

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5613

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Agriculture & International Trade, February 7, 2001
Ways & Means, April 10, 2001

Title: An act relating to marketing of agricultural products.

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

Sponsors: Senators Rasmussen and Spanel.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture & International Trade: 2/2/01, 2/7/01 [DP].
Ways & Means: 4/10/01 [w/oRec].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Rasmussen, Chair; Shin, Vice Chair; Parlette, Sheahan, Snyder, Spanel and Swecker.

Staff: David Johnson (786-7754)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Brown, Chair; Fraser, Kohl-Welles, Long, Rasmussen, Regala, Roach, Rossi, B. Sheldon, Snyder, Spanel, Thibaudeau and Zarelli.

Staff: Richard Ramsey (786-7412)

Background: Consumers often indicate a preference for food grown locally and for food purchased directly from the farmer. Small farmers can realize a much greater profit if they are able to sell their products directly. Often, however, small farmers lack the resources to effectively market their products themselves. Information and ideas related to effective marketing are not always easily accessible for small farmers. It is feared that, without more effective marketing information, many small farms will not be able to continue supporting themselves and that the preferences many consumers have for local direct farm products will be frustrated.

Summary of Bill: The small farm direct marketing program is established in the Department of Agriculture. The program employs a small farm direct marketing assistant and provides marketing assistance to small farmers, including direct marketing information, reducing market barriers, assistance with regulation compliance, increasing marketing opportunity infrastructure, and other assistance related to small farm marketing.

The program continues for five years and by December 1, 2006, the department must issue a report on the accomplishments of the program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Small farmers can't compete with agribusiness, they need opportunities to market directly. This program will help small farmers capture a greater share of the consumer's food dollar. Many small farmers do well at growing food, but have difficulty marketing the food they grow. This assistance from the department will help many stay in business and become full-time farmers.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Laurence Leveen; Theresa Steig; Anne Schwartz, Washington Tilth Producers, Blue Heron Farm; Bob Gregson, Island Meadow Farm, King County Agriculture Commission; Steven Evans, King County; Jan Piercy, Farmers Market Management; Rich Hines, American Farmland Trust; B. Rice, Washington Sustainable Food and Farming Network; Grant Davidson, Washington State Farmers Market Association; Mary Beth Lang, Leslie Zenz, Department of Agriculture.