



Director Clark Joins NASDA Trade Mission to Cuba

Last week, Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA) Director Christy Clark joined the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) on a trade mission to Havana, Cuba. The goal of this international trade mission to Cuba was to identify and address trade opportunities that exist in the private sector for U.S. agricultural products, gain a better understanding of trade rules and regulations as well as the political and economic environment to strengthen the United States' trade relationship with Cuba.

Director Clark and delegates met with government officials as well as industry and private sector leaders to learn more about how the U.S. and Cuba can collaborate in the future on agricultural trade. The delegation consisted of 13 people including other state department of agriculture directors, secretaries and commissioners.



“The goal of the trip was to explore and initiate private sector relationships for potential ag trade markets to enhance international opportunities for **Montana commodities**,” said Director Clark. According to the USDA’s Foreign Ag Service, U.S. Trade with Cuba in 2023, totaled \$337 million. While in Cuba, delegates visited cooperative farms who grew food and completed agricultural research and they also visited a pasta production facility.



Delegates met with government officials from the ministry of agriculture as well as Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel. They also met with private sector businesses and different cooperatives, also known as “Small and Medium Enterprises” (SME’s), with the goal of building relationships and learning more about the complex trading environment.



The delegation included:

- Ted McKinney, CEO, NASDA
- Amanda Beal, Commissioner, Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry
- Bryan Hurlburt, Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Agriculture
- Christy Clark, Director, Montana Department of Agriculture
- Don Lamb, Director, Indiana State Department of Agriculture
- Hugh Weathers, Commissioner, South Carolina Department of Agriculture
- Mike Strain, Commissioner, Louisiana Department of Agriculture & Forestry
- Thom Petersen, Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Agriculture
- Ernesto Baron, FTA International, USA Poultry and Egg Export Council Representative (NASDA industry guest)

Funding for this trade mission was provided by the USDA’s Foreign Ag Service’s Emerging Markets Program through NASDA. The Emerging Markets Program (EMP) helps U.S. organizations promote exports of U.S. agricultural products to countries that have, or are developing, market-oriented economies and that have the potential to be viable commercial markets.

Learn more at: agr.mt.gov/Home/News



Montana Wheat & Barley Update: ***Gleanings from MWBC by Kent Kupfner, Exec. Director***

MWBC On the Move:

This winter, MWBC staff and directors have attended meetings and events held at a multitude of locations around the globe. Supporting and promoting the importance of value-added processing facilities that utilize Montana's wheat supplies is always high on our list of priorities. Lori Wickett and Kent Kupfner joined Governor Gianforte and Department of Agriculture Director Clark for a tour of Montana Milling's Great Falls processing plant. Charlie Bumgarner represented Big Sky barley growers by joining a group of barley industry stakeholders in Washinton, DC. Sam Anderson and Charlie also represented barley growers at the US Grains Council international marketing conference in Guatemala City. Promoting increased use of wheat domestically is also a key component of our marketing mission. In that vein, Lori and Denise Conover attended the Wheat Foods Council winter meeting in San Antonio, TX. MWBC also supports the Wheat Quality Council(WQC) and its efforts to improve wheat and flour quality. Max Cederberg and Sam represented Montana at the WQC annual meeting where they advocated for the development of new wheat varieties that improve the value of wheat for all parties in the supply chain.

Education & Outreach:

We are continually striving to improve the quality and functionality of our website. We've made many changes and improvements, so please check out www.montanawbc.com We also continue to focus our outreach efforts through social media postings and video content. With the objective of better describing the MWBC mission, we worked with Agri-Studios to create

a new “About Us” video that has been well received. We’re proud of the content and like the message it sends.

Preferred Wheat Varieties:

MWBC has been working on a publication that highlights the importance of selecting the right wheat variety considering agronomic returns to the grower and end use performance for the miller and baker. This is an important topic for all industry stakeholders and this effort should help advance the overall quality of Montana wheat. Look for a copy of this publication elsewhere in the Montana Grain News and on the MWBC website.



Montana Winter Wheat Conditions:

While the 2024 winter crop remains dormant, we are still monitoring conditions. Moisture conditions are far from ideal with 48% of topsoil rated adequate and 29% of subsoil in that category. Hopefully, we’ll see additional winter moisture and then a wet spring. The crop certainly shows promise with condition ratings cited as 2% poor, 53% fair and 45% good-to-excellent.

