



MONTANA
PULSE CROPS
"A LEADER IN PRODUCTION, QUALITY AND INNOVATION"

Strategic Plan

2025-2030

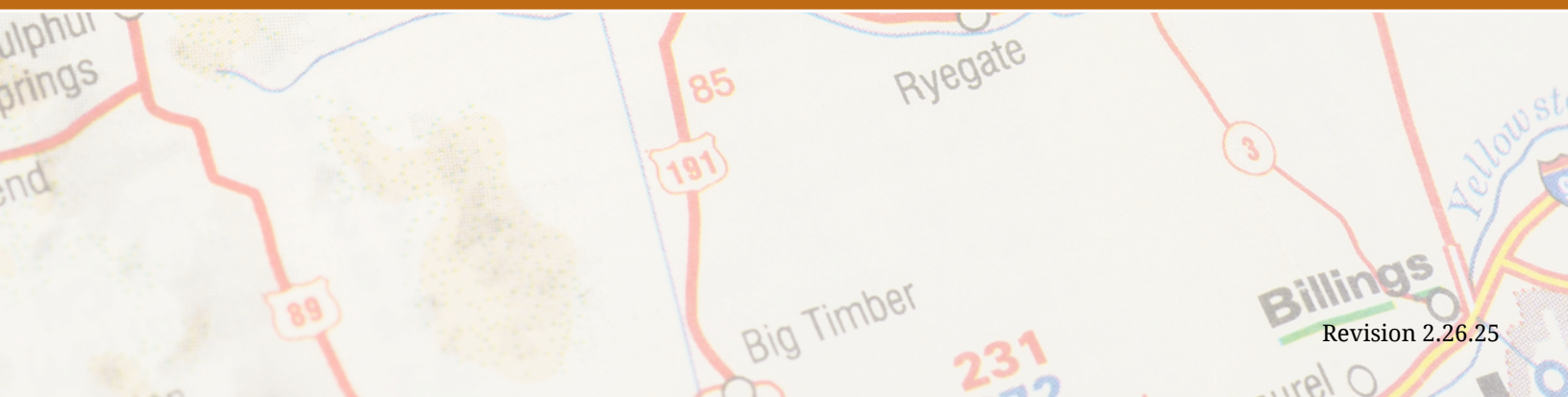


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Executive Summary

In early 2024, the Montana Pulse Crop Committee embarked upon a strategic planning project. Over the course of several months, the leadership team assessed the current pulse industry in Montana, anticipated key issues and trends impacting domestic and export markets, and together created a five-year strategic plan to guide efforts and focus resources.

The United States ranks ninth in global pulse production, with Montana as the leading producer of crops like dry peas, lentils, and chickpeas. Montana has maintained its top position since 2011, driven by growing demand for pulses as an affordable protein, and the USA Pulses Coalition has targeted a 10% increase in production and consumption by 2035.

Pulses offer sustainability benefits, improving soil health and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, positioning them as vital to global food systems. This strategic plan addresses barriers, promotes sustainability, and aims to establish pulses as a critical component of resilient, future-ready agriculture.

Four core strategic priorities have been established to guide the organization's work:

1-Build internal strength: Focuses on optimizing organizational processes and communication to enhance governance, streamline operations, and support impactful collaboration with Montana pulse producers and key partners. This includes establishing efficient administrative frameworks, aligning efforts with partner organizations, and conducting annual reviews to ensure continuous improvement and strategic alignment.

2-Expand markets: Emphasizes leveraging partnerships to expand Montana's pulse markets and strengthen communication for long-term growth. This includes supporting national coalition initiatives, executing domestic promotional campaigns, crafting targeted pulse narratives, and forging alliances within the supply chain. Collaboration with the livestock industry and economic development authorities aims to align agricultural priorities, drive innovation, and enhance Montana pulses' visibility.

3-Communicate & educate: Creates a comprehensive communication and education program for Montana pulse producers to promote best practices and industry knowledge. This includes conducting a needs assessment to tailor educational content, defining key learning competencies, and partnering with the Northern Pulse Growers to implement data-driven, creative communication channels to deliver timely and impactful information.

4-Innovate: Drives research and development efforts to improve crop management, address diseases, and enhance product quality in the pulse industry. This includes fostering collaboration on national research initiatives, strengthening direct funding and partnerships for pulse research in Montana, attracting innovative food production facilities, and working with local leaders, universities, and developers on value-added research and innovation.

This strategic plan provides a clear roadmap for the Montana Pulse Crop Committee to navigate the evolving pulse market landscape, tackle key challenges, and capitalize on new opportunities for growth. By focusing on internal strength, market expansion, effective communication, and innovation, the committee is well-positioned to enhance Montana's leadership in pulse production, improve the sustainability and resilience of the industry, and make lasting contributions to global food systems.

With a shared commitment to advancing these priorities, the Montana Pulse Crop Committee will ensure that Montana pulses continue to thrive both domestically and globally for years to come.

2025-2030



MONTANA PULSE CROPS

"A LEADER IN PRODUCTION, QUALITY AND INNOVATION"

Four Strategic Priorities

**1-Build
Internal
Strength**

**2-Expand
Markets**

**3-Communicate
& Educate**

**4-
Innovate**

Background

Established and led by Montana farmers, the *Montana Pulse Crop Committee* is a state checkoff agency created in 2017, with passionate volunteer producer-leaders and talented administrative staff, focused on creating profitability for pulse crop producers in Montana through market development, research, and education. Reference: *Agricultural Commodity Research and Market Development Enabling Act (MCA 80-11-10)*.

