.6 million (79%) of these sales were livestock.
- The most prevalent farm size is 1,000 acres or more with 117 farms (31%) in this category.
- The next most prevalent is 50 to 179 acres with 106 (28%) farms.
- 45 farms (12%) are less than 50 acres.
- 246 farms (66%) sold less than \$10,000 in farm products.
- 54 farms (14%) sold more than \$100,000 in farm products.
- 15 farms sold \$74,000 of food directly to consumers. This is a 25% increase in the number of farms selling direct (12 in 2002), and a 111% increase in direct sales over 2002 sales of \$35,000.
- Direct sales were 0.3% of farm product sales, less than the national average of 0.4%.
- Musselshell County ranks 4th in Montana for inventory of goats, with 955.

Stillwater County highlights (Census of Agriculture 2007):

- 635 farms, 15% more than in 2002.
- Stillwater County has 857,000 acres of land in farms.
- Farmers sold \$43.5 million of products in 2007.
- \$9.1 million (21%) of these sales were crops.
- \$34.4 million (79%) of these sales were livestock.
- The most prevalent farm size is 1,000 acres or more with 184 farms (29%) in this category.
- The next most prevalent is 50 to 179 acres with 134 (21%) farms.
- 138 farms (22%) are less than 50 acres.
- 367 farms (58%) sold less than \$10,000 in farm products.
- 81 farms (13%) sold more than \$100,000 in farm products.
- 20 farms sold \$70,000 of food directly to consumers. This is a 17% decrease in the number of farms selling direct (24 in 2002), and a 6% increase in direct sales over 2002 sales of \$66,000.
- Direct sales were 0.2% of farm product sales, one half the national average of 0.4%.
- Stillwater County ranks 9th in Montana for acreage of oats, with 1,145.
- The county ranks 1st in Montana for inventory of bee colonies, but *inventory figures were not released by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*

Wheatland County highlights (Census of Agriculture 2007):

- 137 farms, 16% less than in 2002.
- Wheatland County has 822,000 acres of land in farms.
- Farmers sold \$25.7 million of products in 2007.
- \$6.7 million (26%) of these sales were crops.
- \$19 million (74%) of these sales were livestock.
- The most prevalent farm size is 1,000 acres or more with 77 farms (56%) in this category.
- The next most prevalent is 180 to 499 acres with 22 (16%) farms.
- 19 farms (14%) are less than 50 acres.
- 53 farms (39%) sold less than \$10,000 in farm products.
- 44 farms (32%) sold more than \$100,000 in farm products.
- 5 farms sold food directly to consumers, up from 3 farms selling direct in 2002.
- *Note that figures for direct sales in Wheatland County were suppressed by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*
- Wheatland County ranks 4th in Montana for sales of poultry and eggs, with \$700,000.
- The county ranks 4th in Montana for sales of sheep and goats, with \$1.2 million.
- Wheatland County ranks fourth in the state for inventory of laying hens, with 32,000.
- The county ranks 4th in the state for inventory of pullets for laying flock replacement, with 15,000.
- Wheatland County ranks 6th in Montana for inventory of sheep and lambs, with 14,000.
- The county ranks eighth in Montana for inventory of broiler chickens, but *inventory figures were not released by the USDA in an effort to protect confidentiality.*

State of Montana highlights

Montana highlights from the Census of Agriculture (2007):

- 29,524 farms, 6% more than in 2002.
- Montana has 61 million acres of land in farms.
- Farmers sold \$2.8 billion of products in 2007.
- \$1.3 billion (46%) of these sales were crops.
- \$1.5 billion (54%) of these sales was livestock.
- The most prevalent farm size is 1,000 acres or more with 9,791 farms (33%) in this category.
- The next most prevalent is 10 to 49 acres with 5,462 (19%) farms.
- 7,379 farms (25%) are less than 50 acres.
- 15,695 farms (53%) sold less than \$10,000 in farm products.
- 6,380 farms (22%) sold more than \$100,000 in farm products. Montana ranks 2nd in the U.S. for acreage of barley, with 719,000.
- The state ranks 2nd in the country for acreage of dry edible peas, with 222,000.
- Montana ranks second in the U.S. for acreage of lentils, with 88,000.
- Montana ranks 3rd in the U.S. for acreage of wheat, with 5.1 million.
- The state ranks 5th in the country for acreage of forage, with 2.8 million.
- The state ranks seventh in the U.S. for inventory of sheep and lambs, with 272,000.
- 1,287 farms sold \$6.3 million of food directly to consumers. This is an 11% increase in the number of farms selling direct (1,164 in 2002), and a 40% increase in direct sales from 2002 sales of \$4.5 million.
- Direct sales were 0.2% of farm product sales, one half the national average of 0.4%.
- If direct food sales made up a single commodity, the value of these sales would outrank the state's 17th-most important product, safflower seeds.
- Statewide sales in vegetables totaled \$39 million.
- 229 farms farm organically, with a total of 58,868 acres of harvested cropland, and 75,807 acres of pastureland.
- 37,260 acres on 106 farms are undergoing organic conversion.
- 207 farms in Montana sold \$8.8 million of organic food products, including \$6.9 million of crops (this may include ornamental and greenhouse crops), \$847,000 of livestock and poultry, and \$1.1 million of products from livestock and poultry (such as milk or eggs).
- 148 farms market through community supported agriculture (CSA).
- 1,224 farms produce value-added products.
- 7,115 farms use conservation methods such as no-till, limited tilling, filtering field runoff to remove chemicals, fencing animals to prevent them from entering streams, etc.
- 7,707 farms practice rotational management of intensive grazing.
- 514 farms generate energy or electricity on the farms.