Upcoming Events

March will be an active month for MWBC as we have a busy schedule of events. Lee Dahlman will be joining the National Barley Improvement Committee in DC. Lori and Kent will be leading a group of ten wheat growers from across the Big Sky to the Wheat Export and Marketing Workshop hosted by the Wheat Marketing Center in Portland. MWBC staff will also be attending board meetings of the Montana Grain Elevator Association and the Montana Pulse Crop Committee. Kent will be discussing the current state of global wheat markets during a presentation for the Montana Bankers Association convention. Finally, the MWBC “March Madness” research review and board meeting will take place in Bozeman on March 18 & 19.

Be safe, best of luck on the farm and watch out for spring fever!

Read more at: <https://montanawbc.com/>



MWBC's "March Madness" Pitch Competition

If you've seen Shark Tank, this is similar! Montana State University Plant Sciences and Plant Pathology students present their current research works in under five minutes to a panel of judges. Comprised of Montana Wheat & Barley Committee board members, the panel will have opportunity to ask questions following each presentation. Scholarships will be awarded to the top three presenters.

Gather insight on cutting edge research to better Montana's grain industry. Student research posters will be on exhibit during the event.

DETAILS

Date: March 18th, 2024

Location: Montana State University

Time: 3:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Cost: Free

More information: <https://montanawbc.com/research/>



USDA Releases 2022 Census of Agriculture Data

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) today announced the results of the 2022 Census of Agriculture, spanning more than 6 million data points about America's farms and ranches and the people who operate them down to the county level.

The information collected directly from producers shows a decrease in the total number of Montana farms. The data shows an increase in the number of new and beginning (operating 10 or fewer years on any farm) as well as young (under the age of 35) producers in Montana. The full Census of Agriculture report as well as publication dates for additional ag census data products can be found at nass.usda.gov/AgCensus. Ag census data can also be found in NASS's searchable online database, Quick Stats.

“The 2022 Census of Agriculture can be used to help communicate the story surrounding Montana agriculture as it stands today and its pace of rapid change,” said Montana Department of Agriculture Director Christy Clark. **“This data helps farmers and ranchers make vital decisions on their operations as well as helping direct us as a department towards providing top tier support to our producers through our programs and services.”**

Ag census data provides a valuable insight into demographics, economics, land use and activities on Montana farms and ranches such as:

- There were 24,266 farms and ranches in Montana, down 10.3% from 2017 on 57.6 million acres a decrease of 1%.
- Family-owned and operated farms accounted for 92.8% of all Montana farms and operated 80% of land in farms.
- Montana farms and ranches produced \$4.54 billion in agricultural products, up from \$3.52 billion in 2017. The majority (55%) of the sales were from crop sales. The Grains, oil seeds, dry beans, and dry peas category led with 43.0% of all sales, followed by Cattle (38.6%). With farm production expenses of \$4.36 billion, Montana farms had net cash income of \$1.14 billion. Average farm income rose to \$46,889.
- 83.6% of Montana farms had internet access in 2022, a slight increase from 81.4% in 2017. However, 78.7% of farms and ranches across the United States had internet access.
- A total of 2,544 Montana farms and ranches used renewable energy producing systems compared to 2,555 farms in 2017. Nearly all the Montana farms (85%) with renewable energy systems reported using solar panels.
- In 2022, 931 Montana farms sold directly to consumers, with sales of \$15.7 million. Value of sales increased .3% from 2017.
- The 1,080 farms with sales of \$1 million or more were 4.5% of Montana farms and represented 98.7% of sales and government payments. The 13,723 Montana farms (57%) with sales of \$50,000 or less accounted for 2.6% of sales and government payments in Montana.
- The average age of all Montana producers was 59.3. The average age in 2017 was 58.2 years.
- There were 11,724 Montana farmers with 10 or fewer years of experience, an increase in the number of beginning farmers from 2017 of 7%. Beginning farmers in Montana are younger than all farmers, with an average age of 46.9.
- The number of Montana producers underage 35 was 3,689, comprising 8% of all Montana producers.
- In 2022, 17,830 female producers accounted for 40% of all Montana producers, compared to 36% of all U.S.producers. Sixty-seven percent of all Montana farms had at least one female decision maker.

