Western Montana Food Systems

Sustainability and Resiliency

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Flathead Lake, home to Flathead Lake Cheese
During the COVID-19 pandemic, where are Western Montana’s food systems failing to be resilient and sustainable in the way that they serve the Missoula human and nonhuman community and what local approaches can best address those weaknesses?
Research Methods

Qualtrics Survey
- Anonymous
- Chain-Referral Distribution
- 54 responses
- Coded with R

Follow-Up Interviews
- 6 interviews
- Conducted via zoom
- Transcribed using Otter.ti
- Coded using Atlas
Map of Producers

A map of western Montana showing zip codes of responding producers who were surveyed for our GLI Capstone project.
Demand and revenue

- Many farmers saw a significant demand increase in 2020 while also experiencing a revenue decrease.
“The money that came from the stabilization grants from the state, helped enough for us to keep our doors open.”
Flexibility and adaptability in business

“Adaptability is the only way you're going to survive, whether there's a pandemic or not.”
“I know the people that roast my coffee, I know that people that grow the sheep and the lambs and the cows and the pigs and the carrots. And so I feel blessed living here.”
Recommendations

- Provide an improved distribution mechanism/forum to sell direct to consumer
- Technical assistance when applying for grants
- Support diverse distribution channels (flexibility)
Perspective!

- Many examples of Missoula and Western Montana being a sustainable food system
- Producers were inspired
- Community came together
- Provided time for reflection & gratitude in the midst of grief