

# Options & Opportunities for Washington Growers

## Biologically Intensive Agriculture & Organic Farming (BIOAg) at WSU



For most growers, farming today is more challenging than ever. Input costs and regulations are increasing. Profitability is marginal. And our reliance on dwindling petroleum supplies has made agriculture vulnerable.

At the same time, the demand for food produced in an environmentally friendly way has increased dramatically. Leaders today are concerned about food safety, food security, clean air and water, and a safe environment for agricultural workers. Demand for organically grown or third party-approved sustainable products increases by more than 20 percent annually. Growers recognize the importance of bringing products to market that meet the demands of today's consumer. To be successful, they need production and marketing tools to help them take advantage of these profitable emerging markets.

Washington State University is one of the nation's leading institutions in providing growers with new tools for new markets. WSU's Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources (CSANR) has developed the Biologically Intensive Agriculture & Organic Farming Program (BIOAg) to provide research and information on production and marketing methods that meet growers' needs while protecting workers and the environment.



### What is biologically intensive agriculture?

- Relies on biological processes.
- Works in concert with natural systems to maximize on-farm resource management.
- Minimizes off-farm inputs and unwanted impacts like soil erosion.

Direct-seed and organic cropping systems are two well-known examples.

### How does BIOAg help growers?

- 1. Smart decision-making.** Growers are always looking for ways to increase their profitability. They stay ahead of the curve when they have access to state-of-the-art research on environmentally friendly production methods and marketing trends.
- 2. Complying with regulations.** Growers need resources to help them meet new environmental regulations. Reducing chemical use by switching to biologically-intensive or organic methods means fewer regulations to comply with.
- 3. Profiting from community relationships.** Growers' relationships with the community are changing as more people from urban areas move into the country. Growers who use biologically intensive and organic methods capitalize on consumer interest in locally grown and organic food, while gaining the support of their neighbors.
- 4. Higher returns, lower impacts.** Biologically-based methods can improve economic returns while reducing unwanted impacts. Organic and other eco-labels, such as Food Alliance certification, offer a price premium to growers.
- 5. Consumer demand.** BIOAg approaches generally rely on inputs that pose a lower risk to worker safety and decrease pesticide residues. More and more consumers are purchasing organic foods based on their perceived health benefits and taste.



# Healthy Farms, Food & People: BIOAg and Washington's Food & Farming System



## Discovering How Nature Assists Agriculture

**RESEARCH** on organic farming systems helps us better understand the natural processes at work on farms, and how to harness them for reduced production cost, better land stewardship and improved food quality. All growers can benefit by integrating BIOAg into their farming systems.

**More profitable pears:** The pear industry offers an example of how BIOAg research can benefit all growers. Organic insect pest management on an areawide basis performs at least as well as conventional approaches, both for cost and efficacy, while reducing pesticide use and residues. This has opened new marketing opportunities for growers while enhancing protection of salmon habitat.

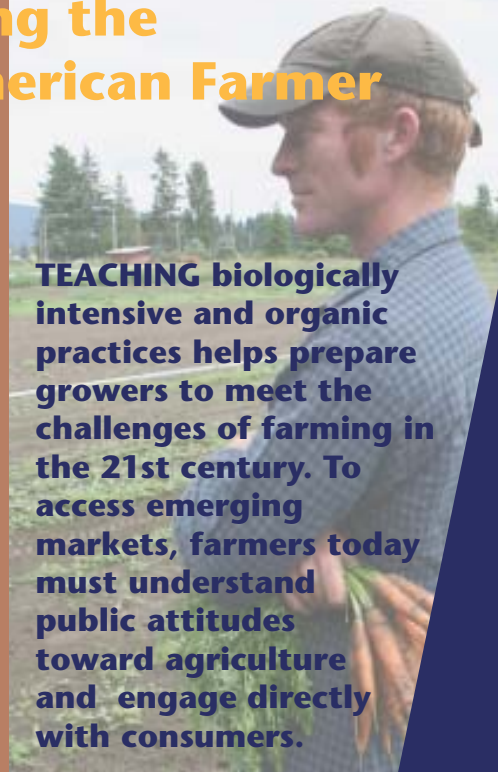


## Educating the New American Farmer

**Cultivating Success:** Through a partnership with the University of Idaho and the non-profit Rural Roots, WSU's Small Farms Program offers the Cultivating Success course series for beginning farmers and established growers who are ready to take their farm in a new direction. To date, more than 300 farmers have participated, and

**TEACHING** biologically intensive and organic practices helps prepare growers to meet the challenges of farming in the 21st century. To access emerging markets, farmers today must understand public attitudes toward agriculture and engage directly with consumers.

WSU Extension now plans to offer courses at ten sites around the state during the 2004-05 academic year. In addition, courses on biologically intensive agriculture at the Pullman campus draw more students each year, and in 2005, WSU will become one of the first universities in the nation to offer a major in organic farming.



## Sharing What Works



**OUTREACH** on biologically intensive and organic agriculture helps Washington growers access the latest production and marketing information. Resources on BIOAg and a calendar of events can be found at [www.csanr.wsu.edu](http://www.csanr.wsu.edu).

**CSANR** Fact Sheets provide quick answers on sustainable agriculture topics at WSU. For more information on the Center for Sustaining Agriculture & Natural Resources, visit [www.csanr.wsu.edu](http://www.csanr.wsu.edu), call (253) 445-4626, or email [csanr@wsu.edu](mailto:csanr@wsu.edu). CSANR works to develop approaches to agriculture and natural resource stewardship that are economically viable, environmentally sound and socially responsive.