

Legislative Council
SJ11 – Farmer’s Market Study
June 10, 2025

Chair & Members of the Legislative Council –

We realize that a large number of study bills passed during the 2025 legislative session, and that legislators have tough decisions to make in determining where to allocate resources for interim work. We are writing today to ask for your consideration of assigning and developing a plan for SJ11, The Farmer’s Market and Local Food System study bill.

The original scope of SJ11 was broad – including both the opportunity to provide recommendations on updating and improving existing statutes surrounding farmer’s markets and the opportunity to bolster local food systems and distribution/markets. However, we recognize that due to time and budget constraints, the opportunity to study this topic may be limited. We polled our members and asked them to identify top priorities, should the study move forward. Based on this polling, we would like to ask the committee to consider referring the study to the **Economic Affairs Interim Committee** with the goal of providing 2027 legislative recommendations in the following areas:

- **Statutory Updates**
 - Revising definitions, including current “Farmer’s Market” language;
 - Clarification of allowed Farmer’s Market business structures;
 - Review of Local Food Choice Act (2021/2023) and Cottage Food Law implementation and impacts and related recommendations;
- **Regulatory Clarifications**
 - Interpretation surrounding existing laws are varied and current language can be contradictory;
 - Enforcement clarifications;
 - Liabilities (Businesses and selling/prep of defined hazardous foods)
 - Consumer protections (potential labeling, etc.)
- **Communications**
 - Provide strategy for state agencies (Dept. of Ag, DPHHS, Commerce) to work collaboratively to provide education and outreach on existing laws and updates to producers, farmer’s market managers, cities and counties, and vendors;
- **Breaking Down Barriers to Growth**
 - Addressing issues above, along with exploring investment and growth opportunities (grants, etc.)

Grow Montana and our related stakeholders are happy to serve as a resource and work with the committee as/if directed to provide potential options to solve the current challenges. We appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely –

The Grow Montana Team

2024-2025 COALITION MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS



Past Coalition Members

Gallatin Valley Farm to School

Montana Organic Association

Natural Resources Defense Council