

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6253

As Passed Senate, February 15, 2002

Title: An act relating to assessments for planting stock certification and nursery improvement programs.

Brief Description: Regulating planting stock certification and nursery improvement programs.

Sponsors: Senators Rasmussen, Swecker, Shin, Spanel and Honeyford; by request of Department of Agriculture.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture & International Trade: 1/16/02. [DP]

Passed Senate: 2/15/02, 49-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Majority Report: Do pass.

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

Staff: Bob Lee (786-7404)

Background: The Department of Agriculture administers a program for the inspection and certification of fruit tree, fruit tree related ornamental trees, and fruit tree rootstock. A component of that program includes the licensing of nursery dealers. The program provides for the inspection of nursery stock including whether the stock is free of infection by plant pests.

There is an assessment levied on the wholesale market value of these items sold within or shipped from the state by a licensed nursery dealer. All fees collected are deposited in the planting stock certification account within the non-appropriated agricultural local fund.

Advisory committees composed of various segments of the fruit industry exist to advise the department on the implementation of the program.

There is concern about the effect on the grape industry of plant pests being introduced into grapevine rootstock in Washington State.

Summary of Bill: The existing horticultural plant and nursery stock program is expanded to include grapevines.

An annual assessment must be levied on the grapevines sold within or shipped from the state by a licensed nursery dealer. The Department of Agriculture sets the rate of the assessment by rule.

The director must form a committee composed of industry and university representatives to advise the department on the implementation of the grapevine certification, and nursery improvement program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: The industry has been working for about a year with the Department of Agriculture to develop this legislation and supports it. The legislation would provide the capacity to conduct expanded virus testing of registered grapevines and to maintain a foundation vineyard at Washington State University. This expanded testing is needed because recent surveys indicate that some quarantined grape viruses are widespread and that it is necessary to begin routine testing to maintain the effectiveness of the certification program. The program will allow Washington to meet federal and international standards on plant quarantines.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Bob Hart, WA State Nursery and Landscape Assn. (pro); Heather Hansen, WA Assn. of Grape Growers (pro); Thomas Wessels, WA State Department of Agriculture (pro); Leslie Ementh, WSDA (pro).