
**Agriculture & Natural Resources
Committee**

HB 1685

Brief Description: Establishing a Washington food policy forum.

Sponsors: Representatives Gregerson, Hudgins, McBride, Peterson, Bergquist, Ortiz-Self, Tarleton, Orwall, Robinson, Farrell, Riccelli, Fitzgibbon, Walkinshaw, Senn, Lytton, Appleton, Ryu, Tharinger, Moscoso, Ormsby, Fey and Jinkins.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes the Washington Food Policy Forum (Forum) to be administered by the Washington State Conservation Commission for the purposes of creating a forum in which state food policy, food-related programs, and food-related issues can be examined, improved, and better integrated with the goal of increasing the production, sales, and consumption of Washington-grown foods.
- Requires the Forum to make recommendations to the Legislature by October 31, 2016.

Hearing Date: 2/4/15

Staff: Peter Clodfelter (786-7127).

Background:

Food policy councils collaborate to address challenges related to a food system. A food policy council is typically comprised of stakeholders interested in a local, regional or state food system. Councils can be formed by executive order, state law, and local ordinance, or through community grass-roots efforts. In general, a food policy council may work on issues related to supporting a local, sustainable food system and addressing issues such as food system infrastructure, public health, and local economic development. Examples of food policy council projects might include community gardens, farm-to-school programs, and support for food bank programs.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Various forms of statewide food policy councils operate in other states. Also, there is a Regional Food Policy Council in King, Pierce, Snohomish, and Kitsap counties.

In 2008 the Legislature passed the Local Farms-Healthy Kids Act (Act), which was intended to strengthen links between state agriculture and state food procurement as a method to expand local markets, improve nutrition, and benefit the environment. The Act created four programs:

- The Farm-to-School Program administered by the Washington State Department of Agriculture;
- The Washington Grown Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Grant Program administered by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction;
- The Farmers Market Technology Improvement Pilot Program administered by the Department of Social and Health Services; and
- The Farmers to Food Banks Pilot Program administered by the Department of Commerce.

During the 2010 legislative session a broad coalition worked with the Legislature to propose Senate Bill 6343, which called for the creation of the Washington Food Policy Council. The bill did not become law and, subsequently, Governor Gregoire issued Executive Order 10-02 "Strengthening Washington's Food Systems through Policy and Collaboration."

Executive Order 10-02 called for a more focused examination of state food policy, food-related programs, and food-related issues. Further, Executive Order 10-02 directed certain state agencies to assess existing data, identify gaps and opportunities, and support solutions for improving the state food system. An interagency work group was created consisting of the state Department of Health, the state Department of Social and Health Services, the state Department of Agriculture, the state Conservation Commission, and the state Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. In 2012 the interagency work group recommended the establishment of the Food System Roundtable.

Summary of Bill:

The Washington Food Policy Forum (Forum) is established for the purposes of creating a forum in which state food policy, food-related programs, and food-related issues can be examined, improved, and better integrated. The State Conservation Commission (Commission) is required to administer the Forum.

Forum Membership.

The Director of the Commission is responsible for appointing the Forum's members and appointing an administrative chair. In making those appointments, the Director must attempt to ensure a diversity of knowledge, experience, and perspective from sources like state and federal governments, academia, related nonprofit and community groups, and the food industry, including food production, processing, distribution, marketing, and retail sales.

In addition to the members appointed by the Director, four state legislators may serve on the Forum in an ex officio capacity. For appointments of these legislative Forum members, the Speaker of the House of Representatives is required to appoint one member from each of the two largest caucuses in the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate is required to appoint one member from each of the two largest caucuses in the Senate. Each member of the

Forum, legislative or nonlegislative, serves without compensation, except for certain travel reimbursements.

Forum Goals.

The Forum makes recommendations after considering specific goals. The Forum's goals include:

- increasing production, sales, and consumption of Washington-grown foods;
- developing programs that increase purchases of Washington-grown foods for schools, adult care programs, and other state-funded food programs;
- reviewing and developing programs that support providing proper nutrition and avoid burdens associated with obesity and chronic diet-related diseases;
- protecting land and water resources needed for sustained local production;
- examining ways to encourage and allow people to continue farming and providing for the continued economic viability of local food production, processing, and distribution in Washington; and
- reducing food insecurity and hunger in Washington by ensuring that access to nutritious food is available to families of all income levels.

Mandatory Considerations While Making Forum Recommendations.

While making recommendations, the Forum is required to consider how the following things may help achieve the Forum's goals:

- increased collaboration and communication between state agencies;
- increased collaboration and communication between local, state, and federal agencies;
- public-private partnerships that can leverage private and public market influence, like through institutional purchasing and contracting;
- improvements to laws and regulations relevant to the food system and food security in the Washington;
- improvements in how state and federal programs are implemented that are relevant to the food system and food security in Washington; and
- identification of additional federal, state, local, and private investments needed to accomplish the recommendations.

Also, while developing the Forum's recommendations, the Forum is required to: (1) coordinate with the Office of Farmland Preservation to avoid duplication of effort, and (2) coordinate with and build on processes established by the Washington State Food System Roundtable initiated pursuant to Executive Order No. 10-02. Further, also while developing the Forum's recommendations, the Forum may conduct research and analysis as needed within available financial resources and form an advisory committee or committees to address issues identified by the Forum as requiring additional study.

Presenting the Forum's Recommendations.

The Forum's recommendations must be presented to the Legislature through the State Conservation Commission by October 31, 2016. The Forum's recommendations may include considerations for continuation of the Forum beyond the expiration date provided in the bill—July 1, 2017—and any changes to the mission, charge, or structure of the Forum if it continues beyond that expiration date.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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