

Alaska Agriculture

Senate Resources Committee



Presented by John Boyle, Commissioner
Alaska Department of Natural Resources
February 16, 2024





Alaska Agriculture

Agriculture and food independence is of great importance to many Alaskans





Goals

To grow agriculture in Alaska for:

- 1) Greater food security and independence for Alaskans, and
- 2) Jobs and value-chain benefits of a well-developed economic sector





Alaska Agricultural Data

- Federal government collects agricultural data nationwide – “Census of Agriculture”
- 2022 data released Feb. 13, 2024
- Voluntary survey
- Division will be comparing changes from last census (2017), evaluating new data

2022 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

United States
Summary and State Data
Volume 1 • Geographic Area Series • Part 51

AC-22-A-51

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United States Department of Agriculture
Tom Vilsack, Secretary
National Agricultural Statistics Service
Hubert Hamer, Administrator



Alaska Agricultural Data, continued

- Number of Alaska farms increased from 990 in 2017, to 1,173 in 2022
- Land in farms increased from 849,753 acres in 2017 to 869,852 in 2022
- Value of agricultural products sold increased from \$70.5 million in 2017 to \$90.9 million in 2022
 - Crops: \$29.6 million in 2017, \$39.7 million in 2022
 - Animal products: \$40.8 million in 2017, \$51.2 million in 2022





Alaska Crops

| Crop type | Estimated acres |
|---------------|-----------------|
| Grass hay | 21,000 |
| Barley | 6,000 |
| Oats | 750 |
| Wheat | 350 |
| Potatoes | 150 |
| Seed potatoes | 35 |



* Vegetable crop data is not reported



Nenana-Totchaket Agricultural Project

140,000 acres of State land is being made available for agriculture over the coming decades





Nenana-Totchaket Agricultural Project

- First land sale in 2022 was highly successful, with 2,000 acres offered at sealed-bid auction and over the counter sales
- Saw strong local and national interest in the 27 parcels (24 were ultimately sold, mostly to Alaskans)
- Some farmers have already started clearing and planting their lots
- 2024 activity: reviewing terms, planning, continuing infrastructure and well drilling



2023: Initiatives

- Alaska Feed Grain Reserve Program
 - \$1 million investment, partnering with Alaska Farmers Cooperative in Delta Junction
- Access to markets; building bridges
- Plant Materials Center seed cleaning capacity, efficiency upgrades





2023: Initiatives - Grants

- Micro-Grants for Food Security
 - Second launch this week
 - 915 recipients to date fed 42,500 people
- Local food purchase program
 - Farmers markets (and others) contracting with small and mid-sized farmers
 - Product distributed to under-served Alaska communities





2024: Year of Strategic Review

- Holistic look at Alaska agriculture
- Field visits
- Bringing Alaska agricultural policy leaders together
- Soliciting best-in-class expertise (Indiana, Utah, etc.)
- Pursuing strategic partnership with Purdue University
- Building collaborative relationships with Yukon and other provinces





2024 Goals

- Progress strategic review, collaborations with policy makers
- Dedicate resources where Alaska benefits most
- Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Grant
- Advance myriad opportunities:
 - Farmer Support Services program





Challenges

- DNR
- Industry
 - Market access
 - High costs, high risk
 - Infrastructure Labor
 - Next generation Alaska farmers
- Research needs





Thank you

Joe Byrnes
Legislative Liaison
Alaska Department of Natural Resources
Joe.Byrnes@Alaska.gov
(907) 317-5183

