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From: National Young Farmers Coalition www.youngfarmers.org

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Montana Young Farmers Ask for Senator Tester's Support in the Farm Bill

Sen. Tester, only active farmer in Senate, welcomes input from young farmers

BUTTE, MT – Monday, October 23 – Young farmers from Montana gathered on Saturday to share their needs with Senator Jon Tester's staff (D-MT) at a "Young Farmer Roundtable" hosted by the [National Young Farmers Coalition](http://www.youngfarmers.org) (NYFC) as part of the annual AERO Expo.

At the roundtable, a panel of young farmers spoke to their challenges as young agricultural entrepreneurs, citing issues such as access to land, credit, and student loan debt. They highlighted the importance of federal programs funded by the farm bill to their farm operations and asked for Senator Tester's support in the farm bill process.

As a Montana farmer himself, Senator Tester can be a champion for young farmers in the next farm bill. His staffer, Erik Nyland, said Tester is very interested in the farm bill as he's the only active farmer in the Senate. He said, "If you have any input for him...new ideas, student loan forgiveness and things like that, I'm here to take that back."

Farmer participants included: **Jacob Cowgill**, Prairie Heritage Farm in Power; **Brianna Ewert**, farmer and Farm to Institution Manager at Lake County Community Development Corporation in Ronana; **Laura Garber**, Homestead Organics in Hamilton; **Bart Morris**, Oxbow Cattle Company in Missoula; and **Whitney Pratt**, Farm Manager at Purple Frog Garden in Whitefish.

Bart Morris of Oxbow Cattle Company was able to buy a piece of land in Missoula thanks to the ACEP-ALE program. He said, "The thing that's allowing us to do this, which is a huge component of this year's farm bill, is the [ACEP]-ALE program, which will be cut in half next year, from \$500 million to \$250 million. If we weren't able to participate in this, we could not conserve this land that is directly up against the urban sprawl of Missoula."

Local event partners included the Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO) and the Community Food and Agricultural Coalition (CFAC). The event was made possible with support from Annie's Homegrown, the California-based maker of natural and organic pastas, meals, and

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snacks. Shauna Sadowski, Senior Manager of Sustainability at Annie's said, "As a food company, we recognize the critical role that farmers play in making our foods possible. With the average age of the American farmer at 58, and rising, we're committed to supporting the next generation of farmers. We applaud the great work taking place in Montana to support young agricultural entrepreneurs."

The National Young Farmers Coalition (NYFC) is an advocacy network of farmers fighting for the future of agriculture. Visit NYFC on the web at www.youngfarmers.org, and on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#) and [Instagram](#).

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