

# Washington State Conservation Commission

## FARMLAND PRESERVATION NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2017

[HTTP://OFP.SCC.WA.GOV/](http://ofp.scc.wa.gov/)



### *2017 Legislative Session Rolls Along*

As the 107th legislative session rolls on, legislators of late have been busy on their respective floor's voting out bills ahead of a major cutoff, **March 8**.

March 8 is the House of Origin cutoff—meaning, bills need to be moved from their respective house of origin by the conclusion of the day. Then, committee hearings will ramp up again with hearings on bills that have remained active to this point. The next major milestone in the legislative process will be the policy bill cutoff of **March 29**.

Session is scheduled to adjourn Sine Die on **April 23**.

To keep track of the legislative calendar dates, go to: <http://leg.wa.gov/legislature/Pages/cutoff.aspx>

If you are interested in commenting on a bill or contacting your legislator, the following link provides information on the various ways you can provide your opinion. <http://leg.wa.gov/LIC/Pages/hotline.aspx>

The Office of Farmland Preservation tracks legislation as it relates to agricultural viability, regulatory impacts, protection of farmland, land use, and other topics that may have a nexus with the viability of farmland in Washington. Bills below are still active and moving.

To learn more about individual bills, select the bill page link. Once at the bill page, you can select either the actual text of the bill or review the bill reports (recommended). Bill reports provide background, effect of bill, and summary of public testimony.



<b>Bill Number</b>	<b>Bill Page</b>	<b>Bill Title</b>	<b>Current Status as of March 2</b>
SHB 1017	<a href="#">Bill Page</a>	Addressing the siting of schools and school facilities.	On 2nd reading in House
SHB 1544	<a href="#">Bill Page</a>	Concerning small farms under the current use property tax program for farm and agricultural lands.	On 2nd reading in House
HB 1562	<a href="#">Bill Page</a>	Continuing the work of the Washington food policy forum.	House Rules
SB 5010	<a href="#">Bill Page</a>	Promoting water conservation by protecting certain water rights from relinquishment.	Passed Senate 27-22 Referred to House Ag
E2SSB 5239	<a href="#">Bill Page</a>	Ensuring that water is available to support development.	Passed Senate 28-21 Referred to House Ag
SSB 5808	<a href="#">Bill Page</a>	Concerning agritourism.	On 2nd reading in Senate

**Stay in contact and sign up for the OFP-Newsletter!**

Email frequency is once a month

Sign up on the web at: <http://ofp.scc.wa.gov>

## *Food Consumption Research—Washington included*

REPORT: Strategies Low-Income Parents Use to Overcome Their Children's Food Refusal

The January 2017 Maternal and Child Health Journal published an article reporting on a study regarding strategies low-income parents use to overcome their children's food refusal.

**Introduction** Parents play a key role in the development of eating habits in preschool children, as they are the food “gatekeepers.” Repeated exposure to new foods can improve child food preferences and consumption. The objective of this study was to determine parent feeding strategies used to influence child acceptance of previously rejected foods (PRF).

**Methods** We conducted eighteen focus groups (total participants = 111) with low-income African American and Hispanic parents of preschool children (3- to 5-year-olds) in Texas, Colorado, and Washington.

**Results** We found three major themes in the data: parents most often do not serve PRF; parents value their child eating over liking a food; and parents rarely use the same feeding strategy more than once for a PRF. Desiring to reduce waste and save time, parents said they most often intentionally decided not to purchase or serve PRF to their children.

**Discussion** Because parents' primary goal in child feeding is getting children to eat (over acceptance of a variety of foods), strategies to help parents promote consumption of less easily accepted foods could help parents with child feeding struggles and improve children's dietary quality.

Read more at: <https://goo.gl/vMKJwS>

## *Two New Berries for You from USDA ARS*

By Sharon Durham - USDA ARS

Agricultural Research Service (ARS) geneticist Chad Finn and his colleagues at the Horticultural Crops Research Unit in Corvallis, Oregon, developed two new berry varieties—a blueberry and a blackberry—and recently released them to the public.

