

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SSB 6382

As Reported by House Committee On:
Rural Development, Agriculture, & Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to creating the meat and poultry processing and marketing assistance program.

Brief Description: Creating the meat and poultry processing and marketing assistance program.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Ericksen and Takko).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Rural Development, Agriculture, & Natural Resources: 2/25/20, 2/28/20 [DP].

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Creates the Meat and Poultry Marketing Assistance Program (Program) within the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), providing service to small and midsize farms.
- Directs the WSDA to work with the USDA to negotiate a cooperative agreement in order to operate a state inspection program.
- Directs the WSDA to report on the Program, meat and poultry processing facility needs, and information related to the negotiations to enter into a cooperative agreement with the USDA.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT, AGRICULTURE, & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 14 members: Representatives Blake, Chair; Shewmake, Vice Chair; Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; Dent, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chapman, Dye, Fitzgibbon, Lekanoff, Orcutt, Pettigrew, Ramos, Schmick, Springer and Walsh.

Staff: Rebecca Lewis (786-7339).

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.

Background:

The Animal Health Program within the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) is charged with protecting animals and the public from communicable animal diseases. The WSDA Food Safety Program licenses custom meat businesses to slaughter or process uninspected meat food animals such as cattle, sheep, goats, and swine for the sole consumption of the owner.

All meat for public sale is inspected by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in compliance with the federal Meat Inspection Act. The USDA delegated to the WSDA authority to conduct meat inspections for certain facilities that only slaughter or prepare meat for consumption by the owner of the animal. The USDA has also delegated authority to the WSDA to allow for the slaughter, preparation, and sale of 1,000 or fewer birds per calendar year, which the WSDA does through a special poultry permit.

There are three types of facilities that slaughter or prepare meat for consumption by the owner of the animal:

- custom meat facilities, which are facilities that process meat;
- custom farm slaughterers, which are mobile slaughter units either at the animal owner's farm or an approved site; and
- custom slaughter establishments, which are fixed slaughter facilities.

Before issuing any license to operate as a custom farm slaughterer, custom slaughtering establishment, or a custom meat facility, the WSDA must inspect the facility and equipment. Custom facilities may not sell any meat that is processed in the facility. Instead, custom facilities slaughter or process animals for end use by the owner of the animal. The custom facility owner is paid by the owner of the animal to slaughter the animal and prepare the meat. The meat may not be sold either wholesale or retail.

Summary of Bill:

The Meat and Poultry Processing and Marketing Program (Program) is created in the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) to assist small and mid-size farms explore options for direct marketing, and to expand capacity to process their meat for sale.

The Program must:

- help farms comply with state, federal, and local rules and regulations that apply to direct marketing of meat;
- assist in developing infrastructure, including custom meat facilities, and slaughter facilities inspected either by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), or the WSDA through a cooperative agreement with the USDA;
- provide information on direct marketing activities;
- identify and help reduce barriers to direct marketing;
- assist in developing and submitting grant proposals for direct marketing efforts; and
- perform other functions that will assist farms in directly marketing their meat and poultry products.

The WSDA must work with the USDA to negotiate a cooperative agreement in order to establish a state inspection program.

The WSDA must report to the Legislature by December 31, 2020, on the Program activities to date, meat and poultry processing facility needs, and information related to the negotiations to enter into a cooperative agreement with the USDA to conduct state inspections of meat and poultry facilities.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Providing an avenue for small-scale producers to sell their meat is a popular concept. This bill would give the opportunity for people in the city to purchase beef produced by small producers living out in the county. Five years ago, there were five United States Department of Agriculture inspected facilities available to small producers, and now there are none. Most farmers in Washington raise 50 animals or fewer, and each county has at least three small-scale hog farmers that would benefit from this bill. Future Farmers of America students could also make use of the program. The program would only add a small cost. Small-scale chicken farmers are able to use the state inspection process to process and sell their poultry, and the requirements would be similar. Currently, a farmer must keep all of the meat, instead of selling it, which is more than would fit in a normal-sized freezer. There would be no room for ice cream.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Erickson, prime sponsor; Allen Ostrander; and Mark Streuli, Washington Cattlemen's Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.