Montana's top 25 farm products in 2009 (Economic Research Service)

See chart on next page

	\$ millions
1 Wheat	949.9
2 Cattle and calves	896.1
3 Barley	189.8
4 Hay	116.4
5 Sugar beets	50.9
6 Lentils	42.9
7 Dairy products	42.8
8 Hogs	36.5
9 Potatoes	34.4
10 Greenhouse/nursery	30.2
11 Dry peas	27.1
12 Sheep and lambs	18.7
13 Corn	15.4
14 Honey	14.8
15 Chicken eggs	6.9
16 Dry beans	6.8
17 Safflower	5.3
18 Oats	3.5
19 Wool	2.4
20 Cherries	1.6
21 Flaxseed	1.3

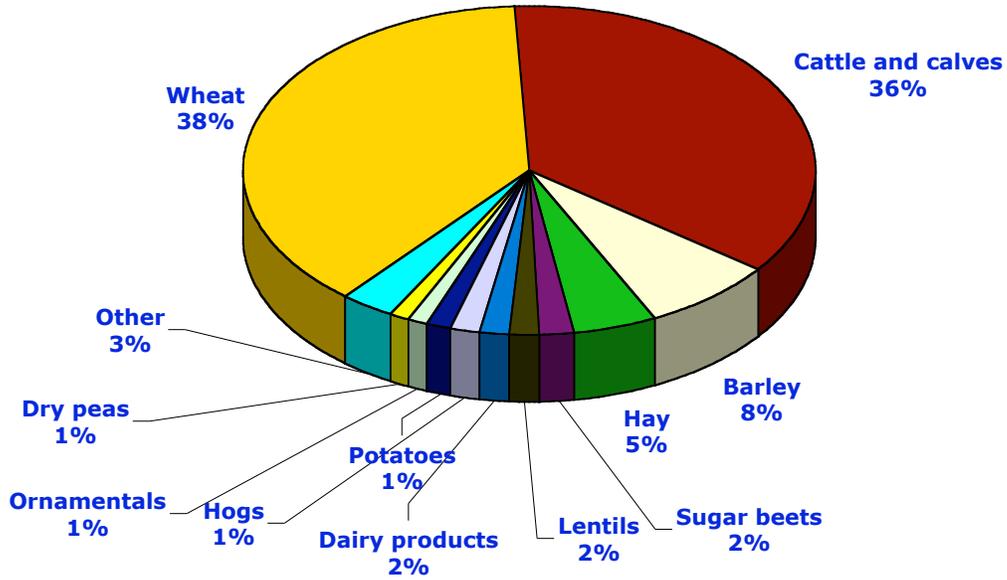
Note: aquaculture, turkeys, and mushrooms were also listed among Montana's top 25 products, in that order, but sales figures for these products were not released by ERS. Sales for these products combined appear to total about 3% of the state's farm product sales of \$2.6 billion in 2009.

Note also that at \$6 million, direct sales from farmers to consumers amount to more than the value of the 17th ranking product, safflower seeds.

Montana's top 25 farm products in 2009 (Economic Research Service)

See table on previous page

Top farm products sold by Montana farms, 2009



Source: USDA Economic Research Service

Balance of Cash Receipts and Production Costs (BEA):

Southeast of the Triangle region ranchers and farmers sell \$419 million of food commodities per year (a thirty-one-year average for 1979-2009), spending \$477 million to raise them, for an average loss of \$58 million each year. These figures do not include federal subsidies (see below). *Note that these sales figures compiled by the BEA may differ from cash receipts recorded by the USDA Census of Agriculture (above).*

Since 1979, farm producers have spent \$1.8 billion more producing crops and livestock than they earned by selling these products. This amounts to a loss of 14% of farm product sales. Total cash flow for farmers in the region has been negative for all but two years since 1979. Moreover, 51% of the region's farms and ranches reported net losses in 2007 (Ag Census). Southeast of Triangle farmers and ranchers earned \$180 million less by selling commodities in 2009 than they earned in 1969 (in 2009 dollars).

