



AK Agriculture Insider

May, 2017

From the Director

Director Arthur Keyes shares information about legislation and proposals that involve Agriculture in Alaska.

Summer Meal Sites

Communities across Alaska prepare to connect youth with Agriculture during our summer months.

Make it Count

The USDA is preparing to take its 2017 Census of Agriculture in Alaska. Why it's important to participate.

Organic Cost Share

Certified Organic Growers in Alaska may qualify for the national cost share program.

Ag Day Activity

A fun seed activity for youth to celebrate Alaska Agriculture Day on May 2, 2017.

Recipe of the Month

TLC Salad- after a long winter it's time to rejoice in our greenhouse bounty with this summer salad.

Meet the Team

Get to know our Farm to School Coordinator, Jodie Anderson.

New Website

Check out our new Alaska Grown website, connecting us to farmer's markets, retailers, growers and producers.

From the Director

I hope all of you have wonderful Alaska Agriculture Day celebrations planned! It is excellent the state dedicates a day to recognize, celebrate and share the agricultural work of Alaskans that has been going on for decades. Over the past few months, our state lawmakers have been producing and discussing multiple bills during the legislative session that impact Alaska agriculture. Myself and other Division of Agriculture employees have been providing testimony and sharing our expertise pertaining to some of these bills. One of the more popular bills proposes the legalization of industrial hemp. Senate Bill 6 defines hemp as an agricultural product and removes it from the state's list of controlled substances. This bill passed the Alaska Senate in early April and the House is currently holding hearings on it. Other bills pertaining to Alaska Agriculture include: HB 19, HB 46, HB 63, HB 172, HB 197, and HB 218. For more information and to see the current status of these bills please visit:

<http://www.akleg.gov/basis/Home/BillsandLaws>

Recently I have been receiving inquiries about the status of a non-legislative proposal, the Board of Game's Proposition 90. For the past year, the Division of Ag has been attending Sheep and Goat meetings. Most recently a public meeting was held in mid-April where stakeholders were able to come and share their concerns, and hear about the progress the group has made. Division of Ag will continue to provide input and participate in this process.

The state sale of the Mt. McKinley Meat and Sausage plant is progressing and we anticipate a final sale soon. I want to wish all of you a successful start to your summer growing and farmer's market season.

Until next time,
Arthur Keyes - Director of Agriculture



Farm Census Count

Farmers and ranchers in Alaska will soon have the opportunity to make a positive impact on their communities and industry by taking part in the 2017 Census of Agriculture. The Census is conducted every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) and is a complete count of all U.S. farms, ranches, and those who operate them.

Answers to the Census impact farm programs and rural services that support Alaskan farming communities. To make this happen Alaskan farmers must do their part and be counted by returning the Census form; there's strength in numbers that only the Census can reveal. For example, in 2012, Alaska farmers reported a total of 762 farms, spanning 833,861 acres. This showed an 11 percent increase in the number of Alaska farms from the previous Census in 2007. The Census also revealed that the average age of an Alaskan farmer is 57.1 years, slightly below the U.S. average of 58.3. But Alaska leads the nation in the percent of principal operators who are beginning farmers (farming less than 10 years) at 37% of Alaskan farms. This telling information and thousands of additional farm and ranch statistics are only available every five years, as a direct result of responses to the Census.

Producers who are new to farming or did not receive a Census in 2012 still have time to sign up to be counted in this critical effort at:

www.agcensus.usda.gov

You may also contact the Alaska NASS office by emailing Suzan Benz at:

suzan.benz@nass.usda.gov



Summer Meal Sites



School may almost be out for the summer, but there are some exciting agricultural projects happening with the 2017 Farm to Summer Meal Site program in Alaska. The program provides subgrants to Alaska schools and childcare sites that participate in one of the federal USDA Child Nutrition Programs. This year, nearly \$37,000 will be distributed between 29 school and daycare sites, and 43 family childcare provider homes across 13 communities in Alaska. The funds can be used in a variety of ways including: to create or expand institution gardens, to procure local produce or seafood, to integrate garden-based and healthy eating curriculum into summer programs, to take field trips to local farms or farmers markets, and to purchase food-related equipment for recipe development using fresh produce or local fish.

The Farm to Summer Meal Site program focuses on three main principles: education, procurement, and gardens. The goal of the program is to enhance the eating and educational environments of these sites, increase children's acceptance of fresh produce and local fish, and increase awareness of the importance of a healthy diet and physical activity. Through growing, harvesting, and/or cooking local foods, the program also helps introduce children to their local food system. Grant funding for the summer meal sites is provided by the USDA, Food and Nutrition Services, Team Nutrition Grant Program in partnership with the Child Nutrition Program from the Department of Education.

