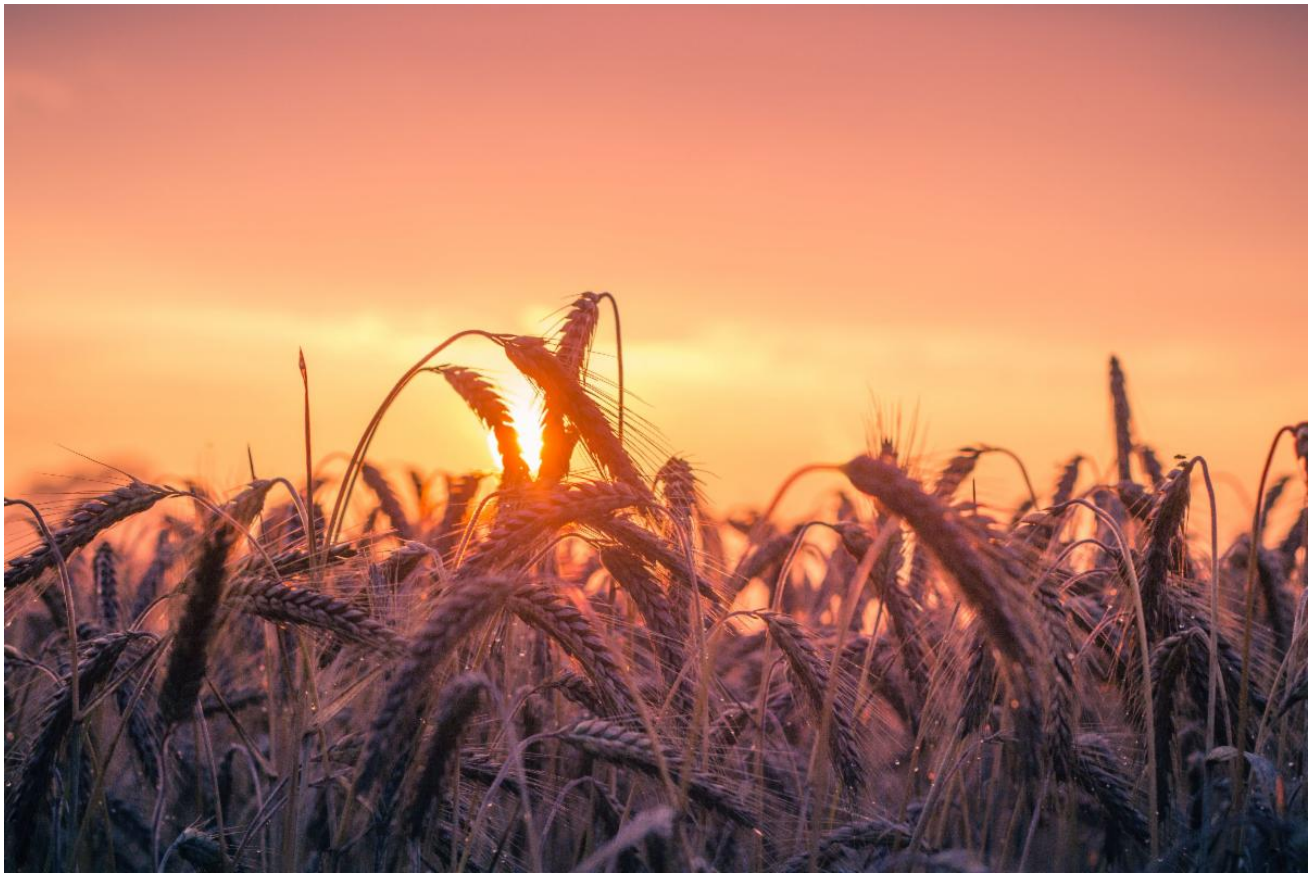
WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

