



**Division of Agriculture**  
Alaska Department of Natural Resources

## **Alaska's Plan for Agriculture**

**Update in process** \_\_\_\_\_





# Division of Agriculture

Alaska Department of Natural Resources

Dear Alaskans;

This plan was originally developed by the Division of Agriculture, in cooperation with the industry, educators, legislators and others in 2008. This report will be an evolving document, in that every other year the ADOA will work with the agricultural advisory panel to revise this plan as needed. It is important to note that the goals and steps may change over time to reflect the current needs.

ADOA heard the concerns addressed by the aquaculture industry during the 2008 public comment period. The farming of shellfish holds promising opportunity for coastal Alaska. This industry has not been addressed in our long term plan as authority does not lie within the Division of Agriculture.

I want to thank everyone who provided input during this process.

Remember to “Look, Ask, Buy Alaska Grown” at your local stores – and support Alaska’s Agriculture Industry.

Franci Havemeister, Director

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# **Alaska Division of Agriculture**

## **The Long Term Plan for Agriculture**

### **Introduction**

The agricultural industry of Alaska is privately owned and privately managed. It continues to contribute to the economy, food security and the well-being of the State. To continue to do so, agriculture must be a healthy and sustainable renewable resource industry.

The Alaska Division of Agriculture (ADOA) mission is not to direct the agricultural industry, but to promote and encourage. This mission is fulfilled through the following programs:

1. Agricultural Land Sales and Management
2. The Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund (ARLF)
3. Plant Materials Center
4. Agriculture Inspection Services
5. Agriculture Marketing/Outreach

ADOA believes that through open communication, education, and appropriate funding, producers will prosper and the citizens of Alaska will enjoy the benefits that Alaskan Agriculture offers.

### ***Mission Statement***

*The mission of the Alaska Division of Agriculture is to promote and encourage the development of an agricultural industry in the State.*

## ***Vision Statement***

*The vision of the Alaska Division of Agriculture is to promote an economically stable agricultural industry for Alaska that can enhance the quality of life for its people, Alaska's food security, and provide economic benefit to the state.*

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## Background - Agriculture

Agriculture has played a role in Alaska over the past century. Prior to statehood, the people of Alaska realized the value of agriculture. This is noted with the state seal, originally designed in 1910, which portrays a farmer, his horse, and three shocks of wheat. Today, much of the general population does not understand the significance of agriculture, as the majority of the population is two or three generations removed from the farm. It is critical that we educate the citizens of Alaska, most importantly – the young people, of the importance of a healthy agricultural industry, its role in enhancing Alaska’s food security and improving the quality of life for all Alaskans.

Alaska’s economy reflects the boom-and-bust history of the State and territory that has often sought immediate profit at the expense of long-term stability. This does not fully reflect Alaska’s potential for a diversified agricultural industry, or the need for long-term stability. Numerous agricultural development projects, plans, analyses, reports, and studies have been undertaken, and issues and proposals have been debated. **Historically, the state has taken the lead with limited success. ADOA believes that industry must take the lead and the ADOA will partner with industry to achieve those goals.**

ADOA must continue to embrace the challenges and look for opportunities for the future. It must continue to encourage good agricultural principles and good management practices, including food safety and security.

At present, factors that impact the industry in a positive manner are:

- Recent emergence of niche markets;
- Increased concern about food safety;
- Consumer support in buying local;
- Increased interest in food security; and
- Demand for native plants to be used for revegetation.

Challenging factors include:

- The need for better linkages with land grant research, education and outreach;
- The need to ensure regulations and implementation do not hinder current markets nor discourage new markets;
- Lack of infrastructure; and
- Increasing input costs.

The ADOA continues to work closely with the Board of Agriculture and Conservation (BAC), and must continue to foster good relationships between the University Of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), industry representatives, state agencies, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), local governments and communities, and organizations across the State to encourage and promote a healthy and sustainable agricultural industry.

## Purpose of a Strategic Plan

A comprehensive and strategic plan for the Alaskan agricultural industry is needed so the State can direct its efforts and resources to best serve the industry, and in turn the citizens of Alaska. The purpose of this bi-annual review and strategic planning process is to better understand the needs of the industry and a tool of which to track agency progress. The Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR) recognizes that an industry driven plan with goals and specific objectives will provide ADOA with the information needed to assist the industry.

