

New Leadership and Growing Momentum for Montana Pulse Crops

The Montana Pulse Crop Committee is proud to announce the official hiring of Dr. Giseli Valentini as Assistant Professor of Pulse Crop Breeding at Montana State University (MSU). Dr. Valentini has served as Interim Pulse Crop Breeder since 2025, and her appointment marks a major milestone for Montana's pulse research and production.

Dr. Valentini holds a Ph.D. in Genetics and Breeding from Maringa State University, Brazil, and completed postdoctoral research at USDA-ARS in Beltsville, MD, and North Dakota State University in Fargo, ND. She combines classical and modern breeding techniques: leveraging genetics, genomics, and advanced breeding tools—to accelerate the development of lentil, chickpea, and pea varieties tailored to Montana's environment.



Giseli Valentini, Montana
State University Pulse
Breeder

“Our work is aligned with shared goals: increasing pulse consumption, enhancing productivity, and advancing sustainability,” said Valentini.

Driving Research Through Statewide Field Studies

Dr. Valentini's research is supported by MSU genetic and pulse crop studies conducted across Montana, funded by the Montana Producer Checkoff, which provides essential support for field trials and genetic testing. These multi-location trials evaluate new lines under real-world conditions, prioritizing yield potential, stability, disease resistance, and seed quality. Recent successes of the MSU Pulse Crop Breeding program include MT Bridger (chickpea) and MT 457 (green pea), both showing strong adoption across Montana farms. Traits such as early maturity, upright growth, and improved protein content are helping pulses remain competitive in domestic and global markets.

“Growers are true partners in our work,” Valentini said. “Their feedback directly influences which traits and varieties we prioritize.”

NASS 2026 Pulse Projections Reflect Shifting Planting Trends

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) released its 2026 projected planting report today, based on recent surveys. Montana's pulse projections show mixed trends:

- Chickpeas: down 10,000 acres to 250,000 acres
- Lentils: down 210,000 acres to 630,000 acres
- Peas: up 20,000 acres to 710,000 acres

These figures highlight the challenges and opportunities Dr. Valentini's breeding program aims to address—enhancing productivity and stability while responding to market and environmental pressures.

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Tom Allen with Northern Pulse Growers Association mans the booth at the KMON Farm Show in Plentywood MT

Looking Ahead: Innovation for Resilient Pulses

Dr. Valentini plans to expand the use of marker assisted selection, genomic selection, and high-throughput phenotyping in her program. Her goal is to deliver varieties that are not only high yielding but also resilient, climate-adapted, and profitable for Montana growers.

With Montana Producer Checkoff-funded research and Dr. Valentini at the helm, Montana's pulse industry is poised for continued innovation, stronger collaboration with growers, and a brighter, more profitable future.



Paul Kanning, Flaxville and Todd Hansen, Gildford represent US Pulse Growers on the Whitehouse South Lawn



Jeff Winkler, Fort Benton, gives input as USA Pulses revamps their long-term strategic plan.

A message from the Executive Director~

From Bozeman to Spokane, Plentywood to Helena, it's been a busy month on the road making sure Montana pulse producers are represented in every conversation, keeping stakeholders informed, and ensuring our programs continue to deliver real value across the state and beyond.

That commitment to showing up was also on display nationally, as Todd Hansen of Gildford and Paul Kanning of Flaxville represented Montana pulse growers during the Great American Agriculture Celebration at the White House. Alongside national leaders, producers, and ag advocates, they helped ensure Montana's voice was part of important conversations shaping the future of American agriculture.

For MPCC, showing up matters. It's one more way producer checkoff dollars are put to work—keeping Montana farmers in the room, engaged in the discussion, and present where national policy and market direction take shape. Real representation. Real stewardship. Real work on behalf of Montana pulse producers.

Your farm. Your future. Your checkoff dollars at work.



Liz Edmundson
Exec Director

