

# MONTANA FARM TO SCHOOL DISTRIBUTION STUDY

Distribution Partnership Opportunities and Lessons Learned



**This study is intended for internal use only by  
the Montana Farm to School Leadership Team**

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# SUMMARY

In a 2017 survey of 53 Montana school nutrition professionals, one of the top challenges to purchasing local foods was finding suppliers of local foods, including both producers and distributors. The purpose of this report is to increase and improve existing knowledge of distribution opportunities, challenges, and partners to create and strengthen local food community partnerships and distribution networks. This report analyzes key findings from the Montana Food Distributors Study, which details the service areas and local product availabilities of major, mid-sized, and small regional food distributors operating in Montana. This report makes recommendations to potential Montana freight partners and to the Montana Farm to School Leadership Team based on the highlights of the Montana Food Distributors Study, as well as the lessons learned from a freight partnership case study in which Montana's contracted DoD Fresh vendor, Grasmick Produce, conducted freight partnership trials with local producers at Swanson's Mountain View Orchards in Corvallis to make local apples available to Montana schools.

*"We try to do as much local food as we can, but it is really hard for us because of our location, so we don't get it delivered to us. Like Western Montana Growers Co-op, if we order from them, we have to go pick it up from Helena mostly, once in a while Butte."*<sup>1</sup>

*- MT Food Service Director  
(Local Food For Local Kids, 2020)*

## OVERVIEW OF USDA FARM TO SCHOOL PROJECT

The purpose of this project is to increase local food distribution and procurement to K-12 schools in Montana by working with three community teams in Browning, Malta, and Fort Benton to provide farm to school programming support while conducting research through the Montana Farm to School Leadership Team's Distribution Working Group. The project's target communities are located within Montana's north-central "Golden Triangle," so called for its favorable wheat growing climate, and represent the schools located east of Montana's continental divide that are interested in procuring local foods despite its limited access due to the consolidation of local food distribution channels in Western Montana. Because of the geographic diversity of the three districts, the creation and strengthening of local foods infrastructure that serves them will have statewide implications: as local food access in schools in these rural areas increases, access for local and regional institutions will also increase.

1. "Local Food for Local Kids" Mission West Community Development Partners and NCAT, October 2020.

# MT FOOD DISTRIBUTORS STUDY

## Background

Local is defined as grown, raised, and processed in Montana. This section summarizes the complete spreadsheet of findings available in Appendix 1: MT Food Distributors Spreadsheet. The sample was drawn from all food distributors delivering local and/or non-local products to Montana buyers including but not limited to schools, universities, grocery stores, convenience stores, and restaurants. The sample includes major broadline distributors of wholesale food items with distribution centers and headquarters located primarily out of state (ex: United Retail Merchants, Associated Food Stores, United Natural Foods, Inc.), mid-size distributors servicing convenience stores and small grocers in Montana (ex: Doyles Sheehan in Missoula, Core-Mark, Valley Distributing in Billings), small regional distributors with a pronounced focus to expand the retail and food service sales of local Montanan producers and processors (ex: Quality Foods Distributing in Bozeman, Charlie's Produce in Bozeman, Western Montana Growers Cooperative in Missoula)<sup>2</sup>, Montana-based food processing centers with their own delivery trucks and vans (ex: Root Cellar Foods in Belgrade, Bear Paw Meats in Havre, Stampede Packing Co. in Kalispell), smaller county or community-based distributors located in and around the Blackfeet Reservation with a focus on food sovereignty and/or food security (ex: Nourish the Flathead, Essential Eats Distributors, Wicked Good Farms), and other food distributors with the potential of becoming freight partners with local producers such as Montana Food Bank Network.

Two Montana State University dietetic interns and the National Center for Appropriate Technology's (NCAT) Montana Local Foods Specialist identified and conducted phone interviews with 37 food distributors. In addition, the spreadsheet was supplemented by data provided by the Montana Food Distribution Study (2020) of the Montana Cooperative Development Center, Native American Development Corporation, and NCAT. The interviewees varied depending on staff availability and included transportation managers, programs officers, sales managers, owners, and customer service representatives. Not all food distributors are listed in the spreadsheet and some were omitted if they provided too little data or if their company's food product offerings was deemed insignificant. Almost all of the data was gathered prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. While we cannot fully assess how buying patterns have changed or how all the buyers have been affected, follow up interviews were conducted with over half of the listed distributors to gather additional data about changes to distribution routes and product availability due to COVID-19. Additional COVID-19 related data can be found in the "Other Notes" column of the spreadsheet in Appendix 1.

2. "Montana Food Distribution Study." Mariah Gladstone and Linda Howard. MCDC, NADC, and NCAT, November 2020.

