



The Division of Agriculture Activities

March 6, 2014

Find us on the web at:
<http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag>

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Questions or Comments?
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Director's Note

Spring is in the air – maybe not to stay, but this past weekend sure was beautiful. Temperatures in the high 30's to low 40's made the annual "scavenger hunt" for things missing from my yard, almost enjoyable. Every year, the woods around my house become a treasure trove of items that were left unprotected from the infamous mat-su winds that blow through the valley. This year was no different, sand box toys, pool items, and garage buckets were reclaimed and put back in their rightful place in eager anticipation of the true arrival of spring.

Just as spring brings change, each new year brings changes as well. This year, the Division of Agriculture said goodbye to [Plant Materials Center \(PMC\)](#) Manager, Stoney Wright. Upon Stoney's retirement, management structure was changed and now two managers split the responsibility of the PMC. Programs and responsibilities have been divided and now Rob Carter and Brianne Blackburn actively manage different sections within the PMC and are actively involved with the programs they manage. The vacant manager position will be reclassified to a programmatic position which will assist with the further development and promotion of the agriculture industry.

Another change on the near horizon is the retirement of our potato specialist, Bill Campbell. The potato program has seen several changes recently, one of which was the Alaska Seed Growers, Inc. (ASGI) passing authority for seed certification back to DNR. This change, places all responsibility within DNR; for a complete explanation read the inspection section Potato update. Bill Campbell has been working closely with Inspector, Mia Kirk to assure a smooth transition in the program. The Division of Agriculture is reviewing current processes and procedures and will be updating the potato regulations in the near future. Until that time, certification standards will follow the Potato Certification Handbook that can be found here: http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_potato.htm.

The Division of Agriculture is hosting a Potato Symposium on March 22, 2014 at the Plant Materials Center and is available by remote attendance through "Go to Meeting". This informational meeting will present to potato growers and interested persons the latest information concerning important diseases, disease management strategies and seed export basics for this internationally regulated crop. To view the agenda and the remote attendance information go to http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_potato.htm.

The legislative session is almost half over and there are multiple bills of interest to agriculture for a brief overview of Bills introduced earlier this session see last month's (February) newsletter at http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_newsletters.htm. Legislation recently introduced includes the following: **HB 344**: Introduced by Representatives Olson, Chenault, & Seaton – An Act prohibiting the importation, sale, purchase, or release into waters of the state of certain invasive aquatic plant species.

If any legislation introduced this year is of interest to you, be sure to contact Committee members and participate in public testimony opportunities. Your voice is your most powerful tool so take advantage of opportunities to provide input.

If you are looking for an agriculture volunteer opportunity, the Board of Agriculture and Conservation is in need of committed agriculturalists to serve on the board. For more information please contact me or visit <http://gov.alaska.gov/parnell/services/boards-commissions.html>.

As always, please take the time to read the newsletter and mark your calendars for upcoming events. If you have any questions or concerns, please give me a call at 761-3867 or send me an email at franci.havemeister@alaska.gov.

~ *Franci Havemeister*

*"One trouble with trouble is that it always starts out fun."
— Unknown*



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Agriculture Calendar

- Tue. **March 11th - 13th** **Sustainable Agriculture Conference (SARE).** Wedgewood Resort. Fairbanks. 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. Details: [here](#)
- Thur. **March 13th** **Winter Conservation Series.** Private/Homeowners Well Protection & Testing. Mat-Su College, FSM 103, Palmer. 7-8:30 p.m. Details: [here](#)
- Thur. **March 19th** **Walking the Red Road.** Artemisia in Alaska. Plant Materials Center, 5300 S. Bodenbug Spur, Palmer. 11-1 p.m. Details: [here](#)
- Thur. **March 20th** **Winter Conservation Series.** Greenhouse Fundamentals. Mat-Su College, FSM 103, Palmer. 7-8:30 p.m. Details: [here](#)
- Sat. **March 22nd** **Potato Symposium.** Plant Materials Center, 5310 S. Bodenbug Spur, Palmer. 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Details: [here](#)
- Thur. **March 27th** **Winter Conservation Series.** Fruit Tree Propagation & Grafting. Mat-Su College, FSM 103, Palmer. 7-8:30 p.m. Details: [here](#)
- Thur. **March 27th** **Board of Agriculture & Conservation Meeting.** 1800 Glenn Hwy, Suite 12, Palmer. 1 p.m. Details: [here](#)

If you have an event that you would like to add to the calendar, please contact [Lora Haralson](#).

