

## Food Security in Montana

*More than one in 10 Montanans struggled with food insecurity according to 2018 food insecurity data from the USDA Economic Research Service. Communities and organizations across our state are developing programs and tools to improve community food security and access through farmers markets, community donation gardens, food donation, food pantries, and additional community food programs. Montana State University Extension partners with communities and organizations working to provide Montanans with low food access with increased access to nutritious, locally produced food through the Growing Together Montana effort led by the Extension Nutrition Education and Master Gardener programs.*

### Important Definitions

**Food access** refers to the ability of people to obtain fresh, healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate foods through market and non-market sources. Non-market sources may include home production; food sharing; community gardens; community, school, and other meal programs; and emergency food sources. Challenges to food access at an individual level may include inadequate income, health problems and disability, limited time and resources to acquire and prepare healthy foods, lack of access to a kitchen and food preparation equipment, and lack of land and other resources to grow/raise food. At a community-level challenges may include an absence of nearby retailers offering nutritious food (“food deserts”), poor public transportation and infrastructure, limited or no school meal programs (especially in the summer), and lack of community food spaces that include farm land, community gardens, farmers markets, shared kitchens, community meal sites, food pantries, etc.

**Household food insecurity** (as defined by the USDA) is a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food.

**Household food security** (as defined by the USDA) means access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.

### MSU Extension Programs, Partnerships and Resources

Growing Together Montana is a partnership of the Montana State University Extension Nutrition Education Program and Master Gardener program. With funding from SNAP-Education, the project supports donation gardens throughout the state. The project goal is to grow food for local pantries to help lower-income Montanans access fresh fruits and vegetables and support them in using the foods through nutrition education.



## MSU Extension Resources:

- The [Buy Eat Live Better Nutrition Education Program](#) hosts the [Growing Together](#) website as well as food [fact sheets](#), [recipes](#), and opportunities to sign up for [nutrition education classes](#).
- The [Master Gardener Program](#) website connects users to courses available in Montana, further resources, and provides a log in.

## Additional Resources

**SNAP and locally grown produce.** The ability of local foods purchases using SNAP dollars is easier than ever. The resources below provide information on SNAP participation and farmers markets.

- [Farmers Market Portal: SNAP and other food access programs](#). Working in partnership with farmers markets and other Montana programs can help participants increase food access.
- [How to Accept SNAP at your Farmers Market](#). Does your local farmers market accept SNAP EBT? Check out the Montana guide for up-to-date information on how to accept SNAP.
- The [Double SNAP Dollars](#) program in Montana can help stretch the value of SNAP benefits so that participants can access more fruit and vegetables while supporting Montana farmers and communities.

## References

USDA ERS. Definition of Food Security.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – SNAP. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, contact the Montana Public Assistance Helpline at 1-888-706-1535 or [www.apply.mt.gov](http://www.apply.mt.gov). Montana State University Extension is an ADA/EO/AA/Veteran's Preference Employer and Provider of Educational Outreach.