More information available: <https://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus/>



Montana State Grain Lab Update:

“So far this year the Grain Labs have experienced a mixed bag of weather and samples coming through. Trips to collect official samples have slowed some and samples submitted to the lab are at typical levels. There has been 31 different varieties of grain, pulses, and oil seeds inspected from the 1800 samples worked on so far this year. Varying types of lentils, peas, barley, wheat, and chickpea have been the most frequent, in that order. It has been good see some moisture even if the snow does make official sampling more challenging.

Improvement projects in the works this year are focused on a couple of areas: updating key equipment to avoid obsolescence, improving cycle time, and implementing newer technology to save on energy costs. Projects include new equipment and led lighting that will also help ensure lab visitors and trade teams experience a modern, professional lab setting, furthering their trust and desire to do business with Montana producers. The lab has already implemented 2 new GAC 2700 moisture testing machines and will soon be getting a new Infratec Nova grain analyzer. The led lighting updates for the grading rooms should be in place by summer.



Adam Gutzwiler, the Grain Lab’s Quality Assurance Specialist, recently spent a morning with Timeless Seeds staff and suppliers discussing the grading of pulse crops. Timeless Seeds requested the presentation so that all their associates could better understand the significant impacts towards the federal grade certifications that the lab issues. Knowledge is power, a better understanding of the grading inputs makes for a better outcome and can help growers avoid potential discounts. The grain lab is always open to visits, tours and helping its customers understand grading requirements of the Federal Grain Inspection Service.

-- Dan Reimer, Director, Montana State Grain Lab



It's the Courage to Continue That Counts

MWBC in Guatemala by Marketing Dev. Director, Sam Anderson

Charlie Bumgarner and I traveled to Guatemala this February for the U.S. Grains Council's 21st International Marketing Conference. Guatemala's economy and food security are intertwined. They face challenges of poverty, land, and vulnerability to natural disasters requiring their citizens to have a secure food supply. Corn exports play a crucial role; contributing to feeding lots and their largest growing food sector in poultry—this reliance on corn for animal feed to meet domestic human consumption needs provides a heartwarming medicine to U.S. producers in attendance.

Beyond crop prices, economic dynamics, and politics, those in attendance were able to see a different side of their efforts to produce food. We farm to provide sustenance for countries who are in need. We were able to see and experience the value of our products and efforts to the citizens of Guatemala. It is a beautiful country and their citizens have an overwhelming positive attitude living on far less than any American.



We were able to discuss with USGC's Overseas Office's ongoing efforts to expand barley marketing opportunities. To be honest, many of the export outlooks for U.S. barley are not the best. The U.S. has lost market access to our once top importers of barley (Japan, Korea, Mexico). We have seen some of our geographically closest countries see more economic advantages to importing from our competitors (Australia and EU). Freight, drought, and domestic demand play a role in why we are not competitive.

Concluding presentations, the group was met with dead silence and feelings of frustration. Is this all-bad news? From a U.S. barley producer perspective is this bad to be priced out of markets? Would you rather produce less barley at a higher price or more barley at a lower price to compete internationally? With so many profitable crops available at a Montana producer's fingertips, barley has slowly aligned to fit an added value to meet domestic and craft malt needs. Grappling with those questions, Charlie and I look to an old quote, giving us the energy to keep going and working towards the original task in 1967 when MWBC was commissioned "to market and expand barley opportunities".

"Success is not final, failure is not fatal: It is the courage to continue that count."

- Winston Churchill



As the trip came to an end, the barley team got our foot in the door with the largest brewer in Guatemala who represents malt purchases for 3 central American countries. We met and discussed the economics of shipping malt to Guatemala. They were very receptive to bids from the U.S. and want to hear back from U.S. malt suppliers. A positive response and great note to end the trip on. We will never stop, and continue to align U.S. Barley producers with countries who are willing to pay for a high-quality crop and a premium price.