The committee consists of five voting members appointed by the governor and three ex officio nonvoting members who are actively involved in the production, research, or marketing of pulse crops. The committee oversees the Pulse Crop Market Development Program administered by the Montana Department of Agriculture.

The committee manages demand-building programs and research projects on behalf of Montana Pulse producers and the assessment must be at least 1% and no more than 2% of the net receipts of pulse crops grown, delivered, and stored in Montana. Checkoff assessments have proven to promote utilization of pulses and much of the work of the checkoff is done in collaboration with strategic partners such as the USA Pulses Coalition and the Northern Pulse Growers Association.

Domestic and international demand for pulses continues to rise due to its nutritional and economic value. It's also important to note the power of the sustainability story of pulses, which prove to be efficient users of water, plus they're strong builders of soil nitrogen and organic matter.

All pulse producers are required by law to invest in the pulse checkoff and assessment refunds can be requested through the Department of Agriculture with an average rolling 5-year refund rate of less than 3.1%, indicating a large majority of producers value the work of the checkoff, yet there is a notable opportunity to build deeper trust with producers, especially given the spike in refund requests in 2024.

Within the past 18-months, a key leadership role within the organization was added with the hiring of an Executive Director, the first for the relatively early-stage committee. The role is currently administered by the Montana Grain Growers Association via a grant agreement. Additionally, a Montana-focused field representative was added by the Northern Pulse Growers team in the second half of 2024 to expand boots-on-the-ground support for pulse growers across the state.

The strategic planning process was driven by the board of directors for the Montana Pulse Crop Committee and administrative staff:

Brian Aklestad ~ Chair, Member At-Large
Zach Coccoli ~ Montana Department of Agriculture
Liz Edmunson ~ Executive Director
Chad Forest ~ Committee Member
Todd Hansen ~ Member At-Large
Blaine Juedeman ~ Vice Chair, Member Western District
Paul Kanning ~ Eastern District
Jeff Winkler ~ Pulse Industry Representative

Representatives from USA Pulses and Northern Pulse Growers were also engaged throughout the planning process due to their significant funding agreements and program partnerships.

Strategic Planning Map

FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVE	REVENUE GROWTH	CHECKOFF ADMINISTRATION EXPENSES	PRODUCTIVITY
PRODUCER PERSPECTIVE	VALUE	ENGAGEMENT & REFUND RATE	MARKET DEVELOPMENT
INTERNAL PERSPECTIVE	OPERATIONS	REGULATORY AFFAIRS & RESEARCH	COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIPS
LEARNING AND GROWTH PERSPECTIVE	HUMAN CAPITAL	ADVOCACY	EDUCATION & EVENTS

Phase 1 ~ SOAR: Seek to understand Montana pulse crop strengths, opportunities, aspirations and desired results.

MPCC Executive Director	MPCC Committee	Strategic Partners, including NPGA, USA Pulses, MSU, etc.
Evaluate key industry reports, and key performance indicator data	Explore key pulse producer and consumer opinions	

Phase 2 ~ Clearly articulate vision for administrative infrastructure and required competencies. Map core competencies and service delivery channels.

Regulatory	Market Development	Communication
Talent Management	Research	Leadership

Phase 3 ~ Anti-Average talent management and execution.

Executive leadership development and team growth	Producer engagement, education & events	Dashboards & project development
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Strategic Planning Process

The board applied industry knowledge and participated in an intensive planning process to craft a plan that provides clarity and focus to the MPCC.

The planning process was facilitated by Nebraska-based strategic planning consultant, Sarah J. Bohnenkamp from *Sarah J. Bohnenkamp Coaching & Consulting*, and included the following activities:

- March 2024-Project initiation began.
- June-Board of director initiation session hosted via Zoom.
- June through September-Key stakeholders identified and interviewed.
- October-Initial SOAR analysis draft completed.
- October-In person board planning session in Bozeman, MT., including research review with Montana State University and Food Innovation Lab tour.
- December-In-person board planning session in Great Falls, MT.
- January 2025-Strategic plan approval.

Situational Assessment

The United States ranks ninth globally in pulse production, with Montana leading as the top-producing state. Key pulse crops include dry peas, lentils, and chickpeas, grown primarily in northern-tier states such as North Dakota, Montana, Washington, and Idaho.

Since 2011, Montana has led the nation in pulse acreage and production, serving both domestic and international markets. Notably, India dominates a significant share of global pulse trade. Over the past decade, U.S. pulse exports have increased by nearly 30%, reflecting their growing importance in global food systems. However, this growth coincides with mounting economic pressures on producers, including rising costs of inputs like fertilizers, fuel, and equipment, as well as fluctuating commodity prices and inflation. These challenges pose threats to profitability and sustainability for Montana's pulse farmers.

The USA Pulses Coalition has set an ambitious goal to increase pulse production and consumption by 10% by 2035. Rising global demand for pulses is driven by their affordability, high nutritional value, and alignment with global trends. Pulses are an essential protein source for growing populations in developing nations and an increasingly popular ingredient in health-conscious, plant-based diets in developed markets. Their low price point, extended shelf life, and versatility—whether dried, canned, or as flour—make them a dietary staple for cost-sensitive and environmentally conscious consumers. Pulses also appeal to diverse culinary and dietary preferences.

