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# South Puget Sound Agricultural Producer Needs Assessment

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## Abstract

This agricultural producer needs assessment aims to increase awareness of issues facing the agricultural community in the south Puget Sound region. It also aims to spur community-wide action based on these results, while providing specific guidance for the development of agricultural research and education programming at WSU Thurston County Extension. This project was supported by partnerships with the Thurston Economic Development Council, Thurston Conservation District, and WSU Lewis County Extension, with financial sponsorship by the Port of Olympia.





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# Introduction

A needs assessment is undertaken to guide development of research and education plans for County Extension programs. It can also yield results useful to community members, agencies and organizations interested in supporting farmers, growing the agricultural economy, maintaining natural resources, and building community.

In 2016, the Thurston County Washington State University Extension agriculture program initiated an effort to assess the needs of agricultural producers in the South Puget Sound region of western Washington. In order to document farmer needs for internal (Extension) use, as well as for a South Sound region audience, several partner organizations engaged in and supported this effort. The Thurston Economic Development Council, Thurston Conservation District, and WSU Extension Lewis County partnered on data collection.

The goals of this needs assessment were to:

- Provide WSU Extension with producer input to help guide planning and evaluation of agriculture research and education programs
- Provide regional organizations with producer input to guide economic development, agricultural resource conservation, and other community development and education programming
- Complete a robust documentation of agricultural producer needs available for use by other individuals, agencies and organizations in the south Puget Sound region

Documenting needs of producers in Thurston County is also important given trends that challenge the viability of agriculture in the region. These include long-term trends in farmland loss (6,500 acres since 2000; 90,000 since 1950; an aging farm population (average of 59 in Thurston County); development pressure (126,000 new residents by 2040) pushing up farm start-up costs such as for land; the continued loss of large farms<sup>1</sup> and contiguous farmland (Figs 1, 2); new food safety and conservation regulations; and corporate entry into local and sustainable food markets that shifts conditions for high-value farm-direct sales through farmers markets, farm stands and box subscription programs (CSAs).

With over \$122 million in agricultural sales (4<sup>th</sup> among Puget Sound counties; top ten statewide in livestock sales), an increasing number of farmers, and steady increase (4%) in sales between the most recent U.S. agriculture census cycles, Thurston County enjoys significant economic and community benefits from agricultural activities. Addressing the needs identified in this assessment will help to sustain the viability of agriculture in the region along with the economic, social and cultural benefits of a vibrant farm economy.

## Change in farm numbers 2007 to 2012

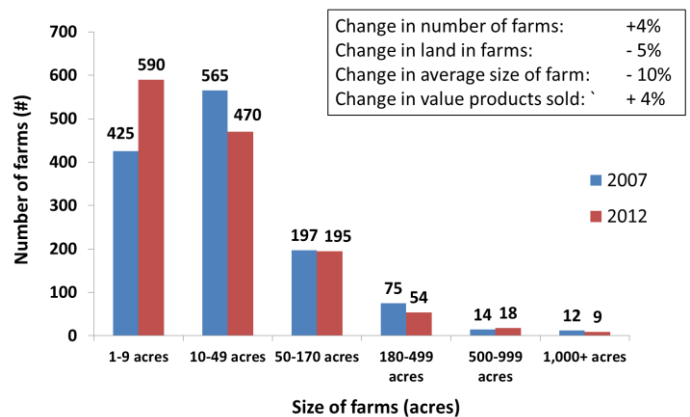


Figure 1. Change in farm numbers in Thurston County

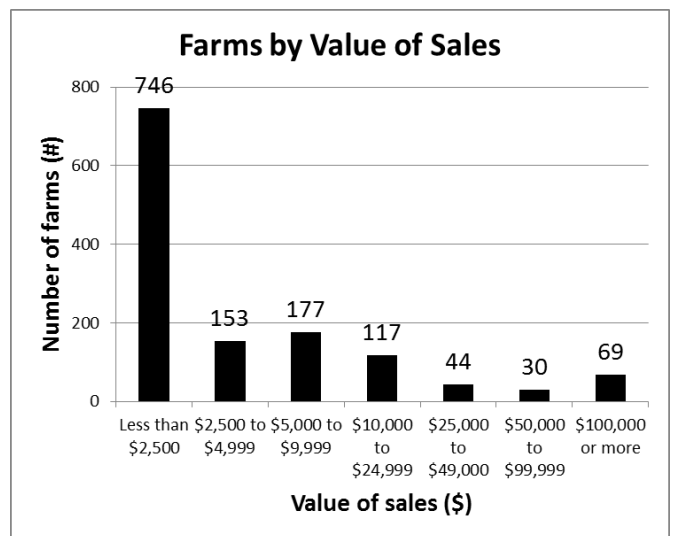


Figure 2. Farm numbers by value of sales

<sup>1</sup> Large farms can compliment small and medium-sized farms in several ways, anchoring farm support businesses such as feed stores, welding services, slaughter facilities; provide resource exchanges such as manure; enable equipment access; and if multi-generational often provide repository of local farm knowledge and skills

In the course of utilizing this resource, please reference the directly transcribed producer comments where greater detail is needed: <http://extension.wsu.edu/thurston/agriculture/>. Attempts were made to summarize needs accurately and indicate how many individuals shared high-priority needs; however, detail is inevitably lost transcribing producer comments into summaries.

## Methods

The needs assessment approach utilized in this study consisted of three parts: (1) pre-assessment, (2) assessment, and (3) post-assessment.

### Part I. Pre-Assessment

The goals of the pre-assessment were to review available information concerning agricultural producer needs in the region, and to determine whether additional research was necessary. Results of this assessment are

summarized in Appendix 1 (Pre-existing Regional Farm Needs Assessments), and include summaries of four reports. Each resource contributes to an

understanding of agricultural producer needs, but none provide a systematic, region-wide assessment inclusive of all producer types. The goal of the current work was to document producer needs across the south Puget Sound region, and across producer types including forestry, nursery crops, grain, fruit and vegetable, meat, dairy, forage, and to a more limited extent gardener-homesteader. With the goal of a widely inclusive documentation of needs directly from producers, an assessment (Part II) was undertaken from June 2016 through February 2017.

### Part II. Assessment

The WSU Thurston County Extension Agricultural Needs Assessment utilized input from producers to assess needs. The authors collected comments during five producer meetings and seventeen one-on-one interviews. Four of the input sessions were focused on producers in different regions around Thurston County including Rochester, Rainier, East Olympia, and West Olympia. A final input session involved members of the South Sound chapter of the Washington Farm Forest Association. In total ninety-two individuals were surveyed including eighty-three farmers representing seventy-two farms, and nine gardener-homesteaders.

**Assessment Methodology: Listening Sessions.** A method modified from Angima and Etuk was utilized to document producer needs utilizing an interactive, small-group format known as a *nominal group technique*. This approach allows small groups with a brief prompt to rapidly generate structured feedback in a way that minimizes ‘group think’ while eliciting individual responses which then stimulates additional group input.

At the outset of listening sessions, prior to separating into small break-out groups, attendees were asked to comment privately (using blank “current situation” forms) on two topic areas: “what is” and “what should be”.

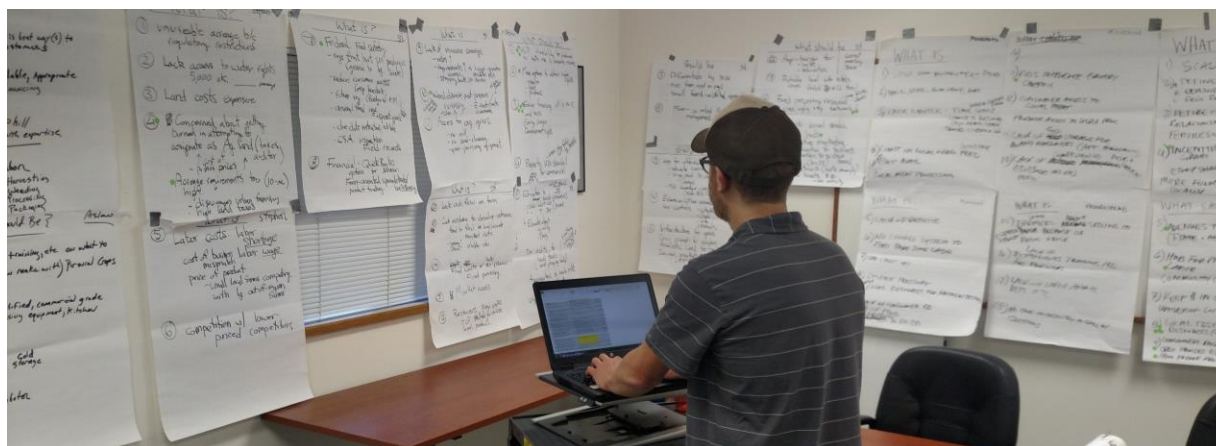
Is your organization/agency using information in this assessment to guide programming? Please let us know. Documenting the use of these results strengthens future efforts to fund agricultural research & education in south Puget Sound! (drop us a line at [bramwell@wsu.edu](mailto:bramwell@wsu.edu) thanks!)



**What is** the current situation(s) in your business with respect to the following prompt categories: production, marketing, land, education and training, regulations, and other

**What should be** the solution/s in reference to your “what is” comments?

“What is” comments and “what should be” responses were sequentially recorded on two side-by-side sets of flip charts. Each “what is/what should be” pair was counted as one comment. A total 235 comments were collected. At the completion of the small-group exercise, group findings were compiled and shared, with brief discussion. At the end of each input session, participants were given three colored dots and asked to place them next to the comments that represented their highest priorities. No attempt was made to identify solutions during this exercise as the focus was needs documentation within a limited timeframe.



Transcribing producer comments from flip charts

**Assessment Methodology: One-On-One Sessions.** One-on-one sessions were conducted in person or over the phone with **17 producers**. Participants were asked to provide input on the same topics as above and were asked to provide as little or as much input as wanted.

**Data Analysis.** Qualitative data analysis of listening session results was conducted in cooperation with Rebecca Sero, an Extension Evaluation Specialist with Washington State University. Two sorting methodologies were utilized: open coding and axial coding. **Open coding** was used to break down data into headings and subheadings. Headings were established on the basis of major themes in producer comments. Comments were assigned to these (ten) categories: marketing, land, regulations, research/education/networking/information resources (R&E), farm inputs, water resource management, consumer education, pest pressure and labor. The total number of comments was calculated in each category, and comments could only be assigned to one category.

Summary statements were then developed, and assigned to different subheadings that captured the primary messages in the comments. For example, responses regarding ‘Water Rights’ issues were summarized and grouped together as a subheading under the heading of “Water Management”. The bulk of this report regarding producer needs is included in these “Results Summaries” from page 10-23.

A second approach, **axial coding**, was also utilized to analyze how producer needs relate to each other. A “need” often exists in relation to others. For example, a need for assistance with water rights transfers among farmers related to regulations governing resource management, access to information resources and training, and irrigation efficiency. To document these relationships, comments were assigned to any category to which they related, non-exclusive. In this

assessment, comments pertaining to “Land” were made fifty-one times, and simultaneously referenced other categories fifty-seven times. The result, fifty-seven, is one measure of how significant a need is: if a needs category doesn’t related, or cross over to other categories, with much frequency, it likely is not as significant as other needs. In this report, this measure is a “cross-reference” count, and captures the number of times comments in one heading also references needs topics assigned to other headings.

**Results Summaries.** The Results Summaries (p. 10-23) are syntheses of all comments offered during input sessions and one-on-one sessions. Overlapping themes were synthesized and summarized into a reader friendly format. The summary includes fact boxes supporting each category which reference the following counts:

- 1) The number of comments in each category, sorted by the predominant theme (open coding)
- 2) The number of priority marks in each category (colored dots)
- 3) The “cross-reference count”, or, the number of times a given category was referenced among *all* categories (axial coding)
- 4) The ranking of each category by number of comments
- 5) The ranking of each category by number of priority marks
- 6) The ranking of each category by the cross-reference count

Below the counts are sets of **priority mark themes**, short summaries of comments that attendees felt strongly enough about to post colored dots next to.