For the upcoming 2017 summer, Alaska Farm to Summer Meal subgrant recipient sites are planning exciting ways to engage the children and youth in their programs. There is a mixture of sites that have never grown anything at their locations and sites that are expanding their established

gardens or procurement practices. Schools and childcare sites are integrating hydroponic systems, indoor gardening, raised garden beds, container gardening, and season extension methods to expose students to the variety of ways to grow food. Some of the sites will also be integrating interactive projects into their summer programs such as beekeeping, food preservation, fish processing, and breadmaking. Other sites have planned for their students to visit farms and farmer's markets throughout the summer.

By enhancing the connection communities have with local food producers in Alaska, students and families are empowered to make informed food choices while supporting the local economy, specifically through the Alaska agriculture and fishing industries. The Division of Agriculture is excited to see how these summer meal site projects turn out and we will provide an update on them at the end of the summer.



More than 13 communities across Alaska will be hosting Farm to Summer meal sites this year.



Meet the Team

We would like to introduce you to Jodie Anderson, the Farm to School Coordinator with the Division of Agriculture. As a soil and compost expert, she also has a great deal of teaching and education experience. Jodie was raised in a small town in southern Michigan and has family who farm sugar beets, soy beans, wheat, corn, and dry beans in the thumb-area of Michigan. She grew up loving nature, visits to family farms, science, and learning.



After graduating from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a Bachelor of Science in Biology and Secondary Education degree, she taught high school and then went to graduate school. She completed her Master in Arts of Teaching Biology at Brown University, and went back to teach chemistry and biology at the high school and college levels for a decade in northcentral North Carolina.

In 2003, Jodie worked for the University of Alaska Fairbanks in both the Cooperative Extension Service and the School of Natural Resources and Agriculture for several years, running the Alaska Community Horticulture Program. Her work at UAF afforded her many opportunities to travel around rural Alaska and develop relationships with many teachers, growers, and communities. She looks forward to plugging back into many of those relationships to continue the great work the Alaska Farm to School Program. Jodie is excited to work with and for you as we support and strengthen the Alaska Farm to School Program.



Ag Day Activity

Celebrate Alaska Agriculture Day with this fun carrot seed activity for youth!



Download the instructions and Carrot Seed Activity book here:
[Carrot Seed Activity Booklet](#)

Organic Cost Share

Are you a certified organic grower in Alaska? You may qualify for the National Organic Certification Cost Share program. Last year, more than a dozen Alaska organic producers qualified for the program. The program allows certified organic operations to be reimbursed up to 75 percent of qualifying certification fees (a maximum of \$750 per scope). Organic operations who received initial certification or that renew their certification between October 1, 2016 and September 30, 2017 qualify for the cost share program.



For more information and to download an application, please [click here](#).



Recipe of the Month

TLC Salad - Tomato, Lettuce and Cucumber

(recipe adapted from lovemysalad.com)



Ingredients:

- 1 head of Alaska Grown lettuce (choose your favorite type)
- 1 Alaska Grown Cucumber (can often be found at Farmer's Markets)
- Alaska Grown Tomatoes (smaller ones give a nicer appearance)
- Feta Cheese (optional)
- Onion cut into rings (optional)

Dressing Ingredients (mix together):

- 2-3 tablespoons of White Balsamic vinegar
- ¼ teaspoon brown sugar
- 4 tablespoons of Olive oil

Preparation Instructions:

- Rinse & spin dry the lettuce leaves then blend dressing ingredients together.
- Spoon half the dressing on large flat plate first. Then place handfuls of lettuce leaves that sit on top of dressing on the plate. This means the leaves don't get too covered in dressing.
- Cut the tomatoes into quarters and place on lettuce and add sliced cucumber.
- Cut or crumble feta over the top with sliced spring onion if you like. Drizzle remainder of dressing lightly over the top of the salad.
- Season with salt and pepper.

*This salad serves approximately 4 people.

Visit Our New Website

Find farmer's markets, retailers and farms that provide Alaska Grown products.



www.buyAlaskaGrown.com

Upcoming Events

- May 1st - [Joel Salatin Lecture Series](#) (Anchorage)
- May 2nd - Alaska Agriculture Day
[Joel Salatin Lecture Series](#) (Fairbanks)
- May 3rd - [Joel Salatin Lecture Series](#) (Juneau)
- May 5th - Ag Day Celebration at the Division of Agriculture located at 1800 Glenn Hwy, Palmer, Alaska. There will be kids activities and Ag equipment on display.

Have an event you want us to share? Email the info to:
jennifer.castro@alaska.gov

Celebrate

May is National Egg and Salad Month!



Make sure you share the benefits of Alaska Grown eggs and salad makings on your social media!

#BeSocial with us

