



Producer Training: Session 4 Transcript

Video Transcript Module 4 Sections A + B

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Aubree [00:00:00] The final session of the Montana Farm to School Producer training. This session was recorded live at Hardin School District and includes module for the Conclusion Module and a presentation by Hardin Farm to School and Hardin School Nutrition Program. If you participated in any of the Live in-person or live virtual sessions, please complete the photo release form. This gives us permission to use these photos and any video or photos we take during the sessions, including the Zoom recordings that may have your name displayed. You can scan the QR code shown here to sign the photo release online. Now we'll dive into the content, starting with module four with Jan to speak from Mission West Community Development Partners.

Speaker 2 [00:00:44] All right. So we're going to dive into the business planning piece. Business planning is always those things that I find. We work with the Food Nag Center, we work with businesses to start food businesses, ag based businesses. And the business planning is always this thing that is just like, I'm working on it. So we're going to dive into this. So you're going to really understand how you're going to be planning for your farm based business to sell to schools. So we're just going to be learning what are the best practices here as you start planning to move into food and on the call markets, because this is a market strategy. So just like any other market strategy, you should be doing some planning on how you access those markets are and are successful. So you're going to be defining your market channel and what this school is. A lot of the previous sections of this of this workshop have You've dove into these areas. So you are starting to you've talked to your schools, you understand what your school needs are and you're kind of you kind of getting a sense of the price point of what they need to have for them to be able to buy that product. And you're also you've also thought about because I remember doing this section in the previous workshops is you've taught you thought about how you're going to do it, you can do it direct. Are you going to be using a food hub or aggregator like the Western Water Growers Co-op is considered an aggregator. Your food hub would be considered an aggregator when you put that together. So what? What what's, what's the means you're going to be using? Because every time you do one of those next steps beyond direct, you need to figure out the costs associated with that good example. When you work with the Food Hub and they're moving your product, more than likely there's a certain percent added to that product or deducted. It depends on how they make that arrangement with you as a supplier. And then also distributors figure 35%. Right off the top. If you're working directly like quality foods or some other distributors, you need to you need to figure

that price point into your costing because they're they're absorbing a cost that you typically would be doing if you distributed your own product. And the DOD is another whole world, which I'm not going to dive into. But these are things just again, you're you're now planning your your entry into the schools. It's the house you're going to do it and that's going to directly reflect your costing. And that's really important that you understand your costing, because if you don't, that means you don't know if you're breaking even. If you're actually making a profit in how much that profit is. And at the end of the day, I think you're planning this is a business strategy, not a donation strategy. So what is you need to understand your cost? And so some of the things you want to think about when you're figuring out costing is what are your fixed costs and what are your variable cost. And so does anyone here have a thought about what they think a fixed cost might be? Anyone. Hedge your mortgage. It's something you have in place on your farm if you have a mortgage and it is consistent. It's the same. Your tractor payments are considered a fixed cost. So when you're doing your business, planning on your farm, you're going to have costs that just occur. You know, you go over the time period of that mortgage or the time period of that tractor payment. It's still a cost of doing business because you need that tractor to do your harvest. So it's a cost of operation to the to the product that you're going to be either harvesting or in packaging and selling to the schools. So these are things you really want to deeply understand. So what are variable costs is like the word says it's cost. It might shift. It might shift with the type of production you're doing. It might shift with the amount of labor you need. You need a full crew to do one crop. You need half that crew to do another crop. So what are those variable costs? You want to understand that they are variable within your costing structure. So there's a lot of tools for cost calculation. And as you can see here, there's a couple of links. I'm not going to dive into the spreadsheet right now because there are a lot of tools out there to do cost calculation. And what I would highly suggest if you haven't done this, is to start diving into those tools and just understanding how you populate them. There's just some really good models out there that you can play with the most extension agent. I imagine you have some cost tools that people can get to start determining what are your what are your on farm operation costs. And I'll be the first one to say that is not my expected expertise. We work with the value added side. So once that product comes in, we work with businesses to say, okay, well, what's the cost? Your your product processing to get this value added product from the raw state into that packaging into labeled ready to go to market. And we have cost tools that help businesses do that. So it really is what stage you're at. We did have some discussion on value added processing. These are just some tools there that you can go access. So a lot of times when people do value add or even just if you're selling a raw commodity, you're going to be doing some kind of investment. So say you did decide that you're going to be doing a fresh vegetable operation to sell to schools. You're going to have cost of investment to make that happen. You maybe you did have to buy a tractor. Maybe you did have to invest in some harvest equipment to be able to to get that operation harvested. That's you want to figure out what the return on that investment is. You also will be figuring out the depreciation on that investment. So if you did buy equipment, it's usually a seven year depreciation schedule is pretty common. Those are things you want to make sure you're wrapping in because people are. What do you do to depreciation? Well, it's like it's your way of figuring out your cost to replace that piece of equipment. So you want to understand what that investment is. Are you going to get a return on that investment? So you bought that special packaging equipment. Did you put a portion of that cost into your costing to make sure that you're going to be covering? At the end of the day, that investment is getting repaid and that it has been a worthwhile investment? And those are really important things to weigh in your decisions as you move forward and definitely expanding your capacity to serve school markets. And do you know the financing and grant options are out there? We talked about that in a previous module that the growth through AG program is a fantastic program for producers wanting to go and expand into school or broader markets rather than just, you know, direct sales. These are opportunities that if you do have feel like you want to pursue some financing or grant programs, definitely talk to Food AG Center in your area. Just know there's eight centers across the state and they're at the Department of AG's website. There'll be great resources for you to pursue those. And right now

we're really literally waiting for the value added produce your grant to come out. Yeah. Yeah. You're definitely not going to be doing the retail markup, but what? This is a good question because the West Montana Growers Co-op, which we worked with extensively them a lot, they have two channels, they have their retail channel, they have their wholesale channel, their retail channels, pretty much their CSA boxes, because that's a retail markup. Retail markup is typically a 50% markup on your base cost, and that's without distribution. Anything is just, you know, you go in direct. I mean, that's what you think about retail. You go in direct the wholesale arm. They've done a very pretty creative scale on how they do wholesale markup on those products, because what they do is it depends on the volume of produce. So the larger producers will have a lesser markup to them, whereas the smaller producers have have a larger markup. So they had to develop a scale to address that. But it's still at the most a 25% markup because that institution or that wholesale market is going to turn around and mark it up again and they're going to be very, very well. Same with the distributor. They're going to be very price conscious of what the end price of that product is. And sometimes when you're working with a producer, they'll come back and they'll go, Your pricing doesn't work for us because at the end of the day, when they add on their markup for distribution, it's it's outside the market what the market can bear. So those are the things that as your producers, you know, the large scale producers have that room for that flexibility because of the volumes they're selling. That they're they're probably more flexible in that markup. It depends on what as like if they buy from Cisco, some schools buy from Cisco. So they're they're working with a wholesale distributor there and they're paying those prices. But in answer to your question, western Montana growers, what is really, really important is when they first started, which Yellowstone is kind of an emerging food hub. They started at 10% markup and they couldn't survive. You need to find that sweet spot where you can say, if we have this kind of markup, we can break even in these first few years and then start developing that growth strategy because the sales are going to drive that growth strategy. Yeah, I would say maximum 25%. Max. For wholesale. Yeah, that's right. Yeah. And so they shifted their wholesale to 25%. They were 1015 and they couldn't survive, shifted to 25. But at the same time, you're driving that market value story, and that's at beginning Food Hub Challenge, which you guys are going to be on that balance is you if you're working with producers that are used to getting retail prices for their products and they want to be part of your food hub, you have this learning curve of, you know, at the same time how you're building that if it's a cooperative or whatever model it is that you're using, they need to understand the business side of the food hub. That aggregator and how you bring that understanding into education is really, really important that your education, your members, whether you're a co-op or whatever structure you are, that if you want to support this aggregation of your community, they need to understand that straight retail doesn't work. The retail costing in that aggregation model doesn't work. You need to look at it as I need to go to a wholesale price structure and can my farm afford it? This is the other thing that the farmer needs to understand is that very first slide. Will you your your operation work and aggregation scenario. Or do you need that direct retail? Great example. Flathead cheese. They started their business and their vision was to be in every store in Montana. Flathead Lake. Excuse me. They started producing their cheese and getting their operations going and all of a sudden they went, Wow, there's no way we can afford wholesale. We will not break even on wholesale. So they aggressively drove retail. Now that they have their sales up, they're doing wholesale. So they did the stages of in their operation so that they could be successful as a business. But it was a real lesson for them to learn that you just don't go from a startup, oftentimes as a startup directly into a wholesale market. You have to build your capacities. You have to build your sales volumes. I mean, there are some out there that have done it. I'm not going to say you never. But typically you start as a direct retail operation. You build your capacity, you build your sales, you build your understanding of your business. Then you launch into wholesale, which is a whole other licensing structure. And we get into food. A little bit of regulation here, right? Little bit. But I can also answer questions about licensing and stuff. Anyone has any. But yeah, so it says it's a scale up. And I think when I heard when people introduced themselves that you are really are at that nascent level. That you're just starting your your, you know, your sales and you're probably more