**Ground-truthing Needs Ranking by Thurston County Agriculture Committee.** Needs assessment comments were sorted and ranked in this study with the intention of identifying priority work areas for local Extension research and education efforts, and to provide regional groups, agencies and organizations with a practical assessment of priority producer needs. To provide a check to the ranking approach described above, needs priorities were ground-truthed across the ten-member Thurston County Agriculture Committee, consisting of six farmer and four non-farmer members. Needs assessment results were presented to the committee in a series of ten slides, consisting of the ten needs categories organized alphabetically. Following the presentation committee members were asked to identify the top three needs areas (Table 1).

**Table 1. Needs areas ranking by comments (#), cross references (#), and Ag Committee panel**

| Comments per need area                  | References to other needs areas         | Panel prioritization                   |
|---|---|--|
| R&E (120)                               | R&E (163)                               | Regulations (6)                        |
| Regulations (66)                        | Regulations (106)                       | Land (6)                               |
| Capital, equipment, infrastructure (63) | Capital, equipment, infrastructure (83) | R&E (4)                                |
| Markets (58)                            | Markets (65)                            | Capital, equipment, infrastructure (4) |
| Land (51)                               | Land (57)                               | Markets (4)                            |
| Consumer education (34)                 | Consumer education (57)                 | Water (2)                              |
| Water (24)                              | Water (42)                              | Labor (2)                              |
| Labor (20)                              | Pests (24)                              | Farm inputs (1)                        |
| Farm inputs (20)                        | Labor (23)                              | Pests (0)                              |
| Pests (18)                              | Farm inputs (21)                        | Consumer education (0)                 |

In discussion following the exercise, the panel proposed several modifications to the ranking and grouping of needs areas. The panel proposed that R&E, though receiving many comments and referenced many times in association with producer needs, could be considered a ‘tool’ to address producer needs, and could be applied to all needs areas to good benefit. For this reason the panel concluded it should not be a specific subject matter needs area, while remaining significant as the most called-for mode of support by producers.



continue to be updated on the WSU Thurston County Agriculture webpage (<http://extension.wsu.edu/thurston/agriculture/>).

2. **Develop research and education programs at WSU Thurston County Extension.** The agriculture program at the WSU Thurston County Extension office is focusing on three work areas emerging directly from this project:
  - a. **Increase market access for agricultural producers.** Raw agricultural materials command a relatively small share of overall consumer expenditures (i.e. the value of wheat in bread). Strategies such as direct-marketing, and value-added processing can be expanded and extended to new communities. This can improve farm viability by developing higher-profit marketing pathways and products. Trialing new crops and new varieties expands markets, such as trialing regionally adapted barley varieties for livestock feed, brewing or malting. Thurston County Extension is and will increase programming in variety testing, engaging in consumer educational efforts/campaigns about the importance of buying direct and local from farmers, and exploring opportunities for marketing infrastructure and equipment, and other work. For more information visit: <http://extension.wsu.edu/thurston/agriculture/market-access/>
  - b. **Support conservation on working lands to help minimize regulatory challenges that farmers face.** In April 2017 Thurston County successfully submitted a Voluntary Stewardship Plan (VSP) to the Washington Conservation Commission, and at the same time was developing a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) impacting prairie land in Thurston County. Conservation programs can put pressure on agricultural lands, but VSP and HCP provide opportunities for farmers to implement conservation practices while remaining economically viable. This WSU Extension program will support voluntary on-farm conservation efforts through research and education that demonstrates and evaluates on-farm conservation practices. This work will also provide information to decision-makers and conservation partners (NRCS, Conservation Districts and other) on how to encourage and incentivize on-farm conservation. For more information visit: <http://extension.wsu.edu/thurston/agriculture/on-farm-conservation/>
  - c. **Encourage and support innovation on the farm and in the farming community.** South Puget Sound farmers constantly innovate with new infrastructure and equipment, new farm-originated inventions, new fertility management tools, new pest management practices and many others. But innovation can be risky and as a result some promising products, equipment and management practices are not tested or adopted. The WSU Thurston County Extension agriculture program will encourage innovation by trialing promising crops, varieties and products, sourcing funding for on-farm research, creating networking opportunities for farmers to share innovative practices, hosting technical experts (farmers and academics) at workshops and trainings to spread innovative practices, and host farm planning courses for new farmers. For more information visit: <http://extension.wsu.edu/thurston/agriculture/management/farm-training-networking/>
3. **Coordinated community response.** A coordinated community response may or may not be feasible in addressing producer needs in the region. However, opportunities do exist to link efforts:
  - [County governments](#) coordinate efforts to support agricultural activities
  - Regional food system councils/networks address farm and food system work collaboratively; work of an existing network could be expanded (<https://ssfoodsystemnetwork.org/>)
  - Producer associations, commodity commissions and federations advance a common research and development agenda
  - Producer cooperative is established to address specific farm needs, such as the Siskiyou Sustainable Cooperative (<http://www.siskiyoucoop.com/>)

## Executive Summary: The “Big Three”

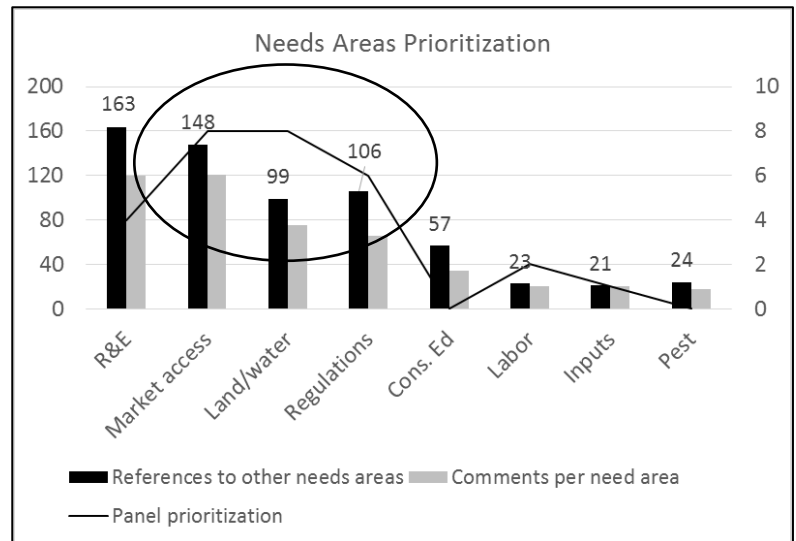
Research, education, networking and information sharing (R&E) was commented on the most in this needs assessment, and was most often commented on in relation to other specific needs areas, such as training for food safety regulations. For this reason, the R&E category is best understood as a critical *tool* to address other needs identified by producers. Many farmer needs could be at least partially addressed by improved access to research, information resources, and networking with other farmers. As a universally applicable tool rather than a specific need area, the R&E needs area is separated from “The Big Three” identified in this assessment, which are:

- Market access (removing physical and social barriers to high value markets)
- Access to productive resources (land and water)
- Regulations

These rankings are based on (1) the number of comments documented per needs area, (2) a measure of the *relatedness* of one needs area to other needs (see methods), and lastly (3) a review by a local panel of farmers and Thurston County agriculture committee members. Figure 3 reports the results of assessment rankings.

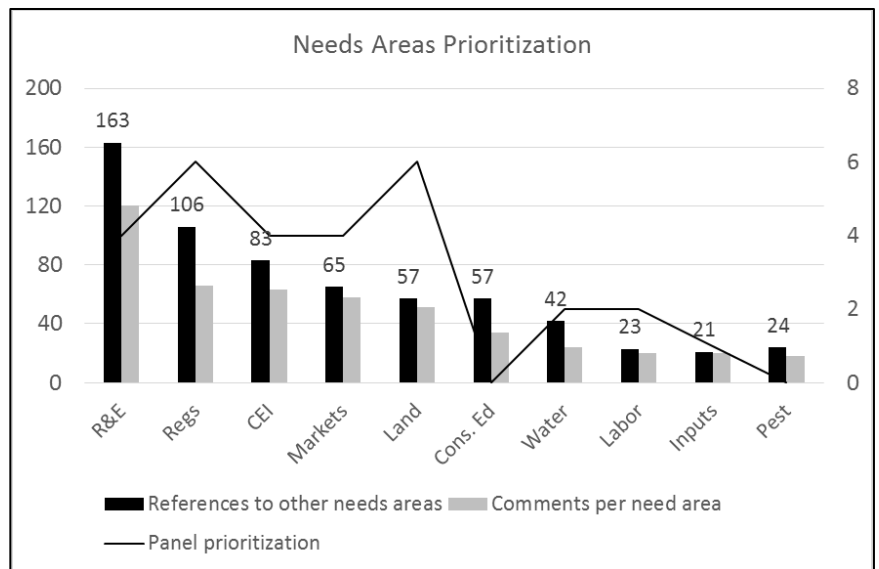
**Market access:** Among the ten needs areas identified in this assessment, ‘Marketing’ and ‘Capital, Infrastructure and Equipment’ are consolidated here because the former focuses on social barriers to expanding market access, while the latter focuses on physical barriers. Combined, removing barriers to market access emerges as a primary needs area for farmers in the region, addressing issues on the physical barriers side such as: equipment needs, processing and storage facilities, feed grain and seed processing, and variety trialing; and on the social barriers side such as: consumer perceptions about cost, loss of market share for local farmers, collective marketing, and marketing skills.

**Productive resources:** Needs related to access to land and water were identified as two of the ten categories in this needs assessment (Figure 4). They are combined here because access to basic productive resources is a coherent, basic need among farmers in Thurston County. This need is compounded by escalating land prices and increasing competition for water resources, both driven by development pressure and resource conservation issues. Producer needs in relation to land and water included knowledge of available farmland (database) for lease or purchase, more purchase of development right opportunities, zoning compatible with long-term agriculture, consultation with farmers concerning critical species/habitat decisions, better financing options, succession planning resources and tools, water use adaptation recommendations and farmer networking to respond to climate change, water conservation planning resources, and support and more tools for water rights identification, acquisition, banking and trading.

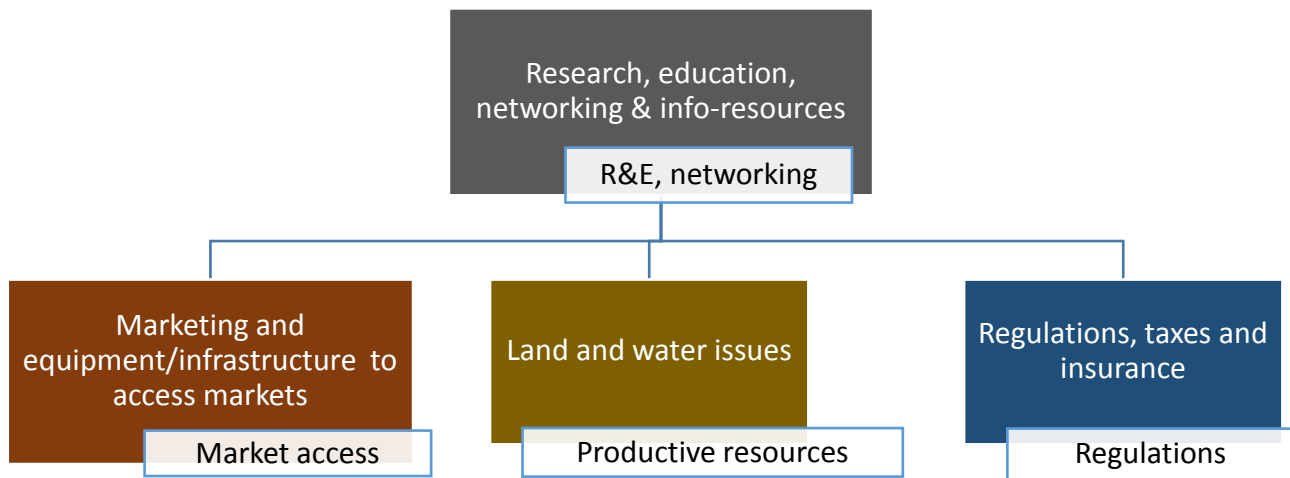


**Figure 3.** Grouped ranking of producer needs based on number of comments, relatedness of a needs area to other areas (References to other areas), and panel prioritization. R&E: training, education, networking and information resources; Market access: physical barriers (capital, equipment and infrastructure) and social barriers (marketing, price perceptions) to markets; Regulations; and Cons. Ed: consumer education.