Pulses are not only nutritionally valuable but also sustainable. Their nitrogen-fixing properties naturally enrich soil, reducing the need for fertilizers, and enhance overall soil health. Additionally, pulses require less water compared to other crops, reducing agriculture's carbon footprint. However, rising input costs and unpredictable weather conditions (e.g., drought) create ongoing pressures on production viability.

Despite pulses' clear advantages, they remain a relatively niche market. Greater market transparency, improved communication within the value chain, and expanded awareness among stakeholders are essential to foster sustainable growth in the industry.

At the global level, the pulse sector continues to be shaped by broader economic and policy dynamics. As of January 2025, the world's population has reached 8.2 billion, with steady but uneven GDP growth of 3.2%. Yet, rising public debt and shifting trade and environmental policies add layers of uncertainty for the industry.

Consumer trends toward sustainable, plant-based, and nutrient-dense food options, along with increased demand for organic and gluten-free products, present significant growth opportunities. Innovation in pulse-based products—such as flours, snacks, and alternative protein ingredients, has further expanded the market. Pulses are uniquely positioned to meet the dual demand for affordability and sustainability while promoting food diversity around the globe.

The Montana pulse checkoff is in a dynamic growth phase, actively establishing and refining systems and strengthening strategic partnerships to enhance its impact. A strong focus on research and innovation has defined recent investments, reflecting the checkoff's commitment to driving advancements in the pulse industry. With a complete leadership team, the organization is poised to build on its foundation and expand its influence both domestically and globally.

To navigate these challenges and capitalize on emerging opportunities, this strategic plan outlines actionable steps to enhance producer resilience and position pulses as a cornerstone of future-ready food systems.

Mission, Vision & Values

The Montana Pulse Crop Committee's board conducted an assessment of the organization's mission, vision, and values, identifying opportunities for enhancement and alignment with future goals.

New Mission Statement

- *To improve the return on investment for the farmers of Montana.*
- *Old Mission: Invest in and deliver support for marketing, research, education, and policy development programming that improves return on investment for the pulse producers of Montana.*

New Vision Statement

- *Empowering Montana farmers to deliver high quality nutrition for the world and strengthen local communities.*
- *Old Vision: A prior vision statement did not exist.*

New Core Values

- Honesty & Integrity
- Knowledge
- Resiliency
- Community
- Innovation
- *Old Core Values: A prior set of core values did not exist.*

Key Issues & Trends



The board explored several different industry perspectives that will affect the ability to promote and research Montana pulses over the next five years. Outlined below are the top issues and trends identified:

1-Farm economics-Rising costs for inputs like fertilizer, fuel, labor, and equipment, combined with fluctuating commodity prices, are squeezing farmers' profitability. Policy changes and environmental mandates add further challenges to their economic viability.

2-Yield constraints-Producers want to unlock the yield potential of pulse crops by improving genetics and reducing the impacts of weeds and diseases. This includes more research into more disease-resistant and higher-yielding varieties.

3-Market expansion-Significant opportunities to expand the use of pulses through both increasing export demand (especially in Asia and Africa) and creating new domestic market opportunities should be leveraged. This includes promoting pulses as ingredients in food products and promoting their health benefits.

4-Research and development-Producers want to continue to invest in research to understand and leverage the many benefits of pulses and to improve yield and quality.

5-Market access and trade-Producers want to ensure access to high-functioning transportation systems and quick resolution to trade barriers. Trade policies, particularly tariffs and trade agreements, significantly affect market access, especially in major markets like India.

6-Consumer education and promotion-There's still a significant knowledge gap regarding the benefits and uses of pulses among consumers.

7-Rising demand for innovative pulse products-Driven by health consciousness, ethical eating, and environmental concerns, consumers are looking for plant-based proteins. There's a growing market for pulse flours, snacks, and ingredients in processed foods, driven by clean label trends and dietary restrictions (like gluten-free diets).

Critical Strategic Questions

The following set of strategic questions were used throughout the planning process to help inform decision making:

- What should the Montana Pulse Crop Committee be **known** for (mission, reputation and values)?
- **How is the work of the MPCC different** than other agriculture focused groups/unique?
- How can Montana continue to be a **leader in pulse production**?
- What core **organizational structures** should be designed and developed to create operational effectiveness and security?
- What are the most effective ways to **expand pulse market access and export opportunities**?
- How can **strategic partnerships and collaborations** foster industry growth and innovation?
- What role can the Montana Pulse Crop Committee play in the **national pulse industry efforts**, particularly in supporting the USA Pulses Coalition?
- What's most important when **evaluating funding decisions** for MPCC projects and programs?
- How should **research and development** efforts be enhanced to tackle pulse crop diseases and optimize yields?
- How should **education and communication** efforts be structured to support producers' needs?
- What would **attract more producers to engage in work and leadership** of the MPCC?
- How can Montana pulse producers **innovate** to meet rising global demand?
- How can **consumer education** help boost demand for pulses in both domestic and international markets?
- How can **sustainability** be integrated into Montana's pulse industry to capitalize on its environmental advantages?