mature than anyone here and how your operation is. And so how you do that in a very, very planned sequential way. So you don't hit that wall and have loss. And then when you have loss and if you had tractor payments, then all of a sudden it starts spiraling on you, you start moving backwards, which you don't want. Yeah. And some of them have really worked their budgets, too, to make it happen. You know, I think the the direct or is it the fresh produce? They get a few more dollars to be able to do more less budget restraints with that, to be able to procure the fresh produce directly. Okay, So can you imagine it? You can imagine that this that if you're going to go to another new market, it's just scenario. You've been doing farmers markets, things going really well. You have a local school that you've decided you want to supply and so you are going to be thinking maybe I need to be looking at my production, scaling up my production to meet this new potential market for my farm. So that's what we're going to be talking about in this section. We're going to just basically really what are the logistics behind increasing production scale to appropriate scale? It's really something to be thoughtful about and evaluate the marketing and financing to make sure it's going to be successful as you scale up. So understanding the scales of production and we again, we just kind of talked about this a bit is like you had these different ways of entering school markets. You can go direct from your farm, directly from your farm there. You're going to go through a food hub or a co-op or they're going to come to the farmer's market and buy from you, or you're going to be doing your own processing or you're going to work with a food processor or a distributor. So all the different ways that you enter into these different channels, they're really market channels You want to think about is your scale, Are you do you have appropriate scale to make that happen? And I, I do. We deeply understand that as a food processor. So when we started farm to school years ago, we started doing farm to school with the West Montana growers ten years ago, and we started exploring different crops and how we could process those crops for regional schools. So we were serving about maybe five schools in those vegetables. What we learned really quickly from a processors perspective is really, really inefficient for us to process £100 of carrots. £100 of beets, broccoli. I mean, it just came and turn the equipment on to do that. So we learned really quickly that we needed £600 to make it functional so that we could do it. And it could be something that not only is cost effective for the schools, but it's costs of it for us to operate. And so with that, we really had to get creative because not every school needed £600. Schools wanted £100. So we started bundling. So these are things that just from my experience and understanding the scale from a processors prospector perspective, scale is really important that you understand it. The you understand that that school, what is the scale that school or those numbers are schools are going to need this going to be cost effective for you to do whether it's a direct delivery, whether it goes to a food hub, food processor or a distributor. There's things before you hit it, you start thinking about going into this direction that I think is really an important evaluation. You learn this evaluation when you do business planning. But there is always a weak link. On your farm and your operation. So say you are you've decided to go into a school market, which means you need to scale up. Well, you're weak. Link is going to be amplified in that scaling up. So what do you think? Your weak link is? Huge issue labor. Any other weak links? Yeah, that's a great way of putting it. The bottleneck. And that's so classic for all. Beef. Beef. We had about four beef operations during COVID, say, Ah, we're gonna start selling locally and we have three freezers in our in our facility. So our one freezer was the one that they stored in and became very apparent. That all of a sudden the boxes, a hamburger were starting to grow and grow and grow. And it's because that's a really important business planning to say, okay, I'm doing this expansion, I'm doing the scaling up, but I still deal with these lower cuts of meat and what is the way I'm going to deal with those? Because at the end of the day, you cannot afford that loss. So what's your strategy? So now really, really important to recognize another probably weak link that I think a lot of people deal with our financial. Especially now, our financial world is really challenging. Interest rates are extremely elevated, so that means financing is becoming a challenge. Top two To make work, you might be able to get the loan, but can you make it work at the interest rates that are out right now? So these are things to just sit back before you do this scale up is to think about where are my challenges in my operation and how? What's my strategy? Because I'm always I'm a firm believer. You always say challenges, but you

you on the other side, you say opportunity and how you solve them. I mean, there's there's ways to solve them. So, again, the financial one, I just say look at these opportunities that are out there right now with the infusion yoga's doing now and local food, there could be some real opportunities to get some financing. It is a really good rate. The meat processing grant are a loan program. It's a really good one. Yeah. So anyway, weak links we all have. We know them and then you know how to address them. And then you want to have sustainable growth. And we talked about return on investment. So if you in this scaling up, if you're having to do some kind of investment, making sure that you're going to be getting a return on that and that is a source that you're able to sustain that growth. I mean, sustainability is really important. You could live at break even for so long. But you want to figure out how you do start making profit on your expansion and what are the different different tools and equipment that you you know, you'll get more profit if you do this investment. But in that mid time, are you able to sustain that growth? Sometimes growth can be really painful. But at the end of the day, if you really have done your business planning and projections, you can see the opportunity. You can see that growth potential to your farm. And in that you just need in that in that gap, how you're going to survive and live in that gap. And so those are things like maybe there's opportunities for some gap financing with your bank as you roll through that growth stage. So these are just things to be thinking about and make sure that you're putting it into your planning. Again, business planning is really good stuff to do. I'm going to shut out to extension. They have some great business plan models for produce for on farm and for value add. Another good good place to go was at TRUCK. That's with National Center for Appropriate Technology. If you just Google Astra, there's reams of information there on on farm business planning and value added ag business planning. So it's the tools to get in use. It's really important. So then, you know, you kind of have in a sense, I mean, of what might be coming up for you and that you're planning on how to address that bottleneck that, you know will come. Okay, So what are some other considerations in this? This is just we've we've touched upon this, but you do want to think about do you need to change your administration capacity or administration Is systems, your labor management, your good need, increase, increase land access or your land base for the scaling up? Of course we touched upon equipment and what are some things that you can increase, you know, potentially increase your efficiencies. So this is just things to look at. Again, it's really common sense. Like anything, if you're going to grow, how do you grow? What do you need to be looking at to make that growth successful and sustainable? And in a farm operation, if you're saying I'm going to grow, I'm going to double the production of carrots, I need another quarter acre to do that. What does that mean to your operation? And do you do you have the equipment and capacity to do that or do you have to invest in new equipment? And then, of course, the labor management is huge, which we're going to dive into some labor stuff here. The labor market labor has really gotten quite interesting for farmers. It used to be where you could ask to pull someone on your farm and, you know, happily work them to death and never have to worry about farm law and labor law. But there are definitely labor laws, even with interns. There's labor laws that you must address and make sure that you are meeting the requirements of the law. So here's some resources is a link there that you can go to to get some of this information. But the days of, you know, really just having so on, you know, just common labor on your farm. I mean, right now you pay someone over \$600 If you're showing it on your books, all of a sudden you have to generate 80 to 99. You know, and that before. I mean, we've had people working. We do have a farm. We have a sheep farm. We've had people come work on our farm and we never thought about it. Now it's like, boy, it gets tagged if you've got in your accounting system. And they're saying, Did you get a 1099 for that? And we're like, Oh, okay. Yeah. And did you pay worker's comp? Right, Right. So these are things just you want to think about. You know, the workman's comp thing is really a big deal. We you know, when we work in our facility, we have to go through all sorts of not just workman's comp, but we have to go through, you know, hiring equity. We have to make sure we cover a lot of bases to meet federal laws and state laws. So just make sure you understand those if you plan on hiring people to work in your operations. Okay, so what are some special considerations? I think you all have gone through numerous modules, have touched upon school needs in this training. So I think it is going back to