**Regulations:** Regulatory issues ranked high (on their own, ungrouped) as one of ten needs categories. Needs regarding regulatory issues were widely linked to other needs, such as access to land, to water and water rights, and to labor, as well as in relation to taxation and insurance issues, among other needs. Regulations were seen as often at odds with sustaining long-term agriculture in South Puget Sound. Agricultural producers wanted more local control over decisions restricting use of productive farmland, site specific (not one-sized) tools to co-manage natural resources and farm operations, cooperative and not punitive relations with regulators, support navigating regulations such as concerning food safety, size-neutral taxation structures, and more cost-share and incentives for the ecosystem services and natural resource management that farmers are currently managing for, and increasingly being required to manage for.



**Figure 4.** Ungrouped ranking of ten producer needs categories based on number of comments, relatedness of a needs area to other areas (References to other areas), and panel prioritization. R&E: training, education, networking and information resources; CEI: Capital, Equipment and Infrastructure (indication of physical barriers to market access); Markets (indication of social barriers to market access); Cons. Ed: consumer education.



# Summaries of agricultural producer needs

## Capital, Equipment, Infrastructure

### Equipment

Farmers seek increased accessibility to large equipment and support transporting it as well as medium sized equipment that is easier to transport

Shared refrig/freezer space and dry storage is sought, as well as infrastructure for affordable, collective processing

An entity to purchase more shared equipment is sought. Farmers would like to see the development of an equipment library for small farms equipment

Lacking recycling infrastructure for t-tape, agro bond, and agricultural plastics



Photo credit: Shared Use Kitchen Planning Toolkit

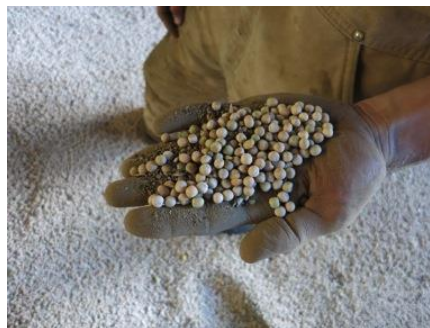
### Financial

Farmers feel there is not enough cost share money available for improvements, and that loans and credit are difficult to access. Farmers are seeking increased availability of cost-share programs and support in purchasing and leasing land

A challenge exists in accessing and using personal net equity and a 10% line of credit on gross sales could help this

### Grain

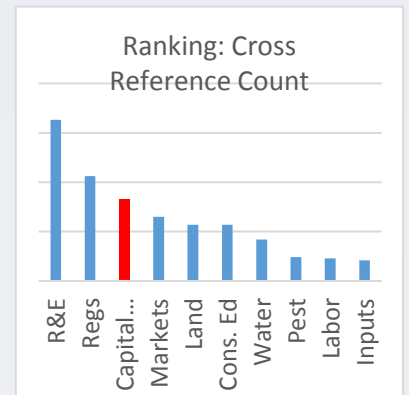
Livestock farmers are challenged in accessing local and organic feed. Much of the high volume feed is GM and comes from far away. There exists a perceived difficulty in producing high volume organic, non-GMO grain locally. Increased incentives for growing grain, increased access to land and access to processing equipment is seen as a way to counter this



Feed peas, Hidden River Farms

Vegetable farmers want to integrate grain in rotations but lack infrastructure such as a mill, seed cleaning and grain processing equipment

- Comments: 27
- Reference count: 63
- Cross-reference count: 83
- Rank by reference count: 3 out of 10
- Rank by cross-reference count: 3 out of 10



### ~Priority mark themes

Access to loans/credit/net equity, grain access, shared equipment/size variable, new grain product development, cost share money, food processing education/equipment, cold storage, transporting large equipment, financial support accessing land, recycling infrastructure, bee integration, product diversification

*Farmers also seek support in developing multiple end uses for grain and ability to market them and would like to have access to a network of existing grain markets*

*An interest exists for increased grain research to assist adoption, increased trialing for feed crops, production systems and sprouted grains for feed*



All Crop, Kirsop Farm

## **Livestock**

*Farmers expressed a need for livestock infrastructure from enterprise specific to general. Key needs are identified as cold storage for meat producers, feed production equipment, and capacity for specialty products such as cooperative wool mill and equipment*

*Improved and diversified livestock genetics are identified as a need, such as for improved meat production and breeding stock*

## **Production, Expansion, Diversification**

*Farmers would like to see an expansion of small farms with greater diversity, such as more livestock operations, vine, tree, nut, production, and apiculture*

*A deficiency of bee integration has been observed*

*Many producers lack access to cold storage due to affordability or lack of space.*

*A need exists for food processing infrastructure to help utilize excess of food product. A shared commercial processing kitchen is a potential solution*



Colvin Ranch. Photo credit: Lucas Patzek

## Consumer Education

### Buy Local

*There is a perceived deficiency in the buy local economy. Some would like increased public education on the true cost of producing food and the difference between “true local” vs. big box organics*

*Some believe increasing awareness of SNAP and EBT programs among farmers would increase purchasing options for consumers who receive benefits*

*It is thought that children and youth influence family grocery purchasing and that increased education on healthy eating for children and youth would support the local foods economy*

### Communication

*There exists polarization and poor communication between groups with different values*

*A need is perceived for consumer education campaigns about the difference between local farming and big box organic*

### Cooking

*There is interest in seeing increased public education on cooking seasonally and food preservation techniques. Farmers lack time to teach and have questions about what entities have capacity to offer classes*

*There is a perception that restaurant cooks lack skills to utilize local/seasonal products and that a need exists to adapt culinary training to focus more on cooking fresh, seasonal foods*

*Many would like increased education that engages children and youth including cannery camps and more SNAP-ED programs in schools*

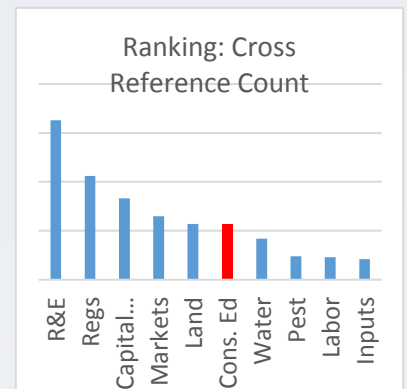
### Cost & seasonality

*Farmers perceive consumers as lacking an understanding of the true cost of food, as well as the importance of shopping with the growing season*

### Forestry

*Some foresters observe a negative public perception of clear-cutting and other forest management practices, and would like increased education to the consumer about the values of this practice*

- [Comments: 17](#)
- [Reference count: 34](#)
- [Cross-reference count: 57](#)
- [Rank by reference count: 6 out of 10](#)
- [Rank by cross-reference count: 6 out of 10](#)



**~Priority mark themes**  
*Expand buy local economy, cost of food, cooking fresh foods, healthy eating for kids*



Farm walk with public in south Puget Sound

## Farm Inputs

### Biodiversity

*There are concerns about depleting bee populations. Too much trucking around bees is seen as a concern. Farmers would like to see increased diversity of products, more consistent season-long bloom and the use of hedgerows to attract native bees. Domesticated bees could be increased with the use of contract apiarists. Educational pollinator gardens are seen as an important tool*

### Energy

*A need is observed for increased alternative energy on farms. Energy costs are felt to be high and sporadic. Farmers would like support in accessing affordable wind and solar power including access to loans and grants that are easy to complete*

### Feed

*Livestock producers are challenged in accessing local, non GMO feed in bulk. An abundance of feed is being brought in. Hay grown locally is said to be from large farms that have a perceived monopoly on production. Farmers are seeking a data base of local hay producers*

*Purchasing feed in small quantities is expensive and feed available in bulk purchasing is sought as well as increased access to storage*

*Farmers would like access to data to match production type to site and vice versa*

### Soil Amendments

*Direct access to adequate manure is seen as a challenge. Increased truck delivery is seen as a need. A database of manure and hay producers, product types, processing information, weight, cost, and nutrient value is sought*

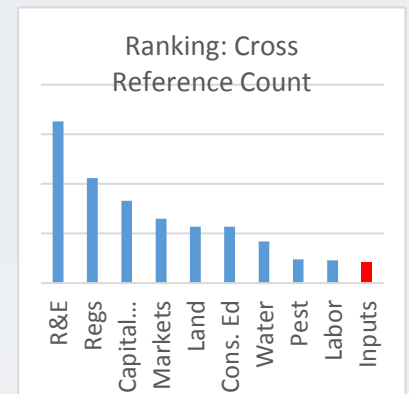
*Farmers who experience rocky and compacted soil seek efficient and expedient techniques to improve soil structure*

*There is a stated need for increased biosecurity around farm inputs including more precaution around avian flu*

*Dairy farmers seek a way to deal with an abundance of dairy solids in the winter. A network to find outlets for dairy solids is sought. Some would also like to see research on the potential of dairy solids as a fertilizer and strategies to lower dairy soil nutrient levels through crop uptake*

*Some are lacking adequate composting facilities and express interest in a cost-share solution. Technical/educational assistance on advanced composting infrastructure is sought*

- [Comments: 19](#)
- [Reference count: 20](#)
- [Cross-reference count: 21](#)
- [Rank by reference count: 10 out of 10](#)
- [Rank by cross-reference count: 10 out of 10](#)



### ~Priority mark themes

*Access to local grain, alternative energy/grants, access to organic manure-based compost, support bee populations*



Phacelia cover crop for pollinators

# Labor

## Access

Farmers express lacking access to adequate labor, including temporary/part-time labor for weed control, haying, packing, and processing. Easy-to-use networks for accessing labor are needed such as community crews, information hubs and farm intern programs

It is perceived among some that work ethic is lacking among the non-immigrant population

## Retention

Farmers experience challenges providing livable wages, adequate health care, and have trouble providing other incentives to retain long-term, high-quality workers. There is interest in mechanisms to retain laborers such as profit-sharing and equity positions. Perceived root causes include:

- A market-driven by low-priced food, and consumers who don't understand real costs of production and the value of good food. Small farms express challenges competing at low cost
- overwhelming labor regulations
- lack of free and adequate healthcare

## Training and Education

A need for increased access to technical education and training for labor force is expressed

Farmers observe a lack of youth interest in farming, and seek increased access for youth to engage in apprenticeships and internships

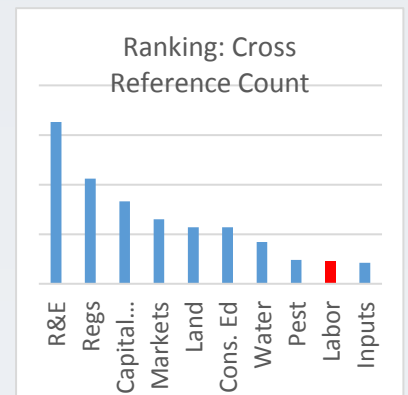
## Sustainability

Farmer-operators face burn-out and strategies are sought to: streamline regulatory and labor regulations to get help; more information/demonstrations on how to mechanize and scale production for efficiencies;

State-run benefits packages to assist farmers and retain laborers was of interest

Access to health care and preventive medicine is lacking. There is a need for farmer physical therapy, chiropractic work, massage and other support for health preservation and injury prevention

- Comments: 14
- Reference count: 20
- Cross-reference count: 23
- Rank by reference count: 8 out of 10
- Rank by cross-reference count: 9 out of 10



### ~Priority mark themes

Retaining long-term labor, wages and benefits, owner labor exhausted, labor regulations, student interns, low cost of food, low worker interest/ethic, workforce training, access to labor force, community labor sharing



# Land

## Expansion

*There is perceived dearth of affordable/leasable farmland. Produce farmers would like to see increased land ownership and increased contiguous land for better efficiency*

*Livestock producers are seeking more contiguous land for beef production and more grazing land in general. Producers seek a database of landowners who rent land for grazing*