Montana Pulses Stakeholders

Pulse Producers: <i>across all regions, committees, board, etc.</i>	USA Pulses Coalition	Northern Pulse Growers Association	Export Market Relationship Builders
1st Purchasers in Montana- Grain Elevators	Canadian Pulse Handlers/ Collectors	Processors & Ingredient Builders	BNSF
Montana Policy Makers	Montana State University	Consumers (Domestic & International)	Economic Development Authorities
Ag and Consumer Media	Nutrition Focused Professionals	Food Service	Local Montana Communities
Other State Pulse & Pea Organizations	MPCC Executive Director	NPGA Field Representative	Montana Department of Agriculture
Pulse Crop Working Group			

High potential future collaborators:



SOAR Analysis ~ Critical Strengths

In developing the strategic plan, the Montana Pulse Crop Committee board assessed current industry dynamics and evaluated trends likely to affect market development. Board members identified the critical Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Realities facing the organization.

The following **critical strengths** were identified:

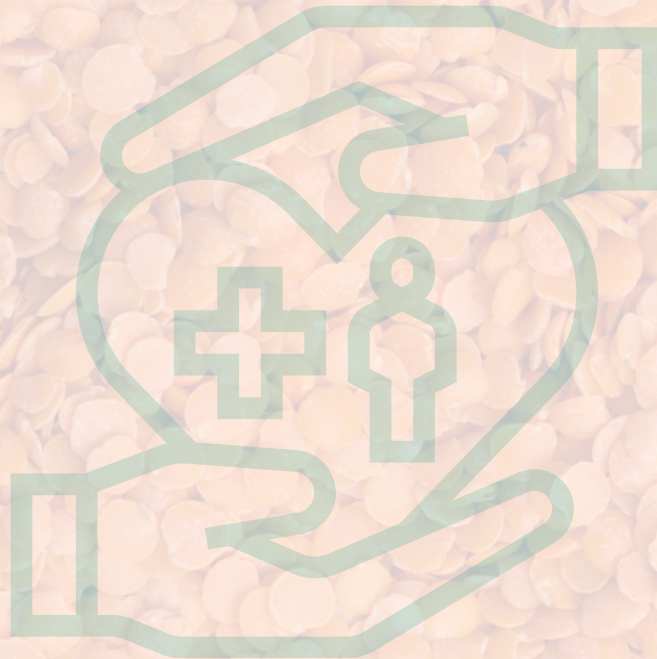
- The MPCC is lead by a core group of passionate and **effective volunteer, producer-leaders** and has strong human capital (executive director via grant and NPGA field rep).
- As a food source, pulses are **nutrient dense** and **good for your health**. Pulses are rich in protein, fiber, vitamins, and minerals while being low in fat, making them popular among health-conscious consumers and integral to plant-based diets. This nutritional profile supports their demand globally.
- A federal dietary advisory committee wants Americans to **eat more pulses**. The committee is considering increasing the recommended weekly intake of pulses from 1.5 to 2.5 cups in 2025.
- There are ample aligned opportunities for producer-focused **collaboration** with *Northern Pulse Growers Association*.
- MPCC has long-term **support** and guidance from *Montana Department of Agriculture*.
- *Montana State University* has conducted meaningful **research** for the pulse crop industry over the years.
- Pulses are used in a **wide range of food products**, from whole food items to protein powders, flours, and snacks. Their **adaptability** to various processing methods and culinary applications enhances their appeal across diverse food industries.
- Pulses compliment the growing of a variety of other crops (like wheat and barley), making them excellent **rotational and cover crops**. Often yields improve after planting pulses.
- Domestic pulse **production has grown significantly** over the past two decades, to over 3 million acres of dry peas, lentils, chickpeas, and dry beans.
- Pulse market **demand is increasing** domestically and internationally. The global shift toward plant-based diets, driven by health and environmental concerns, has spiked demand for pulse crops as an alternative protein source, creating new market opportunities.
- **Hola Montana** program has proven to grow demand in Latin America.
- Assessment growth and solid management of funds has resulted in organizational **financial strength**.
- Pulses are **flexible** and can be used in a wide variety of food and feed products for human and animals.
- Pulses are **affordable** for consumers.
- Pulse **innovation** is yielding promising products and nutritional benefits.
- Pulses are good for the planet. They have a **low carbon footprint** and a **low water footprint**.
- Pulses **enhance soil structure**, as their root system increases water-holding capacity and soil aeration.

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SOAR Analysis ~ Critical Strengths

Continued.

- Pulses are **nitrogen-fixing plants** which improves soil fertility and reduces the need for fertilizers, enhancing sustainability.
- There's a short yet strong history of Montana pulse checkoff program success in the eyes of many key stakeholders, and the MPCC has **strong credibility** with state commodity associations.
- Pulses can help families **stay on farms**.



