

Western Montana Growers Cooperative

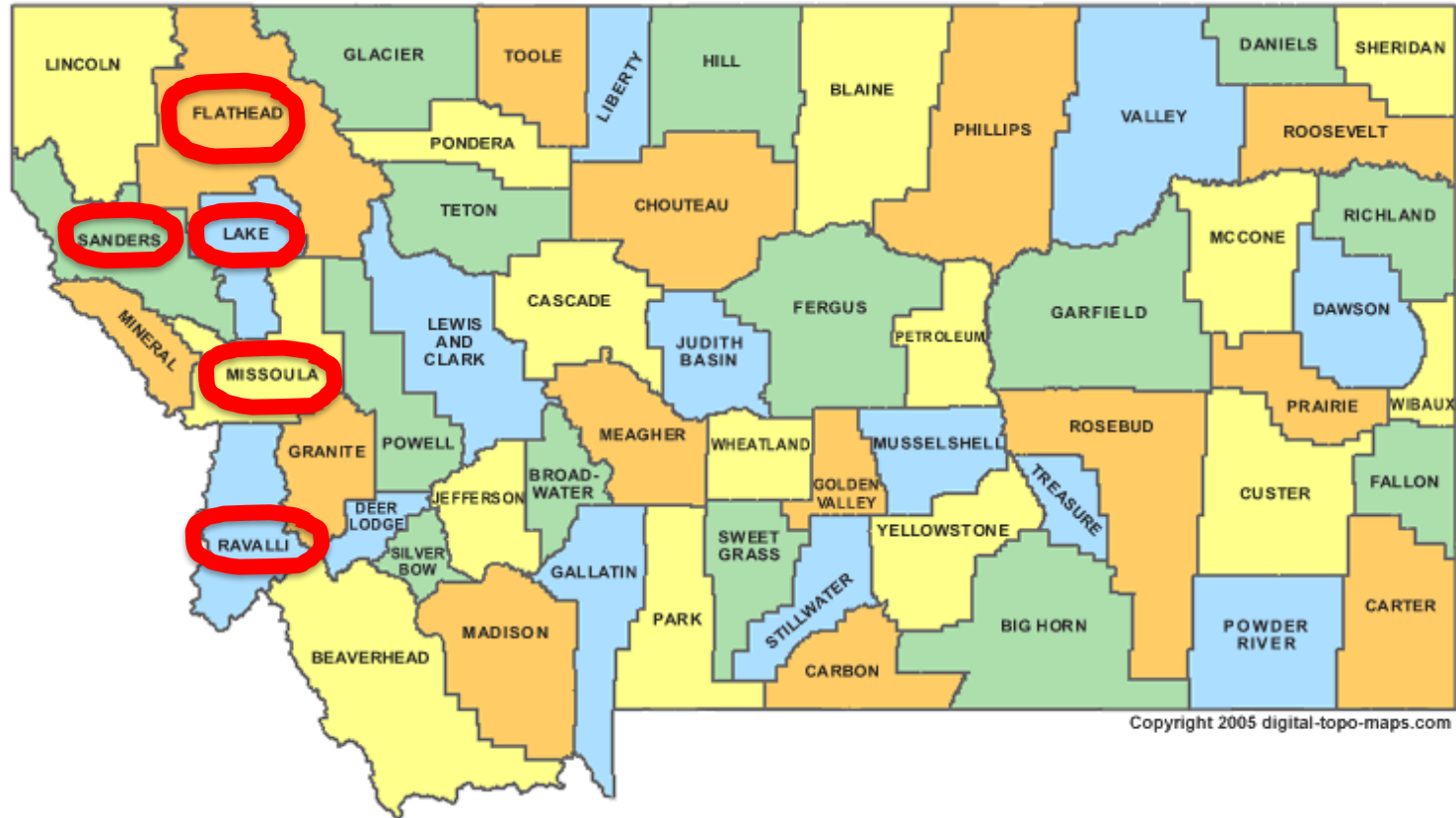
Brittany Palmer
February 13, 2020



