



## Washington State Farmers Market Association 2014 Legislative Session Priorities

### 1. Invest \$500,000 for the Farmers Market Nutrition Programs

**UPDATE: Budget added \$200,000 For FMNP (\$100K for Senior; \$100K for WIC)**

WSFMA, along with many other groups, is asking the state legislature to invest \$300,000 for the WIC FMNP and \$200,000 for the Senior FMNP so that 18,000 more eligible low income seniors and young families can buy fresh fruits and vegetables from farmers selling at farmers markets around the state. Last year, over 170,000 Washingtonians were eligible for these programs; with current funds only 37,000 were able to participate. The two programs serve only about 20-25% of eligible participants and the demand is high. **Top priority for WSFMA**

- Low-income families and seniors improve their nutrition.
- Public investments stay local. Farm incomes increase and more money circulates within the state and in rural areas.
- Farmers markets are more inclusive and accessible for *everyone* in their community. FMNP leverages \$900,000 in federal USDA funds for Washington State

### 2. Technical Fixes to the Law Permitting Wine-and-Beer-Sampling-at-Farmers-Markets

**UPDATE: Bill Passed**

During the 2013 legislative session, the senate and house both approved overwhelmingly SB 5674, which permitted the sampling of wine and beer at all Washington farmers markets. During the implementation of the law in the second half of last year, a few technical issues with the law became apparent. We are seeking a few simple changes to the existing law to correct these to fully implement the intent of the legislation. **Top priority for WSFMA**

### 3. Restore State Food Assistance

**UPDATE: Budget Request Failed. Legislature did add budget proviso language that ensures SFA benefits are *no less than 75%*, ensuring no further future cuts.**

A reduction in State Food Assistance (SFA) benefits in 2012 put nearly 14,000 children in immigrant families at greater risk of hunger by reducing benefits to 50% of the benefits provided in SNAP (federal food stamps – together, State Food Assistance program and SNAP comprise our state's Basic Food Program). In 2013, state lawmakers partially restored SFA by bringing benefit levels to 75 percent of benefits provided by SNAP. This session, we ask that they do right by Washington's future and fully fund State Food Assistance. These benefits mean families have the option to buy more food at farmers markets, which benefits small family businesses. **WSFMA supports**

#### 4. Cottage Food Law Modifications

##### **UPDATE: Bill Failed**

Cottage Food Laws help meet the demand for local food by allowing individuals to produce and sell non-hazardous foods made in their home kitchens, outside of expensive permitting and licensing procedures. Washington Cottage Food Operations Law (RCW 69.22 and WAC 16.49) allows people to make low-risk food in their home kitchens and sell directly to consumers. Existing law limits annual production to \$15,000/year. Efforts are being made this session to raise the cap to \$25,000 and modify the cottage food law to make it more farmer-friendly. Likely the changes will be incorporated into an amendment to HB 1135 when it comes to the full floor vote. **WSFMA supports**

#### 5. Amend Homesite Exemption in Open Space Law (HB 1437)

##### **UPDATE: Bill failed - passed in House, but failed in Senate**

HB1437 was introduced in the 2013 session to correct inequalities in the Open Space /Agriculture laws that work against small farms. The bill would remove the "farm house acre" practice employed by assessors. Farm land that is enrolled in the Open Space program is currently assessed based on current use (i.e. "agricultural" as opposed to "highest and best use"). The land is taxed at a considerably reduced rate while structures on the land are assessed at full value. For farms under 20 acres, the one acre under the farm house is assessed at the 'highest and best use'. This law was developed when the majority of working farms were larger than 20 acres, and doesn't recognize the significant increase in smaller acreage working farms over the past 5-15 years. As written, it subjects smaller farms to a higher tax rate and works against efforts to preserve working lands. For more info, contact Leslie Cushman [lesliecush@comcast.net](mailto:lesliecush@comcast.net) and Jim Goche [marketgardens@comcast.net](mailto:marketgardens@comcast.net). More information at: [weneedsmallfarms.wordpress.com](http://weneedsmallfarms.wordpress.com). **WSFMA supports**

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##### **For more information:**

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