

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## SSB 6091

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Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Continuing the work of the Washington food policy forum. .

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks (originally sponsored by Senators Warnick, Saldaña, Lovelett, Stanford and Wilson, C.).

**Senate Committee on Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks**  
**Senate Committee on Ways & Means**  
**House Committee on Rural Development, Agriculture, & Natural Resources**  
**House Committee on Appropriations**

**Background:** The Washington State Conservation Commission (Commission) convened a Food Policy Forum (Forum) in response to a proviso in the 2016 supplemental operating budget. The 2017-19 biennial operating budget included a proviso to the Commission to continue the work of the Forum with the same proviso language from the 2016 supplemental operating budget. The Commission was directed to report to the Legislature with the Forum's recommendations by October 31, 2017. The Forum followed a previous food system roundtable established by Executive Order 10-02.

The Forum is composed of members appointed by the director of the Commission (director) and four members from the Legislature. The proviso established that, in making appointments, the director must attempt to ensure a diversity of knowledge, experience, and perspectives by building on the representation established by the food system roundtable initiated by Executive Order 10-02.

The Commission submitted a report to the Legislature in October 2017, a progress report in February 2019, and recommendations in June 2019. The Forum reached consensus on recommendations related to:

- food insecurity;
- agricultural land protection and availability and next generation farming;
- alleviating barriers to small and medium scale farmers accessing markets;
- infrastructure and rural economic development; and
- impacts of climate change.

In the 2019-21 biennial operating budget, the Legislature directed the Commission to continue convening the Forum and to implement the Forum's recommendations. The Commission and the Department of Agriculture (WSDA) must submit recommendations and

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a workplan to implement the recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor by June 30, 2021.

**Summary:** The Forum is established as a public-private partnership whose purpose is to develop recommendations advancing the following food system goals:

- increasing the availability of Washington-grown foods throughout the state;
- expanding and promoting programs bringing healthy and nutritious Washington-grown foods to state residents;
- examining ways to encourage retention of an adequate number of farmers for small and mid-scale farms;
- reducing food insecurity and hunger in the state; and
- identifying ways to improve coordination and communication among city, county, regional, and state food policy entities.

Recommendations of the Forum must consider ways in which increased collaboration and communication between various government agencies and innovative public-private partnerships may help achieve the goals of the Forum. Recommendations must also consider improvements to laws, regulations, and program implementation helping achieve the goals of the Forum. Recommendations must also consider defining and describing the variety of agriculture in the state utilizing farm acreage, farm business type, crop and agricultural product type, and defining what the term "local" means in the context of food production and distribution, as a way to help achieve the goals of the Forum.

In developing its recommendations, the Forum must coordinate with appropriate local, state, and federal agencies, tribes, and nongovernmental organizations to avoid duplication of effort, and solicit public input through public hearings or informational sessions. The Forum may conduct research and analysis as needed, and form advisory committees to address identified issues.

The director and director of the WSDA must appoint participating members of the Forum by consensus. In making appointments, the directors must attempt to ensure a diversity of knowledge, experience, and perspectives reflecting any issues addressed by the Forum including:

- state and federal government employees, including academia, nonprofit and community organizations; and
- the food industry, including food production, processing, distribution, marketing, and retail sales.

A majority of the participating members appointed by the directors must appoint an administrative chair for the Forum. Four legislators, one from each of the two caucuses of the House of Representatives and the Senate, appointed by the speaker and president respectively, may serve on the Forum in an ex officio capacity. Staff for the Forum must be provided by the Commission and WSDA. The Commission and WSDA are jointly responsible for transmitting the recommendations of the Forum to the Legislature by October 29, 2021, and every odd-numbered year thereafter.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

Senate 45 0

House 97 0

**Effective:** June 11, 2020