SOAR Analysis ~ Critical Opportunities

The MPCC identified the following critical **opportunities**:

- **Improve producer awareness** of the **value of checkoff** programs and how they influence pulse producer ROI. Includes dissemination of research results and implications.
- Gain better understanding of key topics pulse farmers want to learn more about so future producer-focused events meet growth needs. Provide flexible and valuable **education opportunities**, measuring effectiveness and overall outcomes.
- **Provide clarity around roles** and goals for the organizations working on behalf of the pulse industry, including clearly articulating who the MPCC is, why it exists, and how it uniquely works to serve Montana pulse producers and society.
- Support economic growth of food and feed **processors** in Montana. Attract new processors to the area.
- Invest in **research** that will better control **disease** and **pests** and **increase yield**.
- Invest in **regional research** pulse producers can use in operations.
- **Grow producer confidence** in raising their voices on behalf of the pulse industry and agriculture as a whole.
- Tighten partnership with USA Pulses coalition to **improve communication strategies** and key narratives for a variety of audiences and channels, including consumers, policy makers, supply chain partners and educators.
- **Enhance grant making process**.
- Clearly articulate **specific Montana-focused target audiences** for non-producer related communications efforts and role of Northern Pulse Growers Association (media, supply chain, educators, policy related, nutrition-focused, etc.).
- Consumers are more **curious** than ever about where their food, fibers and fuels come from due to the rise of global food and consumer consciousness. Engage them at deeper levels (example: climate and sustainability related conversations).
- Study consumer **marketing narratives** to better understand what claims resonate best for target consumers. Question the use of “*pulses*” in marketing and claims such as “*Pulses can save the planet*”. Craft key narratives that connect and tell a compelling story of sustainability and flexibility.
- Create **solid administrative procedures and core systems** for communication, talent management, financials, events, education, marketing and other core segments to ensure accountability for quality and business redundancy.
- Develop strategies that strengthen relationships with **elevators and 1st handlers**. Increase dialogue with 1st handlers about the impact of the checkoff, and learn about education needs.
- **Define what traceability and certification priorities** should be championed by pulse producers.
- Articulate the differences between **policy-focused** work/activities/events and **advocacy** and **education** work/activities/events. Create clear targets and boundaries for MPCC **policy efforts** and activate committee.

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SOAR Analysis ~ Critical Opportunities

Continued.

- Improve partnerships and **collaboration** with other Montana agriculture & grower organizations. Example: Montana Wheat & Barley.
- Clearly define the **brand** of Montana pulses.
- Assess **board size and structure** of MPCC on a consistent schedule.
- Invest in relationships with pulse supply chain partners in **Canada**.
- Proactively address supply chain partner (seed dealer) concerns with proposed national **seed licensing** and seed ownership rights shifts.
- Leverage growing consensus around **increasing pulse recommendations** in dietary guidelines.
- Align efforts as appropriate with USDA **RAPP funding** initiatives related to pulse crops (Regional Agricultural Promotion Program). Example: RAPP funding enables the promotion of U.S. pulse crops in regions with growing demand, such as South and Southeast Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa. RAPP funding aims to catalyze a significant increase in both the visibility and consumption of pulse crops in new and diverse markets



SOAR Analysis ~ Critical Aspirations

The following critical **aspirations** of the CCAC (CCPC) were identified:

- To **increase pulse production** in Montana and to **increase consumption** around the world.
- **Increase trust** across all levels of the supply chain.
- To be **leaders** in the pulse industry.
- Move from transactional to **relationship-based** engagements with buyers (to farm level).
- To be among the **best growers (quality)** of pulses in the world.
- To have a **strong pipeline** of future MPCC leaders.
- Protect access to robust **crop insurance** programs.
- Craft **effective project metrics** that go beyond feel good measures and financial investment reports. Track record of checkoff programs and projects that deliver **strong ROI** and **value** to producers.
- **Improve partnership** and collaborations with USA Pulse coalition and Northern Pulses.
- Provide easy access for education that supports the development of **strong business acumen**.
- More **collaboration**: Nurture a variety of Win/Win partnerships. Attract strong partners for collaboration to ensure farmer assessments go further, faster.
- Grow **research hubs** in Montana.
- Create **new dynamic markets** for pulse growers that increase domestic and/or international demand.
- To be **in service** to society.
- Be rooted in **community connection**.
- **Improve food science** related to pulses.
- **Support** the next generation of agriculture.
- **Innovate through PEOPLE (not just technology)**.
- Become more engaged with **Montana livestock industry**.
- **Partner with USA Pulses** with their strategic planning efforts.
- Create strong programs that focus on pulses as a **wonderful partner and ingredient**.
- World class **marketing** materials (all types digital and traditional).
- Support the development of **centers of excellence for pulses**.
- Ensure all **checkoff assessments are collected** (including Canadian opportunities).

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SOAR Analysis ~ Critical Aspirations

Continued.

- **Influence food guidelines** to increase recommended amount of pulses to eat per week. (Increase from 1.5 cups)
- To improve the **health** of **humans** around the globe.
- To improve the **health** of the **planet**.
- Collaborate with **Alberta** and **Saskatchewan** pulse crop groups.



SOAR Analysis ~ Critical Realities

The following critical planning **realities** were identified:

