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**SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5045**

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**State of Washington 67th Legislature 2021 Regular Session**

**By** Senate Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks (originally sponsored by Senators Warnick, Lovelett, Robinson, Rolfes, Schoesler, Short, and Van De Wege)

AN ACT Relating to expanding opportunities for meat and poultry processing and inspection; adding a new section to chapter 15.64 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 89.08 RCW; and creating a new section.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  Disruptions to the food supply chain due to the coronavirus pandemic revealed the importance and limitations of Washington's local meat processing system capacity. State investment in local meat processors is needed to modernize operations and ensure functional capacity of the system. Support for the small meat processors provides multiple benefits for the greater public good including continuity of food supply and resilience in the face of supply chain disruptions, consumer food safety and public health, animal health and welfare, and increased economic growth opportunities for both meat processor small businesses, skilled workforce, and livestock producers.

The legislature finds that consumers and small to mid-scale farmers would both benefit from greater access to meat and poultry processing facilities that would allow the farmer to sell meat and poultry to consumers who would like a greater opportunity to support local agriculture, while also ensuring that the meat and poultry are inspected under a program that safeguards consumers from possible harm. Direct marketing assistance will play a critical role in considering the economic viability of meat and poultry processing facilities and providing small and midsize farms with the ability to sell meat and poultry to consumers at retail.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 15.64 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The meat and poultry processing and marketing assistance program is created.

(2) The meat and poultry processing and marketing assistance program must assist small and midsize farms and small and midsize processors in exploring options to expand capacity for processing meat or meat and poultry for sale and direct marketing efforts. In carrying out this duty, the meat and poultry processing and marketing assistance program must:

(a) Assist farms in complying with federal, state, and local rules and regulations as they apply to direct marketing of meat and poultry products;

(b) Assist in developing infrastructure including, but not limited to, custom meat facilities, slaughter facilities inspected by the United States department of agriculture, and slaughter facilities inspected by the department under a cooperative agreement with the United States department of agriculture as appropriate to increase direct marketing opportunities for farms;

(c) Assist processors in complying with federal, state, and local rules and regulations as they apply to processing meat and poultry and the marketing of meat and poultry;

(d) Assist in developing, in consultation with Washington State University extension, training opportunities or apprenticeship opportunities for slaughterers or inspectors;

(e) Provide information on direct marketing opportunities for farms;

(f) Identify and help reduce market barriers facing farms in direct marketing;

(g) Identify and help reduce barriers facing processors in operating slaughter facilities;

(h) Assist in developing and submitting proposals to grant programs to assist farm direct marketing efforts; and

(i) Perform other functions that will assist farms in directly marketing their meat and poultry products.

(3) The department must work with the United States department of agriculture to negotiate a cooperative agreement with the United States department of agriculture in order to operate a state inspection program.

(4) The department must collect data on the activities conducted under this section and report to the legislature by December 31, 2021, pursuant to RCW 43.01.036. The report must include information related to meat and poultry processing facility needs and information related to the negotiations to enter into a cooperative agreement with the United States department of agriculture to conduct state inspections of meat and poultry facilities.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 89.08 RCW to read as follows:

The commission must develop a grant program to provide funding to districts to provide access to meat and poultry processing and inspection within the district. In addition to other funding needs to provide access to meat and poultry processing and inspection within the district, grant funding may be used by districts to establish a mobile slaughter unit or to provide needed infrastructure to provide for the retail sale of meat or poultry.

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