were there specific needs that food service director was asking and definitely food safety. There's been a lot of questions raised about, you know, schools buying locally. Do they need to meet a certain food safety requirement? So you want to deeply understand that. Is there a production standard there? I mean, will they accept seconds? They may not. You want to make sure that they understand that? I think the most classic is the concept of clean From the farm to a kitchen is something that I've heard some horror stories about. So just know that, you know, you are taking produce into a kitchen that feeds kids. So there is a certain level of clean and they're not going to want you to bring a bunch of squash that has mud all over them or potatoes or anything things should be. I mean, your basic threshold, I would say, is clean. Now, does that mean sanitary or sanitized? I mean, those are two different definitions. But, you know, I have seen produce come in our facility that has been like, oh, my God, no, reject. And ours isn't like a school kitchen. I mean, we're a full warehouse processing facility, So you want to think beyond the farm gate? You want to think you're going into a kitchen and a kitchen that feeds kids. So really important. And then just the ability to do that washing and packing. Do you have that capacity? If they're asking you to have the produce process to a certain level, do you have the asking you to have it bagged? Are they asking you to do certain things? But in delivering that that production and then, you know, accounting system, this is something that you want to think about. How do they want things labeled? And you want to think about yourself. Do you need a traceability on that product? So think about labeling. Think about how you know from that label that if something's wrong, that it can come back to you, but then you can go maybe even deeper on your farm to say, Oh, this is the area that this was a concern, or maybe something happened. So labeling is really important because it tells it tells the producer or the buyer what's the product, how much they're buying. How to contact the contact the producer. But also, if you use a system of barcoding or batch coding, it's a traceability for you. I mean, it's not just for the buyer, it's for you. It's really important because you don't want to have to do a recall on everything you sold. If you have the ability to do traceability. So. And then, you know, again accounting system your your beef going up your business plan using this great program. But then you're going to have to manage those financials. Do you have an accounting system that can do that be really important for you to be able to do that to track your sales and payments? So the next one is meeting the budget needs of the schools. Again, we've kind of talked about this, but price, I think we've we've driven that horse home. It just, you know, understanding that entry price point is going to be really important. And like we said, some schools have extra money right now. They might be able to work with you in that pricing. But then it's sustainability is going to be sustainable for your operation. Will that continue? So really look at the pricing and then the volume. Again, there might be some schools that, you know, have such a minimum need. Is it going to cancel out for you to harvest, package, distribute that product to that school for £50? No, I mean, you want to look at that. You really deeply understand that. You want to understand for us is £600. You want to you want us to use our floor. £600. We can't go below that. We have to have to have a crew and turn on that equipment. £600. So I understand that. You know, I know it you know, it might feel good to take the £50 the end of the day. Has it brought sustainability back to your operation? So really important. And the billion is another thing that I don't know how fast schools turn their payments around, but that's really something to understand. Most people on their invoices say net 30. Is that the schools operation? Do they do net 30 or are they quarterly? What's your payment schedule? Because you have queued up all these costs and are you able to hold those costs until you get payment? You have to live with that. So understand their payment structure and they do have a payment structure. There's just no way it's not. I just can't imagine that institution like a school doesn't have their accounting system has a payment structure that you need to know what that is. Okay, so grading, packaging and labeling, I talked a little bit about labeling, but I think what's really important is this grading some schools will take seconds. But you want to make sure that they'll take seconds. Classic example is the apples. We had a producer in western Montana that had these tiny little apples and they're like, No way are they great. There's no way you can put those on the, you know, really in the wholesale market, too small. But boy, they perfect for schools. So it's just a great opportunity to take a second and get it into a school

market. He sold a bunch of apples to schools because of those little apples. They're perfect for kids instead of the big ones. You have to cut in half or quarter and then they turn brown and you throw half of them away. So just really understand if you have some seconds or is there an opportunity for seconds and the type of crop that you're doing. And the packaging again is, you know, are they going to accept you just bring in a box or been a produce or do they want it bagged? Do they want it? You know, cut, cut it all. I mean, we talked about processing in a previous module. The schools are going to tell you how they want that or how they can use it. And I think one really common one is squash. This one school district in back east worked with some producers that they could do nothing with those giant Hubbard squashes. It's too much work. They don't have the labor to cut those squash. Much less the manhandling of cutting a big covered squash. So those producers got together and all they did was cut and claw those squash, wrap them in plastic. And the schools could use them. So it's things like that or those Segway points. The more questions you ask, the more you understand their capacities in their kitchens, which I know there's a module that got pretty deep in that earlier, but it could be your opportunity to move some product. So we know their needs. We talked about labeling. When we do a batch code, we literally just have product code. So squash will have a product, the company code for us because we're numerous companies using our facility. Be your farm name. The date it was basically processed or harvested. And some might even add a code for where it was harvested. So those are when you're getting deeper on your farm plan and you want to be able to go back in that traceability, which I think is the most important thing in labeling. Is traceability because that can you can tell someone says, hey, I had a real issue with that squash, and you can say, okay, I'm going to go back to that field because I know the field code. I will go back to that field and we'll look around and see was there issues there that I did not see and I should have been aware of. So it's that traceability going back and it can go as far back, as intimate as you want. You go to the area, your farm, or you can even put a code for the row that it came from. So these are things that as you're doing, especially fresh, leafy greens, you want to deeply understand the food safety of your farm and you want to know where you harvested that because you might walk back to that row or that area and you go, Oh my God, there's deer poop all over the place that I didn't see or I didn't notice. It's things like that that, that you're able to set up systems that can protect you as a farmer because you guys have gone through a lot of food safety already, if I understand correctly, from the previous modules. So again, just understanding the food safety requirements. And do they want you to have a food safety plan? Do they want you to be gap audited? If you're doing produce, we could talk to the cows, come home and food safety because that's actually something we work in a lot. So if anyone has any questions during breaks, I'll be happy to chat with you. And then a managing risk. We're just talking about risk earlier. Just make sure Farm Commons is the most amazing organization. They they have so many resources and just really understanding how as a producer you can manage your risk. What are the liability? How to structure your business to shelter you from liability. You know what business structures can do that. And then also just insurance and what kind of insurance policies you should be looking at if you're selling food because food is can have a risk. Yeah. Arrows brought them out for a couple workshops. If you ever see Farm Commons coming to do a training, go to it. They are excellent. They really, really they have such deep understanding behind legality, the legal parameters behind on farm operations. And if you're selling, you know, to either direct or to institutions. Really good resource. And so I guess we're just really final considerations. Is this going to be is it going to be necessary? Can you cover the costs and are you going to get a return on this expansion? At the end of the day, you're going to be doing expansion to meet the broader market and are you ready for it? So there's applied activity.

Module 4 Section C: Crop Production and Planning

Video Available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WsU9Mkaynp0&t=1361s>

Tammy [00:00:00] Hi there. My name's Tammy Howard, and I am going to talk about crop production and planning for this module. Production planning is an important tool to meeting the consistency and quantity requirements for selling to schools. So that's what we're going to be going over and talking about in this section. But first, I just wanted to introduce myself. As I mentioned, my name is Tammy and I work with the National Center for Appropriate Technology, and I, along with a large team throughout the country, work to develop the curriculum that you all have been using for this for this program. And I am excited to be able to teach just a small part of it for you folks today. So let's get started. So schools can actually provide a reliable market. And one bonus of selling to schools is that you can plan that production far in advance because schools will want to have an understanding of how they're going to be making sales from producers. Well in advance of the production season. But a really important consideration in working with schools is you need to make sure that you are meeting the demand or what you've agreed to sell to the schools. And you do that by crop planting and planning. And basically that's done through understanding having an understanding of your harvest needs and that can be done in advance with working with the school nutrition director in understanding how much you intend to sell to them. And then you determine based on that demand, you work backwards from your harvest all the way to the planting stage. And I'm going to talk about some different kinds of tools that you can utilize to do that today. Some questions that I think are really important when you're thinking about your planting plan is based on that agreement with the schools. So are you required to provide a weekly product or a monthly product, or is that something that you're providing annually, for example, like a bunch of winter squash that day that the school might have storage capacity to store throughout the throughout the winter? So I wanted to ask you folks, what do you think is an example of a weekly product? We had eggs. Okay. Yes, that's great. Yep. Milk for sure. But it's definitely those perishable products. Yeah. Lettuce is another really great one for like a salad bar. They're salads. Great. What about monthly beef? Yeah, be something a little less perishable or if they have freezer capacity. I know you've been learning about how, you know, based on the school's capacity, how can your product be adapted or processed or how can your product meet the needs of the school capacity? Awesome. What about something annually flower? Power. Yeah, that's less perishable. I mean, some people do provide, you know, like winter squash, something that's just like all off product that they have storage capacity for. So again, it really is based on the capacity of the schools. So, yeah, again, as that sales agreement is going to really determine the the timing and the amount for the crops that you're producing and selling to schools. Another question to think about is when should you be checking in with the school about that plan? And schools have a different schedule than farmer's schedules. But if you're if you're well, if you have a a school food service director that is, you know, willing to be flexible, obviously, you know, this this time of year or even a little bit earlier, is is a great time for a a crop farmer to be checking in with the schools about what they can commit to and and what what you can provide over the school year. And and one thing I also want to make sure that you all know is that it's just really important to communicate like if if you have a really dry year or and can't produce can produce your product at the agreed upon time or if your have flooding and have a crop failure, all of those things, it's really important to communicate with the school. As soon as you're you know, you're not going to be able to meet the needs of the school. Also thinking about the grade and and size that the school wants, those can determine your days to maturity. So again, so you're working back. What is your production goal that will help you determine your harvest, your harvest and planting dates. You want to identify those harvest targets. They will help you identify how much space it's going to take on your farm and help you start developing a planting plan on your farm. And then you can determine how much seed you need by knowing how many, how many plants or acres of a specific product you're going to take. So we don't expect you