Marketing Section



On-Farm Food Safety Workshops

This workshop targets both large and small growers, farmers' markets, home gardeners, and anyone who is interested in learning more about ways to produce, handle, and distribute fresh produce in a safe way.

A typical agenda for the workshop is as follows:

Content (around 1 ½ hours)

1. Welcome, introduction, purpose
2. GAP/GHP overview
3. Risk analysis and water source
4. On Farm Food Safety Plans
5. Harvesting, packing, and distribution

Farm visit (around 1 ½ hours)

- On site examples and answering of questions.

Some other topics that will be covered

- Schools as a market, record keeping, liability insurance, and traceability of product.

Quotes from satisfied attendees -
"Great at answering our questions right away with a very diverse group."
"Very helpful - knowledge is power to move ahead in the right direction."



If you would like to see a workshop held in your area or if you have any questions or comments please contact us:

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The Division of Agriculture will not have a **2014 Cooperative Marketing Program** grant cycle. For more information please contact [Amy Pettit](#).

Now that the Farm Bill has been signed and enacted, the marketing team is very close to releasing information about the **2014 Specialty Crop Competitive Grant**.

Watch the Division website and next months' newsletter for the full information!

We are now accepting applications for the

**2014-2015
Alaska Grown Sourcebook!**

Deadline: April 15th

The Source Book is the 'go to guide' for finding Alaska Grown products; the Division will print and distribute over 5,000 copies and has spent hours upgrading the online version of the tool.

Don't forget this is **FREE ADVERTISING** for you and your farm business, so click the link that applies to you below and submit your information. Remember that we **CAN NOT** include your data unless you respond to the information request each year. If your farm business was included in 2012, we cannot automatically include you in 2014 - we need your permission each time.

Also, just because you signed up to be a member of the Alaska Grown program, **DOES NOT** mean your information will be included in the 2014 Book. **Again, you must respond to the new request for information each time.**



Help us help you! Our goal is to include 270 farms!

Complete the [farmer and vendor application](#) here.

Complete the [agriculture services application](#) here.

Inspection Staff

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Pest Detection / Inspection Section

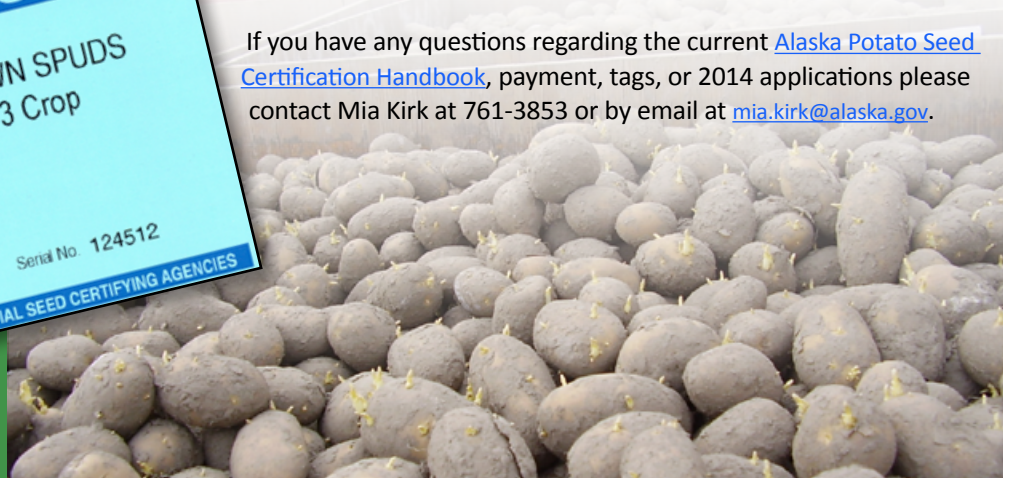
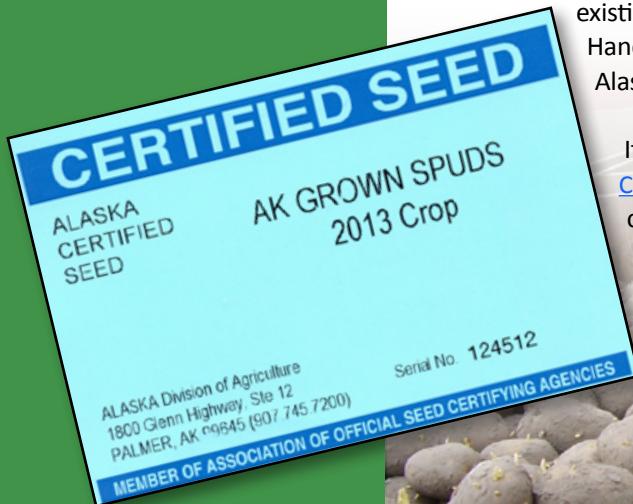
Alaska Seed Potato Certification Program Changes

