

# Montana Beef to School Supply Chain Relationships: Initial Case Study Findings



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# Relevant Montana Statistics

- **Population: ~ 1 million** (US Census Bureau)
- **Land Area: 4<sup>th</sup> largest U.S. state**
- **State Cattle Herd: ~2.5 million** (USDA-NASS)
- **Schools/districts: 821 / 405** (Montana Office Public Instruction)
  - K-12 students: ~145,000
  - 30% in schools 500 or greater (approximately 7 cities)
  - 42% in schools 250-499
  - 17% in schools 50-249
  - Remainder in schools 1-49 (literally 1!)



# Background

- **38% of MT Schools are engaged in farm to school Activities** (USDA F2S Census)
- **Beef is a natural component of this movement in Montana**
- **Primarily a cow-calf state; only 20,000 head are slaughtered in state annually** (USDA NASS)
- **Approximately 20 beef plants have inspection status for schools** (MT Dpt. Of Livestock & USDA)



# The Project

- **USDA Western SARE funded 3 year project**

- Producers and Processors
- Food Services (K12)
- Related stakeholders



- **Research**

- Case studies
- Surveys
- Observational data (e.g., recipes, plate waste)

- **Outreach and Extension**

- Workshops
- Multi-media

# Objectives

- 1. Identify current successful models of B2S efforts;**
- 2. Identify capacity and motivators of beef producers and meat processors to participate;**
- 3. Identify resources to make B2S viable (economically and nutritionally) for schools;**
- 4. Provide strategies to include B2S programming at schools of various sizes.**



# Case Studies

- **Case Studies conducted 2015-2016**
- **Analysis continues**
  - 1 vertically integrated producer/processor
  - 2 independent producers
  - 2 independent processors
  - 6 school districts; 28 total schools (range 2 to 12 schools in district)

# Case Study Methodology

- **Literature and census/dataset reviews**
- **Interview instrument developed and reviewed**
  - Interviews conducted
  - Transcription services
  - Content analysis/code development/coding
  - Themes analyzed
- **Narratives to be released October 24<sup>th</sup>**
  - Celebrating farm to school month!
  - (<https://www.facebook.com/beef2school/>)



# Highlighted Case #1

- **SW Montana: 1044 students, 3 schools (K-12)**
  - 575-600 meals served/day (55% participation rate)
  - Cattle are donated 4-H show animals, purchased by external parties and donated; local ranchers fill-in
  - Processor is 3<sup>rd</sup> party service provider, providing separated frozen patties
  - Additional local processor collaborates for 64 mile delivery in logged freezer truck
  - Highlighted special local hamburger days
  - “Right now, we are reliant on the donations.”





# Highlighted Case #2

- **NW Montana: 6327 students, 12 (+4) schools**
  - 2500 meals served/day (39% participation)
  - Schools buys from local processor
  - Processor procures local cull cattle and trim for school program, processes, sells, and delivers
  - Primarily burger patties, some special sausage and pork products
  - Food service directors text for weekly fresh delivery
  - B2S supports .5 FTE at processing plant; processor purchased new patty-maker due to school business

# Highlighted Case #3

- **NE Montana: 65 K-12 students, one school**
  - 50+/- meals served/day (75+% participation)
  - School buys from local vertically integrated producer/processor
  - Processor delivers 108 miles
  - Primarily premium ground beef; some roasts
  - Part of a comprehensive F2S program including school garden and curricular education



# Trends and Themes: Cost

- **School: local beef is expensive\*; budget balanced over quarter or year, not per meal**
- **Processor: little leeway to depart from market; economies of scale on processing day may allow for some volume pricing**
- **Producer: difficult to meet school price; opportunity to market whole animal after premium cuts; opportunity for cull cows**

**\*\$3.00 to \$4.50/lb**



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# Trends and Themes: Cuts and Use

- Ground beef
- Roasts
- Further processed (sausages, specialty mixes/extenders **using vegetables**)
- Premium cuts **used sparingly**

# Trends and Themes: Cuts and Use

- **Cuts:** ground beef and patties and roasts
- **Recipes:** burgers, beef lentil chili, mac n' beef, goulash, beef marinara, sloppy joes, Salisbury steak, stroganoff, tacos, etc.
- **Extenders:** lentils, mushrooms, vegetable puree
- **Promotion:** signage, word of mouth, menu labeling, educational activities/ curricular tie-ins



# Trends and Themes: Motivations

- **Quality perceptions**
- **Community pride and engagement**
- **Short and transparent supply chain**
- **Nutrition perceptions**
- **Environmental perceptions**
- **Food and fiber literacy**

# Trends and Themes: Community

- **Networks: producers and processors**
- **Benefactors: donations, in-kind and monetary**
- **Parent and student interest/support**
- **Local economic productivity/growth**



# Summary – Challenges and Opportunities

- Interviewed producers and/or processors can ramp-up for more school production
- Cost continues to be a primary barrier
- Montana is rich in state or federally inspected processors
- Schools **need** storage capacity, **appropriate** kitchen **equipment**, and **foodservice staff skills**





# Summary - Recommendations

- **Start small!**
- **Balance USDA Foods (i.e., commodity) and food service supplier beef with local beef**
- **Highlight local beef for burgers and special days/meals**
- **Strategically use wholesome nutritious extenders**



# Future Outputs

- **Food Studies Article**
- **Other Scholarly Articles**
- **Outreach Materials**
- **Stakeholder Workshops**
- **Local consulting and Technical Assistance**
- **Public SARE Final Report**



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# Thank you. Questions?

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