to keep all of that in your head. So there's a lot of really great tools out there for for a crop farmers. And I know there's a lot of really great tools for for livestock production as well that Jan's going to talk about next. So I'm going to share a great tool for small and large scale farms to determine basically how much seed you need the yield estimates as well as days to maturity. And the Johnny's Selected Seeds Grower Library has many great tools to help you determine this. So you're not really caught in the middle of the season and you run out of seed or you you know, a lot of folks use specific varieties. You'll hear from living root farm and they use some varieties of of lettuce that help them grow into the shoulder seasons. And it can also these tools can also help you determine succession planning dates so that you can determine how often and when to plant based on your agreement with the buyer. So this is one of many calculators. I am not endorsing Johnny's selected seeds, but they do have a really great growers library. I always that it's this right tab I wanted to show you from the their home page how to get here. They have a lot of instructional videos but I usually what I'm going to spend most of my time on today is the planting planning tools and calculators. So I'm going to go over here. And so the first one is the seed quantity calculator that I had, and this is an interactive tool. For example, none of us are going to be growing globe artichokes. But say you have. You have an agreement to grow broccoli and you're planning on transplanting it. And you you you're going to want a 100. Ro ft. Of that. So. So you're going to need this. I'll just tell you how many plans you need and and how many plans per foot, which I think. I think broccoli that's a little close personally for broccoli, but if you're transplanting it, then, you know, I usually do 18 inches for my broccoli. But so that's a really great tool as a so you can figure it out. Then you go over and then you can just go in and order however much seed. I want to show you one of my favorite tools here. This is the planting planting tools. So one of my favorite tools is a succession planting calculator and then the seed starting date calculator for seedlings. So let's go to this one first. And. Okay, so let's see. Do you know the let the last spring frost free day in Hardin? I have a guess. It's a very it's it's quite a bit earlier than here in Belgrade, but on May 19th. May 19th. All right. Okay. Is, and then I'm just going to hit enter. Hopefully you might It might be hard to kind of see this, but. Oh, so if you're growing artichokes, you can grow them on May night. You can. They're definitely for us. And then you can plant them on May 19th. But that's yes. So, for example, we have basil here. And as you can see, you might not be able to see, but it says May 26th. And that is because Basil is very frost sensitive. So they're giving you and a little extra time. You'll see here they have also products that are that can be planted before the frost, you know, before that frost free day because because they're they're frost tolerant. So we have like beets two weeks before. And so you can get an idea of when you can you need to start these these products. So that's a really great tool based on your frost free date. Now let's go on over to the succession planting calculator. So somebody had said lettuce, right? So that is something that you definitely want to ensure that you have a So let's say you're growing salad mix here and you want and this is pretty common, like 28 to 30 days to maturity and you want. To plant seven. You know, interval between succession. So you're planning that like pretty much every week, right? So you have an agreement with the school to provide weekly salad mix and you need to understand how much or how often, how often you need to plant. So what's the last frost? What what's the last frost? State average last frost day in Harden, I'm going to say September 15th. Here. Sometimes in Belgrade, it's September 1st and sometimes it's August, sometimes it's July. This gives you an idea. Hopefully. So you want your first planting is on. On May 1st, and then you're planning every week and then the final planting date. Is going to be and this is in the field, your final planting day is going to be August 18th. So this kind of gives you an idea and we can play around. Let's let's try. And if you're wanting to do, for example, just lettuce heads, which will be cheaper for the school, although they require more processing on the part of the school, you're wanting to plant those every two weeks. And so that that gives you an idea of how, you know, you're first planting, your second planting, so on and so forth to your last. Your final planting would be on July 22nd. So this is a really great calculator tool that I always recommend folks look at to to create a succession plan and make sure this can also apply to farmers markets. If you have a community supported agriculture farm, all of those things can do require succession planning. So it's a really great tool. This is based on your

target harvest date and that might be on you know, it might be if you have an agreement to provide a specific product. For example, let's just say Eastern magic, we have broccoli here. And the date that you have agreed to provide, say there's like, for example, a Harvest of the Month program and they want to feature broccoli in August, which I know that's nice. There's probably not a harvest of the month product and in August but still just let's just hypothetical. So this gives you an idea. You put the so say it's on year, you're providing them with that on August 1st. So they have that product through August and then it just calculate you need to go in and find the days to maturity and it'll tell you that you need to see this product if you need it on August 1st, on April 26, and you can do this for all of your crops. So it's pretty it's a it's a great tool for you to figure out when you can do it, when you do your planting. So just to reiterate what I was just talking about it, it's you just you you want to work back from your your agreement with your buyer, whether that be a school or an aggregator and and work back in terms of the quantity of seeds that you're needing, the timing of succession planning and the timing that you have agreed to deliver your product. And some of those calculator tools are really great to do that. So it isn't a perfect world, though, as many of you probably know, that our producers and you do need to factor in crop loss as a percentage. So. So you want to plant make sure that your planting enough and you're not turning up short when it's time to deliver your product to your buyer. So based on base year loss percentage on records from the past and and most recent past hit. So it's really important to factor in some kind of loss percentage in terms of your yield. So you don't want to plant exactly the amount that you're expecting to produce for your buyer. You want to you want to plant over that amount. And we always encourage folks to keep track of their yields for their products. But, you know, if you don't have those records. Then a lot of times it's good to just a lot of folks use 20%, supplant 20% more. And then it's it's a good rule of thumb to use. Also in in terms of accounting for loss and variability in climate, consider a crop succession plan to make harvests actually overlap throughout the season and extend that harvest window. And I think that Johnnie selected seed calculator actually does that. So the weekly planting that they are or the planting timing, for example, the the lettuce mix example that I was using that is accounting for having some variability in the harvest window. And so you have some overlap. So I think they do that a pretty good job of that. But again, your own records really help. Yeah. And then in terms of the harvest date, you want to plan to have crops come in 1 to 2 weeks before the harvest date. That really does depend on your crops. So for example, we were looking at that broccoli being available on August 1st, but you might it might actually be that if you're two weeks ahead of your harvest date, the broccoli would probably start to get soft and flowery before before that. So you might want to have a target target harvest date like a week before. And that really can help if you have weather variabilities and that are cold and overcast or, you know, in the beginning of the season and and we all here in Montana know about weather variabilities and how how it can be it can really impact your your product timing and yield. And then finally, you want to plan for a product that will also be harvestable 1 to 2 weeks after the harvest date in case warmer weather causes crops to mature rapidly. So again, using our Montana example, you know, it could be 50 degrees and then become 80 degrees very quickly. And that's really hard for some of the cold crops. So, yeah, just really making sure you're building some buffers in there for your for your crops. And and as I mentioned, I think that calculator is pretty good for for helping building those buffers. So I know that Chan. I think Chan was talking about the business planning piece and understanding your cost of production. And all of those are based on records really determining and having an understanding of the specific products and how they're yielding and the timing and all that is, you know, really depends on really good records too. Generic enterprise budgets can give you some guidance, but there's really no plate replacement for your actual historic data. So that means farmers have to you know, you have to measure in all of your efforts, including not only your your pricing and your and your time spent and all of those cost calculations, but also also keeping track of when stuff actually is maturing and how it how it looks and the weather and those types of things. And I'll just reiterate that that good communication with schools can help you keep your input production and transport costs lower than for other markets. And you should have a history of measuring all your efforts. Recording those measurements in

some kind of database or Excel is a good I use Excel for my flower farming records and but some databases can be really helpful for measuring, measuring and writing stuff in an easy from, you know, from me or from your phone to your computer. So I think Cod Pro is a really great one for for doing those types of records and that it also works for organic certification. I did want to mention that we I know Living Farm isn't available today, but we did a case study and a video with them and they do talk about they do talk about their agreements with the Harden public schools and how they were able to figure out their production plan based on some of the agreements that they had with heart and public schools. And you'll be hearing about that next. They'll be showing a video of instead of an in lieu of a an actual site visit, because it's probably snowy there right now. And so with that, we're just going to move into your crop planning exercise and that is paid on the crop planning exercise we have is or C and, and it is on page 42. So you can kind of work on a hypothetical bid because there's I know or you can use the one that's in the solicitation packet from the Durango public schools and but I'm happy to answer any questions or I'm also available if you have questions come up when you're actually starting to develop those agreements with schools. So.