The AG Sounder Newsletter



February 2024

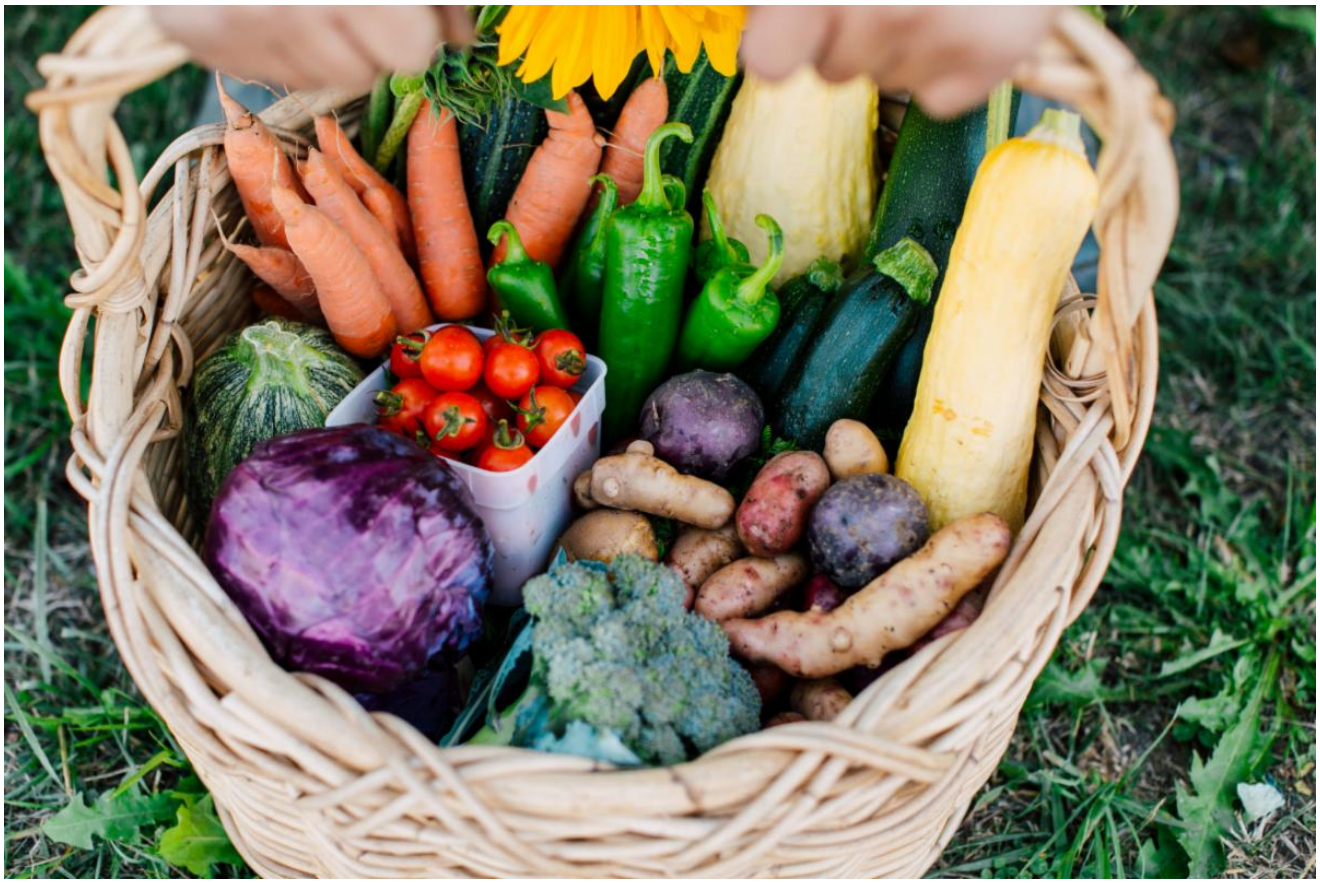
Do you have an event or story you would like featured in The Ag Sounder? Let us know!

In This Issue:

- Wet Feet Farming Webinar - March 14th
- Strawberry Agricultural Mulches Survey
- Wanted: Mobile Hop Harvester
- WSU Food Systems Hub Call - April 17th
- Southwest Washington Grazing School - April 18-21

Help support the Cougs with a donation to WSU College of Agriculture, Human and Natural Resource Sciences

Make a Gift Today!