## Key Findings

1. The service areas of distributors that self-identify as operating “statewide” rarely distribute east of Billings and north of Great Falls. Often, “statewide” indicates that the distribution is made to Montana’s major cities: Bozeman, Missoula, Billings, Helena, and points in between.
2. The vast majority of distributors that deliver to at least one of the project’s target schools located within Montana’s golden triangle are major and mid-size distributors that do not typically carry local food items such as Associated Food Stores, Food Services of America, or Sysco. Distributors that both carry local products *and* deliver to the target schools are either (1) smaller local food carriers located in their same regions (ex: Bear Paw Meats in Havre) or (2) major and mid-size distributors that act as freight partners to local producers (ex: Charlie’s Produce has carried product from the Western Montana Growers Cooperative and Grasmick Produce has conducted distribution partnership trials with Swanson’s Mountain View Orchards in Corvallis).
3. Some distributors that do not deliver to the target schools note that they deliver to Great Falls or Havre, and that schools could work with them if they made pick-ups at these existing delivery locations. Quality Foods Distributing, who extended their routes to Havre in 2018, expressed that an additional stop could be added to Great Falls in order to service the Fort Benton School District if an undetermined minimum purchase order was met.
4. Many distributors’ offerings of local products are incidental and the item description does not include a location of origin, meaning that it is impossible to tell without conducting follow up with a sales representative whether a product is local or not. Often, distributors will rely on brand or farm names as indicators for whether the product is or is not local, which requires that the buyer is knowledgeable about the names of Montana food businesses.

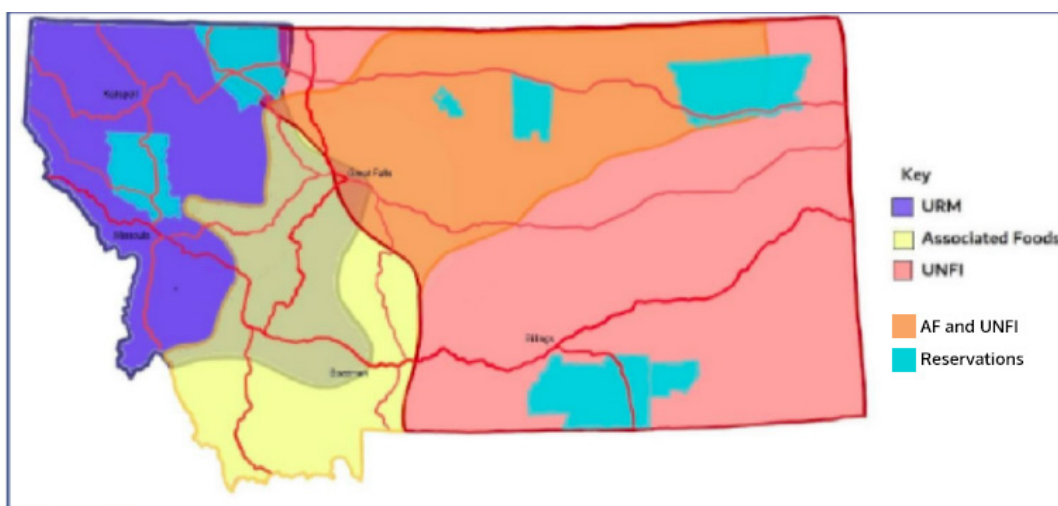


Fig 1: Service areas of major wholesale distributors, MT Food Distribution Study (2020)

# DISTRIBUTION PARTNERSHIP: DOD FRESH CASE STUDY

USDA DoD Fresh leverages the Department of Defense's (DoD) procurement system to provide a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables to schools. All produce is required to be grown in the United States and vendors provide the state of origin for each product. USDA DoD Fresh defines local as produce from within the state or adjacent states. Vendors are encouraged to provide local products in season and local produce must meet contract requirements for quality and food safety. The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Order/ Receipt System (FFAVORS) is a web application used to order produce through the USDA DoD Fresh Program.<sup>3</sup>

Montana's contracted DoD Fresh vendor is Grasmick Produce, Idaho's largest distributor of fresh produce serving all of Idaho, Eastern Oregon, Northern Nevada, Western Wyoming, and Montana schools. In 2019, Grasmick Produce also became Montana's contracted regular USDA Foods vendor. Typically, travel across all nine USDA Foods distribution routes takes four weeks to complete (fig.2). By adhering to regular delivery schedules, a small portion of schools receive their deliveries later in the week and special consideration is given to the freshness of these products to ensure that quality is maintained over the weekend.