Montana



Montana



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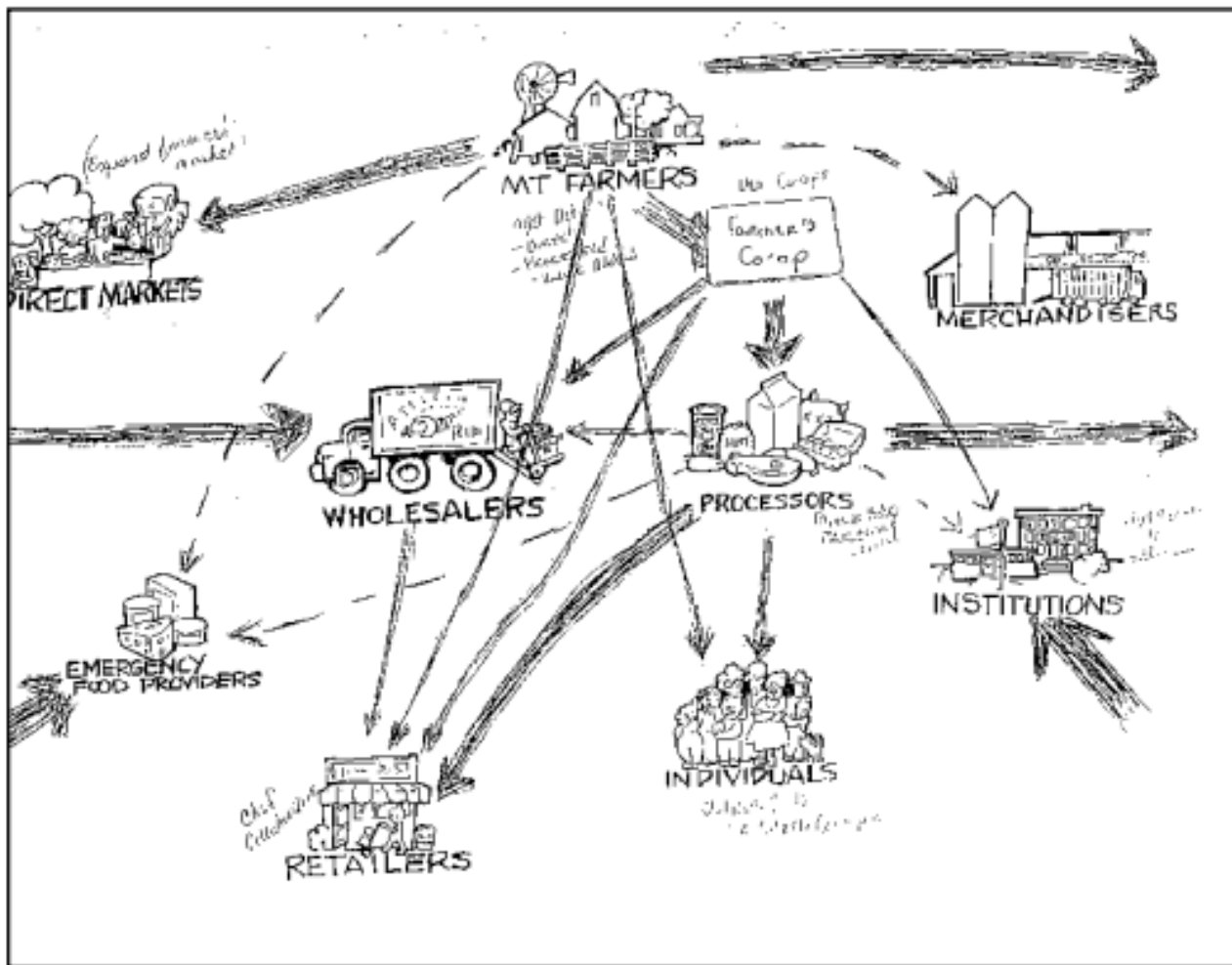