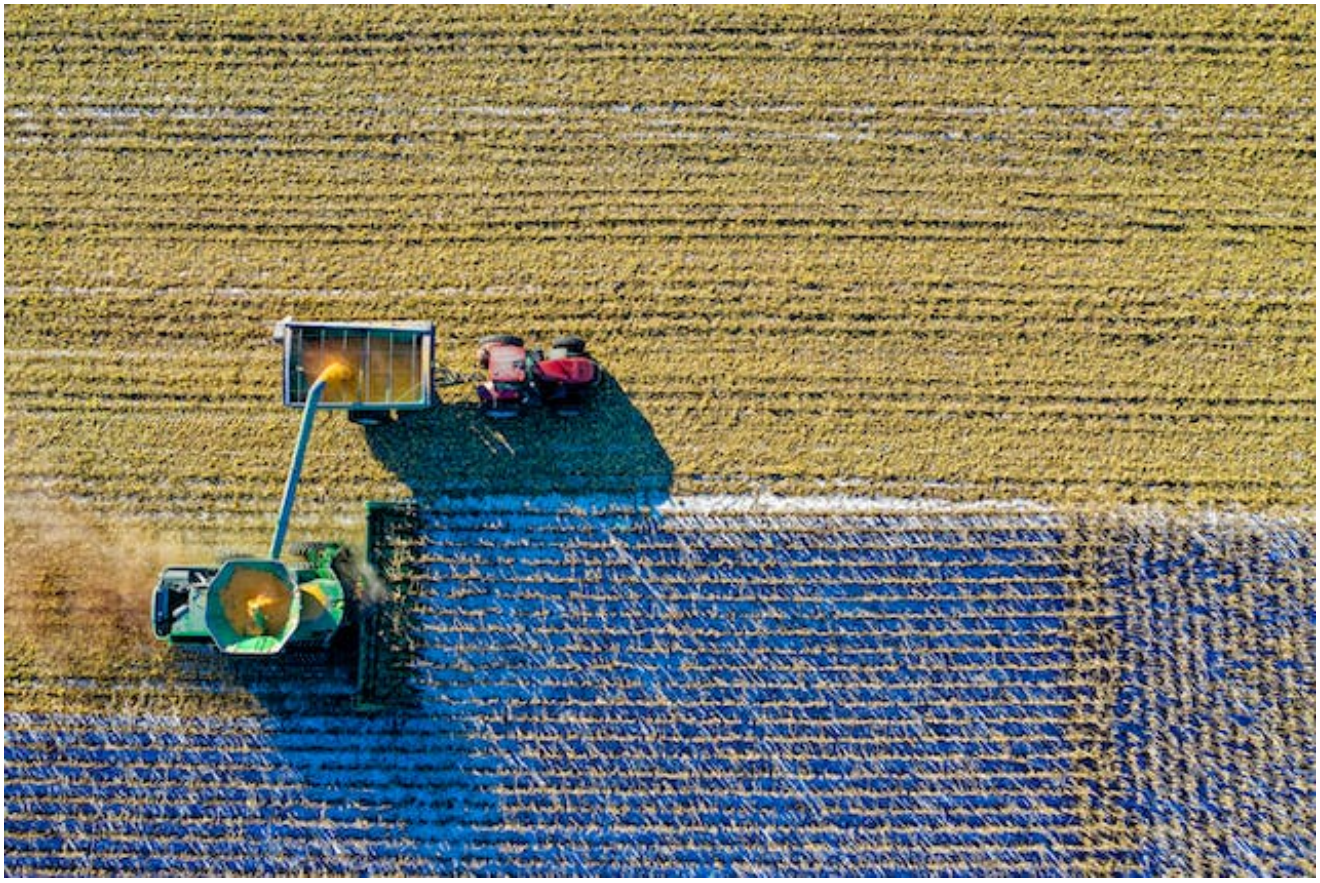
Eat Local First - Celebrating National CSA Week

For consumers eagerly awaiting fresh spring and summer produce, now is the time to choose a CSA farmer. CSA stands for 'Community Supported Agriculture', a convenient way to keep the kitchen stocked with the very best the season has to offer while directly supporting and engaging with a local farm. February 19th-25th is CSA Week, a nation-wide effort supported by the CSA Innovation Network to promote CSA farmers and encourage consumers to sign up early for CSA subscriptions. Celebrating CSA Week not only supports local farmers but also represents a crucial step towards reducing our carbon footprint and combating climate change. By choosing local, we minimize food miles, reduce packaging waste, and support sustainable agricultural practices that are kinder to our planet.

For those that might be new to CSA, Eat Local First can be a trusty guide. Eat Local First's CSA Finder helps consumers in Washington find local food subscriptions near

them, and is also offering the chance to win $300 toward their choice of a CSA share from any CSA farm in Washington. Additional resources, tips and stories of local CSA farms and CSF (Community Supported Fisheries) are also available on the Eat Local First website. There are over 300 farms listed on the CSA Finder – something for everyone!

Click here to learn more.

