

Agriculture Summary

Strengths *Internal attributes that contribute to success*

Natural Resources & Environment

- Access to forests, spaces for foraging (e.g., mushrooms)
- Alaska is a worldwide peony supplier
- High quality agricultural lands in the region
- Farmland provides ecosystem services

Businesses, Organizations, & Government

- Fairbanks has seen growth in number of farms, farm sales, and farm employment
- Farmer's markets
- University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF)'s Fairbanks Experiment Farm

Education & Workforce

- Regional farmers using innovative growing methods

Funding & Markets

- Locally grown foods avoid the shipping costs and quality issues associated with imported foods
- WIC is accepted at farmer's markets, helping make produce available to everyone regardless of income

Infrastructure

- FNSB has rail, road, and airport connectivity to support movement of equipment, supplies, and products
- Community gardens

Opportunities *External forces that contribute to success*

Natural Resources & Environment

- The growing season is lengthening due to climate change and improved technology

Businesses, Organizations, & Government

- Alaska approved by US Department of Agriculture (USDA) to produce industrial hemp
- Alaska has the highest percentage of beginning farmers in the country (2017 Census of Agriculture)
- Co-op model could be brought to the region

Funding & Markets

- Legalization of cannabis and industry growth

Infrastructure

- Waste heat could be used to support farming

Weaknesses *Internal barriers to success*

Natural Resources & Environment

- Limited value-added processing of agricultural products
- Short growing season (by number of days)
- Lack of available and affordable farmlands

Businesses, Organizations, & Government

- The State of Alaska has a history of unsuccessful agriculture ventures

Education & Workforce

- Challenges securing seasonal labor force
- Farm volunteers not covered under worker's comp insurance in Alaska
- Limited knowledge of agricultural education opportunities
- Lack of post-secondary agriculture education options

Funding & Markets

- Disparity between agricultural and retail value of land
- High costs for shipping materials to/from the region
- High export costs and logistical challenges
- High reliance on imported foods
- Poor farm to market linkages; local produce is rarely sold in supermarkets

Infrastructure

- Lack of agricultural storage and processing facilities
- Farm to market roads costly to maintain within current service area system

Threats *External forces that could be barriers to success*

Natural Resources & Environment

- Climate change

Businesses, Organizations, & Government

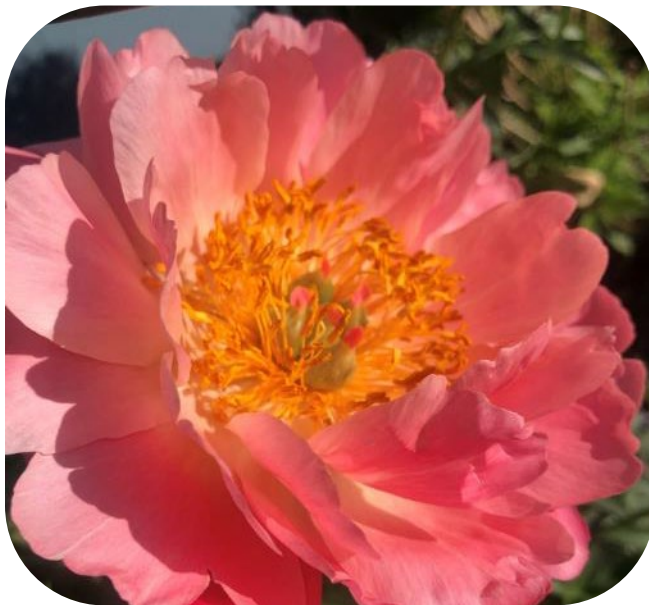
- Reduction in state funding for research and facilities

Funding & Markets

- Complex logistics to harvest, process, and export agricultural products
- Consumer preferences for produce to be available year-round instead of seasonally
- Reliance on imported food and vulnerability to supply disruptions create major food security concerns
- Farm tax deferral requirements from State of Alaska

Where We Are	What measurements can we use to track progress? Where do we want to be in 5 years?	Targets
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 from 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; many of these jobs are seasonal <i>Farm employment in FNSB increased 31% between 2014 and 2019</i>	315 Jobs (2027)
30 Members (2022)	Golden Heart Grown – Total businesses participating in the Golden Heart Grown program, which helps distinguish and promote goods produced in Interior Alaska	40 Members (2027)

Sources: Farms and Sales data from the 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 every 5 years



“It’s as much on the consumer as it is on the producer to increase agriculture production. If farmers sold out by noon every day at the farmer’s market, they would grow more.”