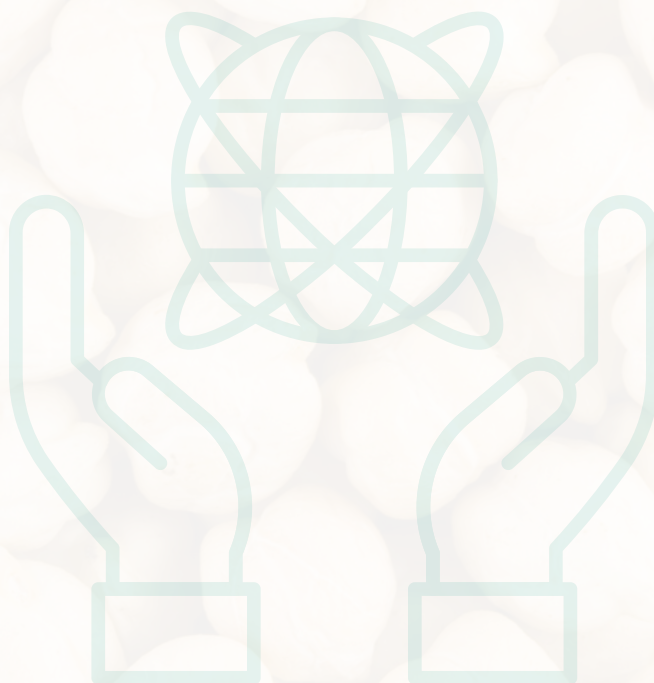
- Agriculture **producers are facing historic debt** (subsidies, labor, inflation, etc). Rising costs of labor, seeds, fertilizers, and other inputs put pressure on growers, particularly as profitability remains constrained by unpredictable market conditions and tight margins.
- Managing **disease** in pulse crops is a complex and long-term challenge.
- Ongoing changes in tariffs, import/export restrictions, and shifting trade agreements can disrupt international markets. Pulse exports, particularly to key markets like India, are **vulnerable** to abrupt policy shifts that can impact profitability and market access.
- **Regulatory and certification standards** will continue to evolve. Compliance with food safety, environmental, and traceability standards is increasingly rigorous, especially in international markets. Navigating these evolving standards requires additional investments in infrastructure and technology.
- **Supply chain vulnerabilities** exist. Transportation delays, rising freight costs, and bottlenecks in the supply chain impact distribution timelines and costs, affecting the industry's ability to meet demand efficiently and cost-effectively.
- **Consumer preference** can shift quickly. The pulse industry needs to keep pace with these expectations to remain relevant, especially as buyers become more selective.
- Pulses are **not considered commodities** and there has been some debate about whether pulses, should be classified as a grain.
- There are **barriers to entry** in this niche industry.
- **Prices are volatile** and there is a lack of **transparency** in the price discovery process.
- There are few sources of **data** to provide market insights at a global level. Consequently, creating more market transparency will be the key to attracting investment to the industry, meeting the growing demand for pulses, and improving trade volumes and market functionality.
- There is not a current or complete **database** of Montana pulse producers that can be easily leveraged for communication efforts (emails, phone, address, etc.)
- The MPCC **refund rate** average has been historically low, but saw a significant increase in 2023 indicating some producers could be questioning value of checkoff.
- Although the financials are strong for the MPCC organization, the **budget is modest**. Future plans must be realistic for budget and size of organization.
- Producers are **very busy** and often don't take time to inform themselves of all of the pressing issues, opportunities and threats to their businesses and lifestyles.
- With increasing **climate** unpredictability and extreme weather events, pulse crops face growing risks related to drought, floods, and other environmental stressors that can impact yield stability and production costs.

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SOAR Analysis ~ Critical Realities

Continued.

- While plant-based protein demand is growing, the industry faces **stiff competition** from other protein sources, including soy, pea protein, and lab-grown alternatives. These competitors often have greater resources and more established supply chains.
- Gaps remain in **technology** and **best management practices** adoption across the pulse industry.
- There is increased visibility and attention from the **negative media** coverage by the beef industry to amplify the benefits of pulse crops as a sustainable, nutritious, and versatile protein source. This is a chance to educate consumers, build stronger partnerships with health and sustainability advocates, and position pulse producers as leaders in addressing evolving dietary and environmental priorities.



FOUR CORE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Four Strategic priorities have been developed by the MPCC board, with the following supporting strategies created to provide clear targets for a given priority. Supporting tactics and KPIs are found on the following pages.

1

Build Internal Strength

Priority 1-Strengthen Administrative Infrastructure to Cultivate Trust and Transparency.

- Strategy 1A-Focus on enhancing **organizational processes**, stakeholder alignment, and communication **frameworks** to ensure effective governance, streamlined operations, and impactful engagement with Montana pulse producers.

2

Expand Markets

Priority 2-Expand Domestic and International Markets for Montana Pulses.

- Strategy 1B-Leverage **strategic partnerships** to grow Montana pulse markets.
- Strategy 2B-Strengthen pulse **narratives** to drive long-term market growth and ROI.
- Strategy 3B-Enhance **local, regional and state strategic communication and promotion** to strengthen supply chain relationships and cultivate high-value collaborations.

3

Communicate & Educate

Priority 3-Enhance Communication and Education to Build Knowledge and Trust.

- Strategy 1C-Collaborate on a comprehensive **producer communication and education** program to promote best practices and industry knowledge.

4

Innovate

Priority 4-Accelerate Innovation in the Pulse Industry.

- Strategy 1D-Impact **research** and development efforts to tackle crop diseases, optimize crop management practices, and elevate product quality.
- Strategy 2D-Foster **collaborative partnerships** to advance pulse innovation in Montana.



1

BUILD INTERNAL STRENGTH

Supporting Strategic Goals & Tactics ~ Priority 1

Strengthen Administrative Infrastructure to Cultivate Trust and Transparency.

Strategy A-Focus on enhancing organizational processes and communication frameworks to ensure effective governance, streamline operations and impactful engagement with Montana pulse producers.

