

AGRICULTURE



Montana’s agriculture is anchored by beef and wheat sectors. Pulses, barley and oilseeds are also major crops. These sectors position the state as a major player in U.S. and global food systems.

Beef

- Montana is one of the top 10 beef-producing states in the U.S.
- Ranching has been vital to Montana, with over 2.1 million head of cattle currently in the state.
- Quality genetics and breeding are pillars of Montana’s industry.
- Though most calves are sold each fall and finished out of state, Montana has a reputation for grass-fed, high-quality beef.

Wheat

- Montana ranks No. 3 nationally in wheat production and No. 1 in organic wheat in the U.S.
- The state produces hard red winter wheat, hard red spring wheat and durum wheat. These varieties have high protein content and strong gluten characteristics, making them ideal for use in baking and noodle production.
- Wheat accounts for one-third of Montana’s agricultural sales, largely to Asia.
- Montana tests all wheat exports for phytosanitary certification and to ensure consistency and the absence of contaminants like buckwheat.

Pulse Crops: Lentils, Peas and Chickpeas

- Montana is the No. 1 producer U.S. of pulse crops.
- Domestic demand is strong, as they are also used as protein additives and an alternative to animal protein.

Barley

- Montana is the second largest producer of barley in the U.S., accounting for 27% of the country's production.
- Barley is grown primarily for livestock feed and malt used in beer production.
- Montana companies like Malteurop and Montana Craft Malt process barley into malted barley for beer production for local, national and international markets.

Oilseeds: Canola, Flax, Safflower and Camelina

- Oilseed production in Montana has expanded significantly in recent decades.
- Canola leads oilseed production, ranking third in the U.S., followed by flax and safflower; camelina is also grown as a niche crop for biofuels.
- Oilseeds are used for cooking oils, livestock feed and industrial products.

Supporting Organizations

Montana Wheat and Barley Committee

Promotes Montana's high-quality wheat and barley exports through research, market development and education

Montana Department of Agriculture

Provides grading and certifications to verify quality and the absence of contaminants

Montana Stockgrowers Association

The largest cattle ranchers' organization in Montana, focused on advocacy, education, sustainability and community support across the livestock sector

Montana Pulse Crop Committee

A producer-funded, state-authorized organization dedicated to supporting Montana's pulse industry through research, market development and education

Montana Grain Growers

A commodity-specific organization representing the interests of Montana wheat and barley growers which uses the contacts and experience gained over the past 60 years to affect the laws, regulations and rules of farming

Images courtesy of Montana Department of Commerce.



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