MDA On the Road & Where to Catch Us

- National Barley Improvement Committee - Washington D.C. | March 3 - 7
- Wheat Marketing Center Producer Tour - Portland, OR | March 4 - 8
- Western AIS Short Course - Missoula, MT | March 5 - 6
- Montana Pulse Crop Committee Meeting - Billings, MT | March 6
- Made in Montana Show - Helena, MT | March 8-9
- Montana Grain Elevators Association Board Meeting - Helena, MT | March 12
- Serve MT Symposium - Helena, MT | March 13 - 14
- In-Person Pesticide Training - Billings, MT | March 13 - 15
- Montana Ag Week - Statewide | March 17 - 23
- MWBC's March Madness Pitch Comp. - Bozeman, MT | March 18
- NWMAC Meeting & Grant Hearings - Helena, MT | March 18 - 20
- Wheat & Barley Committee Board Meeting - Bozeman, MT | March 19
- Montana State Hail Board Meeting - Lewistown, MT | March 19
- Montana Ag Day - Statewide | March 19
- KATQ Farm Expo - Plentywood, MT | March 21- 22
- Montana Ag Bankers Convention - Bozeman, MT | March 21
- In-Person Pesticide Training - Missoula, MT | March 27 - 29
- Wheat Marketing Center Board Meeting - Portland OR | March 27 - 28



MDA Announces 2024 Growth Through Agriculture Grant Awardees

Director Christy Clark and the Agriculture Development Council announced recipients of the state's \$818,954 investment in innovative, value-added agriculture projects through the Montana Department of Agriculture's Growth Through Agriculture (GTA) program.

From Plevna to Kalispell, a total of 22 agricultural businesses throughout the state were awarded funds to advance Montana's agricultural economy.

"Year after year, MDA's Growth Through Agriculture program focuses on giving our agricultural businesses the opportunity to grow and expand in order to add more value to their product and improve their bottom lines,"

Montana Director of Agriculture Christy Clark said. **"The Department of Agriculture is proud to invest in these innovative projects that will add value to Montana agriculture as well as contribute to economic development and local communities."**



Growth Through AGRICULTURE



The GTA program was established by the Montana Legislature in 1987 to strengthen and diversify Montana's agriculture industry through development of new agricultural products and processes.

The GTA program offers funding in the form of a grant or loan or both and funding is determined by a seven member Agriculture Development Council (Council) during scheduled meetings. The Council members are appointed by the Governor. Growth Through Agriculture funding requires the investment of at least a \$1 in matching funds for every \$1 in program grant or loan assistance received.

More information available: <https://agr.mt.gov/Home/News>



Montana Department of Agriculture Announces 2024 Pesticide Disposal Events

The Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA) is facilitating spring pesticide disposal events in the Columbia River Basin region during the week of April 10th-12th, 2024, in Libby, Polson, and Butte. Summer disposal events are set for July 9th-11th, 2024, in Eureka, Clearwater Junction, and Butte. These additional pesticide disposal events were made possible through the Montana Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Program (MT PSPP).

The primary objective of the Montana Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Program is to have a lasting impact on the health and water quality of the upper Columbia River Basin (CRB), knowing that protecting the upper basin will also have a sustained positive effect downstream. The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Columbia River Basin Restoration Funding Assistance Program was started in 2016 to better monitor and make a positive impact in the Columbia River Basin.



PESTICIDE DISPOSAL EVENTS

SPRING & SUMMER PESTICIDE DISPOSAL EVENTS

The Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA) is facilitating spring pesticide disposal events in the Columbia River Basin region during the week of **April 10th-12th, 2024**, in Libby, Polson, and Butte.

Summer disposal events are set for **July 9th-11th, 2024**, in Eureka, Clearwater Junction, and Butte.

The pre-registration deadline for the spring event is Monday, April 1, 2024, and the pre-registration deadline for the summer event is Monday, July 1, 2024. Registrations for pesticide waste collection events are accepted on a first come, first-serve basis. There is no charge for the first 200 pounds of material; amounts over 200 pounds are assessed at \$1.00 per pound, and products are weighed on site. Additional fees may apply to pesticides with dioxins or dioxin precursors.

SPRING EVENT

Wednesday, April 10th – Libby, MT
Thursday, April 11th- Polson, MT
Friday, April 12th- Butte, MT

SUMMER EVENT

Tuesday, July 9th- Eureka, MT
Wednesday, July 10th- Clearwater Junction
Thursday, July 11th-Butte, MT

Please visit the Montana Waste Pesticide Disposal Program page to register. For more information, please visit agr.mt.gov/Pesticide-Waste-Disposal-Program or contact Carli Davis at **(406) 465-0531**.

These additional pesticide disposal events were made possible through the Montana Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Program (MT PSPP).