Baby Blues, a blueberry cultivar, is a vigorous, high-yielding, small-fruited, machine-harvestable highbush blueberry with outstanding fruit quality. It is well suited for processing markets that require a small fruit size. Baby Blues should offer growers and processors an alternative to the low-yielding Rubel highbush blueberry, and it should thrive in milder areas where northern highbush blueberries are grown, according to Finn.

Finn also developed a new blackberry named Columbia Giant. This thornless, trailing blackberry cultivar is a high-quality, high-yielding, machine-harvestable blackberry with firm, sweet fruit. The fruit quality is similar to or better than that of the industry standards Marion and Black Diamond. Due to its extremely large size, Columbia Giant will mostly be sold in the fresh market. It also is adaptable to areas where other trailing blackberries thrive.

Read more at: <https://goo.gl/61FZhl>



Columbia Giant, a new blackberry cultivar developed and released by ARS.

## *DNR Offering 3,000-acre Agricultural Lease*

Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is offering for lease approximately 3,000 acres of agricultural land in the Paterson-Horse Heaven Hills region. This bid opportunity is unique for a several reasons: its large size, an atypical lease structure and the ability to tap into 3.9 acre feet of non-interruptible Columbia River water per acre. **All bids are due by 1 p.m., April 6, 2017.**

[Learn more](#)



## ***Report: Economic Contributions of Washington H-2A Workers***

The Washington Farm Labor Association (Wafila), a membership-based agricultural association, enlisted ECONorthwest (ECO) to prepare an economic analysis of the contributions of the H-2A seasonal visa program in the State of Washington.

The federal H-2A program enables agricultural employers to hire legal foreign workers if there are insufficient numbers of U.S. workers available to fill seasonal time-sensitive agricultural positions.

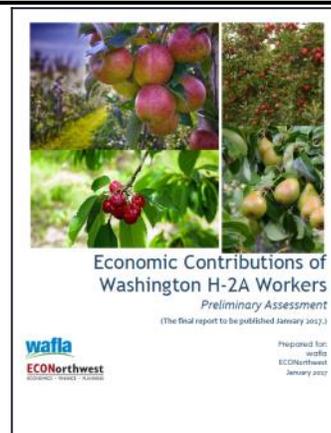
The agricultural industry in Washington produces a diverse range of high-value crops, and the output of this industry plays a large and important role in the state's economy.

Based on this preliminary analysis, researchers find that:

In 2014, the H-2A labor force for apples, pears, and cherries contributed:

- \$1.5 billion in economic output in Washington State
- Supported employment of 14,282 individuals

Read the full report by going to: <https://goo.gl/cSxT1t>



## ***Report: Rising Demand for Organic and Non-GMO Grains Outpaces U.S. Production***

Increasing consumer demand for organic and non-GMO foods led to a sharp rise in organic grain imports in 2016—prompting food manufacturers to explore new incentives for U.S. growers transitioning to organic production, according to a new report from CoBank. While U.S. production of non-GMO crops has risen, domestic production of organic corn and soybeans remains well short of demand.

Imports of organic grains, particularly corn, surged in 2016 to meet the burgeoning U.S. demand for organic food products. Organic corn imports more than doubled from 2015 to 2016 and accounted for nearly one-half of the U.S. organic corn supply. The domestic shortfall for organic soybeans was even greater, with roughly 80 percent of soybeans supplying the U.S. organic market imported in 2016.

Animal feed for organically raised dairy, beef, pork and poultry products, and ingredients used in organic consumer packaged goods are the two principal markets for organically produced grains. For U.S. farmers to satisfy this growing appetite for organic foods, analysts estimate between one and five million U.S. acres would have to be transitioned to organic production.

The report notes that some leading food manufacturers are finding new and innovative ways to incentivize growers for transitioning to organic production to help bolster domestic supply and reduce reliance on imports. Those include free agronomic services to contract growers and premiums for goods grown on transitional acres. A new transitional certification is also available that growers and food companies can use to market their products for a price somewhere between that of organic and non-organic crops.

Read more at: <http://bit.ly/2kQ5i2L>



## ***USDA Seeks Local Food Grant Reviewers***

USDA Agricultural Marketing Service recently announced it is seeking reviewers to evaluate grant applications for the Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program (FMLFPP) and the Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP). Local food grants strengthen America's rural communities by supporting direct farm-to-consumer markets and local food enterprises.