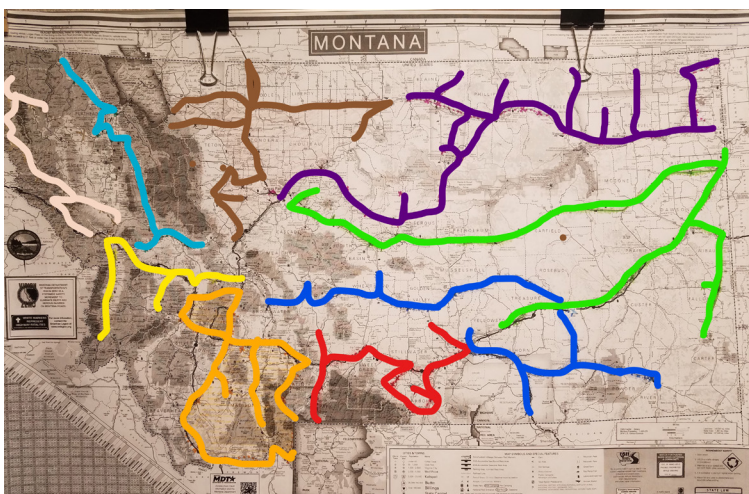


Fig 2: Regular USDA Foods Distribution Routes from Pam Fruh, OPI

In late October 2019, the FFAVORS catalog acquired its first local product for Montana schools through the facilitation of Pam Fruh, Distribution Manager at Montana's Office of Public Instruction (OPI) to arrange a purchase order between Grasmick Produce and Swanson's Mountain View Orchards for 350 cases of empire apples. An empty semi-truck was sent from Boise, ID to Corvallis, MT for pick up of product before making deliveries to 104 school stops along the DoD Fresh distribution routes. Unfortunately, a vast majority of Swanson's apples went unordered by schools due to their significantly higher

3. "Using USDA DoD Fresh to Purchase Local," USDA <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/f2s/DoDFresh.pdf>



Grasmick Produce leaving Swanson’s Mountain View Orchards, courtesy of Pam Fruh, OPI.



Transporting Apple Cases at Swanson’s Mountain View Orchards, courtesy of Pam Fruh, OPI.

price per unit compared to their national counterparts (fig.3). A case of 36 Montana apples cost at least fifty percent more than a case of 40 Washington apples. The higher price of Montanan apples was largely due to a price pointing oversight by the Swansons, in which the apples were sold at the same price per unit as in direct to school sales, despite the larger volume of apples being sold and the costs incurred by Grasmick to make pick up and deliveries in the Swanson’s stead. The cost of delivery was therefore duplicated once Grasmick applied their mark up. In order to clear the unclaimed cases of apples from the Grasmick Produce warehouses, OPI provided a one-time solution to offer apples as a free “bonus” to any school that ordered them. “I am declaring success,” says Pam, “even though we had some major issues and the outcome did not unfold as expected. We learned areas to focus for improvement going forward.”

| GRASMICK PRODUCE CO. SPE300-17-DS695 11/03/2019 |   |               |                |                  |                 |       |
|---|---|---------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------|-------|
| Item Code                                       | Item Description                        | Unit of Issue | Units Per Case | Source of Supply | State of Origin | Price |
| 14H80   | APPLES ANY USF/XF 138-163CT 1/40 LB CS  | LB            | 40             | CONUS            | WA              | 29.75 |
| 18M70   | APPLES FR EMPIRE 36 LB CS               | LB            | 36             | CONUS            | MT              | 53.55 |
| 16Z69   | APPLES FR GALA 125 CT 40 LB CASE        | LB            | 40             | CONUS            | WA              | 34.91 |
| 18J57   | APPLES FR R/D WASH XF 113-125 CT, 40 LB | LB            | 40             | CONUS            | WA              | 30.75 |

Fig.3 Grasmick Produce Apple Comparisons, courtesy of Pam Fruh.

## Lessons Learned

- 1.** Local items must be priced competitively. The unit price of larger wholesale orders must be adjusted from its smaller, direct-to-school wholesale prices in order to compete with cheaper competitors. After negotiating price points with the Swansons, Grasmick Produce was able to arrange a second purchase order at a price point of \$44.75 per unit. Although this was still more expensive than Washington apples, schools can be expected to appreciate the different operating costs of smaller, local farms and choose to support their local growers if the right promotion and education opportunities, such as Montana Crunch Time or National Farm to School Month, were leveraged to promote these newly available local items.
- 2.** Required standards and certifications differ depending on the state's contracted DoD Fresh vendor. In Montana, producers can expect to show verification of a third party food safety audit, a product recall program, and liability insurance naming Grasmick Produce as an additionally insured party. Furthermore, the producer must be able to truck the orders to the Grasmick Produce warehouse in Belgrade. Otherwise, picking up product from the producer's location requires access by semi with a 48ft or 53ft trailer van.
- 3.** The producer must be able to supply the minimum quantity of product as expected. Once the DoD Fresh vendor has submitted a product to the FFAVORS catalog for listing, they are held to a fill rate minimum. Substitutions, such as replacing empire apples with gala apples, are problematic for FFAVORS requirements.
- 4.** There is a lag between acquiring a product for the FFAVORS catalog and distributing it, which can make alignment with pre-scheduled events such as Montana Crunch Time or National Farm to School Month challenging. A product cannot be placed in the FFAVORS catalog before the contracted vendor has possession of it.



# CONCLUSION

Findings from the Montana Food Distributor Study (Appendix 1) illustrate that local food vendors (ex. producers, processors, and growers cooperatives) and major or mid-sized distributors (ex. United Retail Merchants) typically work in separate silos, neither of whom have the ability to *both* carry a variety of local products *and* deliver beyond Montana's major cities to the project's target schools in Malta, Browning, and Fort Benton. Distribution partnerships (whether formalized through purchase orders under a seller and wholesale distributor relationship, as was the case in the DoD Fresh case study, or in cases outside of "business as usual" such as freight partnerships and last-mile-distribution) therefore represent a valuable and under-explored opportunity to combine "the best of both worlds:" access to a variety of high quality, nutritious local food products and an expansive service area that extends east of the continental divide.

