

# RESTORE \$500,000 to WSDA

## Farm to School & Small Farm Direct Market Programs

*Connecting Washington farmers to more schools and new markets makes our kids and communities healthier and Washington farms stronger.*

**WSDA created the Small Farm Direct Market program in 2001** and its partner program, **Farm to School in 2008**. Today they are merged as the **Regional Markets Program**. Direct market sales – to schools, at farmers markets, through CSAs, to restaurants and more – is a growing and important part of Washington's ag economy.

The **Regional Markets Program budget was cut significantly in 2011**, yet demand for program services did not decrease. Restoring \$500,000 will help expand WSDA's capacity to meet producer and buyer requests for training, technical assistance, resources and tools to expand sales; implement new federal school nutrition requirements and federal Food Safety Rules; and scale up to meet the ever-growing demand for Washington-grown food.

## WSDA REGIONAL MARKETS PROGRAMS HELP FARMERS & KIDS BY:

### Improving school districts' bottom line

Increasing the quality and appeal of school meal programs means more students eat school meals, bringing more federal reimbursement funds into our state and our local budgets.

### Creating jobs, expanding rural economy

Connecting farmers with new business opportunities creates more farm jobs so farmers can remain competitive in a changing food marketplace.



Photo by Wendy Dore

### Protecting farmland

Washington loses 40,000 acres of farmland every year. Improving access to local markets helps farmers stay viable which means they can keep their farmland in production.

### Helping farmers be more successful

Washington's strong network of ag-support organizations rely on WSDA's unique expertise to help farmers navigate special regulatory challenges for selling products directly to consumers and institutions.

### Improving nutrition and community health

WSDA's Farm to School program introduces fresh food and healthy eating to kids at school, connecting them to farmers and starting lifelong health habits that fight obesity.