Effective January 1, 2014, the State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Division of Agriculture has resumed responsibility for the Alaska Certified Seed Potato Program. The Alaska Seed Growers Inc. (ASGI) voted to terminate the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DNR and ASGI at their annual meeting in February 2013. Please note the following changes regarding payment, tag requests, and applications for potato seed certification.

- 2013 Certified seed potato tag requests for 2014 growing season:
 - All certified seed potato tag requests must be made one week in advance either by email at: dnr.seed.certification@alaska.gov or phone at 745-7200.
 - The 2013 seed certification fees must be paid prior to tags being issued. Please call 745-7200 for payment arrangements.
- 2014 Potato Seed Certification applications:
 - The 2014 Seed certification applications will be available May 1, 2014 online at the [Alaska Division of Agriculture website](#) or at our offices in Palmer or Fairbanks. Applications are due on June 15, 2014 and payment is due at time of application.
- 2014 Potato Seed Certification Handbook*:
 - The Handbook has been updated to reflect changes in responsibility as well as changes needed in order to manage the Alaska Certified Seed Potato Program.
 - A copy of the most recent handbook may be obtained [online](#) at the Alaska Division of Agriculture website or a hard copy may be obtained at our offices in Palmer or Fairbanks.

*Please note the Alaska Division of Agriculture is currently reviewing existing regulations and will be revising the Potato Seed Certification Handbook. Until the new regulation and handbook are adopted, the Alaska Division of Agriculture will follow the current standards.

If you have any questions regarding the current [Alaska Potato Seed Certification Handbook](#), payment, tags, or 2014 applications please contact Mia Kirk at 761-3853 or by email at mia.kirk@alaska.gov.



PMC Spring Seed Sale for Commercial Growers

The sale for Foundation and Natural Selection grasses, forbs, and grains is scheduled from **April 14 - 25, 2014**. Seeds that will be available for sale will be posted on the [Division of Agriculture](#) and the [Plant Materials Center](#) web pages on April 14. Please [e-mail](#) or call Peggy Hunt for more information, 745-8721.

State Establishes Quarantine of Five Invasive Aquatic Plants

The Alaska Division of Agriculture has established a quarantine at the state boundaries to prevent the entry and spread of five specific aquatic invasive weeds. Management efforts are being implemented to address current Elodea infestations and establishing the quarantine stops further importation of the pests listed below which are popular for use in classrooms and in the aquarium trade. The Division of Agriculture is in the process of amending current Plant Health and Quarantine Regulations (11 AAC34) and will be adding these five aquatic plants to the Noxious Weed Listing.

These freshwater, aquatic invasive plants have the potential to impact freshwater resources and fish habitat in Alaska through the degradation of fish habitat, displacement of native flora and fauna, reduction of recreation and transportation access, and reduction of waterfront property values. Prohibiting the importation, sale, and transportation of these species will help prevent new infestations in the state and help protect Alaska's natural resources. Accidental or deliberate introduction of these plants can lead to the formation of dense mats that can drastically alter a water body's ecology.