## Farmland Conservation

*A lack of sufficient conservation of farmland is perceived and some would like to see increased value in preserving, restoring and expanding agriculture lands. Some would like to see increased efforts to improve pasture and forest health to help sustain future farming*

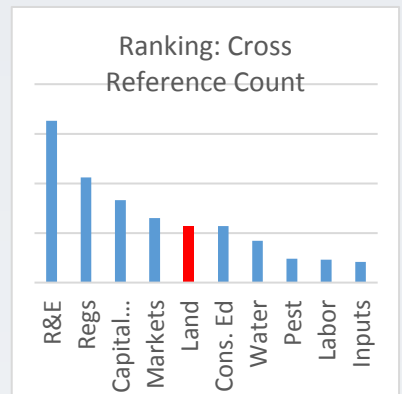
*Farmers feel overwhelmed by development pressure and would like to see increased zoning to resist over-development. The selling off of development rights is a concern and some would like a trusted agency to hold conservation easements. Increased tools to retain more contiguous land is sought*

*Some feel that rezoning and critical habitat decisions are happening without consulting or compensating farmers*



Leon Giles' Blueberry Farm just outside of Olympia, WA abutting a neighbor's livestock operation. Many of the blueberry bushes were planted by Leon's father in the 1940s. Photo credit: Lucas Patzek

- Comments: 32
- Reference Count: 51
- Cross-reference count: 57
- Rank by reference count: 5 out of 10
- 5: Rank by cross-reference count
- 5 out of 10



### ~Priority mark themes

*Access to land, challenges with land cost, easier/broader financing options, multi-use land, farmland conservation, carbon sequestration incentives, valuation for forested land, support in succession planning*

## Financial

*Farmland is high value and landowners are seen as predominantly wealthy. Farmers would like increased access to land at reasonable rates and increased access to multi-use land. Mortgage rates are seen as disproportionate to farmer incomes*

*Many feel land cost is excessive. Farmers seek easier financing options and alternatives to the Northwest Farm Credit Services programs, land trusts, zoning changes and development rights*

## Forestry

*Greater social commitment to proper forest management is needed, financing for forest easement programs, and more avenues for public participation in forest management/ stewardship*

*Long term planning on agroforestry is sought including investments in transfer of development rights and conservation easement programs*

*Forested land is known to add value (ecological) and a need exists for a valuation method for standing trees, because current incentives are all in harvest and residential development. For example, some would like to see increased carbon sequestration compensation, among other options*

## Succession Planning

*Farmers express uncertainty of succession of future farmers and would like access to succession planning that already exists. A legacy plan for retirement is also seen as a priority*

*Increased avenues for continuity and retention of young upcoming farmers is seen as a priority. Mentorship programs for new or aspiring farmers could help with this*

*Farmers would like to see increased land trust support for future leasing /ownership of farms. Land managers would also like to have easier access to Transfer of Development Right Programs*

*A trusted entity is sought to hold conservation easements, which would help secure transition plans in situations with uninterested heirs*



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# Marketing

## Local Market Access

*Small farmers are struggling to access institutional buyers due to challenges with managing high volumes, matching products sought, insurance requirements and a lack of standard pricing from multiple producers*

*Many producers see a mismatch between the costs of local production and prices consumers and restaurants are willing to pay. Farmers would like to see an expanded market during peak growing season and increased options to sell directly to consumers. Some ideas to support this include:*

- *increased access to regional farmer’s markets that are tourist themed; less farm agri-tourism regulation*
- *increase whole-sale prices, more control of wholesale prices*
- *develop a surplus market*
- *develop an information hub that tracks produce supplies that are season specific*
- *increased avenues for community-shared purchasing*
- *develop a Thurston Co/South Sound label*
- *narrow the definition of local to range within the south sound*
- *explore the development of buy local rewards cards*
- *utilize local produce prescriptions, and corporate wellness programs*

*Farmers would like to improve and expand relations with restaurants. Some would like to see increased education/training opportunities to restaurants on utilizing seasonal CSA products. Weekly features or monthly tastings could help increase sales and pay out. Also, some would like to explore the on-farm restaurant model*

*The local market for beef is small. Livestock producers need access to increased USDA meat processing*

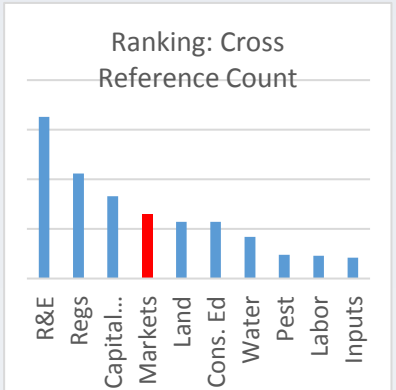
## Market Scale

*There is a growth in large scale organics and some have observed large scale organic farms utilizing misleading local packaging are cutting into sales and profit margins*

*Small, local farms perceive shrinking market for local, direct-from-farmer sales, and increasing competition. Some ideas on how to increase consumer commitment to local farms include:*

- *tax credits for purchases of local foods*

- *Comments: 33*
- *Reference Count: 58*
- *Cross-reference count: 65*
- *Rank by reference count: 4 out of 10*
- *Rank by cross-reference count: 4 out of 10*



## ~Priority mark themes

*Broad-based shared marketing, marketing training/education, social media, aggregate production, new product/research and design, diversification, support buy local market, surplus market, market imbalanced/narrow, large scale affordable production, local beef market small, access to USDA slaughtering*



- *product aggregation to reach new/larger markets*
- *Olympia local brand that could include a subsidy for producers who are willing to participate*
- *More opportunity for on-farm sales (farm restaurants, winery, etc)*

*Dairy farmers are challenged in being locked into restrictive contracts which limit their ability to sell to other buyers*

*Marketing costs are high and some would like to see a shared marketing pool to reduce costs*



Farm to Fork Networking Event. Photo credit: Thurston Talk.

**Technical Assistance**

*Some would like to see more education opportunities, technical assistance and intern support with online marketing resources including web design and social media strategies*

*Many farmers lack time and expertise needed for marketing and are challenged finding broader markets*

*Farmers could benefit from technical assistance to help with marketing to new audiences, producing and marketing diverse product types and increasing farmer access to data on best practices, food safety training (GAPs)*



Helsing Junction marketing photo. Photo credit: Helsing Junction Farm.



Berries from Johnson Berry Farm. Photo credit: Olympia Farmers'



Olympia restaurant owners at Olympia Farmers Market (Our Table, Blissful Wonders, San Francisco St Baker. Photo credit: Bountiful Byway.

# Pest Pressure

## Challenges

Many farmers are lacking the time, resources and best practices to effectively manage weed control. Some challenging weeds noted by farmers include thistle, tansy, bracken fern, morning glory, buttercup and Scotch broom

There is a perception that pest pressure is increasing including east coast pests, broccoli black heart, cane borer, spotted wing fruit fly and soil pathogens

Concerns exist around herbicide and pesticide application negatively impacting pollinators, soil and water

Deer fencing is seen as cost prohibitive and financial support is sought

## Technical Assistance/Education

Farmers would like to have increased avenues to share best practices on pest and weed pressure as well as more educational opportunities on topics like biological control, organic solutions and use of goats for management

More workshops, classes, information, knowing what others are doing, cost-saving techniques

Public education on herbicide and pesticide product usage is sought including better labeling and targeted education materials at stores and institutions such as schools and hospitals

Farmers seek analytical support, access to labs, in identifying pathogens and other soil diseases and deficiencies

Lacking coordinated community interest in weed control; interest was expressed in partnerships between County Weed Board, Extension, community groups like Boy Scouts and 4-H, and neighbors

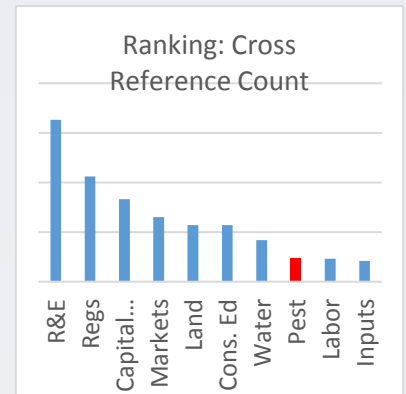


Cabbage maggot. Photo credit: <https://pnwhandbooks.org/insect/vegetable/vegetable-pests/hosts-pests/kohlrabi-cabbage-maggot>



Raspberry cane borer. Photo credit: <https://pnwhandbooks.org/insect/small-fruit/cane-fruit/cane-fruit-raspberry-crown-borer>

- Comments: 17
- Reference count: 18
- Cross-reference count: 24
- Rank by reference count: 10 out of 10
- Rank by cross-reference count: 8 out of 10



## ~Priority mark themes

Local lab resources, nutrient testing, weed control research, tech support/education

# Regulatory

## Conservation and Production

*Some would like to see more local (less federal) control and farmer input on farm policies and regulations. There is perceived need for farm education for policy makers on how conservation issues affect farmers*

*Some feel there is lack of farm outreach information about environmental issues and regulations that affect farmers from government entities; i.e. the Oregon Spotted Frog*

*Lacking the regulatory framework to stay in agriculture; rules that work with farmers to maintain long-term agriculture are need concerning road development, storm water management, cultural studies, others*

*Farmers are concerned about impact to land values and farm operations of critical species listing (Mazama Pocket Gopher, others), and feel farmers are less valued than listed species*

*Concerns exist about federal regulations shutting down farms for potential to pollute. Some would like to see financial incentives, like tax-breaks, for implementing conservation practices. Farm land is thought to be declining or unusable do to perceived excessive water pollution regulation*

*Some land managers perceive that agencies spend a lot of energy on penalization and not enough energy in problem solving*

*The Thurston County Right of Way is seen to be hindering production. Concerns exist about inconsistent mowing in Tumwater and Tenino*

*Foresters are challenged with managing riparian buffer zones and believe that a forest riparian easement could be a more common sense alternative then fixed width buffers*

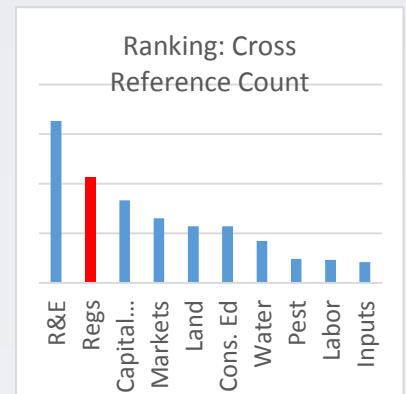
## Liability and Insurance

*Many farms are lacking adequate insurance due to high rates including health insurance for workers, farm liability insurance and crops and animals insurance*

*Insurance requirements are felt to be increasing as larger operations insulate risk. Additionally, some carriers are stepping back from covering smaller farms. Thoughts on solutions include:*

- *broader policies to cover a greater diversity of products; i.e. lavender farmers are not covered to produce honey*
- *increased access to insurers who work with small scale operations, and insurance reforms that considers the needs of small farms*
- *cooperative insurance pools to share costs; i.e. Granges*
- *increased access to federal coverage; i.e. utilize the Farm Bill*

- *Comments: 30*
- *Reference count: 66*
- *Cross-reference count: 106*
- *Rank by reference count: 2 out of 10*
- *Rank by cross-reference count: 2 out of 10*



### ~Priority mark themes

*Tax equity/reform, over-regulation, local vs. federal control of policy, policy reform, farmland designation, equity in livestock production, equity in subsidies/exemptions, organic certification challenges, challenges with food safety regulations*

*Labor and Industry requirements are felt to be burdensome. Some would also like to see age regulations for young farmers adjusted (lowered? In order to engage more youth)*

## **Public Health and Consumer**

*Organic certification is felt to be expensive, complicated and lengthy. Farmers would like to see the process simplified (less paperwork) and to have technical support in the application process*

*Many food safety regulations are geared for large scale farms which creates a perceived economic burden on small farms and reduces consumer access. Examples of regulations of concern include shelf life expiration, animal fee regulations, CSA inspection, refrigeration of spent grain, and refrigeration at farmer's markets*

