

# Washington State Farmers Market Association

## Legislative Areas of Interest



### 1. Goal: Continue WA State Support for the Farmers Market Nutrition Program

- Objectives: Ensure the WIC and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Programs continue to receive critical state and federal funding and support. Explore options to increase the program's efficiency and effectiveness. Rationale:
  - Retains federal dollars coming into the state. The two programs leverage funds from USDA each year that help to generate over \$1.3 million in additional sales to 750 farmers around the state;
  - Keeps more money circulating within the state and in the rural areas; and
  - Helps farmers, farmers markets, and young children all around the state.

### 2. Goal: Expand farmers markets' and vendors' abilities to accept food assistance benefits

- Objective: Build on the national and local interest in shopping at farmers markets by making it easier for markets and vendors to accept shoppers' electronic cards and food-assistance benefits for food purchases. The WA Legislature should:
  - Encourage the State's Department of Health efforts to expand the WIC fruit-and-vegetable program to more farmers and farmers markets; and
  - Continue their historic support for the purchasing of wireless card readers at sales venues for farmers and farmers markets.
- Rationale:
  - Helps expand sales opportunities for Washington farmers and keeps federal dollars flowing in the state; and
  - Increases access to healthy food for more of the state's residents, especially low-income families.

### 3. Goal: Restore the Funding for the WSDA Small Farm Programs

- Objective: Reinstate the domestic business services, training, education, farm-to-school and coordinated-matching-of-buyers-with-sellers programming to smaller-acreage farms that were eliminated in the state's 2011-13 biennial budget.
- Rationale:
  - The WSDA provided essential services—now eliminated—that farmers, schools, and stakeholders relied on that are impossible for private industry to replace; and
  - WA small farmers need internal experts within the state who can help them:
    - Navigate the regulatory barriers;
    - Access institutional markets; and
    - Develop coordinated services that work across jurisdictions, in all parts of the state (such as participating in the farm-internship program).

### 4. Goal: Update the WA Food Code

- Objective: Ensure the new food code is responsive to the needs of smaller-acreage farmers and that food-safety updates are scalable for different types of farm operations.

In the coming year, the WSDA and DOH will conduct rulemaking to implement the new USDA food code.

- Rationale: The food code impacts all size farmers. However, a “one-size fits all” approach to the food code does not take into account the different needs and production techniques of these different types of farmers. The food code should offer flexibility for our state’s farm businesses while meeting the public’s need for safe food.

#### **5. Goal: Support the New Cottage Industry Law**

- Objective: Monitor and support implementation of this new state law to ensure that as baked goods, jams and other non-potentially hazardous foods are prepared in home kitchens, food safety and consumer needs are successfully met. The WSDA is conducting a stakeholder process for develop the rules and regulation for the enforcement of this law.
- Rationale:
  - Provides strong business-incubator opportunities;
  - Encourages job creation; and
  - Responds to consumer interest.

#### **6. Goal: Review the Farm-Internship Pilot Project**

- Objective: Assess the upcoming report from Labor & Industries about the farm-internship pilot project in San Juan and Island counties. The WSDA had been actively involved in pilot implementation.
- Rationale: This pilot project:
  - Plays an important role in helping to educate new farmers; and
  - Supports small-acreage farms.

#### **7. Goal: Monitor the Wine- and Beer-Tasting-at-Farmers-Markets Pilot Program**

- Objective: Ensure the success of the pilot program to offer these tastings at select markets, so the program can expand to all farmers markets throughout the state beginning in 2013.
- Rationale: This pilot program:
  - Enables smaller WA wineries and breweries greater sales opportunities especially since these WA businesses typically do not have access to larger markets or tasting rooms;
  - Expands WA farmers markets’ ability to be incubators for small businesses; and
  - Creates jobs throughout the state.

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