

WASHINGTON SUSTAINABLE FOOD & FARMING NETWORK



List of 2012 State Legislative Issues

The Network, an activist-based nonprofit organization, formed in 1997 to create a statewide, grassroots voice for sustainable food and farming advocacy. Join our listserv and grow our voice for sustainable food and farming! Below are policy issues we are tracking. For more information contact Ellen Gray, Executive Director 360-336-9694 or egray@wsffn.org [wsffn.org](http://wsffn.org)

State Legislation	CALL OLYMPIA TOLL FREE 1-800-562-6000 <a href="http://www.leg.gov.wa">www.leg.gov.wa</a>
Farmers Market Nutrition Programs slated for elimination in FY 2011-13	<p>Last session we were able to save the Farmers Market Nutrition Programs (FMNP) but once again the programs are slated for elimination in the Governor’s budget reduction package. Department of Health (DOH) and Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) operate FMNPs which provide vouchers to low-income mothers, children and seniors to purchase healthy food from local growers at farmers markets. With only \$100,000 in state funds, FMNP leveraged more than \$894,000 in federal dollars in 2011 to support local farms and healthy food for poor families. DOH’s Nutrition Services division provides administrative support for WIC FMNP and, through shared efficiencies with DSHS, for the Senior FMNP as well. Without sufficient administrative funds in the DOH budget, the Farmers Market Nutrition Programs for WIC families <i>and</i> for low income seniors will be eliminated. This year the two programs leveraged \$894,000 of federal dollars! 887 farmers, 130 farmers markets and 179 farm stores received FMNP dollars. This is a strong program that leverages 9:1 federal dollars, helps our farmers, our children and our local economy! Without a state program, the federal dollars will go to another state, and it is unlikely that Washington will ever get it back. <b>Our Request:</b> The Network urges protecting \$100,000 in DOH’s budget to administer the Farmers Market Nutrition Programs for WIC and Seniors. We are collecting farms and organizations that support FMNP. Please visit <a href="http://wsffn.org">wsffn.org</a> and download our endorsement form to lend your name to the effort to protect FMNP.</p>
Conservation Districts Slated for 57% Cuts In state Budget	<p>The governor is proposing to cut \$1,360,000 from the Conservation Commission and conservation districts: Her Proviso states, <i>“Reduce administrative and operations grants to conservation districts by 57% percent to encourage districts to pursue local assessments. To date, only 15 of 47 conservation districts have implemented local assessments to fund district administration and projects.”</i> The cuts will reduce the districts ability to provide assistance to landowners. The requirement to implement local assessments is challenging for districts because the county commissioners (or councils) must vote to approve any assessment and many won’t do that because it’s a tax vote. The WA Conservation Commission recognizes the need to take their fair share and voted in September to reduce their budget by 5% so the impact to districts would be minimized. The governor’s proposal is out of proportion to other natural resource agency proposed cuts. Last year the legislature completely eliminated WSDA’s small farm direct marketing program so very few state funded resources are available for small farms and the conservation districts are an important resource for technical support to small farms. Albert Roberts with the Okanogan Conservation District and the WA Association of Conservation Districts is taking a lead on this issue and he can be reached at 509-322-0445 or <a href="mailto:albert_roberts@hotmail.com">albert_roberts@hotmail.com</a>.</p>
Statewide Small Farm Internship Program SSB 6349	<p>In 2010 The legislature passed SSB 6349 which established a small farm internship pilot program in Skagit and San Juan Counties. A report summarizing the results of the pilot project is being prepared and will be presented to Legislature by Dec 31 2011. There is interest in supporting a bill that would create a statewide small farm internship program within Labor and Industries. Sarita Schaffer with GrowFood is taking the lead and she can be reached at <a href="mailto:sarita@growfood.org">sarita@growfood.org</a></p>

<p>Executive Order 10-02 Strengthening WA's Food System</p>	<p>In 2010 SSB 6343 passed the House and Senate and would have created a statewide food policy council but unfortunately the bill was vetoed by the governor, who supported the intent but did not want to create a new council in statute. Instead she signed EO 10-02 in June 2010 which directed five state agencies to work with stakeholders to strengthen our food system. A draft report is being prepared and the final will be presented to the legislature and governor in December. The report provides a snapshot of our food system and ways to strengthen the food system through continued collaboration.</p>
<p>Model Food Procurement Policy for all State Agencies HB 1801</p>	<p>Last session HB 1801 and companion SB 5653 recognized that the State has a role in improving nutritional health and as an employer and caregiver and as a significant food purchaser, state government should be a model in purchasing healthy local food. The bill requires Dept of Health and the newly-formed Dept. of Enterprise Services to adopt a model food purchasing policy for all agencies which meet certain nutritional standards and strongly encourages purchase of Washington grown food. HB 1801 will again be heard in the State Government and Tribal Affairs Committee. WSFFN urges adoption. Victor Colman with the Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition is the lead and he can be reached at <a href="mailto:vicsolutions@comcast.net">vicsolutions@comcast.net</a>.</p>
<p>Homesite Exemption in Open Space Law SB 5814</p>	<p>Last session SB 5814 was introduced but did not pass. It is likely that the bill will be substituted this session to reflect work done over the interim. Today, under the current use exemption (RCW 84.34.020) , the land under a farmstead is valued at current use instead of market value, but only if the parcel is enrolled in open space ag land (one of the current use taxation programs) and the parcel is greater than 20 acres. (WAC 458-30-317(3)). The proposed bill would remove the acreage threshold and extend the farmstead exemption so that the land upon which employee housing or residence of the farm operator or owner is located is valued at current use rather than the fair market value. The gross income thresholds in existing law are left as is. The bill as introduced targets specific farm activities. These will be refined in the substitute bill. Leslie Cushman with Gull Harbor Farm is taking the lead and she can be reached at <a href="mailto:lesliecush@comcast.net">lesliecush@comcast.net</a> or 360-280-0087.</p>
<p><b>Federal Legislation</b></p>	
<p><b>Re-authorization of Federal Farm Bill</b></p>	<p>The process for reauthorizing the Federal Farm Bill is very confusing this year. The current Farm Bill expires in 2012. Because the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction, or the Super Committee, is tasked with cutting a trillion dollars from the federal budget, the Senate and House Ag Committee Leadership have scrambled to propose their own reductions in a new Farm Bill, in hopes that the Super Committee will take their advice. The Committees have not yet released their Farm bill proposal but in general, we expect it will include approximately \$25 billion in reductions: \$15 billion from commodity payments, \$6 billion from conservation programs and 4\$ billion from food and nutrition programs.</p> <p>There are a couple of bright lights amongst the gloom. Two Marker Bills have been introduced that would help our food system: The Local Farms, Food and Jobs Act and the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act. We would like to have our WA senators and representatives co-sponsor these proposals. Handouts for each of these marker bills are available from The Network. In addition Jennifer Miller from Northwest Center for Alternatives to Pesticides is working hard to track this issue and she can be reached at 208-850-6504 or <a href="mailto:jmiller@pesticide.org">jmiller@pesticide.org</a>. Another good source is the National Sustainable Ag Coalition at <a href="http://www.sustainableagriculture.net">www.sustainableagriculture.net</a></p>