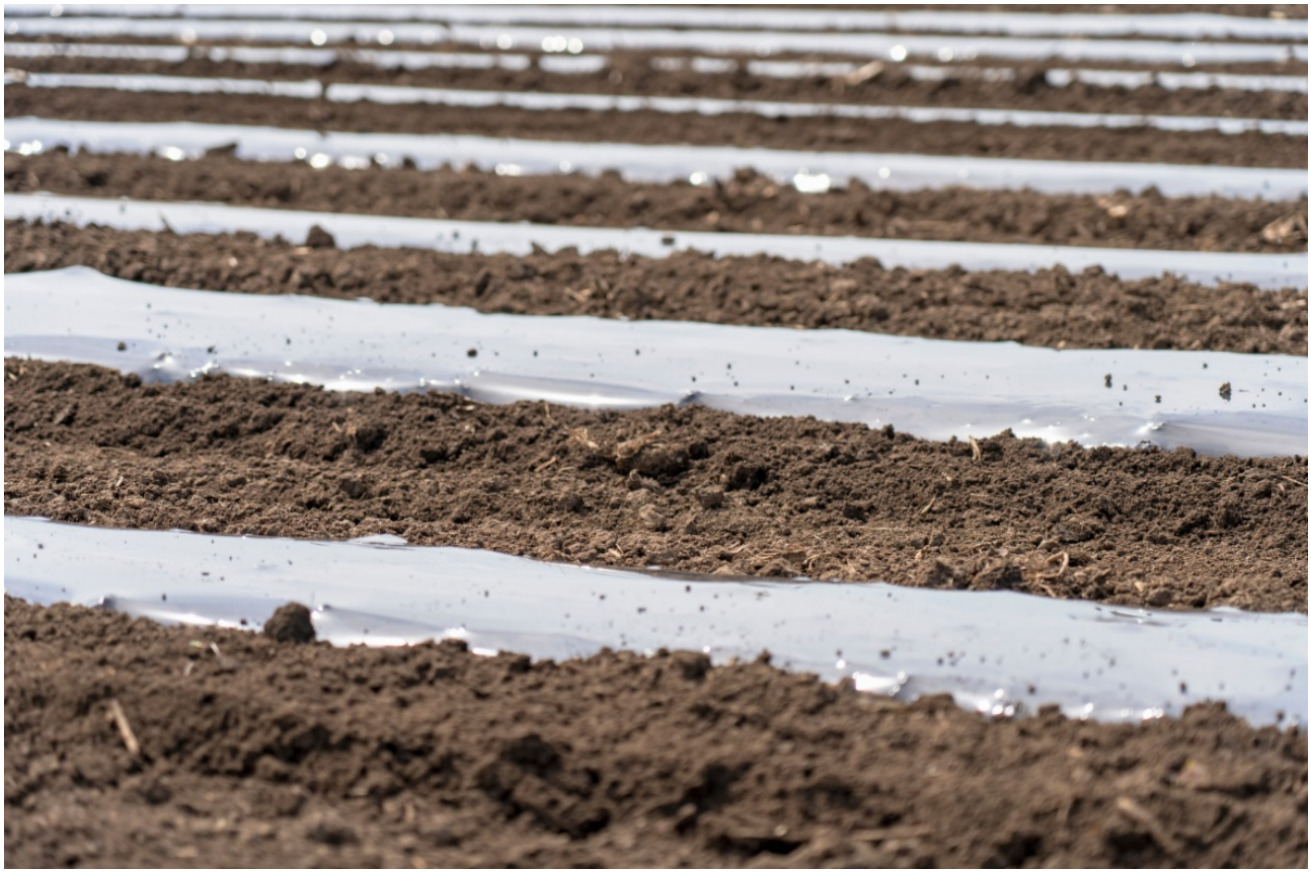


Unlocking Capital for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers & Ranchers

The Council of Development Finance Agencies (CDFA) and the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) Foundation have partnered to create the CDFA-NASDA Foundation Socially Disadvantaged Farmers & Ranchers Access to Capital Program in response to the USDA Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement 2501 Grant Program.

The program will assist socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers in building successful operations by accessing sustainable business capital. The program will do so by developing a culturally significant educational curriculum that teaches agricultural finance in relatable and meaningful terms. CDFA will build on the organization's 40-year leadership of the development finance industry, along with the experience of our strategic partners at the NASDA Foundation, to provide specialized assistance to rural communities and a transferable toolkit to communities nationwide. Through this combination of expertise and collaboration, the CDFA-NASDA Foundation Socially Disadvantaged Farmers & Ranchers Access to Capital Program will help rural communities understand the myriad of financing programs available to invest in socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers and develop long-term access to capital programs and strategies.

Click here for more information.



