



Colorado State University Extension CSU Western Campus

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**The Economic Impact of Agriculture in Mesa County
-by-
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(Grand Junction, Colorado) During these unprecedented times of COVID-19, one question keeps arising over and over from citizens across Colorado: How will our local economy continue to survive during these times of closure and shutdown? The loss of the JUCO world series in 2020 for Grand Junction was devastating, as the estimated return to the economy is at least 3 million dollars annually. Tourism, another large driver of our economy that is also reduced due to COVID-19, brings an impact of roughly 4 million to our local economy. Oil prices are bleak, with little indication of a light at the end of the tunnel. Still, the virus rages on and threatens to keep certain businesses closed and to cancel even more events into the summer that our economy relies on to survive.

Farming and ranching powered Grand Junction's early boom days, from the first harvested fruit crop in 1884, to the development of the sugar beet industry in 1899, and into 1915 when the Highline Canal was able to deliver water to 40,000 acres, enabling diversification of crops, including corn and wheat. It is time we look to agriculture again to consistently support our local economy to help us through this crisis.

Grocery store workers and health care professionals have been our salvation during this time, and are fervently working to meet the surge in demand for food and to meet healthcare needs in the Grand Valley. Along with these essential workers, farmers and ranchers across Mesa County are also answering the call and stepping up, working significantly longer hours than normal to make sure there is food to stock the store shelves with and to keep our population healthy and fed.

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, the Market Value of Agricultural Products sold in Mesa County was \$94,186,000. Livestock sales contributed 48.27 million dollars and crop sales contributed 45.91 million dollars to this total. Keep in mind that each of these dollars will turn

over two to three times in the community, providing a much larger impact on our community. The USDA ERS estimates the average agricultural multiplier to be between 2.6 and 2.8. This translates to an impact of \$263,720,000 on our economy annually. This monetary impact comes in just under other industries in our community and the college world series event. Every cow you see standing in the field in Mesa county contributes between \$600-\$800 to the economy. When you take an evening drive through the orchards to see the blossoms, or gaze out across the field crops growing in Fruita, each acre you see contributes between \$600-\$750 to the economy in a normal year.

Unfortunately, the recent losses we experienced in the orchards in last week's frost could not have been more untimely. We will likely have enough peaches to support our local markets, but beyond that supply will fall short, as producers are estimating 80 to 90% losses to early season varieties in their orchards.

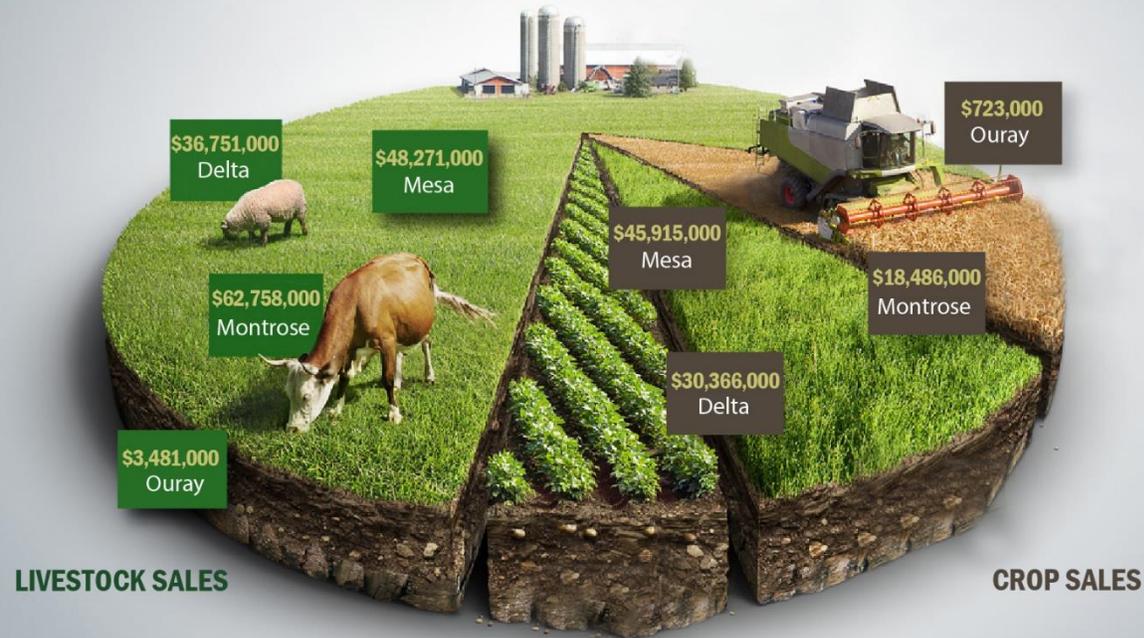
Agriculture runs deep in the roots of our Grand Valley paradise, and it will continue to support our economy through even the worst times now and in the future. If you haven't yet today, remember to thank a farmer or rancher for being another lifeline to our great community.

For more information contact Jenny Beiermann at 970-241-3346 or email at jenny.beiermann@colostate.edu. See infographic below for supporting information and sales data.

Tri-River Area IMPACT OF AGRICULTURE

TOTAL MARKET VALUE OF PRODUCTS SOLD:

Delta \$67,117,000 | Mesa \$94,186,000 | Montrose \$81,226,000 | Ouray \$4,204,000



Data Source: 2017 Census of Agriculture

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