## Recommendations

### 1. Leverage Montana Crunch Time and other promotional opportunities for local products before sale

Montana Crunch Time is a statewide event to celebrate National Food Day and National Farm to School Month by crunching into locally and regionally grown apples in October. This event is heavily promoted to schools and in 2019, 31,224 children and adults registered to crunch in Montana. Annual events such as these guarantee the demand among participating schools for certain local products at certain times of the year. Unfortunately, local apples in the DoD Fresh case study were only made available through the FFAVORS catalog shortly after Montana Crunch Time due to a later harvest time and a lag in listing the product on the FFAVORS catalog, thereby missing an opportunity to sell local food items to schools at a time where food service and administrative staff may have overlooked higher prices in favor of participating in a statewide event to support local producers. This report recommends that promotional opportunities for local food like Montana Crunch Time, as well as Montana Harvest of the Month, and National Farm to School Month, be taken into consideration when scheduling and promoting local food sales in order to align product availability with schools' demand for local food.

### 2. Focus on food items with few broadline competitors

Although the significantly higher price of local apples from the DoD Fresh case study may be partly due to an oversight in adjusting price points for larger wholesale orders, local food items are expected

to incur a higher cost than its broadline counterparts due to its producers' differing production models and added efforts on both the broadline vendor and local seller's parts to negotiate the logistics of pick up and sale. Given the price-sensitive nature of many school food service departments, this report recommends that future iterations of local on DoD Fresh partnership trials seek other Montana Harvest of the Month food items that do not currently appear on the FFAVORS catalog, such as beets.

The Montana Farm to School Leadership Team (MT F2SLT) developed this preliminary list of producers for Grasmick Produce to consider working with in order to procure local food items in the future. This list was developed with the producer specifications outlined on page 6 in mind.

|                                |                                |                  |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Glendale Montana               | Quality Food Distributing      | Mill Creek Farms |
| Flathead Lake Cherry Growers   | Marias River Farms (chickpeas) | Oil Barn         |
| Western MT Growers Cooperative | Timeless Seeds (lentils)       | Link Foods       |
| Apple Grower in Kila           | Root Cellar Foods              | Special K Ranch  |
| Yellowstone Valley Food Hub    | Swanky Roots (greens)          |                  |
| Hutterite Colonies             | Dixon Melons                   |                  |

### 3. Ensure that the Montana Farm to School Leadership Team is engaged in promotion and in making recommendations to distributors

Successful freight partnerships take time, effort, and fortitude on the part of both broadline distributors and local producers to not only negotiate the logistics of pick up and sale, but to derive solutions from early trials and implement them in future iterations. Necessary strategies may be new to both parties' standard operating procedures, such as aligning sale with existing farm to school promotional efforts. Facilitation by a third party like OPI's distribution manager or the MT F2SLT is therefore necessary in order to successfully promote available product to its network of school food service professionals.

While this report was in development, another attempt at a distribution partnership was made between Grasmick Produce and Swanson's Mountain View Orchards to make local apples available to schools through the FFAVORS catalog for the second time. While the process of arranging and meeting vendor specifications such as packing requirements, delivery schedule and locations, payment terms and processes were streamlined in this project's second iteration, certain setbacks seen in the project's first iteration were repeated. Apples, a product with several broadline competitors grown in Washington, was sold for a higher price point months away from Montana Crunch Time for the second time. While this report does not wish to undermine the significant strides made by both Grasmick Produce and Swanson's Mountain View Orchards to put these collaborative partnerships to action on the road, help from the MT F2SLT to promote their efforts and make recommendations based on their knowledge of schools' demand for certain local food products can only ensure that every effort is made at success before one

or both parties perceive the project to be unprofitable and unworthy of a third trial.

### 3. MT F2SLT's Distribution Working Group: Facilitate Potential Partnerships

The DoD Fresh case study represents just one out of several existing and potential partnerships between distributors and local producers to make more local food products available to schools located east of the continental divide. This report recommends that the MT F2SLT's Distribution Working Group continue to these lines of inquiry with distributors to understand their seller specifications; with local producers to improve their capacity to meet those specifications; and with schools to bolster their demand for and improve their ability to afford the local food becoming increasingly available through these partnerships.

This report recommends that the MT F2SLT's Distribution Working Group work with the following distributors to understand their capacity to work as freight partner to local producers:

*Sysco - "Sysco actively seeks to source product locally (...) We are proud of our progress but are far from finished as we strive to (...) generate more ideas to make our company more sustainable." - Valerie Carl, Sysco Montana*

*Wild West Local Foods (formerly Summit Distribution) - looking to refocus its post-COVID-19 business model towards school sales. They are also a distributor for Root Cellar Foods.*