Our Story

- **Mid-1990s:** Mission Valley Organic Growers Cooperative forms
- **1995:** Lake County Community Development Center is founded
- **Late-1990s:** Montana Food Systems Initiative forms out of AERO (Alternative Energy Resources Organization)



Our Story



Our Story

- **2000:** Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center receives USDA Community Food Project grant
- **2003:** Western Montana Growers Cooperative incorporates







“The ones that were established were not interested in a co-op, because they were already doing fine, and thank you very much, why add another layer?”

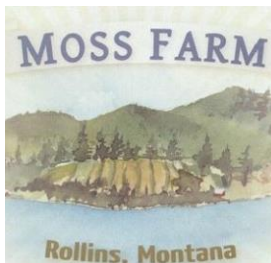
– Mary Stranahan (2013)





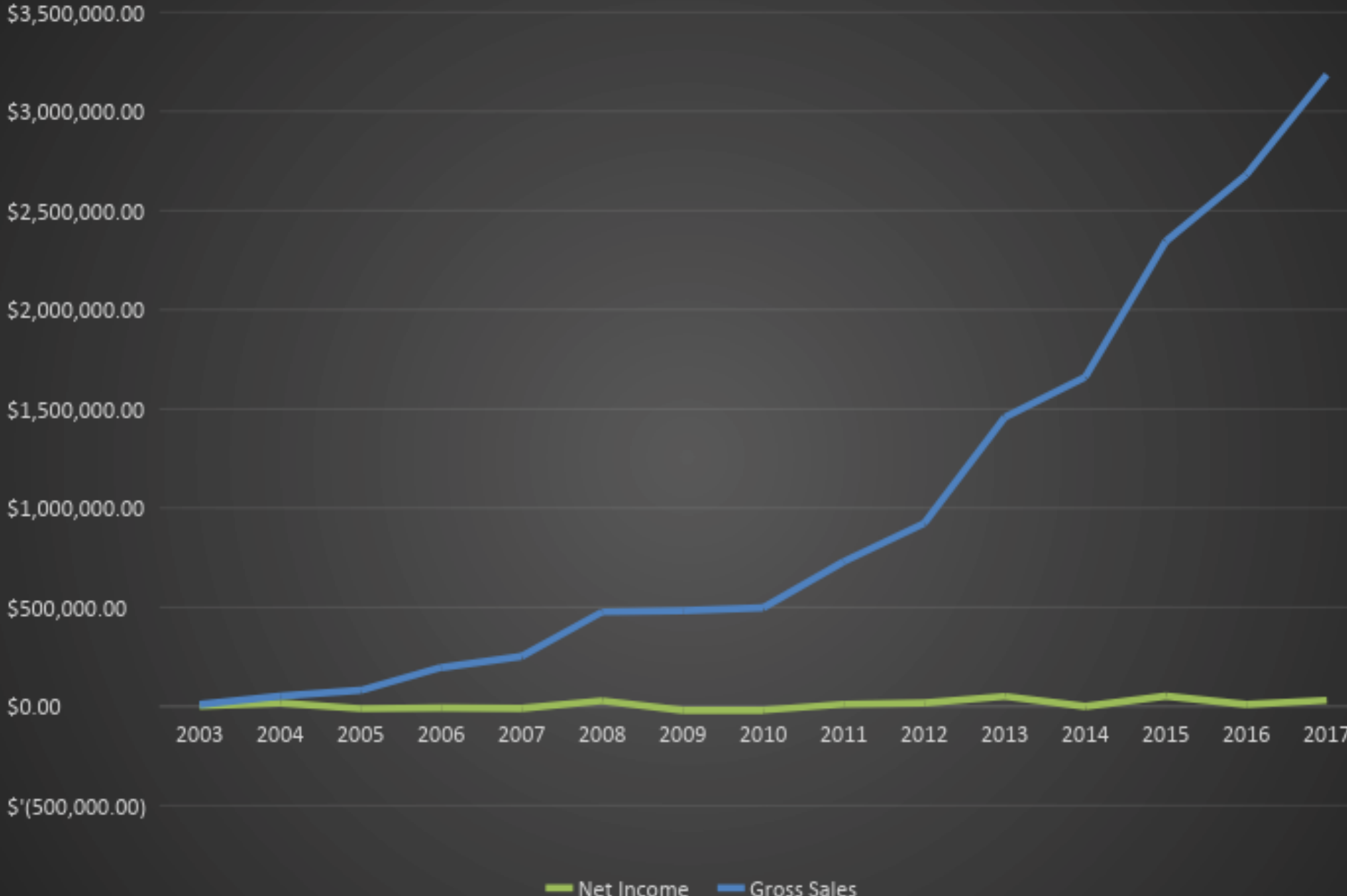


foothill farm











**We believe in making fresh
and nutritious local food
available to our community**



Goal

- To provide communities within the western Montana region with a wide range of fresh, quality products from western Montana's independently owned ranches and farms



Goal

- To reach that goal, cooperative members are committed to producing a supply of quality agricultural products **and sharing in the development and operation of local marketing, processing, and distribution systems** that make that supply readily available to consumers in our region.



Our Values

- **Cooperation**