“Alaska leads the nation in new farms. It’s important to support farmers markets and farm stands. Those are the viable sales venues, rather than getting products in grocery stores.”



Agriculture Objectives – 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, processing, and storage of locally grown products.

“The disparity between the agricultural value and retail value of land has never been as great as it is now.”

“A lot of states allow volunteer work on farms, but in Alaska, volunteers aren’t covered by worker’s compensation.”



“Farmers need more access to training and start-up funds for basic infrastructure like fences and watering.”

“One goal should be to increase food storage capacity in case of an emergency.”


Strategies & Actions – Activities we will implement over the next five years to accomplish objectives & targets. See Chapter 3 for a detailed action plan.

Icon Key:  Capital Project  Military-related

1. **Increase Food Security** – Increase local food storage capacity and support subsistence activities. (Objective 2)

- a. Establish a community cooperative processing center and storage facility. 
- b. Support the creation of food forests, prioritizing areas with higher food insecurity. 
- c. Protect subsistence resources and preserve subsistence use of lands and waters.

2. **Support Farmers** – Existing and new farmers in Interior Alaska have the resources, workforce support, and tools needed to succeed and grow. (Objectives 1, 2)

- a. Better connect farmers to existing trainings and resources, encouraging the use of ecological farming practices.
- b. Increase access to start-up funds and financial support, including funding for basic infrastructure and start up equipment, establish tax exemptions, and offer forgivable loans; give preference to food insecure areas and/or households.
- c. Support infrastructure, programming, and funding recommendations identified in the 2020 Fairbanks Experiment Farm Long-Range Plan. 
- d. Support emerging industries such as hemp and peonies.
- e. Improve collaboration between farmers, retailers, and policy makers to cross-pollinate ideas and make progress on shared objectives.
- f. Expand 4H and Future Farmers of America programs in FNSB and connect growers with landowners.
- g. Advocate for changes in State statutes to support farming land/uses.
- h. Connect local meat/fish processors waste products with local farmers to produce local nutrients on farms.

- i. Support and expand community gardening initiatives, including greenhouses. 🔑

3. Promote Local Agriculture – Promote locally grown agriculture products. (*Objectives 1, 2*)

- a. Encourage residents to buy local, including expanding the Golden Heart Grown program, Fairbanks First, distribution of the Interior Agriculture Directory, and Buy Alaska.
- b. Encourage event organizers, restaurants, and schools to increase reliance on locally grown foods.
- c. Expand education and awareness around local farmer's markets.
- d. Promote community supported agriculture.
- e. Establish farmer's markets on military bases. 🏠
- f. Strengthen social media campaigns around locally grown products, including identifying influencers.
- g. Better promote the ability to use special supplemental nutrition program (SNAP) and (WIC) resources at farmer's markets.

4. Recruit Workers – Educate, train, and support new farmers and agricultural workers. (*Objectives 1, 2*)

- 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, including hands-on learning experiences and adding high school coursework on farming, canning, and preserving.
- d. Support creation of a farmer's certification program.

5. Protect Farmland – Establish and implement land use policies that protect farmland. (*Objectives 1, 2*)

- a. Put agricultural lands into agricultural trust lands.
- b. Designate new agricultural areas and prepare land sales of state and FNSB land for agricultural uses.

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. [View here.](#)



Agriculture Action Plan

See Appendix A for a list of acronyms.

Strategy #1: Increase Food Security – Increase local food storage capacity and support subsistence activities.

Capital Project?	Action	Lead	Support	Estimated Resources	Target Completion
✓	a. Establish a community cooperative processing center and storage facility.	The Island: Fairbanks Food Hub	FEDC, FNSB	TBD	TBD
✓	b. Support the creation of food forests, prioritizing areas with higher food insecurity.	The Island: Fairbanks Food Hub	Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC), UAF Cooperative Extension	TBD	TBD
	c. Protect subsistence resources and preserve subsistence use of lands and waters.	Varies	DNR, FNSB, TCC, Doyon, Limited	n/a	n/a

Strategy #2: Support Farmers – Existing and new farmers in Interior Alaska have the resources, workforce support, and tools needed to succeed and grow.