- *Tactic 1A*-Establish comprehensive **operational frameworks**. Develop and implement robust administrative systems, including funding and financial management, governance practices, and collaborative tools to enhance efficiency and accountability.
- *Tactic 2A*-Foster **strategic collaboration** with key partners. Conduct **planning sessions** and establish quarterly communication protocols with *USA Pulses* and *Northern Pulse Growers Association* to align resources, strategies, and program objectives.
- *Tactic 3A*-Conduct annual **reviews of board structure, staffing, and operational systems** to identify improvement opportunities and ensure alignment with strategic goals.

KPIs

1-Host project planning sessions with USA Pulses and Northern Pulses leadership by September 1, 2025.
2-Complete and distribute operational guidelines by January 1, 2026. Formally review procedures bi-annually to find opportunities for continuous improvement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.1-Develop written guidelines for funding and financial management, establishing clear documentation on funding allocation, expense tracking, financial roles of the Montana Department of Agriculture, and auditing processes. Include process for making adjustments to investment targets annually and publishing in annual RFP.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 2.1.1-Special target: Develop and implement procedures to ensure 100% allocation of the NPGA-assigned budget toward approved initiatives. Conduct quarterly audits to evaluate spending effectiveness, verify alignment with organizational goals, and ensure all allocated funds are utilized efficiently by the end of the fiscal year.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.2-Collaboration Systems and Accountabilities: Establish robust systems, including a marketing information hub and clear roles to foster deep, collaborative relationships between MPCC staff and key partners, including <i>USA Pulses</i> and <i>Northern Pulse Growers</i>, ensuring alignment on shared goals.

1

BUILD INTERNAL STRENGTH

Supporting Strategic Goals & Tactics ~ Priority 1

Strengthen Administrative Infrastructure to Cultivate Trust and Transparency.

KPIs continued

- 2.3-Producer Communication: Working in partnership with *USA Pulses*, *Northern Pulse Growers* and other key stakeholders, design and develop creative **producer communication procedures** and annual communication strategies to clearly and consistently disseminate industry news and opportunities to Montana pulse producers.

3-Develop and launch a comprehensive **digital onboarding platform** for board members by April 1, 2026, with a phased implementation plan to drive continuous growth annually.

A user-friendly online portal will provide seamless access to:

- Training materials, video tutorials, and a self-paced onboarding module.
- A dynamic events calendar, contact directory, and essential resources, including financial reports and policy documents.
- Flexible, self-directed training options tailored to accommodate busy schedules, ensuring accessibility and engagement for all board members.

4-Begin annual **evaluations of operational effectiveness**, including staffing structure, by January 1, 2027. Complete 100% of board and regional evaluations annually, starting in Q1 2027.

EXPAND MARKETS

Supporting Strategic Goals & Tactics ~ Priority 2

Expand Domestic and International Markets for Montana Pulses.

Strategy 1B-Leverage strategic partnerships to grow Montana pulse markets.

- *Tactic 1B*-Support *USA Pulses Coalition* initiatives through strategic funding and on-going leadership collaboration.
- *Tactic 2B*-Partner with the *Northern Pulse Growers* to execute domestic education and promotion initiatives that drive pulse market growth and visibility.
- *Tactic 3B*-Strengthen collaborative state-led promotional efforts, ensuring alignment with national priorities to maximize return on investment.

Strategy 2B-Strengthen pulse narratives to drive long-term market growth and ROI.

- *Tactic 1C*-Collaborate with stakeholders to craft targeted, impactful pulse narratives for multiple audiences, including producers, partners, and consumers.

Strategy 3B-Enhance local, regional and state strategic communication and promotion to strengthen supply chain relationships and cultivate high-value collaborations.

- *Tactic 1D*: Forge strategic alliances within the supply chain by building stronger relationships with elevators, key trade partners, and buyers to drive market efficiencies and expand opportunities for Montana pulses.
- *Tactic 2D*: Cultivate impactful partnerships with Montana's livestock industry to explore synergies, innovate feed solutions, and amplify pulse market growth.
- *Tactic 3D*: Strengthen collaborations with farm and ranch organizations to enhance producer engagement and align with shared agricultural priorities.
- *Tactic 4D*: Partner with Montana's economic development authorities to advance statewide initiatives that elevate the visibility, value, and competitiveness of the pulse industry.

2

EXPAND MARKETS

Supporting Strategic Goals & Tactics ~ Priority 2

Expand Domestic and International Markets for Montana Pulses.

KPIs

1-Allocate 25-30% of MPCC's annual budget to support market development initiatives, tracking year-over-year investments and program outcomes.
2-Leadership & Industry Representation: Ensure two Montana board members or pulse leaders attend 100% of national and key industry meetings annually and track the number of Montana leaders promoted to advisory or agriculture board positions (example: rail board), aiming for two new roles by 2030.
3-Pulse Promotion: Partner with <i>Northern Pulse Growers</i> to publish four annual campaigns showcasing the health, sustainability, and economic value of pulses , integrating messaging for animal protein-friendly audiences. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Examples:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>Annually provide health & nutrition information related to pulses to key stakeholders and other interested parties such as school lunch systems.</i> ◦ <i>Engage with food & ag development centers and the MSU food systems department (College of Education and Health & Human Development).</i> ◦ <i>Annually disseminate a curated review of PCHI research results to key stakeholders and other interested parties.</i>
4-Pulse Promotion: Partner with livestock organizations to design and implement bi-annual promotions showcasing the synergy between pulses and animal proteins, launching in Q2 2026. Target diverse markets, including livestock feed applications and innovative cross-industry collaborations, to maximize market reach and drive demand growth.
5-Consumer and Stakeholder Engagement: Host an annual Montana pulse-focused event with <i>Northern Pulse Growers</i> to engage consumers, foodservice professionals, and public health leaders, leveraging research presentations, social media, and PR campaigns.
6-Cross-Border Collaboration: Engage with and evaluate relationships with Canadian handlers, buyers, brokers, and processors annually, aiming to influence at least 50% capture of estimated checkoff assessments from Canadian processors.
7-Educational Resources and Knowledge Dissemination-Update and enhance pulse-related online content by Q3 2025.
8-Economic Impact and Growth-Deliver an annual impact report to Montana development agencies by 2027, showcasing economic benefits and growth opportunities for pulses.
9-Secure participation from three Montana economic authorities in pulse-related initiatives by 2030.