 - Skill sharing, cost sharing, building relationships, strengthening community
- Using appropriate technology
 - Produce and market to regions that fit our scale and minimize environmental & economic costs
- Land stewardship
 - Manage land sustainably
- Social equity
 - Interact with and provide for all segments of local community population



Producer Services

- Production Planning
 - Market Assessment
 - Crop Allocation
 - Packing Specs
- Food Safety/Insurance
 - GAP Certification
 - Food Safety Plans
 - Aggregate Insurance Levels



Producer Services

- Packaging and Supplies
 - Bulk packaging purchases
 - Used box collection and distribution
 - Group Order dock receiving
 - Backhauling of supplies and materials
- Logistics
 - Transportation from the farm (or nearby) to Warehouse to Customer



Producer Services

- Sales
 - Dedicated Sales Staff
 - Transparent Pricing
 - Optimized Grower Financial Returns
 - Flexible Payment Terms
- Marketing
 - Brand Awareness
 - Packaging and Label Design
 - Events and Promotions
 - In-store Merchandising



Governance

- Board of Directors
 - Nine member-owners
 - Provides oversight of WMGC finances and operations
 - Creates policies to govern interactions between farmers and WMGC



Governance

- Bylaws
- Co-op marketing agreement
- Hierarchy policy
- Statement of cooperation
- Annual member meeting