*Many farmers would like to see future regulations that are specific to farm size to even the playing field between large and small farms*

## **Scale: Small Farms vs. Large Farms**

*Many small farmers feel that regulations disproportionately support larger farms*

*Some felt that a lack of subsidies exist that support small livestock producers. There are examples of exemptions for small livestock producers in Oregon and Idaho*

*Farmers expressed that regulation is broad-based and should be more specific to farm type and size so not to overlook small farms. Some would like to see incentives for time spent understanding and complying with regulations*

*Restrictions on selling directly from farm stands are thought to limit direct sales. There are also challenges expressed around the difficulty selling product to businesses and institutions due to insurance requirements, regulations and risk*

## **Taxes**

*Some farmers expressed that taxes disproportionately affect small farms (<20 acres) and that tax reforms could help to level the playing field. Property size is the main determinant for land in the Open Space Agricultural Conservation law, and home site exemption on under 20 acre parcels hurts small producers*

*Small farmer have concerns that they could owe back taxes if they attempt to designate and fail*

*It is perceived that big timber farms receive disproportionate tax breaks and reform is needed*

## Research, Education, Networking, Information Resources

### Farmer Education and Training

Farmers seek increased access to education and training opportunities for farm support skills including mechanics, equipment operations, basic large animal veterinary, perennial crop production, product diversification, irrigation, composting, pollinator habitat conservation, pasture management and agricultural tourism

A vital support network is sought for farm skills training that is accessible and free to affordable

Farmers would like to see networks developed for farmer to farmer mentoring and shared learnings. On-farm demonstrations are seen as a valuable tool

Increased networking is also seen as a mechanism to build relationships and increase farmer visibility, as farmers feel they are lacking a voice on community issues and regulatory reform

### Technical Assistance

Farmers are seeking technical support from folks with on-the-ground experience, balancing technical/theoretical and practical information in useable format, including access to science-based best practices, and energy topics. There is interest in greater collaboration with WSU and Natural Resources Conservation Service in identifying such support

Increased information is wanted on diversification of production, and how to develop new product types. This includes assistance in utilizing perennial crops including appropriate selection, access to markets, and general management practices/recommendations

Tools for improved financial management are needed, such as access to software and training in its use, including accounting/financial management

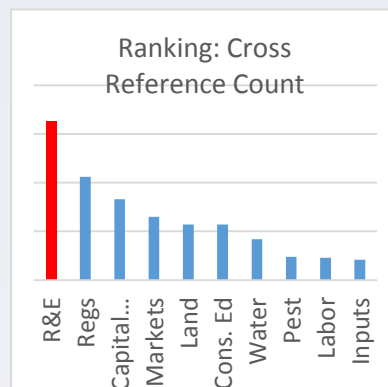
More ready access to technical information is also needed, such as for analytical labs, promising local markets, valuation of local agricultural economy, new crop opportunities, and updates on hot topics such GMOs

Land managers seek support completing paperwork including help with stewardship plans and in finding and submitting grants

### Youth Education and Engagement

Farmers would like to see greater integration with new/young farmers and youth in local agricultural practice to support future farming. Supporting access and opportunities for apprenticeships, paid-internships and engagement in education programs like 4-H and Future Farmers of America would drive this goal

- Comments: 29
- Reference count: 120
- Cross-reference count: 163
- Rank by reference count: 1 out of 10
- Rank by cross-reference count: 1 out of 10



### ~Priorities mark themes

Regional agricultural economic data, farm mentorships, academic vs. grounded farmer assistance, collaboration WSU and other agencies, farmer input in policy, youth engagement, new product support, perennials, grant support and follow-up assistance, technical training, veterinary skills



Pasture management workshop.  
Photo credit: Lucas Patzek.

# Water Resource Management

## Climate Change

*Farmers feel there is a general lack of expertise and training for adapting farm technique to climate change. There is an interest in learning about what water infrastructure will be needed to address warmer weather*

*Farmer to farmer mentoring and networking could help to address future climate related issue*

## Water Conservation

*Farmers observe that water access is depleting as city wells are draining groundwater supplies. Development on wetlands is also seen to deplete access*

*Farmers would like to access more site specific water conservation education, and improved future planning on conservation. Access to technical support with improved irrigation technique and water retention is sought*

## Water Rights

*Many smaller scale farmers are burdened by water access restrictions including the “use it, or lose it”. There is a perceived imbalance between return on crops and the water usage requirements needed to maintain water right.*

*Banking and trading programs are distrusted as are Department of Ecology water rights programs. Stronger relationships between farmers and Department of Ecology staff could help resolve issues, improve trust, and lessen conflict and possible litigation*

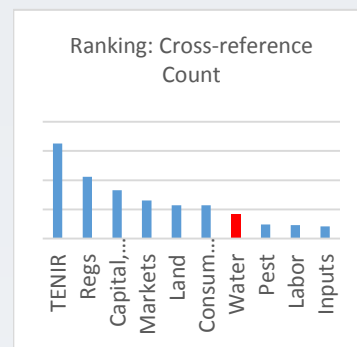
*Additional solutions-based opinions on water rights include:*

- expansion of options for banking and trading water
- expansion of water right transfers that are limited to trading downstream
- increased technical assistance with certain water access programs that are unclear and involve cumbersome application processes; create water rights liaison position
- Clarification/information about minimums and maximums concerning water rights/exemptions



WSU drip irrigation workshop.  
Photo credit: Karie Christensen.

- Comments: 17
- Reference count: 24
- Cross-reference count: 42
- Rank reference count: 7 out of 10
- Rank by cross-reference count: 7 out of 10



### ~Priority mark themes

*Climate change and farming, challenges with water access/city aquifer, more options for banking/trading/transferring water, clarification/reform of water rights policy*

## Available Resources, Solutions Addressing Producer Needs

Results from the needs assessment were circulated to regional organizations and agencies that work on agricultural development. Input was solicited on existing solutions/resources within these entities that address farmer needs as raised in this assessment. The following is an initial list of resources that address, though in most cases do not entirely resolve the identified need. However, study authors thought it would be useful to attempt to assemble existing resources that address or help to address the needs of agricultural producers in the south Puget Sound. This resource list will subsequently be updated and hosted at: <http://extension.wsu.edu/thurston/agriculture/farming-news-resources/>.

| Need area  | Entity                  | Resources that address needs   |
|--|-------------------------|--|
| <b>Capital, equipment, infrastructure</b>        |                         |  |
| Access to capital                                | Thurston EDC            | Thurston Investment Network (ThINk): Matching Thurston County residents who are interested in lending directly to locally-owned small businesses with local businesses seeking capital. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="http://www.thurstonedc.com/think/">www.thurstonedc.com/think/</a>; contact: Aslan Meade: 360-789-8843; ameade@thurstonedc.com</li> </ul>   |
| Cold storage                                     | FSA                     | The Farm Service Agency's Farm Storage Facility Loan program offers low interest financing for cold storage as well as other storage and washing and handling facilities. Additionally, FSA finances equipment and other farm infrastructure through the more general loan programs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Farm Storage Facility Loan Fact Sheet. <a href="https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/FactSheets/2016/2016_farm_storage_facility_loans.pdf">https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/FactSheets/2016/2016_farm_storage_facility_loans.pdf</a></li> <li>Farm Service Agency website for loan programs <a href="https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/farm-loan-programs/index">https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/farm-loan-programs/index</a></li> </ul> |
| Cost share money available for farm improvements | Thurston Cons. District | Cost share available for farm improvements (fencing, planting, watering facilities, heavy use areas, gutters/downspouts, manure storage/composting structures, etc.) as grant funding available. Contact: Robin Buckingham, Resource Specialist: 360.754.3588 x134<br><a href="https://www.thurstoncd.com/">https://www.thurstoncd.com/</a>  |
| Equipment shortage                               | NRCS                    | Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG) can pay for processing equipment and the like by funding a non profit, municipality, public body, etc. The entity in turn can lease to group of farmers or individual farmer(s). Funding is limited and project are scored for competition. I recommend small grant asks of less than \$30,000 in this grant. This grant can cover planning type expenses such as design/engineering costs.<br><a href="https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-business-development-grants">https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-business-development-grants</a>   |
| Financial/lending resources                      | NRCS                    | Rural Micro entrepreneurship Assistance Program (RMAP) loans of less than \$50,000 from funded organizations such as Enterprise for Equity and Community Capital Development <a href="http://www.seattleccd.com">www.seattleccd.com</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For Vertically Integrated Business Models (<i>NOT farm loan or farm operating loans</i>):</li> <li>Business &amp; Industry Guaranteed loan program <a href="https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-industry-loan-guarantees">https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-industry-loan-guarantees</a></li> </ul>   |
| Financial/lending resources                      | WSDA                    | Support and information on business financing for farms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="http://agr.wa.gov/Marketing/SmallFarm/Financing.aspx">http://agr.wa.gov/Marketing/SmallFarm/Financing.aspx</a></li> </ul>  |

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| Financial/<br>lending<br>services                     | Thurston EDC                                      | Small Business Development Center (SBDC), advises existing businesses on all manner of financial management and planning, and assists with loan preparation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.thurstonedc.com/small-business-counseling-sbdc/">http://www.thurstonedc.com/small-business-counseling-sbdc/</a>; Contact: Ron Nielsen at <a href="mailto:rnielsen@spscc.edu">rnielsen@spscc.edu</a></li> <li>•</li> </ul>  |
| Increasing<br>market access                           | WSU   | One of three work areas for Thurston County Extension research and education programming. Contact Thurston County Extension program: <a href="mailto:bramwell@wsu.edu">bramwell@wsu.edu</a><br><a href="http://extension.wsu.edu/thurston/agriculture/market-access/">http://extension.wsu.edu/thurston/agriculture/market-access/</a>   |
| Low-cost<br>equipment<br>rental/library               | Thurston<br>Cons. District                        | Low-cost equipment rental program with small farm equipment. Currently expanding to medium/large scale equipment as producer demand arises. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.thurstoncd.com/index.php/services/equipment-rental/">https://www.thurstoncd.com/index.php/services/equipment-rental/</a></li> </ul>  |
| More cost-<br>share money                             | FSA   | The Farm Service Agency provides low-interest financing for farmers/ranchers. Financing may be used for operating expenses or to purchase or expand a farm operation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farm Service Agency website for loan programs - <a href="https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/farm-loan-programs/index">https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/farm-loan-programs/index</a></li> </ul>  |
| Product<br>development                                | NRCS  | Value Added Producer Grant (VAPG) for either Planning or Working Capital for eligible purposes. This is a 50% grant requiring 50% match made up of any of the following: Cash, Third Party, Applicant+ In Kind, Commodity.<br><a href="https://www.rd.usda.gov/files/4284j.pdf">https://www.rd.usda.gov/files/4284j.pdf</a> and Application Toolkit at this site.  |
| Renewable<br>energy on the<br>farm                    | NRCS  | Renewable Energy for America (REAP) program for farmers, ranchers (rural and urban) and small businesses (rural). This 25% grant can be used for on farm Energy Efficiency Improvements (lighting, hvac, equipment improvements, etc.) <u>and/or</u> Renewable Energy such as Solar PV, digester, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-energy-america-program-renewable-energy-systems-energy-efficiency/wa">https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-energy-america-program-renewable-energy-systems-energy-efficiency/wa</a></li> </ul> |
| Lacking<br>recycling<br>infrastructure<br>ag plastics | Thurston<br>Cons. District,<br>partners<br>needed | TCD formerly ran an ag plastics recycling program in TC with varied success. We have a lot of feedback to share on the creation of a new program and could perhaps be involved in future development of this service.  |
| <b>Consumer education</b>                             |   |  |
| Deficient buy<br>local program                        | Thurston EDC                                      | The South Thurston Economic Development Initiative (STEDI) is a collaborative across cities of Rochester, Grand Mound, Tenino, Bucoda, Rainer, Yelm, Roy & McKenna. “Shop South” rural buy-local campaign launches June, 2017. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.thurstonedc.com/stedi/">http://www.thurstonedc.com/stedi/</a> (Aslan Meade: 360-789-8843)</li> </ul>   |
| Deficient buy<br>local program                        | South Sound<br>Food System<br>Network             | 2017 Local Food Campaign <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://ssfoodsystemnetwork.org/">https://ssfoodsystemnetwork.org/</a></li> <li>• Meetings 1<sup>st</sup> Wed of month, 9:30-11:30, TRPC</li> <li>• 2017 Food Summit Save the Date: October 20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup></li> </ul>   |
| Cooking edu.<br>for local<br>public, chefs            | SPSCC   | SPSCC’s Culinary Arts program provides knowledge and skills in the areas of food production. Specialty classes can range from craft brewing and distilling to owning and operating a food truck. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://spscc.edu/areas/culinary/cap-deg">https://spscc.edu/areas/culinary/cap-deg</a></li> </ul>   |
| Lacking<br>support for<br>buy local                   | Visitor and<br>Convention<br>Bureau               | The Thurston County’s Bountiful Byway promotes local flavors—identifying and increasing customers to area farmers markets, farm stands and farm tours, highlighting restaurants, breweries, and distilleries using local ingredients <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.bountifulbyway.com/">https://www.bountifulbyway.com/</a> (360-704-7544)</li> </ul>  |
| More options<br>for on-farm<br>conservation           | WSU   | Extension resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://ext100.wsu.edu/maritimefruit/pollination/">http://ext100.wsu.edu/maritimefruit/pollination/</a> (cont nxt pg)</li> </ul>  |