Some specific points need to be kept in mind:

- The agricultural industry must continue to receive support from the state of Alaska;
- The ADOA must continue to provide services and programs needed to support and promote the agricultural industry; and
- ADOA must work with industry to identify goals and define issues that impede the growth of a successful agricultural industry.

The goals and objectives of this process reflect the following five areas with which the ADOA has strategic programmatic emphasis.

1. Agricultural Land Sales and Management
2. The Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund (ARLF)
3. Plant Materials Center
4. Agriculture Inspection Services
5. Agriculture Marketing/Outreach



Industry goals that fall outside of the five programmatic areas will require involvement of one or more of the following:

- Legislative changes
- Other State Agency Support
- DNR Support
- Governor's Support
- Legislative Support
- Additional funding

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**Agricultural Land Sales and Management – Identify state lands with agricultural potential and expedite the sale of those lands into private ownership. Manage state lands through short and long term grazing leases and other permits for agricultural purposes.**

**Situation:** The ADOA will continue to work diligently to move state lands with agriculture potential into private hands, guaranteeing future generations' access to agriculture land. ADOA will be an advocate of short and long term grazing leases and permits.

**Objective 1.1:** ADOA will continue to move state land suitable for agriculture purposes into private ownership.

Division benchmark: Sell 3800 acres of state land designated for agriculture use, with agriculture covenants attached into private ownership increasing Alaska's ability to increase production self sustaining and assuring future generations to agriculture land.

**Objective 1.2:** ADOA continues to support best management practices and encourages the agricultural community to develop State Farm Conservation Plans and/or Soil & Water Conservation plans.

Division benchmark: Continue to work closely with conservation districts and encourage producers to update their farm conservation plans.

**Objective 1.3:** ADOA will continue to support agriculture production under the Right to Farm Legislation.

Division benchmark: Remain an advocate for producers statewide.

**Objective 1.4:** ADOA continues to work with Division of Mining, Land & Water (DML&W), Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) and Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) to review state land suitable for agriculture use.

Division benchmark: To increase lands designated for agriculture use in area plans.

Objective **1.5**: ADOA is working with DML&W to streamline the grazing lease and permit process.

Division benchmark: To have a clear understanding between ADOA and DML&W and facilitate the lease and permit process.

Objective **1.6**: ADOA will inform the Agricultural community of area plan reviews that have the potential to affect agriculture and/or agricultural land sales.

Division benchmark: To keep the agricultural community apprised of agriculture issues through the Division monthly newsletter, the Division website, and attending industry events.

Objective **1.7**: The ADOA will review existing legislation and regulations to determine applications to agricultural land that allow such land to remain in agricultural production; including taxation and regulations to protect agricultural lands, and regulations regarding waste disposal and application.

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**The Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund (ARLF) - The Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund is a critical component to the viability of Alaskan agriculture, overseen by the Board of Agriculture & Conservation (BAC) and will be supported by ADOA. – The BAC will work with ADOA and industry to support the growth and development of Alaskan agriculture.**

**Situation:** The health of the Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund (ARLF) remains a critical component in Alaskan agriculture. This program offers low interest loans to the Alaskan agricultural industry. The ARLF within the ADOA has played and will continue to play an important role in creating a profitable and growing agricultural industry.

**Objective 2.1:** The ARLF fund must continue to revolve.

Division benchmark: To maintain a low delinquency rate, such as in 2010 of 2.1% and sell ARLF asset located in Palmer valued at \$975,000.

**Objective 2.2:** The BAC supports continued funding of ADOA with general funds.

Division benchmark: ADOA is currently funded with General funds and does not draw out of ARLF.

**Objective 2.3:** The ARLF will work with government agency lenders and guarantors to promote the growth of the agricultural industry.

Division benchmark: Staff will work cooperatively with other industry lenders to explore areas of possible collaboration.

**Objective 2.4:** The BAC will continue to support the vision for Alaskan agriculture through input and personal expertise.

Division benchmark: BAC members must represent different industry sectors and different areas of the state.

**Objective 2.5:** The ADOA and the agricultural industry support the recapitalization of the ARLF.

Division benchmark: Request general funds to recapitalize the ARLF when available cash drops below two million or when loan activity increases substantially.

**Objective 2.6:** The ARLF will increase its marketing presence at agricultural functions and promote the use of its loan programs.

Division benchmark: Staff will attend and promote the ARLF at a minimum of 3 agriculture conferences and events annually.