QUARANTINE RESTRICTIONS: It is prohibited to import, transport, buy, sell, offer for sale, or distribute plants or plant parts of the regulated species within the state of Alaska. For more information on these quarantined plants and the quarantines visit <http://plants.alaska.gov/invasives/aquatics.html> or [email](mailto:Brianne.Blackburn@alaska.gov) Brianne Blackburn.

Eurasian watermilfoil

Myriophyllum spicatum:

Once commonly sold as an aquarium plant and is now regulated in most states across the country. Eurasian watermilfoil is considered one of the worst aquatic plant pests in North America.

It has NOT yet been found in Alaskan waters.



Waterweed (*Elodea canadensis*, *E. nuttalli*)

Elodea canadensis, *E. nuttalli*:

Both waterweed species have been found growing in a limited number of Alaskan waters. Management efforts are being implemented to address the current infestations and prevent new introductions.

Elodea has leaves in whorls of 3 (occasionally 4) around a lighter green stem. The small leaves can be 6-15 mm long and 1.5-4mm wide. Plants often grow in tangled masses. They readily break into fragments that can float to new locations and re-root. Find out more about [Elodea](#).

It HAS been found in Alaskan waters.



Brazilian Elodea

Egeria densa:

A popular aquarium plant and can be found for sale in pet and aquarium stores under the name Anacharis or Elodea. Brazilian Elodea looks like a much larger version of the waterweed species *Elodea canadensis* and *E. nuttalli*.

It has NOT yet been found in Alaskan waters.



Hydrilla

Hydrilla:

Closely resembles both the Brazilian Elodea and the Waterweed species. It can be distinguished by the presence of tubers in the soil. Hydrilla has leaves in whorls of 5 with small serrations on the leaf edges. Hydrilla can grow 1" a day to fill a waterbody.

It has NOT yet been found in Alaskan waters.



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<http://plants.alaska.gov/>

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Plant Materials Center

Time to Start Planning Your Alaskan Garden

With spring quickly approaching it is never too early to start planning your garden. Many Alaskans begin seedlings indoors as early as March. There are many factors from climate, size, temperature, pH and what you decide to grow that will help make your garden successful. Below are some things to consider while planning your garden.

- 1) Don't supersize it. Plan a garden that suits your family's needs.
- 2) Location, location, location. Pick a sunny, southerly exposed area.
- 3) Be aware of wind. You may need to construct a 4-6 foot tall windbreak to protect your garden.
- 4) Test your soil. The best time to collect a sample is in the fall but you can test in spring before you plant.
- 5) Be picky about what you plant. Select plants and varieties that grow well in Alaska.
- 6) Rototill your soil about 6-8 inches in depth and remove large rocks. Add in organic matter if needed.
- 7) pH matters. If your pH is low you may need to add ground limestone to ensure proper nutrient availability.
- 8) Feed it! Depending on your soil test recommendations you may need to add fertilizer.
- 9) Make it smooth. Prepare your seedbed by raking the surface smooth to aid in good germination.
- 10) Get it warm! Cover your prepared seedbed with clear plastic to raise the soil temperature and don't transplant seedlings outdoors too early. It is a good idea to "harden off" your plants by setting them outside a few hours at a time so they may acclimate to the outdoor climate. This can help prevent stunted growth. Try an hour the first day, two hours the second day, etc. Once outdoors you can grow your plants through openings in the plastic.
- 11) Now you are ready to plant. Stake your rows and plant your seeds at the recommended depth on seed packages.
- 12) Give them room to grow. Thin out seedlings removing the weaker plants.
- 13) Pull weeds. By removing weeds while they are small you avoid the risk of hurting your vegetable's roots.
- 14) Hydrate. Just like you, your garden will need plenty of water. If you grow your plants through the clear plastic be sure enough water is reaching the roots of your plants.
- 15) Watch out for bugs! Keep a close eye on insect infestation and use pesticides or other methods early if necessary. Your local Cooperative Extension Service