EXPAND MARKETS

Supporting Strategic Goals & Tactics ~ Priority 2

Expand Domestic and International Markets for Montana Pulses.

KPIs continued

10-Obtain and review an annual report from the national organization highlighting year-over-year **consumption** increases and key metrics resulting from research, promotions, and other collaborations, using these insights to evaluate program impact and shape future funding decisions. Ultimately achieve 10% increase in consumption by 2030 through collaborative promotions, research dissemination, and strategic campaigns.

3

COMMUNICATE & EDUCATE

Supporting Strategic Goals & Tactics ~ Priority 3

Enhance Communication and Education to Build Knowledge and Trust.

Strategy 1C-Collaborate on a comprehensive **producer communication and education program** to promote best practices and industry knowledge.

- *Tactic 1E*- Conduct a producer-focused needs assessment to identify the learning priorities, preferred educational formats, and effective communication channels for Montana pulse farmers. Leverage *Northern Pulse Growers* and the *Pulse Working Group* to gather insights and tailor educational efforts for maximum impact.
- *Tactic 2E*-Using needs assessment data, define key learning competencies to guide producer skill development.
- *Tactic 3E*: Partner with the *Northern Pulse Growers* to implement data-driven, creative communication/education channels and benchmarks to ensure timely, relevant, and impactful information reaches Montana pulse producers.

KPIs

1-Allocate and track 20% of MPCC's annual budget toward education initiatives to enhance producer knowledge and engagement.
2-Needs Assessment-Achieve at least 25% participation from Montana pulse producers in a needs assessment survey by Q1 2027.
3-Identify key producer learning needs and preferred educational formats to inform strategic communication and education planning by Q2 2026.
4-Educational Programing: Develop and deliver producer-preferred content via a multi-channel strategy curated by <i>Northern Pulse Growers</i> , addressing critical topics such as crop rotation, disease management, root rot prevention, and the adoption of the Pulse Crop Disease Predictive Modeling Tool for its launch at the 2026 NPGA convention.
5-Communication Engagement Benchmarks: Set and achieve a 20% year-over-year improvement in producer communication engagement (e.g., email opens, clicks, and event registrations) by Q1 2026.
6-Montana Specific Content-Track and report on Montana-specific pulse content featured in collaborator events and publications annually beginning by Q1 2026.

COMMUNICATE & EDUCATE

Supporting Strategic Goals & Tactics ~ Priority 3

Enhance Communication and Education to Build Knowledge and Trust.

KPIs continued

7-Effectiveness Evaluations-Conduct annual **evaluations of producer communication reach and effectiveness**, starting by Q2 2026, to continuously optimize strategies.

8-Producer Opinion: Begin evaluating **producer opinions** on the value and impact of the pulse checkoff program starting Q2 2026. Assess program effectiveness through qualitative feedback and other metrics, with measurement of refund rate reductions starting in 2030.

INNOVATE

Supporting Strategic Goals & Tactics ~ Priority 4

Accelerate Innovation in the Pulse Industry.

Strategy 1D-Impact **research and development** efforts to tackle crop diseases, optimize crop management practices, and elevate product quality.

- *Tactic 1F*-Foster collaboration on national research initiatives.

Strategy 2D-Foster **collaborative partnerships** to advance pulse innovation in Montana.

- *Tactic 2F*-Strengthen MPCC direct research funding and partnerships.
- *Tactic 3F*: Establish strategic alliances to attract cutting-edge food production facilities.
- *Tactic 4F*: Collaborate with local leaders, universities and developers on value-added research and innovation.

KPIs

1-Allocate 35% of MPCC's annual budget toward research and development , and track investment percentages by topic and outcomes annually.
2-Board Participation-Achieve 100% attendance by board representatives (or high potential Montana leader) at USA Pulses sub-committee meetings focused on research, with quarterly tracking starting Q3 2025.
3-Collaboration Facilitation-Annually track the number of collaborative meetings and workshops connecting researchers, funding opportunities, and industry stakeholders, beginning Q2 2025.
4-Stakeholder Feedback: Measure the percentage of pulse industry stakeholders reporting satisfaction with research quality and improved research outcomes in post-initiative evaluations, beginning Q1 2026.
5-Processing Facility Development: Secure at least one new pulse processing facility under development or in operation in Montana by Q1 2030.
6-Economic Contribution Tracking: Measure and report annual increases in pulse processing capacity and economic contributions stemming from partnerships and new facilities, beginning Q3 2026.
7-Market Expansion: Track pulse-based food production and product development projects that create new market opportunities, with reporting beginning by Q3 2026.