**The Plant Material Center – ADOA will facilitate the production and sustainability of appropriate plant materials for Alaskan agriculture.**

**Situation:** The Alaska Plant Materials Center (PMC) is the primary source of information in Alaska for seed production, harvest, and cleaning. The PMC is also the primary source of information on revegetation and seeding mixes used by the primary seed purchasers. However, the primary purpose of the PMC is the production of high quality; disease tested seed stocks to be used in production agriculture in Alaska.

**Objective 3.1:** The PMC will reflect and anticipate the needs in Alaska to protect, support, enhance and expand Alaskan agriculture in terms of: appropriate plant materials for crop production; soil and water conservation programs and projects; noxious weed and invasive species, and increased activity in demonstration projects and education/outreach. Furthermore, the PMC will work to enhance its ties to the NRCS and the SWCD.

Division benchmark: Establish a horticulture program within the PMC. This remains a priority for the PMC Advisory Board.

**Objective 3.2:** The PMC houses the State's only official seed testing laboratory and is certified by the nation seed testing organization, Association of Official Seed Analysts.

Division benchmark: Continue to provide the essential services of purity and germination tests, noxious weed seed examinations, tetrazolium testing, and grain moisture testing.

In FY2011, the seed lab tests approximately 600-800 seed lots per year and 1,000 of individual tests.

**Objective 3.3:** The PMC must not lose sight of the fact that it is a crop production facility responsible for the production of high quality, disease tested, low generation crop seed. This material is the base for the production of Alaskan developed varieties. Crop production in Alaska depends on disease free, high quality seed.

Division benchmark: Assemble, evaluate, select, and increase plant materials needed in soil and water conservation, agriculture, and industry and maintain genetic purity of these materials.

Continue to meet certification standards maintained by the Alaska Seed Growers Association.

**Objective 3.4:** Nearly all development projects require some form of revegetation following surface disturbance. The primary users of seed in Alaska are the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, the Department of Defense, mining companies, and the oil industry. The use of native species in restoration should be encouraged and users' findings shared so all Alaska programs can benefit. The PMC will enhance its abilities to act as the state's land resources conservation laboratory.

Division benchmark: Continue to partner with public, private, commercial and tribal partners and land managers to apply new conservation methods using plants.

Continue to market native plant seed through specifications and recommendations.

**Objective 3.5:** The PMC must remain ever vigilant to industry/producer needs and changes in technology or policy directions and remain adaptable to the new conditions and economic environment. The PMC is the production arm of the

ADOA; it is an economic development proponent and a new crop source for Alaska agricultural producers. This requires stable and appropriate funding.

**Objective 3.6:** Educational programs from the PMC involve the intrinsic value of green space, agriculture land, and wilderness.

Division benchmark: With improvements in the acoustics of the PMC conference room and added teaching equipment including Smart Board technology, the PMC has the ability to do on-site and distance education and technology transfer programs and is available to other agencies and groups.

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**Agriculture Inspection Services – The ADOA will assist the Agricultural industry and continue to provide inspection services necessary to facilitate trade, meet regulatory requirements, and ensure food safety and security.**

**Situation:** ADOA inspection responsibilities and regulatory roles are essential for Alaska agriculture to grow, prosper, and market their products. ADOA will continue to provide the industry with Inspection Services that are required to move product into commerce and work with industry to meet new requirements.

**Objective 4.1: GAP & GHP** -- ADOA will continue to maintain trained auditors to offer the USDA programs of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP) to assess participants' efforts to minimize the risk of contamination of fresh fruits, vegetables, and miscellaneous commodities by microbial pathogens based on the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's "Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables."

Division benchmark: To provide 100% of inspections required and requested from industry.

**Objective 4.2: COOL** -- ADOA will continue to maintain trained inspectors to assist Alaskan agricultural producers with the mandatory Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) required on all perishable agricultural commodities by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service.

Division benchmark: To maintain credentials required to provide assistance to Alaskan agricultural producers.

**Objective 4.3: Shell Egg Inspection** -- ADOA will maintain a trained shell egg inspector for market surveillance of shell eggs and egg products and to inspect

shell egg handlers and their facilities in Alaska to ensure compliance with quality standards of the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service.

Division benchmark: To maintain credentials required to provide assistance to Alaskan agricultural producers.

**Objective 4.4: Market Inspections** – ADOA will maintain trained market inspectors to conduct both shipping point and destination market inspections to ensure compliance with quality standards of the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service.

