



MEDA Value Added Working Group
September 22, 2020
10:30am

Participants: Paddy Fleming (Chair), Abby Majerus, Courtney Loeffler, Heather Handeland, Brett Doney, Erin Farris-Olsen, Eric Seidensticker, Davey Madison, and Gloria O'Rourke.

1. Introductions

Paddy Fleming – MMEC
Abbie – MWTC in Lewistown
Courtney – Headwaters
Heather Handeland – Missoula USDA
Brett Doney – Great Falls Development Authority
Erin Farris-Olsen – Heart of the Rockies Initiative, Rural Development
Eric Seidensticker – Jefferson Development Corp.
Tori Matejovsky – GNDC
Davey Madison, MCDC

2. How we got here

Paddy Fleming, Chair, provided a [background of this group's formation as well as documentation](#) in the [MT Next Generation of Community and Economic Development report](#). Paddy shared a document he compiled regarding a definition and several resources for value added ag in Montana. Definition of Value Added Ag via Wikipedia - discussion

- the definition is more global; a state definition would include value added products that go into the global supply chain.

3. Purpose of this group - Discussion

- Provide MEDA board recommendations for legislative purposes
- Provide recommendations on funding requests for value added ag
- Get all groups together and foster teamwork. There are so many players. Coordination would be valuable as there are many groups with a focused purpose. Conclusion: Select a few issues we agree

on and move forward together; foster team work. Examples to learn from are found in Iowa, Holland, and Alberta.

- How do we paint the picture of value added ag and bolster it for economic development? Put an economic spin on the conversation, i.e., specialty crops.
- Create a document that reflects MEDA's work in value added ag.
- Value added ag includes product; also includes processing along the way.
- Heart of the Rockies is working with Headwaters and USDA on a Value Added Market Study for "Conservation Friendly" meat products. They are trying to figure out what level of added value works for producers using good environmental stewardship practices. The audience is western Montana distributors, restaurants, and school districts in Missoula, Powell, and Lewis and Clark Counties.
- MCDC focusing on opportunity cooperatives; could serve as a funding model.

4. Goals of this group - discussion:

- a. Policies and funding recommendations to the MEDA board
- b. Fostering teamwork
- c. Look for expansion of commodities i.e. hops and hemp, etc.
- d. Play a role in addressing workforce gaps

Brett Doney shared the following ideas regarding this group:

1. A Sharing place to bring us together as a team. Share training opportunities, etc.
2. Eight theme areas:
 - a. Higher value production opportunities, i.e. hops, organics, etc.
 - b. Processing and products – take what is grown and add value before it leaves the state
 - c. Local food – grow and raise and use here
 - d. Add value to by-products produced as well
 - e. Continue funding for our key programs
 - f. Business attraction in this sector
 - g. Consider using BOI for this purpose of value added ag
 - h. Foster impact investing and angel networks

5. MT Legislative Discussion

- What message do we want in preparation for the legislative session?

- Happy to see how many people used MT CARES Act for cold storage options. Huge issue for Value Added Ag; gained infrastructure.
- Federal and state elected leadership can heavily influence funding for value added ag
- List dollars/sources that support Value Added Ag for candidates to realize and support. Federal: SBA, EDA, USDA, MMEC, EPA, State: Big Sky Trust Fund, Growth through Ag, etc.

What would we say to a legislator that asks what does MEDA do for Value Added Ag?

- Educate on the importance of this whole sector
- Concerns on land values; if commodity pricing continues
- Invest now to save revenues down the road
- List of programs used in the state is a challenge because even the Main Street Program uses value added ag
- Perhaps be prepared to tell the story of how integrated these programs are – from broadband to value added ag
- Paddy may come up with a percentage of his work that reflects value added ag
- Have a broad definition of value added ag

Action Items:

- a. Paddy will compile a draft goal paragraph and share with the committee.
 - b. RISE program (in the Farm Bill) – Erin will send a link to Gloria to share. Note: View the recording here:
<https://register.gotowebinar.com/recording/1824528904229693200>
 - c. In the future: Create a document that defines value added ag with some examples; list state and federal players. Share value added success in every county. Have a map similar to MDOC's project map. Eric will investigate the data and possible success stories, too. This could be a big answer for Montana's recovering economy.
6. Next meeting – Gloria will send a doodle for a meeting next week.
[Website for minutes, resources, etc.](#)