Partnerships

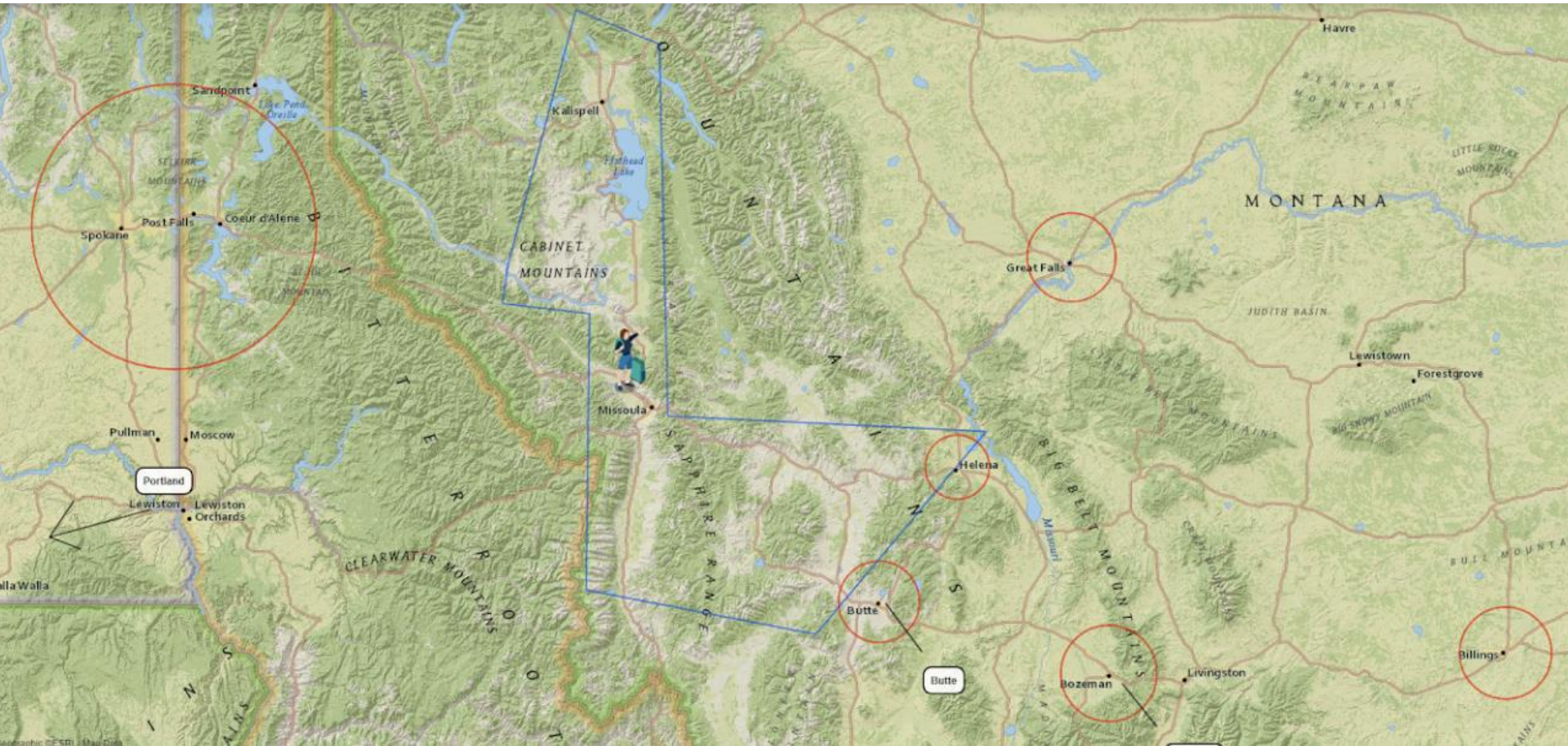
- Previous distribution partnerships:
 - Valley Distributing, Darigold, Eisensein Logistics
- Current distribution partnerships:
 - Charlie's
 - Summit
 - Organically Grown
- Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center



Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center



Partnerships



Products – Fruits, Vegetables, & Herbs



- Melons
- Cherries
- Apples
- Sweet Corn
- Carrots
- Beets
- Basil
- Rosemary, basil, dill, cilantro, ETC!

Products – Meat and Dairy

- Bison
- Beef
- Elk
- Emu
- Charcuterie
- Eggs
- Milk
- Yogurt
- Cheese



Products – Grocery

- Kombucha
- Jams & chutneys
- Honey
- Sauerkraut
- Dry cereals
- Lentils
- Chickpeas
- Shrub mix
- Bloody mary mix



