



# Regional Small Farms

# 2024

## THE ISSUE

The increasing number of smaller scale farms on the Olympic & Kitsap Peninsulas has created a need for more small farm education, technical assistance, experiential opportunities, and resources for area farmers. The region's agriculture faces challenges due to policy-related issues, economic viability, and environmental concerns, such as water management and soil health. Additionally, unpredictable weather patterns and market fluctuations further complicate sustainable farming practices. In 2024, the WSU Regional Small Farms program saw an increase in farmer educational requests and technical assistance to include identification and management of on-farm pests, animal agriculture, crop production, soil health, farmland preservation, agritourism, and farm business assistance.

## THE RESPONSE

The WSU Regional Small Farms program serves Clallam, Jefferson, and Kitsap Counties in Washington state and is dedicated to fostering a thriving food and farming sector in the region. The program actively supports the needs of both new and experienced farmers through farmer education, engagement, and assistance; research and the application of best practices; policy and advocacy for the farm sector; and strengthening the food systems landscape. Additionally, the program consistently develops strategies to deliver outstanding programming and technical support to farmers throughout the region, while also nurturing local community partnerships.

## BY THE NUMBERS

- Responded to **71** technical assistance requests serving **59** farmers. The top two topics of need included Integrated Pest Management and Crop Production solidifying the need for this expertise in our counties.
- Delivered **25** educational events (10 online, 11 in-person farm walks and 4 additional in-person classes) to **381** farmer attendees. Over half (62%) of attendees have been farming for 10 years or less.

## QUOTES

“ There was a lot of great information and please have more classes!  
- farmer attendee Tax Season class

“ Incredibly helpful, refreshing and also put some of my nerves at ease.  
- farmer attendee Chicken Keeping 101 class





## THE IMPACTS

The WSU Regional Small Farms program has significantly impacted the Olympic & Kitsap Peninsulas by addressing the educational and technical needs of small-scale farmers. In 2024, the program engaged 381 farmers through various workshops and classes and provided one-on-one technical assistance to 59 unique farms. Additionally, the program's online educational resources reached a broader audience, with 1,471 views of previous class recordings, helping to equip local farmers with the knowledge and skills needed to improve their operations and foster sustainable agricultural practices. By offering a combination of hands-on support and accessible digital content, the WSU Regional Small Farms Program has been instrumental in strengthening the resilience and success of small-scale farming in the region. Specific Impacts from the past year include:

### **Regional Small Farms classes and event offerings:**

10 online classes, 11 in-person Dirt Talk farm walks, and 4 additional in-person educational opportunities. Through these offerings:

- 381 farmers were engaged in a total of 42.5 learning hours
- 61% of farmer participants farm on 10 acres or less, solidifying the need for small farm education in our region.
- Of the total farmers that attended classes and provided feedback via the evaluations, 77.6% felt that the overall value of the classes attended were of great value to them in their farming education.
- Of the total farmers that attended classes and provided feedback via the evaluations, 79.2% said they would recommend the class to others.

### **Farmer One-on-One Technical Assistance:**

Staff responded to 71 technical assistance requests directly serving 59 farmers across Clallam, Jefferson, and Kitsap counties. Assistance was delivered in person, via phone and through email. The top inquiries (in order of most frequently requested) for 2024 included:

- Integrated Pest Management (IPM)
- Crop Production
- Soils
- Animal Agriculture
- Farm business planning, marketing, and financial planning

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*Washington State University  
Regional Small Farms  
Program provides research-  
based information and  
educational programs for  
farmers, consumers, decision-  
makers, and others involved  
in local food systems.*

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## THE IMPACTS *continued*

### Additional Special Projects:

In addition to educational opportunities for farmers in the region the program engaged in ongoing projects, both county and state-wide, around identified farming and community needs. Project highlights for 2024 include:

- Provided farmers resources through the Small Farms website and monthly agriculture focused newsletter with over 1,377 subscribers and an average 44% open rate.
- Administered the Kitsap Farm Mentor Program - supporting 8 farmer mentors with 8 group class offerings delivered to 12 farm interns.
- Provided support and technical assistance in food access programming such as SNAP and SNAP Market Match to Farmers Markets & Farm Stands in the region.
- Assisted the Kitsap Agritourism Coalition (KAC) with group administration and coordination of the 2nd Annual Kitsap Farm Tour.
- Co-presented the 22nd Annual Jefferson County Farm Tour and served on steering committee.
- Provided facilitation and resources for the 2024 Cultivating Success class series *Explore Your Farm Dream* and *Whole Farm Planning*.
- Continuation of the Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education grant (SARE Award #2022-38640-37490) to conduct three years of sweetpotato trials on farms in Clallam, Jefferson and Kitsap Counties. 20 farms participated.
- Completed series of new and beginning farmer focused classes supported through a Food for Climate Solutions grant from the Russell Family Foundation.
- Installed soil moisture meters on 7 farms in the area to improve irrigation efficiencies
- Acted in an administration, facilitation and/or advisory capacity for multiple community partnerships/ groups, including:
  - Clallam AgWorks
  - Clallam County Conservation Futures Board
  - Climate Action Committee Food System Working Group
  - Jefferson LandWorks Collaborative & Buy-Protect-Sell Farmland Project
  - Kitsap Agritourism Coalition (KAC)
  - Kitsap Food Systems Round Table
  - Kitsap Farmland Preservation Coalition (KFPC)
  - Kitsap Community & Agricultural Alliance (KCAA)
  - Kitsap Harvest
  - Port of Port Townsend Short's Farm Steering Committee

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**Kellie Henwood, Regional Small Farms Coordinator (Jefferson) - [kellie.henwood@wsu.edu](mailto:kellie.henwood@wsu.edu)**  
**Jess Sappington - Farming & Food Systems Coordinator (Kitsap) - [jess.sappington@wsu.edu](mailto:jess.sappington@wsu.edu)**  
**Laurel Moulton - IPM Regional Specialist (Clallam) - [laurel.moulton@wsu.edu](mailto:laurel.moulton@wsu.edu)**  
**Clare Menard - New & Beginning Farmer Educator (Kitsap) - [clare.menard@wsu.edu](mailto:clare.menard@wsu.edu)**  
**Sammi Grieger, Research Assistant (Clallam)- [samatha.grieger@wsu.edu](mailto:samatha.grieger@wsu.edu)**



Clallam/Jefferson/Kitsap County  
WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY  
**Regional Small Farms**