

2022-2026 Fairbanks North Star Borough Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Agriculture Cluster Summary – **DRAFT**

Includes: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats | Targets | Goals | Strategies & Actions | Relevant Plans

Strengths *Internal attributes that contribute to success*

- Fairbanks has seen growth in number of farms, farm sales, and farm employment
- FNSB is on the road system, making it easier to move equipment, supplies, and products
- Interior Alaska farmers are increasingly using innovative growing methods including high tunnels and geothermal heating
- UAF's Fairbanks Experiment Farm supports agricultural research and innovation that supports farmers

Weaknesses *Internal barriers to success*

- Alaska has a history of unsuccessful agriculture ventures
- Challenges securing seasonal labor force
- Disparity between agricultural and retail value of land
- Farm volunteers are not covered under worker's comp insurance in Alaska
- High costs for shipping materials to the region
- High export costs and logistical challenges
- High reliance on imported foods
- Short growing season

Opportunities *External forces that contribute to success*

- Alaska is emerging as a worldwide peony supplier
- Alaska approved by USDA to produce industrial hemp
- Alaska has the highest percentage of beginning farmers in the country (2017 Census of Agriculture)
- Due to climate change, the growing season is lengthening

Threats *External forces that could be barriers to success*

- Climate change
- Reliance on imported food and vulnerability to supply disruptions create major food security concerns
- Reduction in state funding for agricultural research and facilities

Where We Are	What measurements can we use to track progress? Where do we want to be in 5 years?	Targets (10% growth every 5 years)
274 Farms (2017)	Farms – Total number of farms in Interior Alaska <i>Out of 990 total in the state; increase of 26% from 2012</i>	300 farms (2022), 330 farms (2027)
\$10.4 M (2017)	Sales – Total market value of agricultural products sold in Interior Alaska <i>Up 14% from 2012; approximately 80% comes from crops, 20% from livestock/poultry</i>	\$11.4 M (2022), \$12.6 M (2027)
285 Jobs (2019)	Employment – Total number of full-time and part-time employment in the agriculture industry in FNSB <i>Farm employment in FNSB increased 31% between 2014 and 2019</i>	315 Jobs (2026)

Sources: Farms and Sales data come from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Census of Agriculture, 2017; Interior Alaska includes the Fairbanks North Star Borough, Denali Borough, Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area and Southeast Fairbanks Census Area; Employment data comes from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, Total Full-Time and Part-Time Employment by Industry
The USDA Census of Agriculture is only conducted once every five years, which is why these targets show years 2022 and 2027 (release dates for future censuses)

Agriculture Goals – long term improvements and changes we want to see in five years or more



1. Interior Alaska is a thriving agricultural hub, producing high quality goods that are consumed locally and exported to other Alaska communities and beyond.



2. Achieve greater food security in Interior Alaska by increasing production, distribution, and storage of locally grown products.

Strategies & Actions – the activities we will implement over the next 5 years to accomplish goals & targets and who will lead them	Lead
<p>1. Promote Local –Promote locally grown foods. <i>(Goals 1, 2)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Encourage residents to buy local, including expanding the Golden Heart Grown program (FEDC) and distribution of the Interior Agriculture Directory. b. Encourage event organizers, restaurants, and schools to increase reliance on locally grown foods. c. Expand education and awareness around local farmer’s markets. 	
<p>2. Recruit Workers – Build an agriculture workforce that can meet seasonal demands. <i>(Goals 1, 2)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Support the establishment of a statewide farming training/certification program. b. Advocate for the removal of state-level barriers so volunteer farm workers can be covered by worker’s compensation insurance. c. Increase agricultural education at all levels of schooling. 	
<p>3. Land Policies – Establish and implement land use policies that protect farmland. <i>(Goals 1, 2)</i></p>	
<p>4. Support Farmers – Existing and new farmers in Interior Alaska have the resources, workforce support, and tools needed to succeed and grow. <i>(Goals 1, 2)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Better connect farmers to existing trainings and resources. b. Increase access to start-up funds for basic infrastructure and equipment such as fences. c. Support infrastructure, programming, and funding recommendations identified in the 2020 Fairbanks Experiment Farm Long-Range Plan. 	
<p>5. Food Security – Increase local food storage capacity. <i>(Goal 2)</i></p>	

Other Relevant Resources

- **2020 Long-Range Plan for the UAF Fairbanks Experiment Farm.** University of Alaska Fairbanks Institute of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Extension. 2020. [View here.](#)
- **Interior Agriculture Directory.** Fairbanks Economic Development Corporation. 2021. Plan Name. [View here.](#)



Interior Alaska Economic Summit, February 22-23, 2022

Agriculture Breakout: Discussion Summary (02-22-22)

To view results from the other sessions, visit <https://fnsbceds.com/> (results will be posted by March 11th)

This document compiles feedback and notes from the breakout session. The other tools that were used to guide the discussion include:

- An economic cluster/influencer one-pager that identified a preliminary SWOT analysis, goals, strategies, actions, and measures of success
- A worksheet identifying a proposed economic vision statement and guiding questions for each of the activities. The guiding questions have been copied into this document for reference. The feedback on the economic vision statement was compiled separately and will be released by March 11th.