*Charlie's Produce - freight partner with Western Montana Grower's Cooperative*

*Montana Food Bank Network - a Montana Farm to School Leadership Team partner*

# Appendix 1: Montana Food Distributors Study Spreadsheet

| Distributor Name                         | Service Area and Delivery System   | Customers and Ordering   | Products and Marketing  | Do they carry MT local? | Do they deliver to Malta, Browning, or Fort Benton? | Other notes  |
|--|--|--|---|-------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Associated Food Stores</b>            | Based in Salt Lake City, UT. Serves stores in Montana located along the I-15 corridor and east across the HiLine (U.S. Highway 2) to Poplar, and north to Scobey. In the south-central part of the state, they serve stores in Gardiner and Livingston. They supply a few stores west of the Divide, including the markets in Lincoln and Seeley Lake. Currently all trucks are dispatched from the Salt Lake warehouse on what can be a 2 or 3 day run. | Place orders via phone or online. There is a ~\$24 fee for orders under \$500. Delivers to schools and works with smaller stores with low buying volumes. A member store must maintain a minimum average of \$5,740/week to carry their Food Club brand. Some deliveries are once a week, some are 3-4 depending on how large the order. | Carry foods local to UT (i.e. UT peaches, corn, tomatoes, honey, flour). The catalog will describe if the product is local by location (i.e. UT peaches vs. CO peaches).  | No                      | Yes   | -  |
| <b>Bakery and Restaurant Foods</b>       | -  | Place orders online.   | Products include baking ingredients, canned and frozen fruits and vegetables, snack items, beef products, dried goods, kitchen equipment, etc.  | No                      | No  | -  |
| <b>Bauch Potatoes</b>                    | Family farm is located just south of Whitehall. Personal trucks deliver to Missoula, Helena, Bozeman. Partners with co-ops and other distributors to distribute more throughout the state.   | Customers include University Dining Services, local schools, hospitals, and restaurants all over Western and Central Montana. No minimum purchase requirement.   | Products include potatoes, hash browns, french fries, and diced potatoes.   | Yes                     | No  | Definite changes with COVID, schools dropping their orders and the volume of orders overall is down. |
| <b>Bear Paw Meats</b>                    | Based out of Havre and Chinook. Delivers from Havre to Hisdale along the HiLine, to Great Falls, Livingston, and Billings. They also use Valley Distributing to deliver statewide.   | Place orders via phone, or online through email or facebook. No minimum purchase order. They deliver to individuals, restaurants, retail, and schools in the east.   | Sells a variety of MT meat products   | Yes                     | Yes (if picking up in Great Falls or Havre)         | No route changes in light of COVID.  |
| <b>Butte Produce</b>                     | Delivery area includes Butte, Helena, Bozeman and all points in between. They also deliver as far south as Lima and as far west as Drummond.   | Place orders via phone, online, email. There is a minimum order. They deliver to schools.  | -   | No                      | No  | Routes have changed in light of COVID but these changes will not be permanent.                       |
| <b>Charlie's Produce</b>                 | Distribution centers are located in Seattle and Spokane, WA; Boise, ID; Portland, OR; Salt Lake City, UT.  | -  | Supplies conventional and organic fruits and vegetables to fresh and custom cuts, prepared deli meals, grab and go items, microgreens, etc.   | Yes                     | Yes   | Has worked as a freight partner with the Western Montana Growers' Co-op                              |
| <b>Core-Mark</b>                         | Nearest distribution center to MT is in Spokane.   | Customers are primarily convenience stores.  | Delivers fresh, chilled, and frozen merchandise. In addition to their own products, they have transported items from URM to smaller Montana grocers.  | No                      | Yes   | -  |
| <b>Doyles Sheehan (Sheehan Majestic)</b> | Warehouse facilities located in northern Idaho, the Portland, Oregon area, and Missoula, MT.   | Place orders via phone, online, or mobile app.   | Carries non-perishable food items, tobacco products, candy, snacks, and non-food items such as motor oil, health and beauty aids, apper products, and many items found in convenient stores.  | No                      | Yes   | -  |
| <b>Essential Eats Distributors</b>       | -  | Provides resources to indigenous led programs for populations facing food insecurity.  | Coordinates tribal meat donations and distribution.   | Yes                     | Yes (Browning)                                      | -  |
| <b>Flathead Seafood (Flathead Fish)</b>  | Located in Columbia Falls, MT.   | Place orders online, via phone, or email.  | Products include fish fillets, eggs, shellfish, and specialty products.   | Yes                     | Yes   | -  |
| <b>Food Services of America</b>          | -  | Delivers to Montana schools, including Malta, Browning, and Fort Benton school districts.  | Potatoes are the only local MT product they have available during the school year.  | No                      | Yes   | -  |
| <b>Gaines Produce</b>                    | Delivers statewide. Delivery schedules and locations are viewable on their website.  | -  | Fresh fruits and vegetables.  | No                      | Yes   | -  |
| <b>Glacier Wholesale, Inc.</b>           | Service route includes Ronan, up to Eureka, to Troy, to Plains (100 miles each way) every week.  | Place orders via phone or fax. \$100 minimum order. Delivers to schools.   | Carries a range of local products including food, paper products, retail products. Not sure if there is a way to differentiate between local and non-local products.  | Yes                     | No  | No route changes in light of COVID.  |
| <b>Grasmick Produce</b>                  | They are Montana's contracted DOD Fresh and USDA Foods distributor. They service schools across the entire state.  | -  | Has collaborated with OPI Distribution Manager, Pam Fruh, and Swanson's Orchard in Corvallis to place DOD Fresh's first MT produce, apples, in its catalog. The catalog will describe if the product is local by location (i.e. MT Apples). | Yes                     | Yes   | -  |
| <b>Intermountain Produce Company</b>     | Sources fruit from Washington and Oregon and distributes it from their Bozeman, Montana cold-storage facility.   | -  | Wholesale distributor of fresh fruit.   | No                      | No  | No route changes in light of COVID.  |
| <b>Kalispell Creamery</b>                | Makes home deliveries in the Flathead Valley through Montana Milk Movers. Makes wholesale deliveries through Flathead Dairy Distributing, Goe Fast Dairy Distributing, Quality Foods Distributing, and the Western Montana Growers Cooperative.  | -  | Fresh and local dairy products, as well as cow manure and ground beef.  | Yes                     | Yes (Fort Benton)                                   | -  |
| <b>Ocean Beauty Seafood</b>              | Based in Helena and distributes to Bozeman, Billings, Missoula, Butte, Great Falls twice a week.   | Place orders via phone. No minimum purchase order. They do not deliver to schools.   | Seafood Wholesaler. Communicate via phone to find out whether the items are local or not. Also sources local beef.  | Yes                     | Yes (if picking up in Whitefish and Havre)          | -  |
| <b>Organically Grown Company</b>         | Based in Portland Oregon, delivers to Missoula (Good Food Store) 3 times a week.   | Place orders via phone or email with \$200 minimum purchase order. No delivery to schools in MT currently. They deliver to the Good Food Store.  | The catalog will list the region of the items to let the buyer know which items are local.  | No                      | No  | No route changes in light of COVID.  |