Farmers and ranchers earn \$25 million per year of farm-related income — primarily custom work, and rental income (thirty-one-year average for 1979-2009). Federal farm support payments average \$68 million per year for all farms in the region combined (for the years 1979-2009). Overall, this means farm families rely heavily on off-farm jobs to make ends meet, and to obtain health care benefits.

The region's consumers:

Southeast of Triangle consumers spend \$101 million buying food each year, including \$59 million for home use. Most of this food (an estimated \$90 million) is produced outside the region. Only \$629,000 of food products (0.1% of farm cash receipts, and 0.6% of the region's consumer market) are sold by farmers directly to consumers.

Estimated change in net assets for all region households combined was a loss of \$200 million in 2009 alone (BLS). This places further pressure on residents trying to pay for food.

Farm and food economy summary:

Farmers lose \$58 million each year producing food commodities, and spend \$167 million buying inputs from external suppliers, for a total annual loss of \$225 million to the region. Federal subsidies (see above) do not fully compensate for these losses, and moreover, only are given to farmers who grow select crops, such as wheat and barley.

Meanwhile, consumers spend an estimated \$90 million buying food from outside the region. Adding losses from the farm economy to these consumer dollars that flow away from the region, total loss to the region is \$315 million of potential wealth *each year*. This loss amounts to about three-quarters of the value of all commodities farmers sell in the region.

Consumer Markets for Food

Southeast of the Triangle Region — markets for food eaten at home (2009):

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Southeast of the Triangle residents purchase \$101 million of food each year; \$59 million to eat at home. Home purchases break down in the following way:

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 12.8
Fruits & vegetables	10.9
Cereals and bakery products	7.6
Dairy products	6.3
“Other,” incl. sweets, fats, & oils	21.4

If Southeast of the Triangle consumers purchased only 15% of the food they need for home use directly from farmers in the region, this would produce \$9 million of new farm income in the region.

Great Falls — markets for food eaten at home (2009):

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Great Falls residents purchase \$218 million of food each year; \$127 million to eat at home. Home purchases break down in the following way:

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 28
Fruits & vegetables	23
Cereals and bakery products	16
Dairy products	14
“Other,” incl. sweets, fats, & oils	46

Helena — markets for food eaten at home (2009):

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Helena residents purchase \$195 million of food each year; \$114 million to eat at home. Home purchases break down in the following way:

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 25
Fruits & vegetables	21
Cereals and bakery products	15
Dairy products	12
“Other,” incl. sweets, fats, & oils	41

Butte — markets for food eaten at home (2009):

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Butte residents purchase \$88 million of food each year; \$51 million to eat at home. Home purchases break down in the following way:

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 11.1
Fruits & vegetables	9.4
Cereals and bakery products	6.5
Dairy products	5.5
“Other,” incl. sweets, fats, & oils	18.5

Bozeman — markets for food eaten at home (2009):

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Bozeman residents purchase \$240 million of food each year; \$140 million to eat at home. Home purchases break down in the following way:

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 30
Fruits & vegetables	26
Cereals and bakery products	18
Dairy products	15
“Other,” incl. sweets, fats, & oils	51

Billings — markets for food eaten at home (2009):

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Billings residents purchase \$410 million of food each year; \$239 million to eat at home. Home purchases break down in the following way:

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 52
Fruits & vegetables	44
Cereals and bakery products	31
Dairy products	26
“Other,” incl. sweets, fats, & oils	87

State of Montana — markets for food eaten at home (2009):

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Montanans purchase \$2.6 billion of food per year, \$1.5 billion of this to eat at home. Home purchases break down in the following way:

	<i>millions</i>
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	\$ 328
Fruits & vegetables	278
Cereals and bakery products	194
Dairy products	162
“Other,” incl. sweets, fats, & oils	548

Key data sources:

Bureau of Economic Analysis data on farm production balance

<http://www.bea.doc.gov/bea/regional/reis/>

Food consumption estimates from Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Expenditure Survey

<http://www.bls.gov/cex/home.htm>

U.S. Census of Agriculture

<http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/>

USDA/Economic Research Service food consumption data:

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/data/foodconsumption/>

USDA/ Economic Research Service farm income data:

<http://ers.usda.gov/Data/FarmIncome/finfidmu.htm>

For more information:

To see results from *Finding Food in Farm Country* studies in other regions of the U.S.:

<http://www.crcworks.org/locales.html>

To read the original *Finding Food in Farm Country* study from Southeast Minnesota (written for the Experiment in Rural Cooperation): <http://www.crcworks.org/ff.pdf>

To view a PowerPoint presented in March, 2008, by Ken Meter at Rep. Collin Peterson's (D-MN) Minnesota agricultural forum, called the "Home Grown Economy":

<http://www.crcworks.org/crcppts/petersonkm08.pdf>

To get a brief list of essential food facts, many of which are cited in the presentation above,

<http://www.crcworks.org/foodmarkets.pdf>

To link to further analysis of farm and food economies in the U.S.:

<http://www.crcworks.org/econ.html>

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