|  |                                    |   |
|--|------------------------------------|---|
|  |                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://horticulture.oregonstate.edu/content/integrating-beetle-habitat-pacific-northwest-farming-systems">http://horticulture.oregonstate.edu/content/integrating-beetle-habitat-pacific-northwest-farming-systems</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://xerces.org/">http://xerces.org/</a></li> </ul>  |
| <b>Farm Inputs</b>                                   |                                    |   |
| Integrating young farmers; internships & apprentices | FSA                                | <p>The Farm Service Agency supports youth interest in agriculture through FSA's youth loan programs. FSA youth loans are often used to finance 4-H and FFA projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/FactSheets/2017/youth_loans_march2017.pdf">https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/FactSheets/2017/youth_loans_march2017.pdf</a></li> </ul>  |
| Manure networking                                    | Thurston Cons. District            | <p>TCD maintains a manure brokering list for the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.thurstoncd.com/index.php/resources/manure-management/">https://www.thurstoncd.com/index.php/resources/manure-management/</a></li> </ul>   |
| Feed networking                                      | Thurston Cons. District            | <p>TCD maintains a manure brokering list and could potentially add a local feed list as well. (<a href="#">Sarah</a> at TCD)</p>  |
| Concern over decreasing bee populations              | FSA                                | <p>The Farm Service Agency financially encourages development of pollinator habitat through the Conservation Reserve Program Pollinator Initiative.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pollinator Initiative fact sheet - <a href="https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/FactSheets/2015/CRPPProgramsandInitiatives/honey_bee_habitat_initiative_jul2015.pdf">https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/FactSheets/2015/CRPPProgramsandInitiatives/honey_bee_habitat_initiative_jul2015.pdf</a></li> </ul> <p>Conservation Reserve Program - <a href="https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/conservation-reserve-program/index">https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/conservation-reserve-program/index</a></p>        |
| Integrating bees on farms                            | Puget Sound Beekeepers Association | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.pugetsoundbees.org/">http://www.pugetsoundbees.org/</a></li> </ul>   |
| On-farm conservation                                 | WSU                                | <p>One of three work areas for Thurston County Extension research and education programming. Contact Thurston County Extension program: <a href="mailto:bramwell@wsu.edu">bramwell@wsu.edu</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://extension.wsu.edu/thurston/agriculture/on-farm-conservation/">http://extension.wsu.edu/thurston/agriculture/on-farm-conservation/</a></li> </ul>  |
| Habitat for pollinators                              | Thurston Cons. District            | <p>Technical assistance to increase native pollinator habitat on farmland. Occasional cost share dollars to implement habitat projects. Contact Kathleen Berger, Habitat Specialist: 360.754.3588 x118</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.thurstoncd.com/index.php/services/technical-assistance/">https://www.thurstoncd.com/index.php/services/technical-assistance/</a></li> </ul> <p>South Sound GREEN, a K-12 watershed education program connects youth to ag and pollinator education, including partnering to implement educational pollinator gardens. Contact Stephanie Bishop: 360.754.3588 x 108</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.thurstoncd.com/index.php/south-sound-green/">https://www.thurstoncd.com/index.php/south-sound-green/</a></li> </ul> |
| Energy conservation                                  | Puget Sound Energy                 | <p>Partnering with Puget Sound Energy to offer energy efficiency audits and access to PSE on farm improvements and low-cost loans for additional upgrades.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact Sarah Isham Cann: 425.424.6649, <a href="mailto:sarah.cann@pse.com">sarah.cann@pse.com</a></li> </ul>   |
| Renewable energy on the farm                         | Thurston Energy                    | <p>Thurston Energy helps residents and businesses in Thurston County save money and energy in their homes by reducing operating costs and reducing env impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://thurstonenergy.org/">http://thurstonenergy.org/</a>; contact Wayne Ballew <a href="mailto:wballew@thurstonedc.com">wballew@thurstonedc.com</a></li> </ul>  |
| <b>Labor</b>   |                                    |   |
| Difficult to access find labor and interns           | Labor and Industries               | <p>L&amp;I Farm Internship Project allows interns to safely work on farms to learn about farming practices and obtain hands-on experience in farming activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.lni.wa.gov/WorkplaceRights/Agriculture/SmallFarmIntership/default.asp">http://www.lni.wa.gov/WorkplaceRights/Agriculture/SmallFarmIntership/default.asp</a></li> </ul>  |
| Difficult to find student interns                    | Tilth Alliance                     | <p>Tilth Alliance Internship Listings provides state-wide clearinghouse of farm internship opportunities. Farmers can post intern opportunities here.</p> <p><a href="http://tilthproducers.org/farmer-resources/internships/">http://tilthproducers.org/farmer-resources/internships/</a></p>  |

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| Lack of youth interest in farming                            | Thurston Cons. District, WSU                                | <i>Pathways to Ag Jobs</i> forums in partnership with WSU 4H Thurston County to aid in the transition for youth interested in careers in ag. Contact Nora White, Ed & Outreach Coordinator: 360.754.3588 x 105   |
| Lacking network for accessing labor crews, interns           | Thurston Cons. District                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• South Sound FarmLink has entertained the idea of including a farm labor network for new and expanding farms to post jobs and find qualified help.</li> </ul>  |
| Technical training   | WSU   | <p>Thurston County Extension courses (contact <a href="mailto:bramwell@wsu.edu">bramwell@wsu.edu</a>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10-wk Cultivating Success Farm Production Planning course Jan-Mar annually</li> <li>• Other training/education/workshops available upon request</li> </ul>  |
| Technical training   | Thurston Conservation District                              | <p>Workshops and tours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.thurstoncd.com/index.php/workshops-tours/">https://www.thurstoncd.com/index.php/workshops-tours/</a></li> </ul>   |
| Technical training   | The Evergreen State College                                 | <p>Practical and theoretical hands-on training in agriculture; possible interns available</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://evergreen.edu/organicfarm">http://evergreen.edu/organicfarm</a></li> </ul>  |
| <b>Land</b>  |   |  |
| Easements for riparian areas                                 | Thurston Cons. District                                     | <p>The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program offers farmers riparian restoration and compensation for termed easements on salmon bearing streams.</p> <p><a href="https://www.thurstoncd.com/index.php/programs/crep-conservation-reserve-enhancement-program/">https://www.thurstoncd.com/index.php/programs/crep-conservation-reserve-enhancement-program/</a></p>  |
| Farmland conservation needed                                 | Thurston County Agriculture Committee                       | <p>This committee meets last Thursday of each month, WSU Extension Office 7-9pm; one goal in the Working Lands Strategic Plan guiding this group is farmland preservation utilizing Transfer of Development Rights program.</p>  |
| Farmland access, preservation & succession                   | Thurston Cons. District                                     | <p>South Sound FarmLink connects new and existing producers with landowners who have land available to be farmed for lease or purchase.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.thurstoncd.com/index.php/programs/south-sound-farmlink/">https://www.thurstoncd.com/index.php/programs/south-sound-farmlink/</a></li> </ul> <p>TCD is furthering farmland preservation efforts through the creation of a working lands easement program. Contact Sarah Moorehead: 360.754.3588 x 136</p>       |
| Farmland access & preservation                               | South Sound Community Farmland Trust                        | <p>Farmland preservation program in south Puget Sound</p> <p><a href="http://www.communityfarmlandtrust.org/farmland-preservation.html">http://www.communityfarmlandtrust.org/farmland-preservation.html</a></p>   |
| Farmland access & preservation                               | Capitol Land Trust  | <p>FURTHERING COLLABORATIVE AND STRATEGIC CONSERVATION OF SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON'S ESSENTIAL NATURAL AREAS AND WORKING LANDS.</p> <p><a href="https://capitolandtrust.org/">https://capitolandtrust.org/</a></p>   |
| Forest easements for non-harvest option                      | Capitol Land Trust, S. Sound Trust, Thurston Cons. District | <p>TCD is furthering farmland preservation efforts through the creation of a working lands easement program. Contact Sarah Moorehead: 360.754.3588 x 136</p>   |
| Rezoning and critical habitat decisions without farmer input | Thurston County Voluntary Stewardship Program               | <p>Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) is an approach for counties to protect critical areas on agricultural lands, utilizing voluntary participation from and consultation with farmers - <a href="http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/planning/vsp/voluntary-stewardship-home.html">http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/planning/vsp/voluntary-stewardship-home.html</a></p> <p>Program contact for the Working Group can be obtained from Long Range Planning division in Thurston County, or contact Thurston County Extension</p> |

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| Forest easements  | WA Office of Farmland Preservation | Promote the vitality of farming, farmers, and ranchers by ensuring that we will continue to have productive agricultural lands in Washington State <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://ofp.scc.wa.gov/">http://ofp.scc.wa.gov/</a></li> </ul>   |
| Riparian easement as alt. to fix-width buffer             | DNR                                | The Forestry Riparian Easement Program (FREP) is a voluntary program that reimburses landowners for the value of the trees they are required to leave to protect fish habitat <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.dnr.wa.gov/programs-and-services/forest-practices/small-forest-landowners/forestry-riparian-easement-program">http://www.dnr.wa.gov/programs-and-services/forest-practices/small-forest-landowners/forestry-riparian-easement-program</a></li> </ul>  |
| <b>Marketing</b>  |                                    |  |
| Access to markets   | Thurston EDC                       | The Thurston EDC's Agriculture & Food Economy Program works to expand existing and develop new markets for agricultural products produced within the region. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact <a href="mailto:ameade@thurstonedc.com">ameade@thurstonedc.com</a></li> </ul>  |
| Access to markets   | WSU                                | WSU Extension Thurston Co. priority programming focus on market access issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://extension.wsu.edu/thurston/agriculture/market-access/">http://extension.wsu.edu/thurston/agriculture/market-access/</a></li> </ul>   |
| Expand markets during peak season                         | WSDA                               | Small Farm and Direct Marketing program provides marketing information. Direct marketing handbook provides wealth of information for farmers expanding into direct market sales. Also see marketing and business services (3 <sup>rd</sup> link). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://agr.wa.gov/Marketing/SmallFarm/">http://agr.wa.gov/Marketing/SmallFarm/</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://agr.wa.gov/Marketing/SmallFarm/greenbook/">http://agr.wa.gov/Marketing/SmallFarm/greenbook/</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://agr.wa.gov/Marketing/">http://agr.wa.gov/Marketing/</a></li> </ul>                        |
| <b>Pest pressure</b>                                      |                                    |  |
| Help with pest ID   | WSU                                | Some diagnostic and identification resources through WSU <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pest ID: <a href="http://hortsense.cahnrs.wsu.edu/Home/HortsenseHome.aspx">http://hortsense.cahnrs.wsu.edu/Home/HortsenseHome.aspx</a></li> <li>• Diagnostic clinic in Puyallup, WA: <a href="https://puyallup.wsu.edu/plantclinic/">https://puyallup.wsu.edu/plantclinic/</a>. Diagnostic services \$25-\$40.</li> </ul>  |
| Pest management technical resources                       | WSU                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WSU Vegetable Pathology Program: <a href="http://mtvernon.wsu.edu/path_team/vegpath_team.htm">http://mtvernon.wsu.edu/path_team/vegpath_team.htm</a></li> <li>• Small Fruits IPM: <a href="https://ipm.wsu.edu/small/sf.html">https://ipm.wsu.edu/small/sf.html</a></li> <li>• Gardening and pest management: <a href="http://gardening.wsu.edu/pest-management/">http://gardening.wsu.edu/pest-management/</a></li> </ul>  |
| <b>Regulations</b>  |                                    |  |
| Confusion over direct marketing & food safety regulations | WSDA                               | Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) Small Farm Direct Marketing Handbook (i.e. "Greenbook") reviews the various state and regional regulations required for the production and sale of various food items, including fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy and meat, processed products and more <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://agr.wa.gov/marketing/smallfarm/greenbook/">http://agr.wa.gov/marketing/smallfarm/greenbook/</a></li> </ul>  |
| Lack of liability insurance                               | n/a                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Washington House Bill 1508</li> </ul>   |
| Regulations not conducive to long-term agriculture        | King County Agriculture Program    | The King County Agriculture Program "brings together the County's efforts to preserve prime agricultural soils with efforts to protect water resources and ensure the continuing economic vitality of agriculture." Drainage Assistance, Regulatory review to simplify and improve regulatory navigation, Puget Sound Fresh. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/dnrp/wlr/sections-programs/rural-regional-services-section/agriculture-program.aspx">http://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/dnrp/wlr/sections-programs/rural-regional-services-section/agriculture-program.aspx</a></li> </ul> |
| Resources for farmers concerning regulations              | Thurston County VSP                | Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) is an approach for counties to protect critical areas on agricultural lands, utilizing voluntary participation from and consultation with farmers – <a href="http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/planning/vsp/voluntary-stewardship-home.html">http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/planning/vsp/voluntary-stewardship-home.html</a> (cont nxt pg)  |