Division benchmark: To provide 100% of inspections required, requested and provide assistance to Alaskan agricultural producers.

**Objective 4.5: Phytosanitary Inspections** – ADOA will maintain trained inspectors to inspect exportable plant products to ensure compliance with plant health standards of the importing countries. This is a program of the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service to facilitate international trade.

Division benchmark: To provide 100% of inspections required and requested and to provide assistance to Alaskan agricultural producers.

**Objective 4.6: Elk Fence Inspection** – ADOA will maintain trained inspectors to inspect diversified livestock farms and ensure that fencing for elk is constructed and maintained in compliance with standards outlined in AS 03.05.075.

Division benchmark: Meet inspection needs as required.

**Objective 4.7: Organic Inspection** – ADOA will continue to cooperate with the Washington State Department of Agriculture to make organic inspections available to Alaskan producers, processors and handlers.

Division benchmark: Maintain partnership with Washington State Department of agriculture to continue providing organic inspections requested by industry.

ADOA continues to utilize grant funding to cost share Organic inspection costs with producers.

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**Agriculture Marketing/Outreach – The ADOA will support and assist producers in increasing market share through marketing campaigns and continue to perform outreach and education.**

**Situation:** Agriculture is a valuable industry in Alaska. A strong Alaskan agricultural industry is an important enhancement of our state and provides food security. The ADOA will continue to work cooperatively with producers to showcase their quality product and increase their market share in Alaska, participate in conferences that provide education opportunities for producers, partner with youth education groups, and continue to education consumers and residents on the b of buying local.

**Objective 5.1:** The ADOA continues to coordinate, partner, and focus efforts to raise awareness of the importance of Alaskan agriculture to Alaska consumers, including issues of food security, health benefits of locally grown and taste tests.

Division benchmark: Increase coordination between agencies to promote Alaskan agriculture. In FY 2011 partnerships between groups allowed for increased marketing and education.

**Objective 5.2:** The ADOA will continue to support Alaska Grown through marketing campaigns.

Division benchmark: Continue to partner with other agencies, agriculture advocacy groups to market Alaska grown.

In FY 2011 - 8 marketing campaigns were completed.

- Two month Chef Al promotion
- Carrs Bench ads
- Travel Guide – Alaska Edition full page ad

- Alaska wellness Magazine ½ page ad
- Anchorage Daily News twice-weekly ads
- 61 degrees North Magazine ad
- Alaska Grown Face book page with over 5200 likes'
- Coordinated with Spell Out (ASMI) on Alaska Magazine Advertisement

**Objective 5:3:** The ADOA will continue to market Alaska Grown products to restaurants and institutions.

Division benchmark: Staff continues to work closely with Department of Commerce (DOC) to encourage the purchase of Alaska Grown. Implement a new Restaurant initiative, utilizing Specialty Crop Block Grant, summer of 2012.

**Objective 5.4:** The ADOA will continue to work with retailers and wholesalers to source Alaska Grown product.

Division benchmark: staff continues to work closely, providing signage and Alaska grown material to highlight local produce.

**Objective 5.5:** The ADOA will continue to work with other state agencies to purchase Alaskan Grown Product.

Division benchmark: ADOA continues to work with DOC to facilitate the use of Alaska grown in state institutions.

- Producers report an increase in institution purchases during FY11

**Objective 5.6:** The ADOA implemented a “Farm to School Program” to educate students and nutritionists about the availability, flavor, and nutrition of Alaska Grown food products.

Division benchmark: To educate our youth on agriculture production and utilize Alaskan grown products in local schools.

In FY2011 some examples are:

- Creation of a Farm to School brochure
- 17 Farm to school grants were awarded throughout the state to increase awareness about Alaska Agriculture.
- Three districts trying new Alaska grown foods
  - Broccoli & Zucchini in Mat-Su
  - Cabbage in Fairbanks
  - Cabbage & Bison in Tok
- School Garden Safety Guide developed to address potential food safety issues.

**Objective 5.7:** The ADOA will continue to apply for federal grants that benefit the agriculture industry. This grant funding is used for conference hosting, pass through grants, advertising and point of sale materials.

Division benchmark: Receive federal grants to assist the industry.

