

AG STRATEGIES



SECTOR STRATEGY FOR AGRICULTURE

This report charts a course for diversifying agriculture in Fremont County and Central Wyoming, based on economic research and industry analysis, to capitalize on opportunities for both the public and private sector.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Agriculture is the third largest sector of the Wyoming economy and an economic driver in Central Wyoming and Fremont County. Central Wyoming College received funding from the United States Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, and the Wyoming Business Council to develop a collaborative strategy designed to grow and diversify the agriculture sector. The scope of this report focuses on Fremont County; however, where possible, it includes information about other counties in the service area of Central Wyoming College to provide the foundation for developing a regional comprehensive economic development strategy in the future. Central Wyoming College utilized a competitive process to hire Orbis Advantage, Inc. to develop this report which identifies opportunities for community and regional development.

The four core industries identified (Food, Beef, Equine, and Agritourism) can have a catalytic impact to transform communities to be more vibrant to attract and retain tourists and entrepreneurs. Vibrant equine activities and businesses could attract horse enthusiasts and competitors to the region, filling hotels and restaurants. Focusing on components of these four areas can play an important role in filling in “main street” while providing more local jobs and amenities.

The Sector Strategy for Agriculture is an economic development plan, focused on agriculture diversification. Components of the Ag Sector Strategy can be implemented by the public or private sector. For the greatest impact, agriculture development will best be accomplished through public-private partnerships.





The report contains the following components:

Fremont County Economic Profile

This section highlights the demographic characteristics and economy of Fremont County, Wyoming, by examining the population, workforce, educational attainment, and top industries.

- ◀ *There is a great need for economic diversification in Fremont County since its per capita income is so low – third lowest in Wyoming and \$3,000 below the national average.*

Regional Agriculture Profile

This section describes the agriculture sector in Fremont County, Wyoming and the neighboring region (Teton and Hot Springs counties). It briefly frames Fremont County within the bigger picture of agriculture in Wyoming.

- ◀ *The appendix includes an ag profile as a stand-alone marketing piece.*

Fremont County Agriculture: SWOT Analysis

This analysis compares the relative competitive advantages and disadvantages for the agriculture sector in Fremont County by listing the strengths and weaknesses. The list of opportunities and threats for the agriculture sector help identify chances for regional improvement or progress and negative impacts or regional decline to be addressed.

- ◀ *As a regional hub for innovation and education, Central Wyoming College combines a robust network of assets with a positive case for further investment, to leverage itself and Fremont County as a main economic driver now and into the future.*

Agriculture Economics

This section identifies significant sub-sectors by current contribution, trends and potential growth by examining the value chain for agriculture. This important market research can be used to support the business case for public and private sector agriculture initiatives.

- ◀ *If just a quarter of the \$81 million of imported agriculture products were produced locally, this would amount to \$20.5 million in revenue for Central Wyoming.*





Harvesting Ideas

This report offers case studies as examples that can be replicated in Fremont County. These include local success stories with the potential for expansion and regional and national projects that are scale appropriate. This section is organized in the agriculture sub-sectors of local food production, packaging and marketing; beef production and meat processing; livestock genetics; equine; and agritourism. Highlights include:

- *Several projects have built the momentum for a healthy agricultural economy in Fremont County. Regional and national food projects demonstrate expansion opportunities.*
- *Beef production has the potential for growth in Fremont County and Wyoming. There is a growing meat processing industry in the service area of Central Wyoming College. Regional and national projects could be replicated in Fremont, Teton and Hot Springs counties.*
- *Livestock genetics is a subsector high on the agriculture value chain with tremendous growth potential in Wyoming. Examples show how the college could open a center (to expand on its instruction in artificial insemination) or recruit a private facility to the area.*
- *The equine nutrition and health industry is growing in the Rocky Mountain region and nationally.*
- *The destination business model offers people something to see and do, something to eat or drink, and something to buy. Agriculture is very appealing to visitors who desire to experience how food is produced or immerse themselves in the tradition and culture of the West.*

Strategies for Growth and Diversification of Agriculture Sector

This report identifies opportunities in agriculture that have potential but are not currently represented or fully developed in Fremont County. Themes identified for research and analysis of market potential included cultivating opportunities in:

- **Food Production, Packaging and Marketing**
- **Beef Production and Meat Processing**
- **Equine Industry**
- **Agritourism**





A chapter for each sub sector examines strategies for growth and diversification of the agriculture, based on the analysis of data and public input, SWOT analysis, and research on best practices and industry trends. This section provides a framework for the consideration and evaluation of future strategies for the growth and diversification of the agriculture sector in Fremont County and the Central Wyoming College service area.

Academic Programming

Central Wyoming College can play a leading role in regional economic development through academic programming. This section highlights opportunities in workforce development and entrepreneurship to meet the needs of industry. The college is developing two important assets to position the region for economic growth - the Rocky Mountain Complex for Agriculture and Equine Science and the Alpine Science Institute.

Regional Economic Development

This section highlights national trends for structuring economic development organizations and suggests funding opportunities. It identifies public sector and non-profit partners, provides a snapshot of each organization's capacity, and suggests roles for each partner in the agriculture sector strategy. It includes strategies of interest to Central Wyoming College and statewide economic development initiatives identified by the ENDOW Sustainable Harvest sub-committee. This section also identifies ENDOW initiatives, not specific to agriculture, but overlapping opportunities for community colleges: technology, workforce and education, entrepreneurial ecosystem. Three key ingredients to a successful economic development effort:


- ◀ *broad support from the public and private sector*
- ◀ *regional cooperation*
- ◀ *adequate funding and staffing*

Action Planning

This section offers ideas for developing the agriculture sector in the framework of the subsectors: food, beef, equine, and agritourism. We offer suggestions for supporting these development strategies through academic programming and regional economic development efforts.

- ◀ **This menu of options is not all-inclusive; it is intended to trigger more ideas that lead to short-term activities and stimulate long-range planning and implementation by both the public and private sectors.**





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Navigating the next steps



This report is intended to build on the momentum created by the vision of the Rocky Mountain Complex for Agriculture and Equine Science at Central Wyoming College. It provides best practices for agriculture diversification, backed by market research specific to Central Wyoming.

This report is a valuable tool to spur business development for capturing a share of the millions of dollars spent on agricultural products and services that are imported to the region; and capitalizing on the millions of people who visit the area annually. These strategies are best implemented by a partnership between the public and private sectors.

Even with extensive research and dialog with folks in Fremont County over the past few months, this document is only a beginning. We encourage Central Wyoming College and its partners to continue the conversation, expand on these ideas, and use the **Sector Strategy for Agriculture** to serve as a catalyst for economic growth in the region.