Capital Project?	Action	Lead	Support	Estimated Resources	Target Completion
	a. Better connect farmers to existing trainings and resources, encouraging the use of ecological farming practices.	Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District	UAF Cooperative Extension, AFB Fairbanks, IAFN, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, FEDC, Stone Soup Café	TBD	Ongoing
	b. Increase access to start-up funds and financial support, including funding for basic infrastructure and start up equipment, establish tax exemptions, and offer forgivable loans; give preference to food insecure areas and/or households.	Alaska Farm Bureau	Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR), USDA Alaska Farm Service Agency, Alaska Rural Rehabilitation Corporation, FEDC	TBD	Ongoing
✓	c. Support infrastructure, programming, and funding recommendations identified in the 2020 Fairbanks Experiment Farm Long-Range Plan.	UAF Cooperative Extension	AFB Fairbanks, IAFN	TBD	Varies
	d. Support emerging industries such as hemp and peonies.	TBD	Alaska Food Policy Council, AFB Fairbanks, IAFN	TBD	Ongoing
	e. Improve collaboration between farmers, retailers, and policy makers to cross-pollinate ideas and make progress on shared objectives.	TBD	Alaska Food Policy Council, AFB Fairbanks, IAFN	TBD	Ongoing
	f. Expand 4H and Future Farmers of America programs in FNSB and connect growers with landowners.	UAF Cooperative Extension	IAFN, Alaska FFA, AAANRE	TBD	Ongoing

Capital Project?	Action	Lead	Support	Estimated Resources	Target Completion
	g. Advocate for changes in State statutes to support farming land/uses.	TBD	Alaska Food Policy Council, FNSB, FEDC	TBD	Ongoing
	h. Connect local meat/fish processors waste products with local farmers to produce local nutrients on farms.	TBD		TBD	Ongoing
✓	i. Support and expand community gardening initiatives, including greenhouses.	TBD		Varies	Ongoing

Strategy #3: Promote Local Agriculture – Promote locally grown agriculture products.

Capital Project?	Action	Lead	Support	Estimated Resources	Target Completion
	a. Encourage residents to buy local, including expanding the Golden Heart Grown program (FEDC), Fairbanks First, distribution of the Interior Agriculture Directory, and Buy Alaska (SBDC).	FEDC, SBDC	Interior Alaska Food Network (IAFN), The Grange	TBD	ongoing
	b. Encourage event organizers, restaurants, and schools to increase reliance on locally grown foods.	IAFN	The Grange, Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce, FEDC, SBDC, government agencies, medical institutions	TBD	ongoing
	c. Expand education and awareness around local farmer's markets.	Alaska Farm Bureau Fairbanks Chapter (AFB Fairbanks)	FEDC, Explore Fairbanks, Tanana Valley Farmer's Market (TVFM), Alaska Farmer's Market Association (AFMA)	TBD	ongoing
	d. Promote community supported agriculture.	AFB Fairbanks	FEDC, IAFN	TBD	ongoing
	e. Establish farmer's markets on military bases.	TVFM	Alaska Farm Bureau Fairbanks Chapter (AFB Fairbanks), AFMA	TBD	2023
	f. Strengthen social media campaigns around locally grown products, including identifying local influencers.	FEDC	AFB Fairbanks, The Grange, IAFN	TBD	ongoing
	g. Better promote the ability to use SNAP and WIC resources at farmer's markets.	TVFM	Case managers, food banks, AFMA	TBD	2022

Strategy #4: Recruit Workers – Educate, train, and support new farmers and agricultural workers.

Capital Project?	Action	Lead	Support	Estimated Resources	Target Completion
	a. Support the establishment of a statewide farming training/certification program.	University of Alaska	Alaska Food Policy Council, AFB Fairbanks, Alaska Association of Agriculture & Natural Resource Educators (AAANRE)	TBD	2026
	b. Advocate for the removal of state-level barriers so volunteer farm workers can be covered by worker's compensation insurance.	TBD	Alaska Food Policy Council, AFB Fairbanks, IAFN	TBD	2023
	c. Increase agricultural education at all levels of schooling, including hands-on learning experiences and adding high school coursework on farming, canning, and preserving.	UAF Cooperative Extension	Alaska Future Farmers Association (Alaska FFA), Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District, FNSB School District	TBD	Ongoing
	d. Support creation of a farmer's certification program.	Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District	IAFN, Alaska FFA, AAANRE, UAF	TBD	2026

Strategy #5: Protect Farmland – Establish and implement land use policies that protect farmland.

Capital Project?	Action	Lead	Support	Estimated Resources	Target Completion
	a. Put agricultural lands into agricultural trust lands.	Alaska Farmland Trust	Interior Alaska Land Trust	Varies	Ongoing
	b. Designate new agricultural areas and prepare land sales of state and FNSB land for agricultural uses.	State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources, FNSB	AFB Fairbanks	TBD	Ongoing