Module 4 Section D: Animal Protein Production and Planning

Video Available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iJeWgKtob7k&t=915s>

Speaker 1 [00:00:00] We're going to understand the school needs for meat and egg production and understand livestock planning based on demand yield projections and production goals and assess schedules for a sustained delivery and pass to possibility profitability. Excuse me. There we go. Okay, so how does your livestock products fit on the plate? And so I think, you know, again through all these modules. You've been trying to deeply understand how what the school needs are and and that then you can take that information and plan accordingly. And so with that, you're going to, you know, understand how do they get there? Let's just be, for example, how do they buy their beef? They buy it in patties. Goodbye to bulk. They buy it in £5 jar. So those are things that as you move into a school market, just like any other market, you want to understand what they how they need. I would imagine that most schools would. Need graded eggs. So what grade do they like? You know, do they like that extra large or, you know, and do you have the capacity to grade. Grades? That's another thing to think about. Again, How. Do your products fit with school. Demands? You know, the reason meet's important is that. You know of your school menu. The protein is like the center of the. Plate. And so it's a huge opportunity for. You know, getting that meat locally sourced. And so how you meet that opportunity and, you know, I'm. The first one to say. Why don't we have Montana beef and Montana schools? I mean, it's actually becoming a slogan that people are talking about. How do we create a campaign behind this slogan? Because it's kind of absurd. We are the, like, highest quality beef producer in the nation, and yet our schools are serving Montana beef. Some are, but there's to be a lot more. So, you know, the low hanging fruit here, not only. Because they use beef. A lot in their menus. Is that there is. A statewide effort to. Bring more visibility to this. Issue. And what do we need to do to make it happen? So interesting. I know I'm a little deviating a little bit here. But they did just two. About a month ago, two months ago, offer Opie. I put out a bid for Montana beef. And it came really quick. I think producers weren't really ready for it. Maybe there were some I don't know who got that bit. But it was really. Interesting to. See that effort to bring to an API level after public instruction level bid for Montana beef. So one thing they consider is, again, if your product. Will fit the school. Needs and cost. Is probably the biggest bar here for. Protein. Coming into schools. So can you meet that cost? Some people have gotten. Very creative of, you know, doing whole animals. Sales to the local processor and that local processor, you know, basically it goes directly to the school. So they take, you know, maybe know not a cold call. I hate call. Them calls because people think calls are. These skinny little things sometimes be a nice fat cow and they grind it and then it's able to go. Into the schools at a really low cost. So it's not your top in, you know, choice, you know, product from a steer that might have been marbled out beautifully like bear paw. When they talk about their meats, it's like it's pretty, very marbled. So just knowing the school. And then another thing also is the grade schools really watch fat level. So you're going. To have to really understand, am I going to meet that fat level, I think. Or is it 7030? Is most schools. Is it 8020? Okay. So that's that's just really. Understanding the schools. And will it will it meet your operation, particularly in the area of. Cost. And convenience is another thing just a touch upon. Like you have a freezer. That's a beautiful. Thing. We had our fruit. We had four producers had no freezers and they're processing. Cattle and they're relying on us. For a freezer. And then when that freezer, our freezer filled up. So like. You know, time to shift here. So knowing how you can manage that made because it's going to have. To be frozen or refrigerated. So it adds a. Layer to it. Okay. We're not going to show the podcast right now, so we're going to. So we did touch upon this. But you know what? What do they use? And again, volume is going to be really important. If you can supply a volume, it's getting more cost effective for them. Probably help you meet your price point. So what do they need in volume? What is the frequency that they need this meat delivered. And are you delivering it is. A distributor delivering it. If it's a distributor. Delivering it, you need to figure out. Their schedule to meet the school schedules. So you're talking

it's called logistics in. The food world. What is your product logistics on how you move your product around? And that is something you wanted. Again, you want to deeply understand. Because these distributors are busy, they just don't you just don't. Call them up and say, Hey, come pick up my meat today. It doesn't work that way. You need it on their. Schedule. And they will pick up and that needs to meet. The school schedules. So believe me, we did a lot of distribution of chopped, diced vegetables to schools, and the distribution. Was a very challenging piece. Because we were serving about four schools. So they all had different times. They wanted. Those vegetables to come to their doorstep and the distributor had their schedule that they. Went north one day. South the other day. So how. You combine those things are really important and then. Portion size. So you're going to make patties for these schools. Well, you know, is it going to be the jumbo patty? Probably not. So you want to know what. Patty size they work with, What's the weight of their. Serving that you're going to have those patties. Processed. As? And then another thing. To really consider is like those beef. Sticks over there. We have one. Producer, Dahlen has her beef stick. Will Right now she's going through a recipe revision because it had. Way too much sodium in it. And so we're you know, we're. Talking with Dallas. And OSU on how. That recipe can be adjusted. To. Lower that sodium amount. And so we've done several value. Added products and every time we do that formulation, we're looking at the school needs. What's the sodium they'll accept, what's the fat, They'll accept. That that product has to meet. And there's a whole. There's a whole ream. Of excuse me, information there that Anthony could talk a lot better than I can, too. But I know. That the resources are. There, that you can go and you can find out based on is it a snack, is it a. Breakfast or. Lunch, main entree? What are the parameters for the fat, the salt? And those are the main pieces. We were doing a lentil crumble. Which is a 50% lentils. 50% ground beef. For schools. And cooked. Yeah. At Mission Out. Food Enterprise Center. And so we did that for years. We had several schools West. Montana that was taking it. And then they did figure out that, you know, it's not that hard to make lentil crumble. And so those you know, we had the Boys and Girls Club. Buying it, and a lot of them. Did some adjustments in their budgets and they decided to do. It in-house. So we're not making. It as much as we were. But for a. While there we're making quite a bit. Yeah, you'd need a. Commercial facility. And because. It's over 3% meat, it would have to be state or USDA inspected. So that's. Another. Piece to it is there are some there are commercial kitchens. Pop it. Percolating up. We've been having some kind of network calls with them. But the biggest challenge. When you move into meat is, again, you go into another code of inspection. So the code of inspection and just all of a sudden they're. In a different world. And sometimes that code inspection, like we're. USDA inspected, it does add. A layer of staff time and management. So it is I think that's reason. Why you. Don't see a lot of small processing facilities doing meat products because of the inspection that's associated with it. It's not I mean, it's doable. You just you need to be prepared to be dealing with either USDA inspector or a state inspector to make that product. Retail is completely different from wholesale. In the regulatory I. And you're not an. Approved source if. You don't have a regulatory management. System like a seafood asset. And you don't have. A wholesale food license. So it is when you. Start getting into proteins and the issues. With proteins, which. Are I mean, we all have read all the different things that happen when you don't cook things well enough or some, you know, something is contaminated that you. Just go into these layers. In the regulatory world and you add. Those layers when you go from direct sale to wholesale. So your commercial facility changes. Yeah. And actually the the. Nutritionist at OPIS is really. Helpful. And I can't remember her name. They have a new nutritionist. Pam referred us to her. Yeah. And that's what I would. There's a way they calculate. I didn't know is a week. I was like that across a week. They've had this many, you know, sodium, blah, blah, you know, sugar. So it's not a it's not a like a narrow little box is what I'm trying to say. It's just like, of course, they serve hot dogs in schools. I mean, and those hot dogs are not specially made. They're probably. So they they they plan their menus, so they meet those standards. So I think just understanding that and figuring out with them how that product fits in their. Menus is. The way that producer. Wants to go. Yeah, and I can ask and definitely. She's got some resources and. I know Opie has a ton. Of resources too. So this talks about the contract season with schools. So schools do kind of. Figure

their menus out way ahead of time. I am not familiar with, you know. Direct contracting with schools, but I think. If you understand their scheduling, then you understand how you plan your production to meet that schedule. But they do lock in. Like right now we're. Talking to Missoula schools. For next year for a lentil mushroom meatball. What does that look like and what would the volumes they would need? But they're talking about it now for next year.