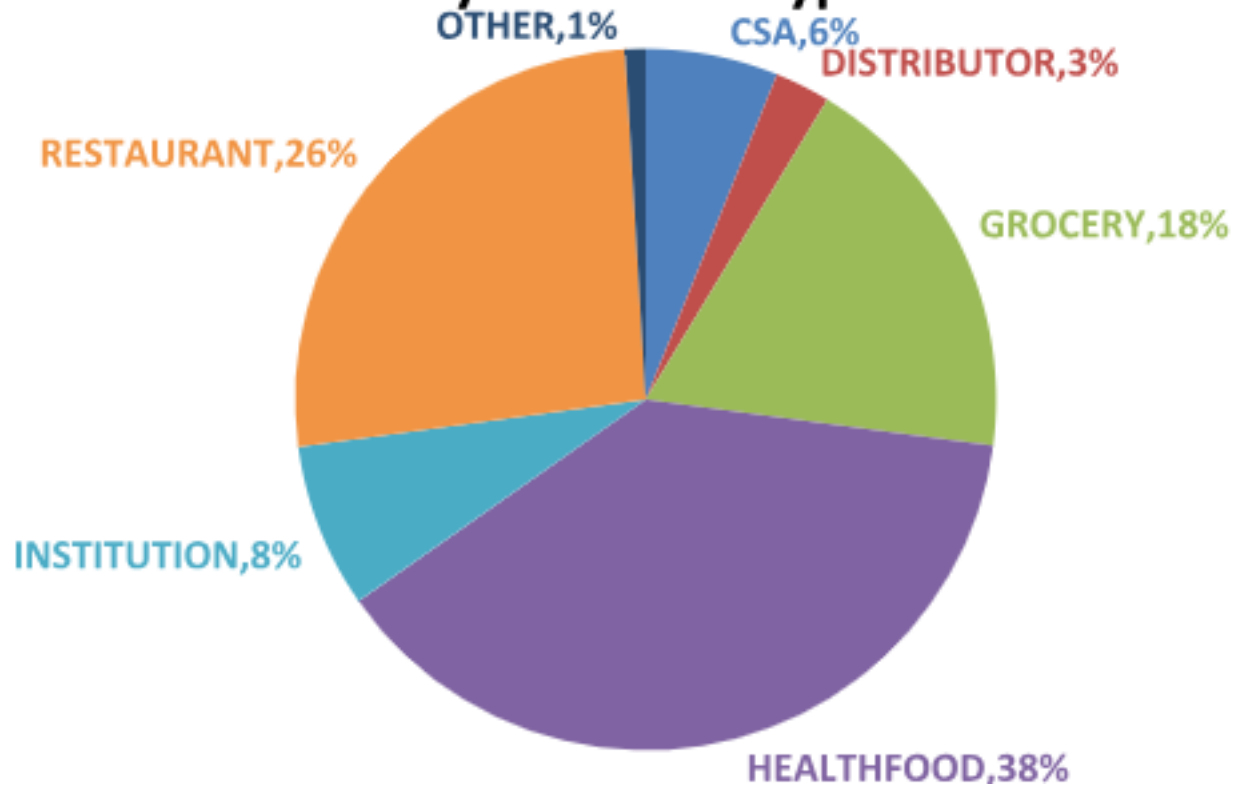
Products – Frozen

- Pumpkin puree
- Kale
- Cherries
- Crushed tomatoes



Sales

Sales by customer Type 2017



Sales

- Eggs (24%)
- Dairy (22%)
- Vegetables (21%)



Aggregation & Distribution





NOTICE

WASH YOUR HANDS

ATTENTION: This is a restricted area. No food or drink is allowed here. Please keep this area clean and free of clutter.



Threats

- Growth of local food movement- Market Dilution
- Expansion of *corporate* groceries (& their contracts)
- Pressure from out of state distributors



Opportunities

- Expanding CSA & institutions
- Expand frozen & year-round products
- Seasonality of the work & hiring
- Sell consistently to more institutions
- Distribute over greater distances through freight partnerships
- Ease competition



Resources



Farm to Healthcare in Montana: Lessons Learned

Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center,
a division of Lake County Community Development Corporation
Ronan, MT

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This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

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"Local Is Delicious," But It's Not Always Easy:

A Case Study of the Western Montana Growers Cooperative



A community-based action research project of the
Environmental Studies Program, University of Montana,
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& Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center

November 2013

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