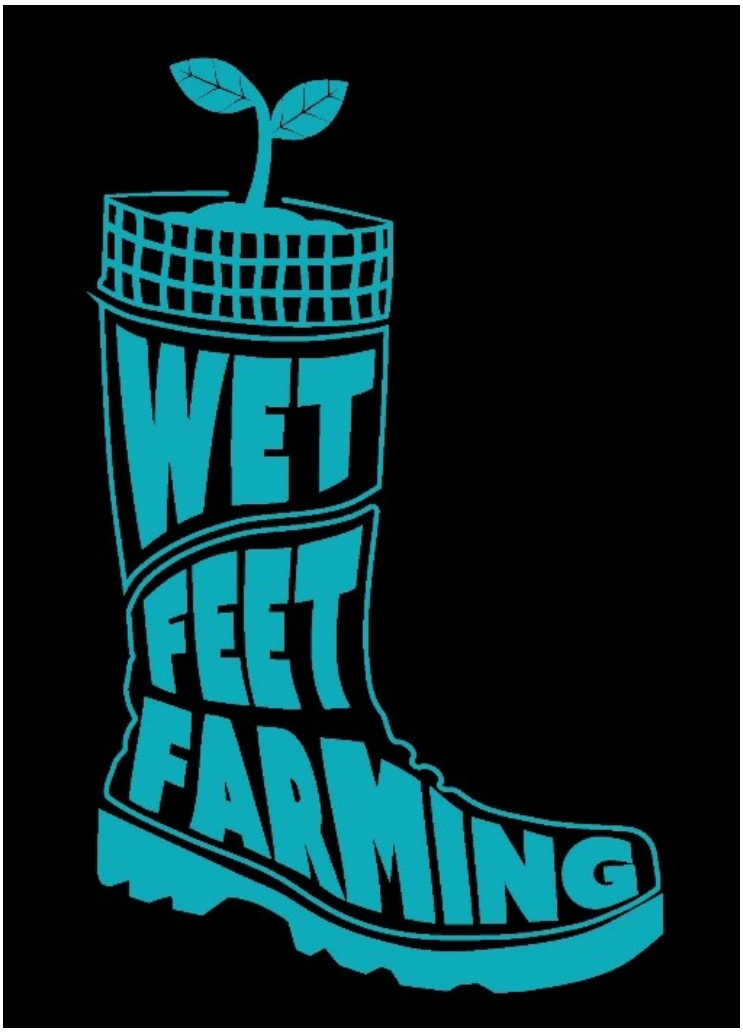
Soil-biodegradable Mulch Updates

Polyethylene (PE) mulch is widely used in horticultural crop production for weed control, soil temperature modification, soil moisture retention, earlier harvest, and improved crop quality. However, PE mulch is non-recyclable due to soil contamination after removal from the field, and thus most PE mulch is disposed of in landfills or, in some cases, buried or burned on farm. Soil-biodegradable plastic mulch (BDM) is a sustainable alternative to PE mulch. BDM provides comparable horticultural benefits as PE mulch with an added advantage of being designed to be tilled into the soil at the end of the cropping season, which reduces waste and disposal challenges. After being incorporated into the soil, BDM fragments biodegrade into carbon dioxide and water, and do not impact soil health. Despite these benefits, adoption of BDM has been slow as growers observe breakdown of the BDM during the growing season. Mulch deteriorates due to loss of physical or mechanical strength of the mulch as the plastic biodegrades. The process of BDM biodegradation in the field begins with deterioration of mulch in the form of rips, tears and holes, triggered by biotic and/or abiotic factors. High air and soil temperature, relative humidity and wind velocity cause rapid weathering of BDMs. Mulch deterioration is perceived to affect functionality of the mulch. However, the effect is minimal when the critical growth stage of the plant has passed.

Growers can visually assess mulch deterioration in the field as percent soil exposure (PSE) to evaluate how well mulches remain intact over time. PSE is a measure of the area of soil exposed relative to intact mulch area and provides an indication of loss of mulch functionality (weed control, soil moisture retention). Growers can assess PSE under their field conditions to determine which BDM thickness performs best for a particular crop. Research has shown that when a BDM starts to deteriorate about 8 weeks or later after planting, weed growth is minimal even when BDM deterioration reaches about 40% by the

end of the crop season. PSE assessment of BDM would help a grower compare the efficacy of BDM and other conventional mulches in terms of weed control and crop yield.

Click here for a video to guide to measure PSE in the field.