|   |  |   |   |     |                                    |   |
|---|--|---|---|-----|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Meadow Gold Dairies</b>                                  | -  | Sells to schools.   | Fresh quality dairy products.   | Yes | Yes                                | Slight difference in routes with restaurant closures. Gov gave schools grants to serve meals which gave more business.  |
| <b>Montana Food Bank Network</b>                            | Delivers statewide to established partners.  | Only established partners are able to order.  | Through partnerships with local and national food manufacturers, agriculturists, and other food manufacturers we are able to secure large amounts of food through generous donations, grants, or wholesale. Under the item description it does not list the location origin (no way to know if you are buying local).   | Yes | Yes                                | Inserted dedicated routes in rural areas as needed to fill out pantries during regular delivery cycle (i.e. Crow, Browning, Northern Cheyenne). Outside of a crisis if a partner org needed to fill their pantry MFBN would insert the route as needed.   |
| <b>Montana Food Distributors Association</b>                | -  | -   | This is a member-ship based association that promotes and protects the retail grocery industry of Montana.  | No  | No                                 | MFDA's primarily concern is with food safety. Local products need the proper inspections and a chain of liability. Problems in the past have included distributing for organic farming using organic fertilizers and dealing with E.coli outbreaks, distribution of raw, unpasteurized milk that carries the threat of brucellosis, artisan cheese products and mold issues, uninspected raw poultry and beef carrying E.coli and listeria. |
| <b>Nourish the Flathead</b>                                 | Runs the Columbia Falls school district backpack program. Gives students backpacks once a week (food throughout the weekend). Also have a food pantry in the high school.  | Gives a survey out to teachers and teachers recommending students to the program. Parents then opt out of the program if they don't want to be in it anymore.   | No local food in the backpacks. Offers fresh snack on Fridays that is local. They do this on Fridays so that backpack participants can take home a little extra.  | No  | Yes (Browning)                     | -   |
| <b>Pacific Seafood</b>                                      | -  | -   | Carries a variety of products from brands including Dominic's, Newport, Pacific Premium, etc.   | No  | Yes (Browning)                     | -   |
| <b>Peirone's Produce</b>                                    | Delivers to western and central MT, no eastern deliveries.   | Place orders via phone or online. No minimum purchase. No delivery to schools.  | Buyers contact vendors, who would describe the origin of the product and whether or not it was local.   | No  | No                                 | -   |
| <b>Produce Depot</b>  | Based in and delivers in Billings.   | Place orders online.  | Products include local yellowstone valley products.   | Yes | No                                 | -   |
| <b>Quality Foods Distributing</b>                           | They work with 65 MT/Regional based suppliers. Delivers to most of Montana and as extended their route to Havre, making another stop at Great Falls possible.  | Some items must be pre-ordered as they are not always stocked. They are full service distributors – they purchase the food and then distribute it   | There is a whole category for Made in MT in the catalogs to determine local products versus non-local. Many options for MT local products including produce (fresh processed vegetables, dried and frozen fruit, beans/lentils/peas), protein (beef, fish, goat, lamb, pork, duck), chill & dairy (all dairy, eggs, hummus), grains, and bulk (beans, lentils, peas, grains, flour, dried fruit). | Yes | Yes (if picking up in Great Falls) | -   |
| <b>Root Cellar Foods</b>                                    | Currently delivers only in the Gallatin Valley with their own delivery van. They are hoping to deliver through Wild West Foods to service Livingston, Billings, and more East.   | Place orders via email, text or phone call. Christine sends out availability each week and they use that to determine what's available to order. No minimum orders except for what one bag of produce might weigh. If outside the Gallatin Valley then there is a 5% invoice charge for delivery. | Sends out an availability sheet that shows the distributors and the farm names (i.e. would show names of local farms so someone would have to be able to identify the local farm). The availability sheet also identifies what is organically grown. People can also always ask what are the local options.   | Yes | No                                 | They do not distribute to Northern Montana, yet, however if their distribution company went there they could. They use Summit Distribution to deliver outside the Valley. They use the company van to deliver in the Gallatin Valley (Belgrade, Manhattan, and Bozeman).  |
| <b>Stampede Packing Co.</b>                                 | Based in Kalispell and has sold portion control steaks and roasts to restaurants in Kalispell, Missoula, Great Falls, Helena and points between.   | Place orders via phone. For certain distributors there is a minimum purchase order. No delivery to school.  | Stampede Packing Company is a family owned business that has been producing and marketing Redneck brand hams, bacon and sausage for over 30 years in Kalispell, MT.   | Yes | No                                 | No route changes in light of COVID.   |
| <b>Spokane Produce</b>                                      | Delivers to Kalispell, Bozeman, Billings, Missoula and some smaller towns in between every day.  | Place orders online and via phone. \$200 minimum purchase order. Deliver to schools.  | -   | No  | No                                 | Buys all "popular grown" fruits and vegetables in Washington and Idaho. With COVID, less products are delivered to smaller locations and schools and larger retailers ordered more. Will most likely not be permanent.  |
| <b>Wild West Local Foods (formerly Summit Distribution)</b> | Statewide distribution to major cities – Bozeman, Missoula, Billings, Ennis, Big Sky, West Yellowstone, Helena. They carry products for small producers for a small fee – hire themselves out for refrigerated delivery service. | Customers are based in Yellowstone, Glacier, MSU, U Montana. They have positioned themselves to accommodate the updated food safety codes (FSMA).   | Offer diverse range of local beef, bison, pork, local veg. Business model focuses on carrying local products whether or not they are their own - goal is to increase local ag.  | Yes | No                                 | Looking to expand their school sales statewide. Erika met with Aubree Roth and Kei Matsunami in 9/2020 about expanding MT school sales.   |
| <b>Superior Meats</b>                                       | Delivers to Missoula area and Helena.  | -   | They are a state-inspected meat processor.  | Yes | No                                 | -   |

