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**Economic Development,  
Agriculture & Trade Committee**

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**SB 5723**

**Brief Description:** Extending an asparagus exception to the standards for fruits and vegetables.

**Sponsors:** Senators Delvin, Rasmussen, Schoesler, Mulliken and Rockefeller.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Extends the expiration date for the exception from mandatory grading standards for asparagus shipped out of state for fresh packing to December 31, 2007.

**Hearing Date:** 3/18/05

**Staff:** Meg Van Schoorl (786-7105).

**Background:**

The Fruit and Vegetable Inspection Program of the Department of Agriculture (Department) inspects fresh produce such as apples, pears, cherries, peaches, asparagus, and potatoes. The produce is inspected according to uniform standards adopted by the Department including maturity, size, soundness, shape, color, condition and other factors important to marketing. The produce may also be certified as free from pests and diseases in order to meet domestic and international market requirements. The Fruit and Vegetable Inspection Program is self-supporting through fees-for-service.

Under current law, the Director of the Department must adopt rules providing grading standards for some fruits and vegetables, and may adopt rules providing grading standards for others. Asparagus is one of the vegetables for which standards must be adopted. In 2004, the Legislature approved a temporary exception to mandatory grading standards for asparagus shipped out of state for fresh packing. With no grading standards, there are no inspections in Washington. Instead the inspection takes place in whichever state the processing occurs. The exception expires on December 31, 2005.

**Summary of Bill:**

The exception from mandatory grading standards for asparagus shipped out of state for fresh packing is extended and will expire on December 31, 2007.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.