



# ALASKA DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE NEWSLETTER

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## Reflections on Agriculture Conference



*By Director Bryan Scoresby*

Many of our staff attended the Alaska Farm Bureau conference in Anchorage last week. This gathering was a wonderful opportunity to

meet with agriculture industry professionals, educators, and farmers from across the state. My first introduction to Alaskan agriculture was in Soldotna at what was then called the agriculture symposium. Many of the challenges we face today are the same ones we faced in 1992. Opportunities continue to grow to meet those challenges. The growth in farms operating in Alaska is well documented in the 2012, 2017, and 2022 Censuses. The symposium of years past has changed into the Alaska Farm Bureau conference of today.

This year's conference was more meaningful to me personally. The conversations with farmers and others were to address opportunities and search for solutions. The breakout sessions were full of information to use in our occupations and acquire knowledge to share with others. There is no possible way one could get to all of them, as many were held at the same time. I mostly enjoyed the grazing symposium topics, the farm finance and record-keeping sessions by Right Risk, and the nutrition presentations from Alaska Mill and Feed on feeding livestock. The



relationship gained with each of you was certainly the highlight of this event. Reserve next year's event on your calendar now so it's a priority.

Thanksgiving dinner and the holiday season are just around the corner. Can you make your Thanksgiving dinner all Alaska Grown? Or even the majority (51%) of your dinner is Alaska Grown? Can your family expand beyond the \$5/week challenge? The Scoresby house will have an Alaska Grown turkey raised by a 4-H youth. Ideas for traditional sides are potatoes from VanderWeele Farms, onions from Glacier Valley Farms, home-grown green beans in a casserole, and salad mix from City Farms. A sweet treat appetizer could be eggnog from Alaska Range Dairy. Buy the eggnog early, as it sells out fast. The pumpkin in the pie will have to be sourced from outside Alaska until a farmer begins raising Alaska pumpkins on a commercial scale.



## Carrots and potatoes in stores near you!



*By Mia Kirk*

For the Alaska Grown \$5 Challenge, we thought it would be most appropriate to highlight fresh Alaska Grown potatoes and carrots. Our

farmers are working hard, washing, packing, and delivering them to the stores, making them available to you through this holiday season! Also, we are excited to announce that VanderWeele Farm carrots and potatoes are not only available at your local grocery store in Southcentral and Interior Alaska, but now can be purchased at the Juneau Fred Meyer! This makes the \$5 Challenge easier for you all in Southeast Alaska. Stop by your local Fred Meyer and purchase Alaska's sweetest carrots and potatoes, and if you cannot find them

in the store, ask for Alaska Grown!

### **Cooking with Alaska Grown**

Through a USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant, our marketing team will continue to produce episodes of "Cooking with Alaska Grown," available on our [Facebook page](#) and [YouTube channel](#). These videos are intended to increase consumer awareness of Alaska's specialty crops, their availability, and how to incorporate local products into your everyday meals.

### **Should Alaska expand cooperative opportunities for Alaska?**

Could a farmer and rancher-owned cooperative help strengthen Alaska's agriculture industry? A co-op could help producers address shared challenges such as high input costs, marketing, labor, processing, and transportation. But whether it moves forward depends on you. The State of Alaska, through the Governor's Office and Division of Agriculture, wants your input. If enough interest is shown, the Governor's Office will support a feasibility study by the University of Alaska Fairbanks with up to \$50,000 to explore next steps. To participate, please take the survey below.



**Click here to watch:**  
**Cooking With Alaska Grown**  
**Roasted Squash & Couscous**



**Your input matters.**

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/AGCoopInput>  
Survey is open through November 30th, 2025.

# PMC completes winter shutdown, gears up for next growing season



*By Casey Dinkel*

With all the crops dried and stored away for the winter, the Plant Materials Center (PMC) celebrated a successful harvest of grasses, grains, and potatoes for the 2025 growing season. However, seed cleaning for all foundation grass seed and grain lots will be put on hold for a few more months until final renovations for the new seed cleaning line are complete. With the entire seed cleaning line installed, final work is underway on electrical and mechanical systems, and on the construction of a 12' x 60' addition. The 12' x 60' addition on the east side of the existing seed house will encompass a small office, restroom, tool room, and mechanical room. With 90% of renovations complete, the initial start-up and training for the new seed cleaning line is slated for the middle to end of January 2026. This new seed-cleaning line will enable the PMC to clean faster and more efficiently than ever before.

Additionally, the PMC greenhouse production agronomist, Jessica Sandvik, completed the winter shutdown for all greenhouses on the PMC property. During October, Jessica relocated and transitioned over 10,000 plantlets for overwintering in the PMC head house, outside box gardens, and coolers. This transition or winter hardening is vital for the winter survival of potted plants and plugs. Many of these native plants will be utilized for revegetation projects throughout Alaska in the 2026 growing season. In addition, a handful of plants will be moved to the PMC production field for bulking up seed production.

The industrial hemp program manager, Phil Czapla, finished up harvest and evaluation of several hemp varieties in a small on-farm trial. This trial yielded

essential data that will determine what hemp varieties will produce seed or fiber in the Alaska growing environment. Once suitable varieties are identified, future growers will be able to produce high-yielding, high-quality industrial hemp that can be processed into a myriad of products. Products such as hempcrete, hemp insulation, erosion-control BMPs, hemp biofuel, and hemp seed oil have the potential to add great value to Alaska's economy.

With Alaska's winter just kicking off, staff at the PMC and I are already gearing up for next growing season. While we are welcoming all the new changes to our facilities, we are also very excited to increase the capacity and range of services we offer to Alaska's agricultural industry.

## 2025 CALENDAR

*3 Months At-A-Glance*

### NOVEMBER

**11** Veterans Day

**13-15** 2025 Alaska Agriculture Conference & Grazing Lands Symposium

**14** National Pickle Day

**27** Thanksgiving

### DECEMBER

**5** World Soil Day

**21** Winter Solstice

**25** Christmas Day

### JANUARY

**1** New Years Day

**23** National Pie Day

# Remembering



**Bruce Bush**  
*“The Rhubarb King”*