|   |  |  |   |     |             |  |
|---|--|--|---|-----|-------------|--|
| <b>Sysco</b>                                | Delivers all throughout MT 5 days a week. Some places 6 days a week (Sat). Some places that are remote once or twice a week.   | Ordering is whatever works best for the customer (online, phone, text, in person). \$500 minimum purchase order, but not black-and-white. They deliver to schools.   | Brand names are the indicator of the local item. It takes the communication of the sales person to clarify local if the food service director is unsure.  | No  | Yes         | -  |
| <b>United Natural Foods (UNFI)</b>          | 3rd major distributor in Montana, headquartered in Providence, Rhode Island. They have a warehouse in Billings, from which they service independent MT stores (including all IGAs) along the I-90 corridor from Big Timber to Lodge Grass, including Red Lodge, Roundup and Lewistown, and the entire I-94 corridor, including Circle, Colstrip, and Lame Deer. Stores in northeast MT including Culbertson, Poplar, and Plentywood, receive their shipments from Bismarck, North Dakota. UNFI travels as far northwest as Conrad and Browning for deliveries. | Distributes to Bozeman Community Food Co-op; Western, Southern and Eastern Montana.  | UNFI distributes the Essential Everyday and IGA branded foods.  | No  | Yes         | -  |
| <b>United Retail Merchants (URM)</b>        | Services independent grocery stores in the Pacific Northwest, including Western Montana and a few stores east of the Continental Divide.   | URM is a cooperative. The independent stores it services are owners of URM. One must become a member/owner to purchase from URM. Different minimum buying requirements for different members. A minimum of \$3,000/week is needed to carry their Food Club brand.  | -   | No  | No          | -  |
| <b>Valley Distributing</b>                  | Serving much of Montana (east of the Divide) and northern Wyoming.   | Customers include grocery stores, convenience stores, coffee kiosks, and full service restaurants.   | Distributes over 7,000 items including tobacco products, fresh produce, bar mixes, meats, breads, spices, and food service items.   | No  | Yes (Malta) | -  |
| <b>Western Montana Grower's Cooperative</b> | For most delivery locations, they have twice/week service.   | Usually the schedule is Monday order for Tuesday/Wednesday delivery (depending on location) and Thursday order for Friday/Saturday delivery. They send out price sheets on Friday that are good for the following week and use a variety of ordering mechanisms (phone, email, etc.) depending on the customer's preference. | Customers support Montana family run farms, and freshness of product (most fresh produce that we offer gets from the farm to the customer within 40 hours). In general we do not have formal agreements that we enter into with customers. We do try for a certain amount of crop planning with some customers so we can tell our producers what to grow, and we also have some MOU's and contracts for custom processed items. | Yes | No          | "WMGC has received support from the MT DoA for many years via GTA grants and other means, and we are enormously grateful. We would love to see more Montana grown food used in state cafeterias and would be more than willing to work with you to make it happen. We understand firsthand the difficulties associated with moving to a more localized supply chain, but we along with our partners around the state are eager to see it happen everywhere, especially at the State Government level." |
| <b>Wicked Good Farm</b>                     | Service is focused in the Flathead County. However, they are open to having a conversation about delivering to Browning.   | To deliver to Browning, a minimum purchase order would have to be approximately \$1,200 to cover mileage and time.   | They are a small diversified organic farm in Whitefish that does aggregating + distributing   | Yes | No          | -  |