Participants *(alphabetical by first name, based on sign in sheet)*

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Facilitated by Evan Wilken, Fairbanks Economic Development Corporation

Number of RSVPs: 24 participants

Feedback on the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

Guiding Questions:

1. What did we get right?
2. What's missing?
3. What would you change?
4. What's the most important item in each quadrant?

Discussion Notes:

Color Key: **Blue** = proposed revision | **red** = proposed deletion | **green** = proposed addition

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise: experimental farm used to be a strength, but is no less so today • Add: Tanana Valley Farmer's Market • Add: farmers are innovative; innovative growing methods • Add: international airport • Add: high quality agricultural land in Fairbanks and Nenana not being used • Add: WIC accepted at farmer's markets, helping make produce available to everyone regardless of income • Add: statewide • Add: direct sales/buy local are preferred to supermarket format • Add: local foods do not require complex logistics and costs of bringing in food (especially produce) from external sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise: short growing season in terms of days but not hours of daylight • Add: lack of storage • Add: export and shipping costs • Add: lack of food processing • Add: Importance of farm to market links (somewhat missing in FNSB) • Add: local produce not sold in supermarkets • Add: farmers not connected to education opportunities • Add: minimal processing of raw foods into products for consumers
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise: we ARE a worldwide peony supplier (not emerging) • Revise: extending growing season with technology – not just climate change • Add: mushrooms, food forests • Add: waste heat from micro-nuclear reactor • Add: educational initiatives about how food is produced; need better training for farming professionals • Add: cannabis industry • Add: farmer's co-op model • Add: solving food instability with connectivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add: lack of education • Add: logistics • Add: State's commitment to agriculture (or lack thereof) • Add: consumer preferences for produce to be available year-round instead of following seasons

Goals, Strategies, Actions Discussion Questions

Guiding Questions:

1. What did we get right?
2. What would you change?
3. What's missing?
4. Who will lead each of the strategies? What do you see as you/your organization's role?
5. Which of the strategies is most important for us to focus on over the next year?

Discussion Notes:

- Goals
 - **Revise:** Goal #2, add processing
 - **Add:** recommend adding a 3rd goal: build workforce development capacity for agriculture.
 - **Add:** throughout this section, expand definition of agriculture beyond food
- Strategy 1: Promote Local
 - **Revise:** expand the strategy so it's not just focused on food
 - **Add:** promote community supported agriculture (CSAs)
 - **Add:** establish farmer's markets on military bases
 - **Add:** promote farms and local foods to young people; develop curriculum in schools, educate on the impacts of food
 - **Add:** promote the ability to use special supplemental nutrition program (SNAP) and Women, Infants, & Children (WIC) resources at farmer's markets
 - **Add:** increase affordability and accessibility of local foods and agricultural products
 - Who? Farm Bureau & The Grange
 - **Add:** identify influencers who can promote local products
 - **Add:** strengthen social media campaigns around local products
 - **Add:** reimburse food fees for local restaurants
- Strategy 2: Recruit Workers
 - **Revise:** reword to educate, train, and support new farmers
 - **Add:** marketing to help break the stereotype of what a farmer looks like
 - **Add:** certification program
 - **Add:** Expand 4H and Future Farmers of America programs, integrate with K-12 and UAF certifications.
- Strategy 3: Land Policies
 - **Add:** put farm lands into Trust.
 - **Add:** Make more land available to farm. Designate new agricultural areas and land sales of state land
 - Who? Farmland Trust, Nenana/Eva Burke

- Strategy 4: Support Farmers
 - Add: community cooperative processing center and storage (top priority!). Peonies need storage from July through September, floral chillers are available the rest of the year
 - Lead: Risse’s, Spinach Creek, peony growers
 - Add: increase financial support, which includes facets such as sales, enforcement/regulation, tax exemptions; offer forgivable loans
 - Add: support hemp as an emerging industry (CBD, export, manufacturing)
 - Add: connect growers to land owners
 - Who? Future Farmers of America, North Pole High School Greenhouse, 4H, etc.
 - Add: better get the word out about what resources are available
 - Who? Cooperative extension
 - Add: Better connect farmers, retailers, and policy makers to cross-pollinate ideas and identify opportunities for better collaboration
- Strategy 5: Food Security
 - Add: support the creation of food forests
 - Add: create processing facilities and subsidize local production of processing, drying, free drying, preserving

Measures of Success Discussion Questions

Guiding Questions:

1. What did we get right?
2. What’s missing?
3. What would you change?
4. Which of these indicators will be the most effective at measuring our success?

Discussion Notes:

- Revise: not just the number of farms – what type of farms?
- Revise: sales – should this be “from”, not “in,” Fairbanks?
- Revise: how many farmers across the 274 farms? Here are they?
- Add: how can we measure innovation? Energy usage?
- Add: number of education programs; number of participants who get training certifications
- Add: space dedicated to community processing/storage
- Add: number of senior/WIC coupons redeemed at local farmer’s markets
- Add: number of ag businesses participating in the Alaska Grown/Golden Heart Grown; these businesses could also provide information on other metrics
- Add: need measurements of food security; how can we measure whether food security is increasing?