Apply by March 20th. Details at: <https://goo.gl/GbF8Wo>

## ***Growing Organic Demand Provides High-Value Opportunities for Many Types of Producers***

Organic agriculture began developing in the first half of the 20th century as an alternative to conventional production systems that use synthetic chemical inputs. USDA set national organic standards in 2000, providing a single set of rules for U.S. organic farmers and handlers and replacing the patchwork of State and private standards that had emerged by the early 1990s.

### **Millennials Spur Growth in the Organic Market**

Organic products have shifted from being a lifestyle choice for a small segment of consumers to being consumed at least occasionally by many Americans. In 2014, Gallup included questions on organics in its annual food consumption survey for the first time and found that 45 percent of Americans actively tried to include organic foods in their diets.

[Continue Reading](#)

## ***U.S. Per Capita Availability of Red Meat, Poultry, and Fish Lowest Since 1983***

According to ERS's food availability data, the annual per capita supply of total red meat (beef, pork, veal, and lamb), poultry (chicken and turkey), and fish/shellfish available for consumption in the United States has fallen over the last 7 years after reaching 200 pounds in the mid-2000s.

In 2014, aggregate red meat, poultry, and fish/shellfish availability on a boneless, edible basis fell to 181 pounds per person, the lowest level since 1983. ERS calculates food availability in a given year by totaling domestic production, imports, and beginning stocks and subtracting exports, ending stocks, and farm, industrial, and other nonfood uses. Per capita availability is calculated by dividing the annual availability by the U.S. population for that year.



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## ***Northwest Farm Credit Services—Land Values Report***

### **Northwest Region Trends**

Northwest land sale transactions verified during 2016 are on pace to match year-end 2015 levels. The majority of the transactions continue to occur between landlords and existing agricultural operators. Interest from investors for agricultural properties in many areas remains strong. Market activity is reportedly mixed throughout the Northwest and is generally dependent on property type and/or market segment.

Fewer listings of good-quality agricultural properties continues to hinder market activity and land values continue to increase. Based on limited data, the land-value trend shows a large increase between 2015 and 2016. However, the exact rate of increase is difficult to predict given the low sale numbers verified to date. Anecdotally, land values have been stable to slightly higher in the majority of areas across the region.

### **Washington Report**

- Low supply of high-quality land is limiting sale transactions.
- Buyers of most cropland are local farmers expanding existing operations, with some out-of-area investors.
- Rural residential and recreational activity has been stable over the past year with a slight increase in activity.

Sales activity for Washington has been stable in most areas over the past six months. Sale prices for most irrigated land remains strong with good demand from local farmers. Low cattle prices may pressure pasture prices downward.

See the full northwest report at: <https://goo.gl/jRessc>

## *Funding Opportunities*

### **Farmer Veteran Fellowship Fund**

The Farmer Veteran Fellowship Fund provides direct assistance to veterans in their beginning years of farming or ranching. The Fund does not give money directly to the veteran, but rather to a third-party vendor for any items that make a critical difference in the launch of a young farm business. Applicants must have served in the U.S. Armed Forces, currently be on active-duty, or serving in the military reserve/National Guard. Applicants must be members of Farmer Veteran Coalition.

Details at: <https://goo.gl/zdEhps>

**Applications must be received by March 20, 2017.**

### **Farmers Market Promotion Program**

USDA is accepting applications for the Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP), to increase domestic consumption of and access to locally and regionally produced agricultural products, and to develop new market opportunities for farm and ranch operations serving local markets.

There is a wide array of eligible applicants. The minimum per grant is \$50,000, and the maximum is \$500,000.

Details at: <https://goo.gl/XPZ486>

**Applications are due by March 27, 2017.**

### **Clif Bar Family Foundation**

Clif Bar Family Foundation Small Grants are awarded for general organizational support as well as funding for specific projects.

Small grants average approximately \$7,000 each.

**One of the priority areas is to create a robust, healthy food system.**

Applications are reviewed three times a year; the deadlines are the 1st of February, June, and October.

Complete details at:

<http://clifbarfamilyfoundation.org/Grants-Programs/Small-Grants>

## *Why You Need an Estate Plan*

From the Private Landowner Network—<https://goo.gl/nch7uD>

It's not the most comfortable topic to discuss, but for the sake of practicality, making a plan for when you die is an incredibly important step everyone should undertake.