Wet Feet Farming Webinar

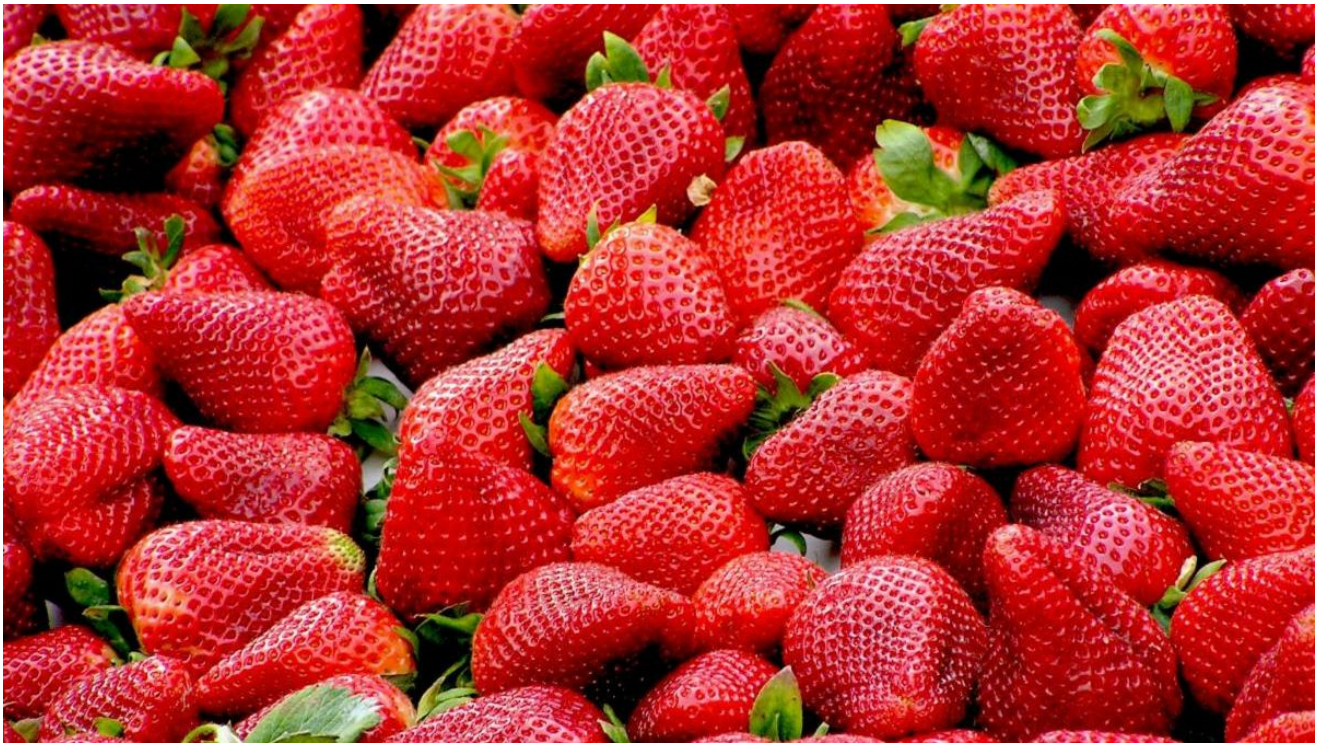
Thursday, March 14th

Are you struggling to farm on saturated fields? Are you finding it more and more difficult to plant crops in the spring, get equipment onto fields, graze animals, or cut hay due to wet conditions? Trees may be the answer!

Many farms in our region are facing challenges with increasingly wet fields due to upland development, failing drainage infrastructure, and changing weather patterns. Join Snohomish Conservation District Agroforester, Carrie Brausieck, for a “Wet Feet Farming” webinar to learn more about this emerging issue and how agroforestry can provide solutions.

Anyone interested in agroforestry is welcome to attend! The webinar is free, and will be held from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. Thursday, March 14, 2024. Pre-registration is required.

Click here to learn more and register.