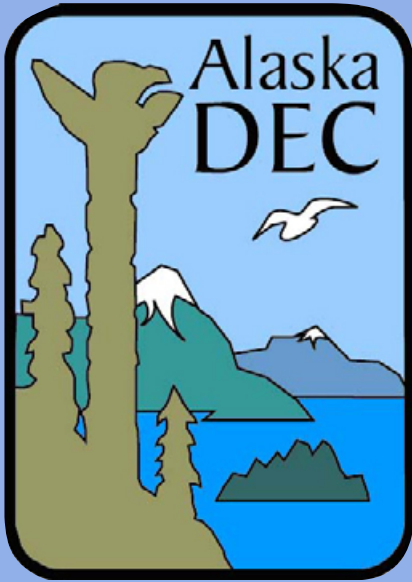
can help recommend what is right for your garden.

16) Enjoy! Harvest vegetables as they become ready and be aware that with proper attendance beans, peas, and some other vegetables can produce all season long.

Last but not least, don't forget the flowers! In addition to adding color and joy to your garden flowers will help attract bees that are needed for pollination.

For more detailed information visit the UAF Cooperative Extension publication titled *16 Steps to Gardening in Alaska* [here](#).





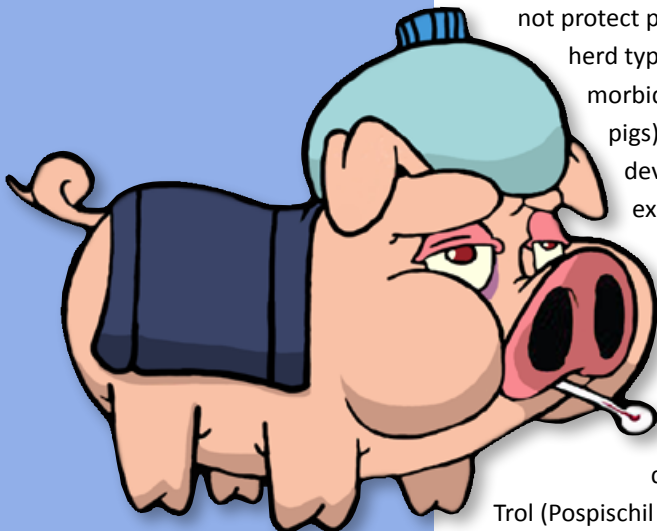
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Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation: Division of Environmental Health

Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea

Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea virus (PEDv) is highly infectious disease of pigs causing high mortality in piglets and was first recognized in the USA in May of 2013. It has now been reported in 25 States and 4 Canadian Provinces. It has killed over 1 million pigs so far. The disease is still actively spreading at this time, with 272 cases reported in the week of Feb 9, 2014.

The disease was known to be present in Europe (first identified in 1971 in Great Britain) and became endemic in Asia in 1982. In 2010, a variant strain was identified on pig farms in China resulting in decreased efficacy of the PED vaccines routinely used in Chinese sow herds and severe disease (high morbidity and mortality). Up until May 2013 the disease had never been identified in North or South America. The virus currently circulating in the U.S. swine herd is 99.4% identical (homologous) with a strain known to be circulating in China in 2012.

PEDv is not a listed disease of the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE); is not considered a foreign animal disease in the United States; and there are currently no interstate trade restrictions pertaining to PEDV in U.S. swine. It is not a zoonotic disease, does not affect people, and is not a food safety concern.

The primary mechanism by which the disease has spread is by contamination at areas where pigs from different sources are concentrated (markets, buying stations, shows, fairs, etc.) and at transportation vehicles (livestock haulers, feed trucks). Biosecurity measures that prevent exposure to contaminated materials (manure, feed, vehicles, equipment) that were exposed to the virus by contact with infected pigs will help reduce the risk of disease transmission. Many livestock and animal health organizations have issued recommendations to enhance biosecurity measures associated with markets, buying stations, and transportation.

PEDv is a corona virus and although it may cause the same clinical signs as another familiar corona virus, transmissible gastroenteritis (TGE), the virus is unrelated to TGE.