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|   |                                 | Program contact for the Working Group can be obtained from Long Range Planning division in Thurston County, or contact Thurston County Extension  |
| Unequal taxation of small and large farms                     | n/a                             | Washington House Bill 1544  |
| <b>Training, education, networking, information resources</b> |                                 |   |
| Advanced soil & compost training                              | WSU                             | Existing extension resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://csanr.wsu.edu/compost/">http://csanr.wsu.edu/compost/</a></li> <li>• Farm compost manual, with special attention to Aerated Static Piles: <a href="https://campus.extension.org/pluginfile.php/48384/course/section/7167/NRAES%20FarmCompost%20manual%201992.pdf">https://campus.extension.org/pluginfile.php/48384/course/section/7167/NRAES%20FarmCompost%20manual%201992.pdf</a></li> <li>• Gardening and compost/soil resources: <a href="http://gardening.wsu.edu/compost-and-mulch/">http://gardening.wsu.edu/compost-and-mulch/</a></li> <li>• WSU Soil Management website: <a href="https://puyallup.wsu.edu/soils/">https://puyallup.wsu.edu/soils/</a></li> </ul> |
| Business tools to support women-owned businesses              | WA Center for Women in Business | The Washington Center for Women in Business (WCWB) supports the mission of all Women’s Business Centers: to “level the playing field” for women entrepreneurs, who still face unique obstacles in the business world.<br><a href="http://wcbw.org/">http://wcbw.org/</a>  |
| Data & analytical support                                     | Pac Mtn Research Consortium     | The Washington Pacific Mountain Research Consortium (WPMRC) provides individuals, businesses, organizations, and governmental agencies with academic research support for community and economic development issues and topics. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact: Dr. Riley Moore, 360-754-6320, or <a href="mailto:rmoore@wpmrc.org">rmoore@wpmrc.org</a></li> </ul>   |
| Farm management questions, conservation plans                 | Thurston Cons. District         | Conservation Plans are a free land management guide for landowners to jointly achieve the management and conservation goals.<br>Free technical assistance is available to landowners and operators to address all of their resource concerns, including pest management, habitat, management practices, soil testing, more. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.thurstoncd.com/index.php/services/technical-assistance/">https://www.thurstoncd.com/index.php/services/technical-assistance/</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.thurstoncd.com/index.php/services/conservation-planning/">https://www.thurstoncd.com/index.php/services/conservation-planning/</a></li> </ul>  |
| Farmer access to data   | Thurston EDC                    | Customized data requests and public use of searchable online database for commercial properties for sale/lease, Thurston County’s labor force , wages, demographics, consumer spending, business and industry, and talent pool. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.WhyThurstonCounty.com">www.WhyThurstonCounty.com</a>; customized data requests contact Kyle Wiese – <a href="mailto:kyle@thurstonedc.com">kyle@thurstonedc.com</a> (360) 464-6053</li> </ul>   |
| Food safety regulations daunting                              | WSDA                            | Food processing, general food safety, consultation, potential for local training available. Contact Lucy Severs: (360) 902-1876 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/FSP/">http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/FSP/</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/FoodProcessors/">http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/FoodProcessors/</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/FoodProcessors/facility.aspx">http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/FoodProcessors/facility.aspx</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Organic/">http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Organic/</a></li> </ul>  |
| GAPs  | WSDA                            | WSDA is offering to Washington growers, producers and shippers an auditing service throughout the food chain to verify that best practices are being followed using USDA's Good Agricultural/Good Handling Practices Audit Program (GAP/GHP). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://agr.wa.gov/inspection/FVInspection/GAPGHP.aspx">http://agr.wa.gov/inspection/FVInspection/GAPGHP.aspx</a></li> </ul>   |
| FSMA, GAPs  | WSU                             | Food Safety Training available; coordinate request through county extension <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://foodsafety.wsu.edu/extension/training-programs/">http://foodsafety.wsu.edu/extension/training-programs/</a> (cont nxt pg)</li> </ul> Food Safety on the Farm program. Inquire with Co. Extension for a workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://foodsafety.wsu.edu/extension/pre-harvest-food-safety/">http://foodsafety.wsu.edu/extension/pre-harvest-food-safety/</a></li> </ul>  |

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| Forest workshops, training opportunities, networking, technical assistance | WSU, DNR                        | <p>WSU's Coached Planning Course:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/events/cponline/">http://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/events/cponline/</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://forestry.wsu.edu/">http://forestry.wsu.edu/</a></li> </ul> <p>DNR Forest Stewardship Program, and Technical Assistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.dnr.wa.gov/programs-and-services/forest-practices/small-forest-landowners/forest-stewardship-program">http://www.dnr.wa.gov/programs-and-services/forest-practices/small-forest-landowners/forest-stewardship-program</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.dnr.wa.gov/programs-and-services/forest-practices/small-forest-landowners/technical-assistance-landowners">http://www.dnr.wa.gov/programs-and-services/forest-practices/small-forest-landowners/technical-assistance-landowners</a></li> </ul>  |
| Grain research   | WSU                             | <p>Regional research on grain varieties, trialing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing Grains West of the Cascades: <a href="http://thebreadlab.wsu.edu/growing-grains-west-of-the-cascades/">http://thebreadlab.wsu.edu/growing-grains-west-of-the-cascades/</a></li> <li>• Ongoing barley variety trials at WSU Thurston County Extension (<a href="mailto:bramwell@wsu.edu">bramwell@wsu.edu</a>)</li> </ul>   |
| Forest management support, promising forest products                       | WSU                             | <p>The WSU Consulting Forester and Silvicultural Contractor Directory is a compilation of forestry professionals around Washington State who provide the professional services to private forest landowners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://forestry.wsu.edu/consultingdirectory/">http://forestry.wsu.edu/consultingdirectory/</a></li> <li>• Forestry resources by topic: <a href="http://forestry.wsu.edu/resources/">http://forestry.wsu.edu/resources/</a></li> <li>• Special forest products: <a href="http://forestry.wsu.edu/resources/#special">http://forestry.wsu.edu/resources/#special</a></li> </ul>   |
| Soil testing help  | Thurston Cons. District         | <p>Basic Soil Test cost is \$25. This cost includes shipping the sample to a certified soil lab and receiving a brief recommendation from one of our natural resource specialists: <a href="https://www.thurstoncd.com/index.php/services/soil-testing/">https://www.thurstoncd.com/index.php/services/soil-testing/</a></p>  |
| Technical education & training for labor                                   | Thurston Cons. District         | <p>Educational events, workshops and training courses are available to the community on a variety of agricultural and natural resource management topics. Contact Sarah Moorehead: 360.754.3588 x136</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.thurstoncd.com/index.php/workshops-tours/">https://www.thurstoncd.com/index.php/workshops-tours/</a></li> </ul>  |
| Technical education & training for labor                                   | WSU Extension                   | <p>On-farm or in-class technical training/workshops can be arranged for topics that are of interest to farmers, from sheep care to food safety and new cultivating equipment (and other). Ask and we'll work to arrange it. Contact <a href="mailto:bramwell@wsu.edu">bramwell@wsu.edu</a></p>  |
| Tools for improved financial management                                    | Thurston EDC                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For general assistance accessing Thurston EDC programs, contact Ryan Norskog: 360-464-6060; <a href="mailto:rnorskog@thurstonedc.com">rnorskog@thurstonedc.com</a></li> <li>• Business TuneUp is an 8-week training program that teaches you the tools you need to improve your business: <a href="http://businesstuneup.org/">http://businesstuneup.org/</a></li> <li>• ScaleUp is a business growth training program; in-person classroom training and one-on-one coaching: <a href="http://scaleupthurston.org/">http://scaleupthurston.org/</a></li> <li>• PTAC (Procurement Technical Assistance Center) provides assistance for small businesses to market to the government, solicitations, drawings, and other areas relating to selling to the government: <a href="http://washingtonptac.org/">http://washingtonptac.org/</a></li> <li>• SCORE counselors serve beginning stage and start-up businesses. Free one on one coaching sessions available.</li> <li>• Veteran entrepreneurial support and skills training while soldiers are in the process of transitioning <a href="http://www.thurstonedc.com/veterans/">http://www.thurstonedc.com/veterans/</a></li> </ul> |
| Business tools to support women-owned businesses                           | WA Center for Women in Business | <p>The Washington Center for Women in Business (WCWB) supports the mission of all Women's Business Centers: to "level the playing field" for women entrepreneurs, who still face unique obstacles in the business world.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://wcwb.org/">http://wcwb.org/</a> contact: Traci Hansen <a href="mailto:thansen@thurstonedc.com">thansen@thurstonedc.com</a></li> </ul>   |