Strawberry Agricultural Mulches Survey

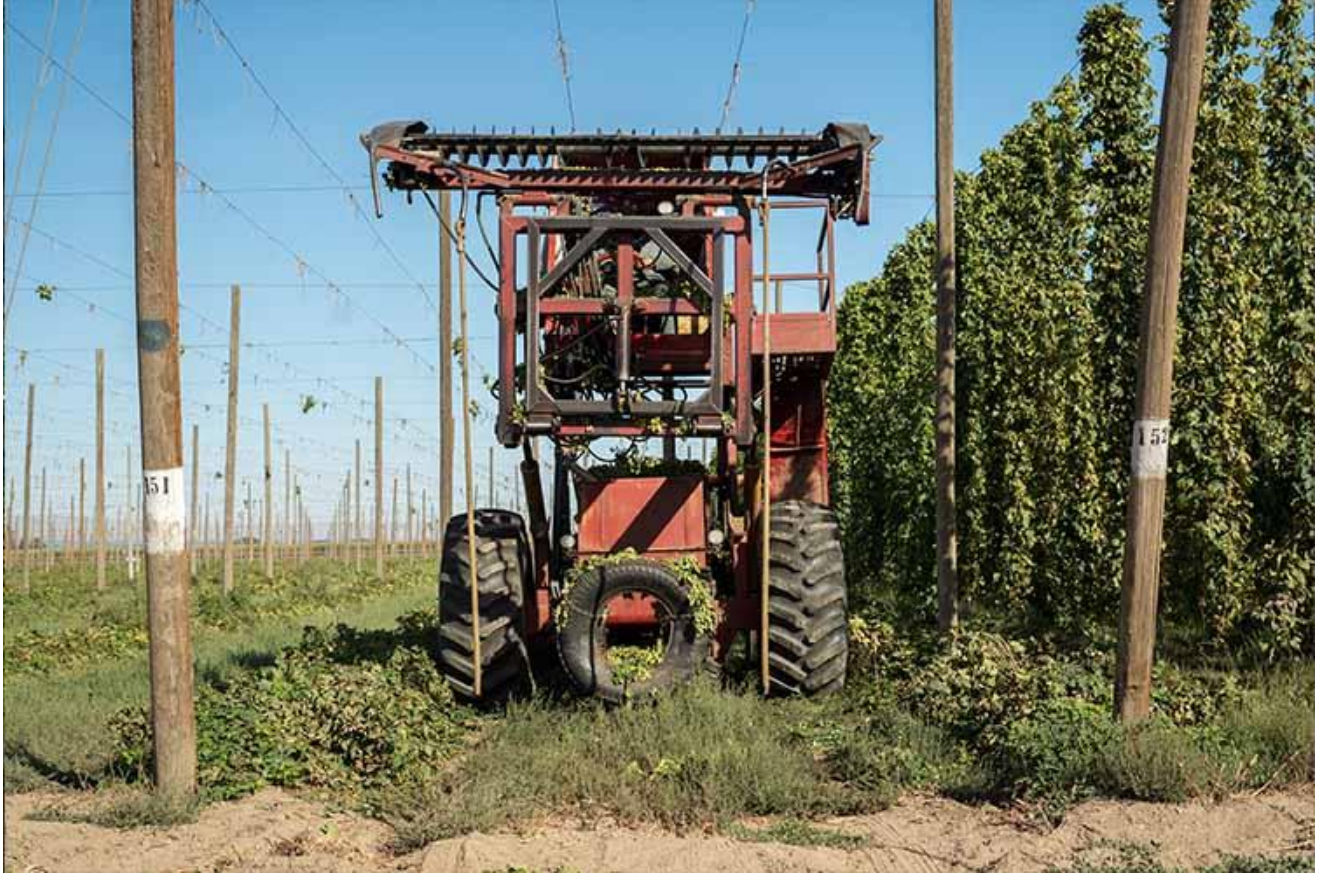
If you grow strawberries, we request that you let us know how we can assist to improve efficiency of agricultural practices in strawberry production. Our particular focus is to understand your use of agricultural mulches for strawberry production.

Your time is valuable, but we hope you can share with us information about your current practices and opinions about different types of agricultural mulches by completing this short online survey.

Responses to this survey are voluntary and your answers will be kept completely confidential. The survey is being conducted by Washington State University's Social and Economic Sciences Research Center and is certified exempt by the WSU IRB 20193-001. No individual or business will ever be identified in our results.

If you have any questions about why this survey is being done, about accessing the survey, or anything else related to the survey, please contact the SESRC at **strawberry.survey@wsu.edu** or call them toll free at 1-800-833-0867.