MDA Working to Release Certificates of Deposit Held Jointly with Commercial Applicators

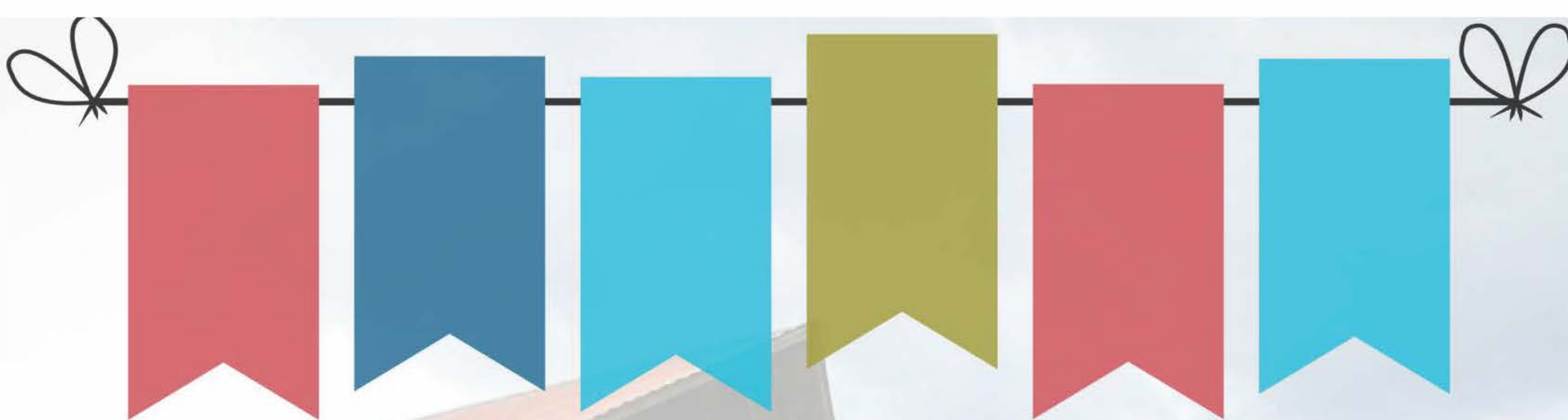
If you were a licensed commercial applicator or had a business with licensed commercial applicators prior to 2017, you might have used a certificate of deposit (CD) to provide proof of financial responsibility for the license. Legislative changes made in 2017 required liability insurance to be used for that proof, however MDA still has CDs on file for some accounts. We have been working to release the Department's interest in those CDs and to have the funds returned to the individual or business that made the original deposit.

The CDs were setup with the Department jointly owing the account, which means that many applicators do not directly receive CD account information from their banking institution, and thus don't get reminders to request the funds be released. In some cases, the license accounts have been closed for years, and the Department may lack current contact information for the joint owner. If you think you or your business may have a CD on file here at MDA, please contact the Ag Services Bureau at (406)444-9431. We continue to work thru our contacts for CDs on file, via email or phone, so please respond if contacted by MDA – it might mean a little green coming your way!



Montana Agritourism Conference Announced for 2024 at Montana State University - Bozeman

Hosted by the Montana Agritourism Fellows and Montana State University, the Montana Agritourism Conference comes to MSU in May of 2024. Featuring educational sessions, networking opportunities, and keynote speakers regarding the value and importance of the agritourism industry in Montana.



SAVE THE DATE

MONTANA AGRITOURISM CONFERENCE

**“Building Agritourism from the Ground Up:
Inviting You to the Table”**

FRIDAY

**MAY 3,
2024**

8AM - 4PM

at Montana State University in Bozeman

**FEATURING EDUCATIONAL SESSIONS,
NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES, AND KEYNOTE
SPEAKERS ON THE VALUE AND IMPORTANCE OF
THE AGRITOURISM INDUSTRY IN MONTANA**

**Hosted by the Montana Agritourism Fellows and MSU.
Registration opens in February 2024.**



**Montana
Agritourism**



More information at: <https://www.montanaagritourism.com/>



What We Have Been (responsibly) Drinking Lately:

We like to get our “Drink of the Month” into different hands around the department.

After “Old Man Winter” decided to show up in February, we have a special local concoction for those slow, cold days.

