

MONTANA PULSE CROPS

A LEADER IN PRODUCTION, QUALITY AND INNOVATION

Last month, I provided a summary of the HOLA Montana trade team's journey to Colombia, where I could only cover the initial part of the trip due to space constraints. This month, we delve into the continuation of our activities in Colombia.

Following our engagements in Bogota, Colombia where we promoted Montana Pulses at the Feria Alimentac food show and explored Corabastos, Latin America's second-largest open-air wholesale food market, the team proceeded to meet with Colombian importers already involved with MT Pulses through the HOLA MT initiative. During these encounters, representatives from the Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the Montana Pulse Crop Committee (MPCC) engaged with the importers' supply chain partners, delivering presentations on Montana's pulse crops. The local distributors and retailers in Colombia were notably impressed by the USDA's quality standards for pulses and the robust Montana pulse crop industry.

In Medellin, our team collaborated with Granipack, a grain importer, to distribute pulses in a door-to-door marketing campaign. Furthermore, in Barranquilla, partnering with Gracol, we toured the significant port on the Magdalena River and participated in a community event promoting healthy activities and food choices. The presence of the mayor's wife at the event, where Gracol distributed 500 food packages to underprivileged families, underscored the importance of such initiatives. Additionally, the team engaged in a Zumba fitness session as part of the event.

This enriching experience was made possible through grants from the MDA and the Montana Pulse Growers, supported by the Montana Pulse Crop Checkoff program.

Throughout the dynamic afternoon, the team and I engaged in embracing, exchanging high-fives, and capturing moments with several Colombian families. There was a palpable sense of joy in the atmosphere, that I have seldom experienced in large gatherings in the United States. Being a mother myself, the thought of not being able to provide for my children is unfathomable. It was during this event that I grasped the significance of the American Farmer, or rather, the profound responsibility that rests on their shoulders. With a substantial portion of US pulses being exported internationally and a global population on the rise, the necessity for a nutritious, long-lasting, and cost-effective protein source has never been more critical. This realization brings to mind the words of John F. Kennedy, who aptly stated, "Food is strength, and food is peace, and food is a helping hand to people around the whole whose good will and friendship we want." Thank a farmer today. Their contribution to this world and it's security extends much beyond food production.
-Liz Edmundson, MPCC Executive Director



Zumba Fitness in
Barranquilla, Colombia



HOLA MT team touring the
Port of Barranquilla, Colombia



Liz helps serve a delicious
pulse inspired meal to
Granipacks retail
customers

A Farmer's Perspective...

I am by my nature skeptical of government / private sector partnerships. I viewed this trip through those eyes in the beginning. I must report that I was wrong and this experience exceeded my expectations. Like most things, this program is personnel-dependent. Weston Merrill has a passion for Hola Montana that is difficult to put into words. It is his baby and he treats it as such. I believe that Zach Coccolli (el Hefe (the boss)) recognizes this and gives Weston the space and tools he needs to succeed. Many successes were written in pencil three weeks ago but now are in ink (actual sales and expanded relationships).

I believe that this expenditure of grower funds was well spent and will be returned multiple times. My desire has been to expand our base demand and reduce our dependence upon any one nation/buyer. The medium green lentil is the bulk of the demand, followed by the pardina lentil and garbs. Growth in other pulses is also most assured.

I participated in presentations for secondary buyers (they buy from the importers - think Sysco / US Foods types for small retailers). Many of these were businesses who were not willing to meet with the wholesalers / importers (Grani pac and Gracol) prior to the Hola Montana program. For perspective, I was able to visit with representatives from a wholesaler with 4200 clients and another with just two grocery store locations. These folks want the quality and consistency of Montana pulses. The journey of a lentil (pulse) starts in research / breeding and proceeds to the farmer and eventually the consumer. This experience filled in the missing links for me. The message I tried to stress was one of relationships, not just transactions. The Montana farmer can sell their crops most anywhere, but we desire a relationship that will last through high prices and low prices. This message was well received by both the importer and their customer. While the market is price-sensitive, quality and reliability are very important and are our strengths. As a member of the Montana Pulse Crop Committee I have voted to spend our checkoff dollars on many things, but I may be most proud of this investment.

I look forward to seeing many of my new friends again in August when Hola Montana hosts a Latin American crop tour.

Best regards,

Brian Aklestad



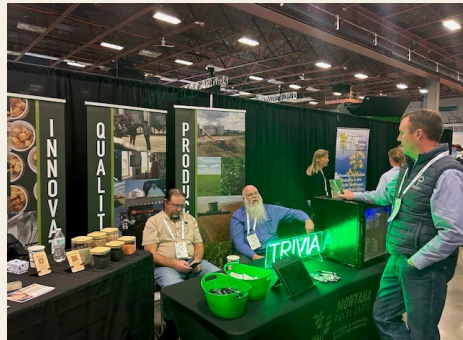
Granipack door to door market research in Medellin, Colombia



Grain Barge on the Magdalena River, Port of Baranquilla



The team handing out 500 food packs to under privileged Colombian families



Thank Ryan Bogar for your 9 years of service to the Montana Pulse Industry

Ryan served on the Montana Pulse Crop Committee from the inception of the committee in 2016 through June 2024. He was instrumental in the early years of the committee and served as the chairman for his last 3-year term. Ryan and his wife Leslie raise their 2 children on a family farm in Plentywood Montana. Thank you for your many years of service, Ryan. It is much appreciated.