Speaker 2 [00:11:28] That in terms of well, especially for meat, probably, but in certain products for next year, the ship sale a little bit because they've already placed that episode February. But that doesn't that's not to say that it's not a good time to contact them always do a couple maybe for 100% of their beef but in couple meals and that can get that relationship established just working through like if they ordered Europe their meat for us, we just know that, you know, especially if they're looking to get like a year long contract with them, that opportunity for next year has passed, probably if they ordered the USDA Foods, but it's still a good time to get in there, build a relationship for the future. Then you got February of this year. Mm.

Speaker 1 [00:12:19] So just. Again in you have to figure out on your end are your. Animals finished that they ready what's your schedule for your operation. And plan accordingly. And that's like for any market. I mean, we're looking at that right now for western Montana growers and what. Their schedule of what their. Restaurant needs are in meat and how. Producers, a group of producers can fulfill that. So it's not just cause us any market. Just knowing their how their product moves through their use and how you can fit into that. And then, you know, again. This is more. About your production. You know, what is. Your level of production? Do you need to scale up to meet these needs? And does it make sense, just like we. Talked about in the. Previous module? And do you have. The the price? I love it when they say, what is your breakeven price? Let's say, what is your profit margin? It's maybe a better thing to think about because you want to be profitable. I think at the end of the game that's really, really important that you want to be looking at how you are profitable doing these sales. And then do you have enough acreage to be able to do that expansion if needed? So are you going to. This is really just. Looking at some. Tools that are out there. Livestock compass, working with your meat processor. That's Astra. I mentioned. Astra. These are really good resources to help you assess your production. And profitability and expanding your meat operation to meet the school market. Eggs. I. I'm not quite sure what to say about eggs. I don't know much about eggs. Grade B or better. Okay. Yeah. You have to have a grading. That's. Yeah. You can't just, you know, kind of go in your back. Chicken coop and collect eggs and. Take them to the schools. They. They have to be graded. And, you know, some. Schools are really used to using processed egg. So we have actually. Been asked if we could. Process eggs, but it's a very unique pasteurization system. And so it's almost like how you pasteurized milk so you don't cook it. You don't. Overheat it. And so it's huge, expensive and challenging. So I would say doing processed eggs is probably off the table. So you're gonna have to find the schools that are working with real eggs. And how you can fit in. Okay, So there's an activity. There's an assessment tool here. Tommy would have kicked this out of the park. Just know that. But he couldn't make it. Okay. All right, Well, thank you.

Hardin Farm to School Presentation

Video Available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXFH4bKn0Xo&t=86s>

Speaker 1 [00:00:00] When I started as a Food Corps service member, I was under school nutrition, stayed under school nutrition, just kept writing a new job description, updating it every two years. Nobody said anything, and they still haven't. So, like, so far so good. But I was very lucky with Marlo too, that seeing the need to the last year and a half, I've been my own department, so I don't do admin meetings or anything like that, but like I have my own agency to be able to do programs. And then we work together and have I mean, our offices are literally right next to my office is right outside her off her real office.

Speaker 2 [00:00:40] Except all those people ask a lot. But they asked recently about farm to school coordinator or director anybody farm to school. I selfishly ride on Ella's coattails, her department for she has a fun job and the kids love her. And she's because.

Speaker 1 [00:01:02] I have food.

Speaker 2 [00:01:02] Fresh food and doing fun things and teaching in the classroom. And we cook school lunch and we all like, enjoyed that. Kids eating school lunch aren't super excited, you know, which is fine. I understand that we do our best. The little kids are great if you want to. Ago both. My office is in the high school. Not a great place, but. But so. So to have her as close to the cafeteria as possible. I won't let it go. Like I act like we do this together. Which we do. We do. We don't know. Like we can't not image. If you're ever talking to somebody, I say, if you can keep that farm to school coordinator, if, like, sometimes it's a biology teacher and then they want to take it on, you know, because it doesn't have it in other schools, it doesn't have it doesn't have to have a lot to do with the cafeteria. But for us, what what better person to pair with is a person that's getting them to taste the beets, getting them to make beet pancakes. And then she's in the cafeteria and the kids see her there physically. But then she is part of our our department and working goes and does her stuff in our kitchen. And it's a great person to be paired with. You know, if we had somebody recycling, we would be like, Come over here, come over. You know, like it's a positive. It helps our image just selfishly. Yeah. For me, which I.

Speaker 1 [00:02:25] Think we then perfectly to all of this and kind of what that looks like for us. And so we really work hard to make sure that everything is student driven and giving students the opportunity to have hands on learning opportunities that is culturally reflective. And so we were very lucky I. As a farm to school. I'm just kind of I'm a visual learner, so I just kind of flow through these. Oh, and then we will have one more video at the very end. We, the largest component of our farm to school program when I first started, was definitely the education piece. It's been a little bit less so just because of staffing. My role has transitioned in the last few years, but this was one of the things that was the easiest way for us to make the connection with local producers is to be able to do use local foods in the classroom through the harvest of the month. Lessons as well as then have that harvest of the month in the cafeteria taste test. And so being able to start relationship with kind of smaller purchases so that it was 50 and £100 unprocessed, that's why we did a lot of kale. And then a lot of it was things that we could then use on the salad bar. Marlin I like, she said, I've been very intentional in trying to take a step back so that we can then make sure that if we're doing it in the classroom, if we're seeing it in the cafeteria, then they're going to see it always on the cafeteria salad bar and making sure that it's a part of the menu. And so sometimes we honestly just play with our food, but it's getting to know our food and where it comes from, and that comes from a lot of community partnerships. I know you've seen the van orders living Route Farm here three or four times today, but being able to incorporate and start that conversation and different avenues, this is

something that we that I've done at a parent teacher conferences before to just start that conversation about what local food is and the number of people that will come up and say, Oh, we do this. And so then starting that conversation. So it's been a great way to meet producers, to meet people who are interested in providing lessons in the classrooms. One of the things that we really want to focus on is making sure that there's signage, that people know what it is, where it's coming from, and really getting out into the community so that we're making that connection. So you can see on the right here, we had our school nutrition staff go out to the farm so that they know one of the things that's really tough for us is that when we are having local produce and we have local cards, we really want to make sure that we're either saying, this is from Speedy's, this is from Living Root Farm, this is from the actual producer and making sure that you're being honored and your name is getting out there as well. And so that and that's why we have a lot of our producers pictures in the cafeteria as well. Yeah. And so any time that we have them making sure that we have signage for them and then not just going out, but also inviting Farmer And usually whenever we meet a new producer, at least at the bare minimum, ask that question of would you be interested in hosting farm field trips, Would you be interested in coming to the school and saying and showing off what you do? So we've done different mock farmers markets in the high school and Acro school. We take students out to the gardens, we go to the farmers market, and then we have taste tests that like that first video we try to make sure are reflective of the community and incorporating traditional foods. And so one of the things for us to is, is trying new recipes. And so a lot of times, especially with farm to school, we can.

Speaker 2 [00:06:29] Do.

Speaker 1 [00:06:31] A little bit more of the unprocessed and then where making and where we're going through and doing that process just like you would at home, making it from start to finish. So like you can see we made meatballs and pickles with local beef in the very top middle there, and that was using the Alma Snell recipe in her book A Taste of Heritage. And so we use that recipe and you can use bison or beef. We used beef and then we use that in the harvest of the month. Beef lesson. The thing that I love about farm to school is that there are no rules. And so I, I was going to I'll do classes in the high school and one time we were doing local beef and we had made a plan to make like a big spaghetti dinner or lunch all together. And one of the kid goes, Hey. I just shot a deer this morning. Can I go get it? And he just went and got the back straps in from the back of his car and brought it in to the classroom. We were in in the cafeteria and he was able to and he just made it right there in the classroom for his classmates.

Speaker 2 [00:07:44] It's somewhat of a food desert. We don't like the fact that people get to travel to get cheaper food because it's not cheaper to drive there. But what we do have, even though we have a big challenge, is kids get far closer to where the food comes from. And there is generations of adults where by my family there is no whole generation growing fat. I mean, you had a pretty far back. So where we regard living and living off of our our land. I grew up in a mall, you know, but these kids, the schools would bring a lot of stuff up. They'll say, my grandma does that or we used to do that or, you know, they they do know where that comes from. Once Ellie starts talking about it, it's not that far. Awareness, agricultural community, but we're not all taking part. And so it's kind of neat to see that you're like, Wow, we're closer here. Just consider this the possibilities.