“The Wildrye Apple Pie Moonshine Honey Crisp”

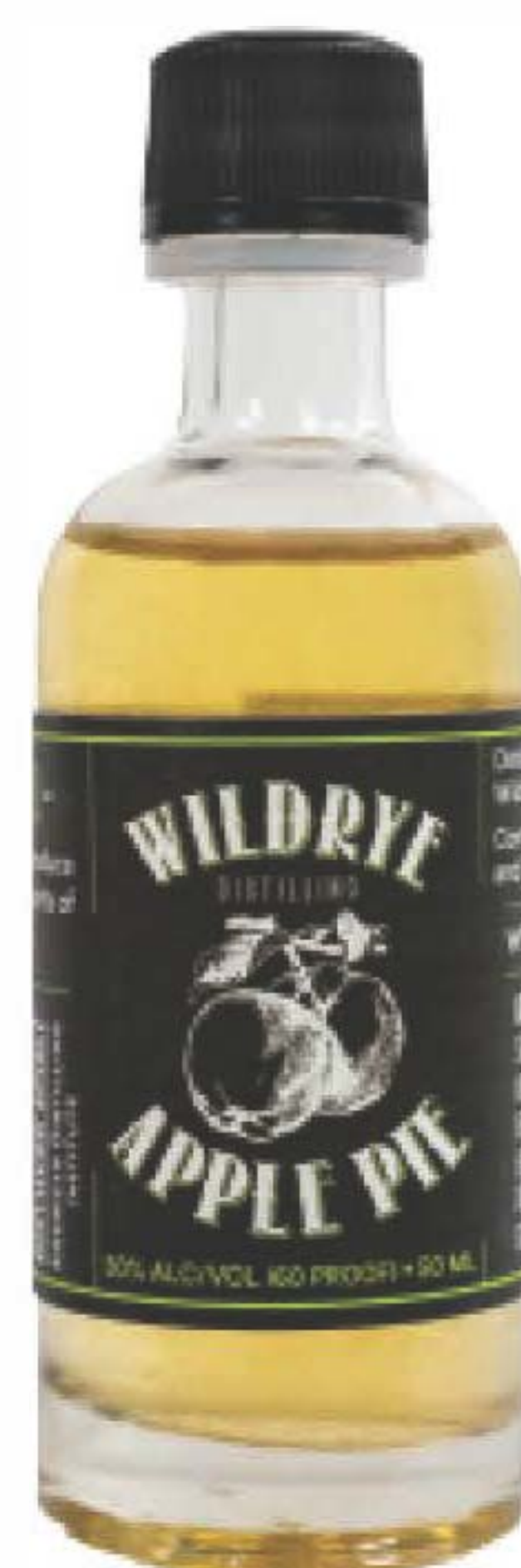
“Wildrye Apple Pie liquor passes on a Tennessee Tradition with a Montana Twist. Wildrye’s Apple Pie is made from Montana corn-spirits distilled on our custom stills, mixed with fresh unpasteurized apple cider, spices and honey.

All of its great flavor and sweetness comes from fresh apple cider and local honey, not syrup or flavorings.

We make Wildrye Apple Pie liquor at 60 proof, so that it is strong enough to mix well in a cocktail and not get lost.”

- ½ Oz Cinnamon Syrup
 - 2 Oz Apple Pie
- ½ Oz Honey Syrup
- ½ Lemon Juiced

Add all ingredients to shaker with Ice. Shake and strain over fresh ice.
Garnish with Cherry or apple.



What We've Been Listening To Recently:



MDA's "Spring Fever" Playlist

1. Here Comes The Sun - The Beatles
2. Mr. Blue Sky - Electric Light Orchestra
3. A Beautiful Morning - The Rascals
4. April Come She Will - Simon & Garfunkel
5. Spring Fever - Elvis Presley
6. Spring Vacation - The Beach Boys
7. 26 - Caamp
8. Mountain Song - Flatland Cavalry
9. Sunshine - Ryan Bingham
10. Wakin' on a Pretty Day - Kurt Vile

We'd Love Your Feedback



Agriculture and in specific, Montana Agriculture is all about community. We thought, one does not have to be directly involved with agriculture to be a part of this community. Thus, our external facing monthly newsletter was created. It is meant to inform, inspire, educate, and reach our agricultural community hand out to whomever would like to be a part of the happenings here at the MDA.

Like to see a section that we didn't cover this month? Let us know! We'd love to hear from you.

Until then, Happy March Friends!