Having an estate plan will determine what happens to your property, who gets your assets, who takes care of your children, and what happens to you. While an estate plan sounds like something for the wealthy, it's actually something everyone should have in place.

One doesn't even need to seek out a pricey lawyer to enact this type of plan. For those who don't have high-value estates, it's even easy to find legitimate online options for quickly putting together legal documents that will help carry out your wishes.

Regardless of your bank account, having a plan in place will give you peace of mind and it will ease the burden for your relatives upon your passing.

### **Wills**

Many people assume that having a will means the courts don't get involved. Unless there is a trust, which is usually part of a high-value estate, a will usually goes through probate, and adheres to a state's probate laws. That being said, it's still important to have a will, and these can easily be drawn up. A will sets the stage for what you want to happen upon your death. At the very least it gives you the power to list your preferences for having your wishes carried out. With a will you can assign an executor who will monitor the process of having your assets divided and your debts paid out. If you don't have an executor, the courts step in to manage your estate.

[Continue reading](#)

The State Conservation Commission recently updated the workbook *Planning the Future of Your Farm—A workbook supporting farm transfer decisions*.

The update was to the estate tax portion. If you have a workbook already, you can get the 2017 updated estate tax page at: <https://goo.gl/4jRXzB>

Request a copy of the workbook or updated estate tax page by sending an email to [ofp@scc.wa.gov](mailto:ofp@scc.wa.gov) or calling 360-407-7474

## *In Short*

### **Multi-State Study Surveys How Health Insurance Affects Farmers and Ranchers**

A four-year project exploring how health insurance options impact the farm and ranch population in the United States is beginning a survey to help researchers understand how health-insurance policy affects farmers' and ranchers' decisions to invest, expand, and grow their enterprises.

States included in the study are California, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, Utah, Vermont, and **Washington**.

For more information, visit: <http://www.hirednag.net/>

### **New “Talking With Your Tenant” publication series now available**

Iowa Learning Farms has created a new publication series to help tenants and landlords begin discussing conservation practices.

The series presents talking points and relevant research findings about a variety of practices: in-field practices like cover crops, no-tillage, and strip-tillage, and edge-of-field practices such as denitrifying bioreactors and wetlands.

The four-part series is available online.

<https://www.iowalarningfarms.org/talking-your-tenant>

### **Researchers Looking for Genetic Traits of Hill-Climbing Cattle**

Researchers across the West are collaborating on a project that would help livestock owners select for a hill-climbing trait in cattle genetics, reports Western IPM Center.

The project collected data on cow movements and behaviors and analyzed hill-climbing individuals for chromosomal commonalities.

Selecting for the hill-climbing trait could help manage resources better by distributing grazing and protecting riparian areas.

Read all about what researchers learned by going to:

<https://goo.gl/1Zyikv>

## *In Short*

### **Congressional Hearings Kick Off Farm Bill and Appropriations Season**

In recent weeks, the debate around the next farm bill – which will be up for reauthorization next year – has begun to gain momentum.

The Senate Agriculture Committee held its first field hearing last week in Kansas and recently the House Agriculture Committee held its first subcommittee hearing focused on the farm bill, choosing to begin with the Conservation Subcommittee.

[Continue Reading](#)

### **USDA Report: Farm Households Experience High Levels of Income Volatility**

For many farm households, income varies considerably from year to year and may even be negative; farm household income volatility is driven mostly by farm income, which is more volatile than off-farm income.

Total household income is more volatile on larger farms than on smaller farms, and crop farms have more volatile household income than livestock farms.

Because household income variability influences these decisions, it can strongly affect agricultural production and household well-being.

[Continue Reading](#)

### **WSDA Drought Report**

The 2015 growing season in Washington State was one of the driest on record due to early, rapid snow melt. In addition, temperatures during the 2015 water year (October 1, 2014 – September 30, 2015) were far above average.

The economic impact of drought from other extreme climatic events has not previously been quantified at a statewide level.

WSDA concluded that the estimated economic loss due to the 2015 drought reached between \$633 million and \$773 million.