Vaccination for TGE (or prior exposure to TGE or Porcine respiratory corona virus) will not protect pigs from infection with PEDv. Introduction of PED virus into a naïve herd typically results in acute outbreaks of severe diarrhea, vomiting, high morbidity (often 100%) and variable mortality (as high as 100% in young pigs). The incubation period is short (2 - 4 days) and natural immunity develops over two to three weeks. As a result sows that have been exposed to the virus will produce protective antibodies in the colostrum to protect future litters of piglets.

The virus is diagnosed based on clinical signs, history, laboratory tests and post-mortem examination of dead pigs. Treatment has limited success and generally involves supportive medication to maintain hydration. The virus is susceptible to a number of common disinfectants including: Virkon S, Clorox, 1 Stroke Environ, and Tek-Trol (Pospischil A, et al; 2002). The best protection is biosecurity measures such as, sanitizing and drying pig trailers which has been effective against PEDv.



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UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS

School of Natural Resources & Agricultural Sciences

Alaska Co-op Development Program Brings Farmers Together

Story contributed by Nancy Tarnai

Improving Alaska's food security through agricultural efforts is complicated. There's a lot more to it than planting, cultivating and harvesting; including considerations about economic indicators, cultural systems, social interactions, business concerns and consumer preferences.

To that end, the Alaska Co-op Development Program has stationed a research assistant in Fairbanks for several weeks. Christine Nguyen is studying the Interior's agricultural system so the community can take an educated approach to creating an agricultural cooperative.

Funded by a Division of Agriculture grant to the Fairbanks Economic Development Corp., the study is focused on vegetable and fruit growers and potential buyers, such as businesses, restaurants and institutions.

In meetings led by Julie Emslie, FEDC's project manager, it was determined that a top priority for Interior farmers is establishing a cooperative that could help them coordinate sales, make group purchases and address crop storage. "What would it look like if the farmers marketed together?" Emslie asked. "There have been a lot of questions and there are still a lot of unknowns.

"We wanted to study the market so we could make a much more educated approach to creating a co-op."

Farmers serving on the steering committee are Susan Kerndt, Brad St. Pierre, Jen Becker and Avril Wiers. Meetings, which have been held all winter, are open to the public.

"We are hoping the information collected will help start a co-op," Emslie said. "We're looking at the potential for wholesale and whether we should focus on certain items and focus on institutions versus retail."

Critical things like when buyers for restaurants or institutions want to buy fresh produce will help growers plan what to grow and when. And the same goes for restaurants. "If they know there will be an influx in kale they can plan for it," she said.

"We're just collecting information to share with farmers and figuring out where to go from there to increase their ability to get food into the market."

Nguyen, the research tech, said, "It's funny how much this has grown to include so many farmers and community leaders." She has been encouraged by the institution and restaurant buyers' enthusiasm about local vegetables. "Almost all of them valued fresh produce," Nguyen said. "Many of them just didn't know the farmers wanted to sell to them. We are helping connect the missing link."

"The food purchasers are developing relationships with the farmers and that helps," Emslie said.

"Our farms here are small," she explained. "To sell outside the farmers markets or a CSA (community supported agriculture) is difficult. Co-ops are tools that are used in other parts of the country."

While it's hard for individual farms to deal with storage, processing, marketing and distribution issues, if the farmers work together, the systems will be more affordable. "We are looking at a way to sell collectively," Emslie said. "The coolest thing about the co-op is that it will be farmer owned. A co-op removes the middle men from the equation; the farmers will have direct say."

Nguyen said the farmers know there are untapped markets which will help them gain new customers. "They realize the current clientele is static."

Once the survey results are compiled, a report will be presented to the steering committee and Emslie plans on giving a talk about it at the sustainable agriculture conference in Fairbanks in March.

"The rest of the state is watching this, particularly the Alaska Food Policy Council," Emslie said. "This was brought on in Fairbanks by the interest of the farmers. How do we recreate this?"

Nguyen said, "I really appreciate that the goals are tangible. The buyers are enthusiastic and the farmers want helpful information. All it takes is information to get them talking."

"Shifting to local food is an uphill battle," Emslie said. "Creating something new takes time."



Alaska Co-op Development Program meeting.