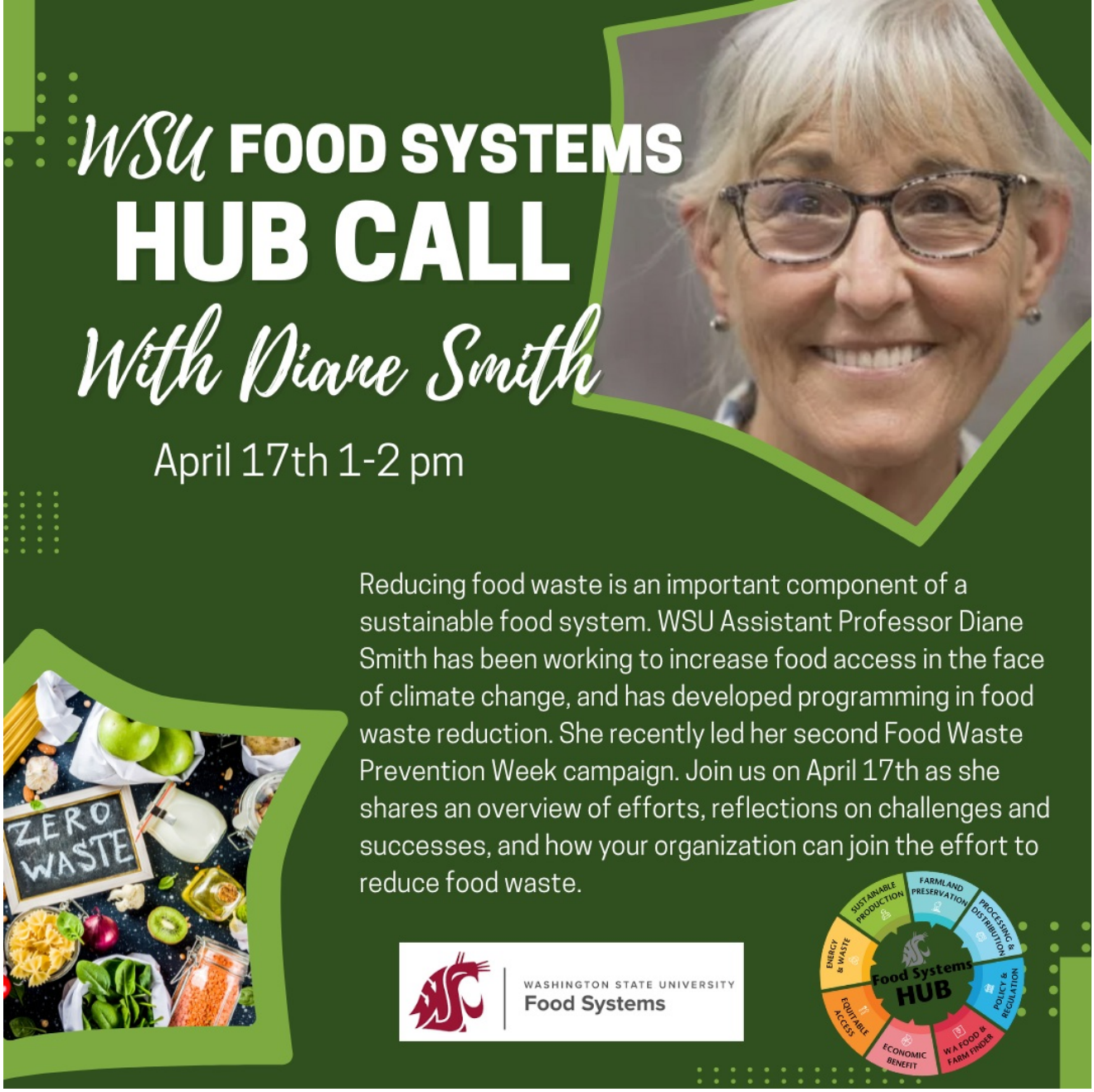
Click here to complete the survey.



Wanted: Hop Harvester for Sale

Do you have a hop harvester that you are wanting to sell to a local farmer? Or do you know someone who has a hop harvester for sale?

Contact bramwell@wsu.edu with information.



Click here to learn more and register.

SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON GRAZING SCHOOL

MULTI-DAY INTENSIVE

April 18 - April 21 - Skookumchuck Grange - Tenino, WA - 8:00am-8:00pm

WHO SHOULD ATTEND:

- Beef, sheep, or goat producers, dairy operators, and horse owners
- Technical service providers supporting livestock producers including NRCS, Conservation District, or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees

LEARN HOW TO:

Half of the time will be spent in the field for hands-on learning

- Evaluate biomass for planned grazing
- Portion out forage through grazing paddocks
- Design grazing cells for a targeted stocking rate and density
- Install, troubleshoot, and fix electrical fencing systems
- Assess pasture health
- Improve soil and forage resources to improve health and productivity

HOW YOU CAN BENEFIT:

- Improve pasture management skills
- Develop, improve and practice grazing management skills
- Reduce hay production and save feeding costs
- Improve pasture productivity
- Diversify with more resilient and nutritious forage resources
- Extend the grazing season and reduce harvested forages
- Raise healthier livestock

PARTICIPATION COSTS:

Includes 3 meals per day

- Cost Per Person: $300
- Cost Per Family/Ranch Team: $300 for the first person, and $200 for each subsequent person
- Please inquire about scholarships
  - Available to all veterans
  - Others welcome to inquire

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Stephen Bramwell

(360) 790-9308

bramwell@wsu.edu

https://extension.wsu.edu/thurston/event/sw-wa-grazing-school-2/

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication or program information or reasonable accommodations need to contact Stephen Bramwell.

Click here for more information.

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WSU Extension Thurston County | 3054 Carpenter Rd SE, Lacey, WA 98503 (360) 867-2189