

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1984

As Passed House:

June 4, 2001

Title: An act relating to marketing of agricultural products.

Brief Description: Creating the small farm direct marketing assistance program.

Sponsors: By Representatives Quall, Morris, Barlean, Cooper, Ericksen, Dunshee, Linville, Hatfield, Ruderman, Poulsen, Conway, Lovick and Kagi.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Ecology: 2/23/01, 2/26/01 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/12/01, 98-0.

First Special Session

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 5/3/01, 89-0.

Second Special Session

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 6/4/01, 88-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates a marketing assistance program to assist small farms in direct marketing efforts.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & ECOLOGY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 14 members: Representatives G. Chandler, Republican Co-Chair; Linville, Democratic Co-Chair; Cooper, Democratic Vice Chair; Mielke, Republican Vice Chair; B. Chandler, Delvin, Dunshee, Grant, Hunt, Kirby, Quall, Roach, Schoesler and Sump.

Staff: Kenneth Hirst (786-7105).

Background:

State law designates the Washington State Department of Agriculture as the agency of state government for administering state agricultural market development programs and activities, both domestic and foreign. These programs are for products of both terrestrial and aquatic farming. To carry out this function, the department has been granted a variety of powers and duties, including those to: study the potential marketability of agricultural commodities of this state; promote the sale of Washington's agricultural commodities and products at the site of their production through the development and dissemination of referral maps and other means; encourage and promote those agricultural industries, such as the wine industry, that attract visitors to rural areas in which other agricultural commodities and products are produced and are, or could be, made available for sale; and promote the establishment and use of public markets in this state for the sale of Washington's agricultural products. In 1985 the Legislature expressed its intention that these powers and duties be exercised without duplicating established private sector marketing efforts.

It is the Director of Agriculture's duty to investigate and promote the economical and efficient distribution of farm products. This may expressly include: aiding producers and consumers in establishing economical and efficient methods of distribution; promoting more direct business relations by organizing cooperative societies of buyers and sellers and by other means reducing the cost and waste in the distribution of farm products; and investigating the possibilities of direct dealings between producer and consumer by parcel post and other mail order methods.

Summary of Bill:

A marketing assistance program is created to assist small farms in direct marketing efforts. The program must: assist small farms comply with federal, state, and local rules as they apply to direct marketing; assist in developing infrastructure to increase direct marketing opportunities for small farms; provide information on such opportunities; promote localized food production systems; increase access to information for farmers wishing to sell farm products directly to consumers; identify and help reduce market barriers facing small farms in direct marketing; assist in developing and submitting proposals for grant programs; and perform other assistance functions.

The Director of Agriculture must employ a small farm direct marketing assistant and must by December 1, 2006, issue a report to the Legislature on the accomplishments of the program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Termination Date: These requirements and authorities expire July 1, 2007.

Testimony For: (1) The small farm marketing program in this bill is supported in the Governor's budget. It would convert a part-time grant supported position to a full time position to help direct marketing efforts for small farms such as subscription supported farming, internet sales, and marketing directly to local grocery stores. (2) The proposed position should be fully funded and should not depend on additional grant support, as in the Governor's budget. (3) Monies spent supporting direct marketing returns monies to the local economy because the sales are local. (4) The Department of Agriculture has been focused on foreign sales; it is time for a local emphasis. (5) The marketing program will tie in directly to Washington State University's programs and the farmers market assistance program. (6) These local sales are very personal in nature and provide an excellent connection between farmers and the local community.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (In support) Mary Beth Lang, Department of Agriculture; Bonnie Rice, Washington Sustainable Food and Farming Network; Cy Berryman, Washington Sustainable Food & Farming Network; Jan Pigman, Tilth; and Kevin Corbin, Olympia Farmers' Market.