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| Tools for improved financial management                        | Small Business Development Center                            | Small Business Counseling: Ron Nielson works with Thurston County farmers regarding financial statement analysis, identify ways to improve operational efficiency, financial forecasting, develop business plans, and other services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.thurstonedc.com/small-business-counseling-sbdc/">http://www.thurstonedc.com/small-business-counseling-sbdc/</a></li> </ul>   |
| Tools for improved financial management                        | Enterprise for Equity, WSU                                   | This is a high-quality, research-based approach to business planning for food- and farm-based entrepreneurs in the South Puget Sound. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.enterpriseforequity.org/agripreneur/">http://www.enterpriseforequity.org/agripreneur/</a></li> </ul>  |
| Vital support network, knowing what other farmers doing        | Thurston Cons. District, WSU, Eastside Urban Farm and Garden | Field day, farmer networking, and on-farm demonstration proposals welcome. These & other organizations post workshop opportunities; will expand offerings. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thurston Conservation District, contact: <a href="mailto:smoorehead@thurstoncd.com">smoorehead@thurstoncd.com</a></li> <li>• Attend Coffee with your Conservation District, 1x/month. (<a href="#">Sarah</a> at TCD)</li> <li>• WSU: Sign up for <a href="#">SouthSoundAg</a> listserv for farmers, or follow: <a href="https://www.facebook.com/thurstonextension/">https://www.facebook.com/thurstonextension/</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://urbanfarmoly.com/calendar-of-events/2608389">http://urbanfarmoly.com/calendar-of-events/2608389</a></li> </ul> |
| Access to technical information critical issues facing farmers | WSU Center Sustaining Ag natural Resources                   | Research and education on the critical issues facing agriculture, such as climate change, energy and water security, and improving technology and management knowledge that will make all of our agricultural production systems more sustainable. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://csanr.wsu.edu/">http://csanr.wsu.edu/</a></li> </ul>   |
| <b>Water Resource Management</b>                               |  |  |
| Expertise on adapting ag to climate change                     | OSU, WSU, UI   | The AgClimate Network is a web-based hub for data, analysis and communication between regional scientists and stakeholders about climate change and agricultural and natural resources topics. A consortium of institutions including Oregon State University, University of Idaho, and Washington State University, and individuals contribute content to this site and share articles and analyses. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.agclimate.net/2017/05/02/exploring-climate-change-adaptation-strategies-for-agriculture-in-the-northwest/">https://www.agclimate.net/2017/05/02/exploring-climate-change-adaptation-strategies-for-agriculture-in-the-northwest/</a></li> </ul>  |
| Irrigation technical assistance                                | WSU  | Irrigation in the Pacific Northwest, information on equipment, irrigation calculators, soil moisture monitoring, FAQs and tutorials, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://irrigation.wsu.edu/">http://irrigation.wsu.edu/</a></li> </ul>  |
| Funding for irrigation efficiency equipment                    | NRCS   | EQIP program funds irrigation efficiency through cost-share <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/wa/programs/financial/eqip/">https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/wa/programs/financial/eqip/</a></li> </ul>  |
| Strategies to adapt to climate change                          | WSU Center for Sustaining Ag and Natural Resources           | Agricultural strategies that will make farming operations more resilient to climate change. Proceedings (open access) of the January 2017 Climate Impacts to Water Conference. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://ext100.wsu.edu/water/climate-impacts-to-water-conference/">http://ext100.wsu.edu/water/climate-impacts-to-water-conference/</a></li> </ul>   |
| Water conservation information & training                      | Thurston Cons. District                                      | Free technical assistance is available to landowners and operators to address all of their resource concerns. Contact Robin Buckingham, 360.754.3588 x134<br><a href="mailto:rbuckingham@thurstoncd.com">rbuckingham@thurstoncd.com</a>  |

## Conclusion

This report was developed with the understanding that a systematic, inclusive and region-wide agricultural producer needs assessment was necessary to provide an up-to-date documentation of the challenges facing agriculture in the region. The goals of the work were to:

- Provide WSU Extension with producer input to guide agriculture research and education programming
- Provide regional organizations with producer input to guide economic development, agricultural resource conservation, and other community development and education programming
- Complete a robust documentation of agricultural producer needs so individuals, agencies and organizations in the south Puget Sound region could help address these challenges

This assessment demonstrates considerable need among agricultural producers, which is not surprising given ongoing trends in agriculture. The south Puget Sound region is not alone in facing issues with aging farm populations, development pressure, impacts due to climate change, absent or dilapidated farm infrastructure, equipment availability, consolidation in the food system, habitat loss, a relatively low percentage of consumer income spent on food in the U.S., regulatory restrictions, and other factors.

Priority needs emerging from this study demonstrate considerable opportunity for investment, community response, consumer education, technical support for farmers, and policy work to improve the long-term viability of agriculture in south Puget Sound. Indeed, producer comments focused on all those aspects of production that could be considered essential to viable agricultural activities, with three primary areas surfacing in this assessment:

- The availability of productive resources, predominantly land and water
- A regulatory landscape conducive both to agricultural business and regional governance, and
- Market access issues concerning:
  - tools and physical mechanisms essential to getting product to market, such as processing infrastructure and essential equipment, as well as
  - a society receptive to the goods farmers have to offer, meaning: citizens who are supported in making sound nutritional decisions; ready options for the public to purchase direct from farms; clear market information (i.e. point of local origin) indicating how to purchase from farmers; a willingness to pay prices farmers need; and social support programs to fill the financial gap between fair market pricing and *ability to pay*

Producer needs also focused on what has been called in this report Research and Education (R&E). Much more specifically, however, producers referred to this as the need for networking mechanisms to share knowledge, access to practical technical support, opportunities for farmer-to-farmer information exchanges, and on-farm research and demonstrations to support farmer inquiry and innovation.

Less pitched, though often no less important, responses in this study focused on practical farming needs such as pest management, access to farm inputs, and labor issues. It is our hope that the results of this work contribute to region-wide efforts to address these and other producer needs.

## Appendix 1. Pre-existing Regional Farm Needs Assessments

The goals of the pre-assessment were to review available information concerning agricultural producer needs in the region, and determine whether additional research was necessary. Four reports are available that provide background information on producer needs.

- Patzek and Rocker's (2014) work systematically and directly documents impediments to and opportunities for increasing produce sales to institutional markets, but does not integrate data from non-produce farm types.
- The Sustainable Thurston (2012) report is a useful documentation of strengths, challenges and opportunities of/for the local food system, but does not systemically integrate direct input from farmers
- The Thurston County Working Lands Strategic Plan (2010) is a useful but somewhat dated report.

The findings and recommendations in these reports contribute substantially to understanding agricultural issues in the south Puget Sound. It is intended that information in these reports becomes increasingly useful and applicable by context and updating contributed by this needs assessment.

Please see below for full summaries.

# South Sound Farms to Market Assessment

WSU Thurston County Extension, 2014

Lucas Patzek, PhD – WSU Thurston County Extension

Sarah Rocker, MA, MPA – The Evergreen State College

## Summary:

This report was developed to assess the potential of fruit and vegetable producers from Thurston, Mason and Lewis Counties, in accessing regional retail and institutional buyers, and to explore what infrastructural investments would support this. The authors finalized the project with a business to business event, South Sound Farm-to Fork, aimed at bringing together buyers and producers.

## Key Findings:

- Gaps in agricultural infrastructure exist including cold storage limiting farmer access to broader markets
- Interest in developing a centralized product aggregation system exists to better meet the order demands from larger buyers. This would be best organized by a third party facilitator to manage the complex logistics involved
- Cold storage and food processing should be explored with farmers and economic development partners
- A disconnect exists between wholesale/institutional buyers and producers. Increased efforts should be made to fuse those business relationships; i.e. business forums and outreach/education to buyers

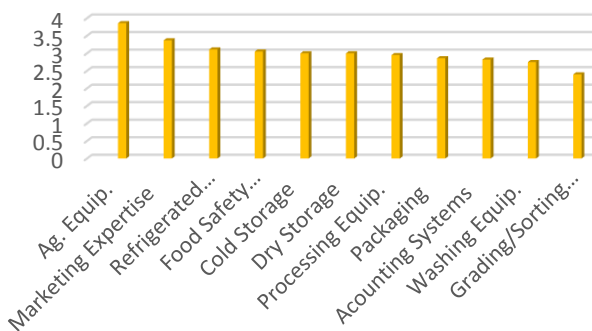
87% of farmers want to sell 75-100% of their produce locally

**BUY LOCAL.**

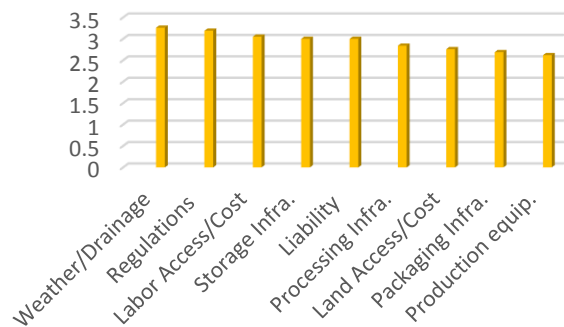
1 out of 2 farmers don't have a business plan



**Farmer interest in sharing resources with other farms. (1 not interested to 5 very interested)**



**Factors limiting fruit and/or vegetable operations. (1 interested 2 not interested)**



# Local Food Systems Panel White Draft White Paper

Sustainable Thurston, 2012

## Summary:

This report was compiled as part of a larger sustainability plan for the Thurston County region. Community leaders and individuals involved in food production and distribution were selected to serve on a panel to combine experience with supported research on issues of meeting current food needs in the county. The study includes anticipated needs factoring in forecasted population growth through 2040.

## Key findings/recommendations:

- Farmers are challenged by development pressure outside Urban Growth Areas, water access, how to meet the demand of population growth, environmental impacts of farming, providing livable wages, and loss of urban farm land
- Production/capacity analysis to support feeding future populations are needed
- Increased shared acquisition of farm land and incentives for using land to farm are recommended
- Support in identifying public land that can be used for community food production is sought
- Exploration of less land intensive farming practices like aquaculture and vertical gardening
- Increased planning for school gardening programs is recommended
- Creation of a Working Lands Advocate position is recommended
- Authors recommend or the elimination of fees that adversely affect farmers; i.e. like storm water fees

*Between 2002 and 2007,  
Washington State lost  
460,000 acres of farmland*



*Agriculture and the  
transportation of food  
accounts for about 50% of  
total global greenhouse gas  
emissions*



# Thurston County Working Lands Strategic Plan

Thurston County Agricultural Advisory Committee, 2010


## Summary:

This Plan complements the Thurston County Comprehensive Plan and the directives of Growth Management legislation. The goal of this plan is to identify the intrinsic value of working lands in Thurston County in order to conserve these lands and maintain forestry and agricultural livelihoods. The content was mostly gathered from suggestions and recommendations shared at focus groups, public meetings and Agriculture Committee meetings.

## Key Findings:


- Well managed working land supports environmental conservation including preserving habitat for fish and wildlife, supporting aquifer recharge, and combating global climate change
  - The market value of land increases pressure on producers to sell for development creating concern for succession of future farmers
- Access to water rights is critical factor for the future preservation of working lands. Growing competition between urban water usage and agricultural irrigation needs is a threat
- Create a Working Lands Advocate to act as a liaison between producers and decision makers would benefit conservation efforts.
  - Expanding options to sell development rights without having to sell the entire property is recommended
  - Developing on-going Purchase of Development Rights programs that earmark and seek out new funding streams to purchase rights would support conservation
  - Authors recommend encouraging The Northwest Agricultural Business center to offer services in Thurston County; i.e. support with innovative product development.
  - Revision of regulations to create alternative standards for working lands that would continue to protect workers and the public is recommended
  - Creating mitigation strategies that would require developers to minimize impact on working lands, or, that would mitigate damages through fees or purchases of other development rights would support conservation

*More than 32,000 acres of lands were converted into urban lands between 1985 and 2000*



*In 2007 Thurston farms generated \$117 million in sales (Federal Agriculture Census)*

*The largest quantity of farms in Thurston County are between 1 and 9 acres*



# Agriculture Infrastructure Study, Pierce County

WSU Pierce County Extension, The Evergreen State College, Pierce County Planning and Land Services - Agriculture Program, Pierce Conservation District and the Pierce County Agriculture Roundtable, 2015

## Summary:

This study compiles input from producers and commercial food buyers within Pierce County. The report offers key insights into the successes and challenges that face the local food system as well as recommendations for solutions.

## Key Findings/Recommendations

- The majority of farmers utilize word-of-mouth as their main method for marketing. Websites are seen as the most affective online tool
- Tractor repair, cold storage, food production facilities and slaughtering/butchering facilities are among some of the infrastructure deficits
- Many feel that there are too many farmer’s markets and that the focus should be on making existing markets better as opposed to creating more
- Purchasers define “local” with a larger geographical span than producers
- Purchasers see pricing as the most important factor in deciding who to buy from
- Purchasers seek ease of access in purchasing including simplified ordering that includes online options and produce that is available year-round
- Authors recommend conducting a feasibility study on developing a centralized food hub to increase local food sales
- Providing marketing/media support to producers and support with technology solutions to business challenges is recommended
- Authors recommend streamlining regulations that affect farmers around health, food safety and land use. Support for farmers in better understanding regulations to support ease of compliance is also recommended