Speaker 1 [00:08:42] And it's really important for us to learn from the community. So like, one of the things is we'll go out like I said, and do field trips, but then also bringing some of that knowledge back. So we were 20, 19, 2020, we were awarded the USDA Farm to school implementation grant, and that has been huge for us. Through that we were able to build this greenhouse that you saw in previous pictures. I've got a few more. You can you probably saw it on your way in. Hopefully, maybe so. Students built this, start to finish every aspect of it. And then we are also building a high tunnel. Do I have all those? Yeah. So it's allowed us to work a little bit

more on the infrastructure, but then also get those resources and reach out to the farmers that we have relationships with and say, Hey, I honestly don't know what I'm doing. Can you help me? Evan's been great with that. Evan also works out and Arceus, and so they provide technical assistance. But that's something that we try to make sure that we have that baseline in that communication. For us, it works pretty informally. I'll get to the procurement aspect with farm to school in a minute, but just having any consultation or that willingness to share resources. So this was elementary primary school students coming to the high school greenhouse our high tunnel in the process of being built. So pretty soon we'll also be in these seats and hopefully we'll have some students in these seats to learning how to make their own market plan and things like that. This is yeah, so it's right across from campus. It's technically school grounds, but it's a little ways away. If you you'll see it on your way out. If you are going past the tennis courts, literally just look straight across. There's a big open field which describes most of Montana. But there there's the structure out there. And so it's walkable for students. They host classes. We're working to get more. There's a lot of funding for adult education. Our superintendent always says that's all like, that's a great space to teach a class and get paid for it through both Evan and Garcia. So them and rocking to J Ranch, who we work with, they both have this exact same height tunnel. So they were able to help us understand Montana specs and all of that. But this is what we kind of hope for and have different dreams of building out. And then how that all relates to the cafeteria is so. So this is a little bit about what Marlo is talking about, our Get Schools cooking grant. So just.

Speaker 2 [00:11:23] To wrap up.

Speaker 1 [00:11:24] For my role, one of the things that I held on from Food Corps was that I do not enter into any contracts for the district. I don't set any prices with producers. I just make the introduction to our food service director having that allows me to. There are several reasons for that, but mostly so that that connection is a little bit more formal. My relationship with producers is typically more informal. Like Marlow said, we do a pretty low key form of communication. We text at the end of the week. What do you have coming up? They drop it off in the middle of the next week and I talked to our what's Pratt's job ordering versus receiving and ordering and say, hey, they have £20 of lettuce or X amount of kale and she says, Perfect, we'll keep it off the Sysco order this week. And so that's how it works for getting it. It mostly into the salad bar. We're working really hard on making it more a part of the entree and then farm to school. It's been really nice to be able to do little things through mostly food hubs. But the biggest thing is trying to have enough purchasing power to get everybody here. And whether that's that's buying wholesale, which is something that the school district, your local food bank and has the purchasing power to be able to do is probably at that quantity. Just being able to find the right distribution. A lot of time for us is where it or what I've seen in the last year and a half that's been really difficult. But setting those specifications. We're pretty not loose with them, but we don't ask. We only ask producers to fill out one page that's in the Montana. Team Nutrition Guide book. It's a one page light to mostly ask like where the water sources and things like that. So it's accountability there, but we don't ask for any certifications. We will say mostly packaging. What's easiest for both you and us. We talk a lot about that, but we don't have any formal specifications, especially because we're not purchasing at that greater than 10,000 for any one item.

Speaker 2 [00:13:44] With the purchasing items. It's everything in food is is volatile. It can change, something bad can happen and we could miss out on the tomatoes and that is difficult for us. I've worked in places where you just run to the store and go get something, but serving 2000 kids a day, there's no oh, let's just grab some chicken fingers. You have to have the product here. So that is something we have the ability. If we were getting chicken breasts from you to then buy them from Sysco. But we don't always say Sysco, but we buy from U.S. foods mainly. We don't they don't carry enough for us to order in a short amount of time from them. Obviously, we had an emergency. We would figure something out. But so that guarantee, we order very far out for a lot of our items

because we can't just call us foods and say we'd like 38 cases of muffins. We let them know a year ahead what we think we're going to pull. They talk to their buyers and then their buyers plan on us buying those things, and then their buyers contact me and say, You said you were going to buy 38 cases a month. You didn't. What are we going to do with these? So it is a given give and take. So it's something we do plan out. I know I was saying, Oh, the menu is this or that, but there are those things that we give them a heads up because we buy so much so they know what to expect. Obviously, if we stopped buying on a dime for some reason I am very give and take. I'll take another order just because I said I would. You know, we have a good relationship like that. But if, like I said, if we buying chicken breast, then you call me tomorrow and say don't have those chicken breasts for next week. That would be difficult. That would be hard to make up for that that short notice. So looking forward know, you know, there's nothing that's a guarantee. But we need a few we need a good percentage of guarantees so we can mess around with the other stuff if we have to. All that stuff on the salad bar, the beets don't show up, the carrots don't show up, whatever. We can just put something else out there or, you know, roast some garbanzo beans or something. And but those center of the plate items, especially because we buy frozen meat, all of our meat is frozen. We, like I said, will buy 38 cases of something. We buy a good amount of ground beef throughout the year and we do buy hamburger patties. I always want local. I want Montana hamburgers. But right now we buy cooked hamburgers and I, I know how to cook a hamburger often, but if you can picture cooking 2000 hamburgers, you know, on a sheet pan, you see like 20 some sheet pans. I already did the math. And I think it was more than that, maybe was 77. And then you're taking those juicy sheet pans out of the oven 77 times. It's not going to work, you know? So we're still looking for cooked burgers. We ll was going to get me a smoker at some point when we're more advanced because we could process that way to, you know, like get a head on that. And that would be fun. That would be for an event. But that is a good idea. That's having a trailer or something.

Speaker 1 [00:16:57] There's always more to do and it's just exciting to see that. Any idea that we've had. Somebody has had that and it's like, Oh, great, how would you do it?

Speaker 2 [00:17:06] And we're just a phone call or email away. We do. Everybody shares information and everybody is what's cool. Everybody's intentions are good.

Farm to School at Hardin School District, NFSN

Video Available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J5ReYp1NHU0>

Farm to school enriches the community by healing all the families they reconnect with the land there's a history of our people of the disconnect of the land and so you know with all of all these activities with the gardening and everything we've been able to heal

[Music]

Farm to school means everything it means Community it means Gathering and it means that we're going to sit down and eat really good food

[Music]

I've been super lucky to be able to be working in farm to school for the last seven years during that time I've learned a lot about food what it means to me what it means to my community and what what it means to bring people together

[Music]

for the food to be culturally reflective of the community because it creates an opportunity for individuals especially our students to be able to take pride in their food that brings up tradition for the students honors their families it honors the past and I think they're more interested if they can connect it to their family or the past or their culture I think the food that we grow right now affects my culture because my ancestors depended on it we actually lived off of this and my ancestors lived off of this I carried on to my ancestors because they mostly depended on that ancestors did all like farming to keep us healthy without farming we wouldn't be here I think it's important for kids to know where their food comes from that's a battle that we faced we've hosted field trips out here with the students coming out to see where the vegetables are being grown that they're being served in the cafeteria and we have actually gone to the school too as a meet your farmer events and and brought samples along and to be able to meet the kids in person and and for them to put a face with the name of living your fun Farm to school is a great way a program for us to be connected in the community with the public school system and be able to provide fresh local grown vegetables when I think of farm to school I think of my own kids and the opportunities for them to eat foods that come from our area this is something that is a major you know project that is healing a whole nation foreign I believe in farm to school because I believe in the people in the community and building all of those connections to strengthen the other pieces of our community too

Conclusion Module

Video Available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9DH8e3xjw64&t=6s>