## Appendix 2: Montana Food Distributors Contact Information

| Distributor Name                                     | Phone Number   | Email Address   |
|--|--|---|
| Associated Food Stores                               | 888-574-710  | -   |
| Bakery and Restaurant Foods                          | Steffen Brown, Sales: 406-830-0777   | -   |
| Bauch Potatoes                                       | Mark Bausch: 406-287-3490  | -   |
| Bear Paw Meats                                       | Angie, Havre Store: 406-265-2440   | bearpawmeats@yahoo.com  |
| Butte Produce  | 406-782-2369   | -   |
| Charlie's Produce                                    | Trevor Magney, Operations Manager: 1-800-727-9172 ext 7137   | TrevorM@charliesproduce.com   |
| Core-Mark  | (406) 728-2499   | -   |
| Doyles Sheehan (Sheehan Majestic)                    | 800-522-7248   | -   |
| Essential Eats Distributors                          | 406-829-6348   | -   |
| Flathead Seafood (Flathead Fish)                     | 406-892-3474   | flatheadfish10@gmail.com  |
| Food Services of America                             | Ray Koschel, Producer Merchandiser: 406-238-7833   | -   |
| Gaines Produce                                       | 406-366-9479   | gainsproduce@gmail.com  |
| Glacier Wholesale, Inc.                              | 406-752-4479   | -   |
| Grasmick Produce                                     | Chris Gaskell, Institutional Business Manager: 208-376-3981  | chris@grasmickproduce.com   |
| Intermountain Produce Company                        | 406-587-8782   | -   |
| Kalispell Creamery                                   | 406-756-MILK(6455)   | info@kalispellcreamery.com  |
| Ocean Beauty Seafood                                 | Todd Mee, General Manager: 406-443-1890  | todd.mee@oceanbeauty.com  |
| Organically Grown Company                            | Stretch Halterman, Transportation Manager: 503-907-3600  | Charles Woodruff, Backhaul Coordinator: cwoodruff@organicgrown.com; Stretch Halterman, Transportation Manager: RHalterman@organicgrown.com; Lucas Crawford, Account Manager: LCrawford@organicgrown.com |
| Meadow Gold Dairies                                  | Kalispell Office: (406) 752-7693   | -   |
| Montana Food Bank Network                            | Stephanie Stratton, Chief Programs Officer: 406-215-1772   | sstratton@mfbn.org  |
| Montana Food Distributors Association                | McKee Anderson: 406-449-6394   | mckee@mfa.biz   |
| Nourish the Flathead                                 | Scott Brandt: 406-261-5569   | -   |
| Pacific Seafood                                      | 503-905-4500   | info@paseafood.com  |
| Peirone's Produce                                    | 509-838-3515   | -   |
| Produce Depot  | 406-862-6508   | -   |
| Quality Foods Distributing                           | -  | Nellie Coyle: nellie@qfdistributing.com   |
| Root Cellar Foods                                    | Christina Angell: 406-813-8484   | christina@rootcellarfoods.com   |
| Stampede Packing Co.                                 | T.S. Laurens: 406-755-3377   | ts@stampedepacking.com  |
| Spokane Produce                                      | 509-455-8970   | -   |
| Wild West Local Foods (formerly Summit Distribution) | Harry Ward, Owner: 406-370-8271; Colin Cook, Logistics Manager: 406-570-3010; Erika Gioscia, Sales: 406-581-3040 | erika@wildwestfoods.com   |
| Superior Meats                                       | Jerry and Cathy: 406-822-4702  | superiorjerky@gmail.com   |
| Sysco  | Jill Vail, Marketing Manager: 406-247-1100   | -   |
| United Natural Foods (UNFI)                          | -  | Kayla Anderson: kranderson@unfi.com; Todd Bennett: tbennett@unfi.com  |
| United Retail Merchants (URM)                        | 509-467-3687   | mjdavis@urmstores.com; pchristianson@urmstores.com  |
| Valley Distributing                                  | 406-248-7806   | -   |
| Western Montana Grower's Cooperative                 | Dave Prather: 406-493-0859   | dave@wmgcoop.com  |
| Wicked Good Farm                                     | Brooke Bohannon: 406-471-3287  | farmer@thewickedgoodfarm.com  |