In FY2011 examples of grant funding:

- Farmers Market Support and Promotion
- Cooperative Marketing Program
  - 11 projects funded

**Objective 5.8:** The ADOA continues to partner with FFA, 4-H, and Ag in the Classroom to help develop tomorrow's agricultural leaders. ADOA strives to partner with other state agencies interested in youth education.

Division benchmark: ADOA will continue to be an advocate for youth education and support youth events through staff participation and sponsorship funds when able.

Work with local Soil and Water Districts to facilitate cooperator and youth partnerships.

**Objective 5.9:** The ADOA will assist in building a strong base for Alaskan agriculture through partnerships, promotion, advocacy and communication. It will establish and cultivate champions and advocates of Alaskan agriculture, including individuals, organizations, government entities, and user groups.

Division benchmark: ADOA will continue to champion agriculture education in outreach, education, and presentations.

Work cooperatively with state and quasi state agencies to mentor agriculture education, workshops and opportunities.

**State Agency/Industry Coordination** – ADOA will work cooperatively with other agencies to address stumbling blocks and concerns of industry.

**Objective 6.1:** ADOA will work closely with Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) and address wildlife management concerns of industry.

Division benchmark: Work with ADF&G to mitigate damage caused by Delta bison.

**Objective 6.2:** ADOA will facilitate communication between Department of Economic Development (DEC) and Industry.

Division benchmark: Host bi-monthly teleconferences with DEC and industry and provide an open line of communication.

**Objective 6.3:** ADOA promotes cottage industry development.

Division benchmark: ADOA will work closely with DEC to promote cottage industry development while addressing food safety concern.



### **Concerns brought forth by industry in this review process:**

- Increase food security
- Address agriculture land tax issues
- Address agriculture land covenants
- Interest in sale of smaller agriculture parcels
- Streamlining lease/permit/patent process
- Address bison conflict in Delta

### **Infrastructure needs brought forward by industry in original plan:**

- Local meat processing capabilities are needed near production areas.
- A stable dairy processing facility must be developed in the Mat-Su Valley.
- Manufacturing plant for urea that will sell to Alaska farmers as well as to international markets.
- Development of a phosphate mine.
- A vegetable processing plant to extend the market season for locally grown produce. (Mat-Su borough has done this study).
- Improved loading and unloading facilities for rail shipments.
- Rail spurs to Delta to carry fertilizers to farms and grain to markets.
- Formation of marketing cooperatives to insure consistent quality and supply, and develop new markets in the state.
- Access to natural gas for processing Alaskan products.
- Production Credits Program for producers meeting certain levels of production targets.
- Increase accessibility of USDA inspections coupled with the ability to sell locally in diverse areas of the state.
- Develop Nenana agricultural area and other agricultural areas.

**Agriculture Advisory Panel**

**Bryce Wrigley  
Jennifer Ansley  
Mark Troutman  
Marlene Wenger  
Tim Meyers  
Wayne Brost  
Rita Jo Schultz  
Rich Worrell  
Don Berberich  
Mike Emers  
Bruce Willard  
Lynn Gattis  
Jan Flora  
John Schirack  
Ben VanderWeele  
Stoney Wright  
Amanda Swanson  
Amy Pettit  
Erik Johnson  
Doug Warner  
Franci Havemeister**

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**Division of Agriculture – moving forward**

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## **Definitions & Acronyms**

The definition of agriculture is “The process, business, or science of producing food, feed, fiber, and other desired products by the cultivation of certain plants and the raising of domesticated animals (livestock). There are numerous branches of agriculture including: agronomy, animal husbandry, horticulture, floriculture, dairy production, and many others.

ADF&G –	Alaska Department of Fish & Game
ADNR –	Alaska Department of Natural Resources
ADOA-	Alaska Division of Agriculture
AFES –	Agriculture, Forestry, and Experiment Station
AOSA –	Association of Official Seed Analysts
ARLF –	Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund
ARS –	Agriculture Research Service
BAC –	Board of Agriculture & Conservation
BMP’s –	Best Management Practices
DOC -	Department of Commerce & Economic Development
DEC -	Department of Environmental Conservation
FFA –	Future Farmers of America
LUCL –	Land Use and Conservation Laboratory
MMM&S –	Mt. McKinley Meat & Sausage
NRCS –	Natural Resources Conservation Service
PMC –	Plant Material Center
SWCD –	Soil and Water Conservation Districts
UAF –	University of Alaska, Fairbanks
USDA –	United States Department of Agriculture