Read the full report with details on individual commodities at:

<https://goo.gl/7ppkxq>

# WASHINGTON STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

## Mark Your Calendars

### Ties to the Land—March 15 & 21

Join WSU Wednesday, March 15 and Tuesday, March 21, 2017 from 5:00pm to 9:00pm both nights for a two-part succession planning workshop. The focus is on helping landowners large and small start their own succession plan discussion using the award-winning Ties to the Land curriculum.

Dinner will be provided both evenings. Location is WSU Snohomish County Extension's—Everett, WA. **Details:**

<https://goo.gl/CK7x1z>

### March 25: Using livestock guardian dogs for predator control

A workshop about using livestock guardian dogs for predator control will be held 1-4 p.m. Saturday, March 25, in Monroe, hosted by Washington State University Snohomish County Extension.

Space is limited and prepaid registration is required. Cost is \$25 per farm (up to two) or \$15 per person.

Register online at <http://LGD.eventbrite.com>

### Changing Lands, Changing Hands—Denver, June 13-15

Land access, agricultural land tenure and farm succession are top challenges for US agriculture.

In cooperation with USDA, Land For Good is proud to host this national event.

<http://landforgood.org/our-work/changing-lands-changing-hands/>

### OSU's Cider & Perry Production March 27 - 31—Corvallis, OR

Hosted by Oregon State University (Corvallis, OR). Taught by an OSU Fermentation Science expert.

This course will introduce you to the fundamentals of cider making as well as the various styles of cider and the history and traditions behind the modern cider industry.

Learn more and register at:

<https://goo.gl/VGLGqL>

### Farm Financial Planning Workshop—March 23, Bremerton

Looking for farm loans or access to capital? Wondering how to create an organized and attractive loan package? Want to understand cash flow on your farm and build a budget for growth? Do you have trouble filling out your Schedule F tax form and have questions? This workshop is for you. Join us for a full day of educational presentations, exercises, and discussion.

**Details at:** <https://goo.gl/ec6hb5>

### Organic Pest and Disease Management Fruit School—March 14/15

Join the WSU Extension Tree Fruit Team for an Organic Pest and Disease Management Fruit School. This event will delve deep into the ecology, biology and tools for successful organic orchard pest and disease management with presentations, discussions, hands-on activities and demonstrations. The 2-day event is co-located at Wenatchee (primary), Prosser (satellite), and Omak (satellite).

**Details at:** <https://goo.gl/IQR0eE>

### On Farm Food Safety - One day University - Regulations and Certifications—March 22

The new FDA Produce Safety Rule under the Food Safety Modernization Act is the first federal food safety law that sets specific standards for fruit and vegetable growers. What does that mean for small farms? Join Tilth Alliance for a One Day University, in collaboration with the WSDA FARMS team, for an in-depth look at the evolving on-farm safety regulations and certifications.

**Details at:** <https://goo.gl/JZaWJD>

### Farmland Succession Planning Workshop - Part 1 of 2 - March 7, 5:30pm - 8:00pm:

Do you have a plan for the future of your farm? Want to learn about other options to transfer your farm to the next generation?

Join us and learn how to get started!

Click Here for More Info.

<https://goo.gl/b04N8x>

### Tractor & Farm Machinery Safety Training - April 14

Developed by WSU Skagit County Extension is coming to King County, April 14, 2017, 9am to 5pm! Includes classroom and hands-on instruction.

Those completing the entire course successfully will be eligible for a Certificate of Completion. Course instruction in Spanish will be available.

Register online at [TractorSafety.eventbrite.com](http://TractorSafety.eventbrite.com).

“OUR MISSION IS TO PROMOTE THE VITALITY OF FARMING, FARMERS, AND RANCHERS BY ENSURING THAT WE WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE PRODUCTIVE AGRICULTURAL LANDS IN WASHINGTON STATE. WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS THROUGH POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNOR, THE LEGISLATURE, THE OFFICE OF FARMLAND PRESERVATION AND OTHERS AND BY ENLISTING PUBLIC SUPPORT. PROGRAMS WILL BE VOLUNTARY, RECOGNIZE LOCAL PRIORITIES, AND PROVIDE FOR ECONOMIC INCENTIVES.”