Aubree [00:00:00] Welcome to the Conclusion module. We're going to be wrapping up the conclusion to this training by reviewing and editing your school business action plan. So you'll want to have your workbook nearby, and then we'll talk about training, evaluation, follow up and additional resources. In module one getting to know school markets. We talked about child nutrition program menus, the type of local foods schools typically want to purchase, how those local foods are often prepared, and the process behind how school district stores and purchase local foods for their school meal programs. In Module two, selling to school markets. We learned about the three market channels for selling to schools, direct intermediate and wholesale distributors, and the basic logistics, knowledge and skills needed to pursue each one of those markets. In Module three Product Development for school markets, you spent time identifying what products you either already purchased or could start producing. That might be a good fit for school buyers. This module also included identifying the processing needs of schools and subsequent infrastructure implications for your farmer business, as well as how to best price your products. And then lastly, in module four growing for school markets, we delve deeper into pricing products for schools, pros, cons and logistics of scaling up to meet school demand and how to best develop and communicate school food safety plans to school authorities. So let's look at business action planning. So you'll want to turn to your workbook page 61 and check out this worksheet. This will help you really go dive into what your plan is for working with school nutrition programs. What different market channels might be best for your business and what are those opportunities that you want to pursue? During the in-person workshop version. We discussed amongst the attendees these questions, so I encourage you to take some time to consider these questions. What channel do you hope to sell your product through? What are the next three key steps to making that happen? What resources do you need to accomplish those steps? And that could also be What questions do you have? What's not clear about how to pursue those steps and then when you will get these done? In the in-person workshop, we had participants write down their goals on cards, which we will mail to them later. But as a virtual attendee, I encourage you to write down your goals and then write them down on your calendar. So what are your goals that you want to accomplish within the next six months in regard to farm to school? So pick one or two and write those down in your calendar as a note to yourself for six months as a reminder to see how you're doing. We have gone over a lot of different resources, different programs, requirements and all of that. So I want to review a few key resources that we want you to keep in mind as you move forward. The Montana Harvest of the Month program features a different Montana grown or raised food each month. Shown Here is our calendar for this current year, and the calendar begins each August. We strive to add new foods each year and change the calendar around to keep it fresh. Herbs are the newest harvest of the month addition. As of this time, this program is open to K-through-12 schools and afterschool programs, early care and education sites, health care facilities and business businesses and communities. We also have a special producer registration to help better connect producers like you with participating sites. Registering as a producer doesn't permit you to producing anything, but it does give you more exposure to participating. Harvest of the Month sites. Registration is free and you can do so at any time. Montana. Crunch time is a fun way of celebrating National Farm to School Month and the amazing bounty of local food in Montana. We hope that you will join us on October 10th, 2023 by crunching on any locally grown or raised food including and going beyond apples. Register your crunch on by October 31st to help Montana win the Mountain Plains Regional crunch off. This is a great intro to working with schools and it's also an annual event, so it's something that you can do each year to build those relationships, especially with new schools that you may not have sold to schools, schools and other participants of Montana. Crunch time can, can, can crunch during a meal, and they can use their normal funds to purchase the crunch items. So in this time, when supply

chain assistance funds are available, that can be a really great way for schools to purchase crunch items. But we encourage you to participate in crunch time, whether or not you're supplying to schools. We hope to see your crunch bites on the farm or wherever you are that day. Please help us spread the word by sharing this with your colleagues, friends, and family. October is National Farm to School Month, and this is a perfect time to celebrate or launch farm to school programs. So another great opportunity for working with schools that you haven't built a relationship with the Montana Farm to School leadership team worked through partnerships across the state to build farm to school initiatives that help kids eat healthy. Connect kids with agriculture and nutrition through education. Support Montana farmers and food businesses. Foster economic vitality and strengthen communities. The team is formed of agencies and organizations with statewide focus and influence that are key to the success of farm to school in Montana. We welcome participation in our public working groups. Then next, Working group meetings will be scheduled in April. So please register for those on our Montana Farm to School Leadership website. We'd love to have your voice as part of these conversations. These public working group meetings are quarterly and you can register for any of the ones that are scheduled for 2023 at this time. If you want to share about your farm to school experiences in any of these public working groups, please email me. We're always looking for new speakers. There are lots of resources to support you. The Montana Farm to School website and social media accounts are where you can find funding opportunities, upcoming events and resources. Montana Food and AG Development Centers can help you navigate changes in your operation. Abundant Montana Directory is the main resource we recommend for schools to find producers, so consider listing yourself there and abundant Montana. Local food coordinators can help you. Presenters from this training are a wealth of information, as are the extension agents in your area. Also, you can all be resources for each other as well as other producers. All the information about training, including the recordings, links, handouts will be uploaded to the attendee resource web page. We have a few upcoming events. So there are three. Montana Harvest of the Month showcases planned for 2023. The first is April 21st and that will be in Gardner. The second is August 10th, which will be in Helena, and the last one will be in fall 2023. In person, registration for the Gardner event is currently open now and travel scholarships are available. This is a great opportunity to learn more about farm to school and more specifically Montana Harvest of the Month and how it's implemented in these communities. So you will really get a chance to get up close and personal with how they are doing. Harvest of the Month and farm to school in these communities. We also have two more Montana Food for Montana schools, trainings and meetups. These will both be held in fall 2023. They are currently being scheduled for northwestern Montana and somewhere in north central Montana. So keep an eye on the Montana farm to school training and event page for more information. In terms of evaluation, you already completed the pre survey at the beginning of the training. Please complete the short post survey. Once you have completed all of the training modules and before March 31st, these evaluations will help improve future trainings and look at the impact of the trainings and the curriculum. Your participation in the evaluation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time. You do not have to provide a response for any survey question that you don't want to use. This third survey will be completed online. You'll receive an email invitation that is sent by the evaluation team, so that will not come from the Montana team, but will come from the national team six months to one year after the training. So keep an eye out for that. The bringing the farm to school curriculum that we are using for this training was developed by USDA, National Center for Appropriate Technology, a national farm to school network. The Montana Farm to School producer trainings are brought to you by Montana Team Nutrition Program at Montana State University and Montana Office of Public Instruction. In collaboration with the fantastic advisory team members featured on this slide. Many of these organizations are also part of the Montana Farm to School leadership team, from which many of our statewide farm to school projects originate. Additionally, we have numerous presenters from these and other organizations throughout the training. This training is funded by a USDA farm to school grant received by the Montana Office of Public Instruction, as well as by the Montana Wheat and Barley Committee. Montana Team Nutrition Program, Great Northern Development Corporation,

National Farm to School Network and numerous in-kind services from our advisory team members and presenters. Thank you to these generous supporters for making this training possible. Listed here are our fantastic presenters for that second training that we offered in this series. Thank you so much for their time and their dedication. Thank you so much for being part of this training. Please reach out if you have any questions. And good luck in working with schools.

Living Root Farm Virtual Farm Tour

Miss Ellie: [00:00:00] Hi, everybody. My name's Miss Ellie, and I am so excited because today we're going to check out Farmer Evans Living Root Farm. [00:00:07][7.6]

Evan: [00:00:16] My name is Evan Van Order, and this is Living Room Farm. This is a high tunnel, which is a greenhouse structure that helps to allow us to grow vegetables earlier in the season when it's still cold outside and then also later into the season when it starts to get cold again in the fall. We've got kale, we've got lettuce greens, we've got Swiss chard, and then we also have our carrots and some radishes and some collard rub in here. Plants need to have soil. Water. Sunshine. And air to grow. Well, we grow these carrots here, and this is a root crop that we can. That we provide for people to eat. And so these are just coming to be about right to start harvesting. They'll get longer, too, as we let them mature. But this is a carrot. It grows in the ground. It's part of the root of the plant. And this is the leaves that come up above the soil surface. So this is our lettuce heads here. These are what we'll harvest for salad mix. And so I can show you here, of course. And this is the fresh, leafy greens here. Then we'll take this and we'll bag it, will wash it, and we'll bag it and make it available for our customers to be able to enjoy. We eat the leaves and this is the leaves of the lettuce plant right here. And so inside here you can see there's a stem. And we don't really eat the stem of the lettuce plant because it's a little bit too woody. But the leaves are nice and fresh and really yummy to eat. These have not gone to seed yet. We do have some plants over on the other side that have bolted, as what we call it. So, yeah, so this is a good example of a plant that has bolted. And so this is Mizuno, which is a mustard leafy green that we would typically put in a salad mix when it's nice and young. But this is an older plant and it has now tried to it's gone to flower and then it's producing seeds here at the top. And so this will provide the seed for next, the next crop for or the next year's growth when we if we collect those and plant them out of these to this bed right here is kale and we've got three different varieties of kale. And kale is a leafy green that we can chop up and put into salads. And this one here is called dinosaur kale that we we like because it looks like dinosaur skin. That's kind of but it is really yummy to eat when you chop it up and put it into a salad for kale chips. I like the dinosaur kale because it's flatter and you can get it to dry down a little bit easier to make into like a chip itself that looks like kind of like a potato chip, but it tastes yummy, too.