

Washington State Farmers Market Association

2013 Advocacy Priorities



1. Goal: Pass Wine-and-Beer-Tasting-at-Farmers-Markets Legislation

- Objective: Build on the success of the 2011-2 pilot program and enable small Washington wineries, distilleries, and breweries to sample their products at all Washington State farmers markets.
- Rationale: This legislation:
 - 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.

2. 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 2013-2015 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).

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

- Objective: Build on the King County Farmers Market Access Project report and 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.

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: 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.

6. Goal: Support Efforts to Expand the Farm-Internship Pilot Project to More Counties

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