
**Rural Development, Agriculture &
Natural Resources Committee**

2SSB 5045

Brief Description: Expanding opportunities for meat and poultry processing and inspection.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Warnick, Lovelett, Robinson, Rolfes, Schoesler, Short and Van De Wege).

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Creates the Meat and Poultry Processing and Marketing Assistance Program.
- Directs the Washington State Department of Agriculture to work with the United States Department of Agriculture to negotiate a cooperative agreement in order to operate a state meat and poultry inspection program.
- Directs the State Conservation Commission to establish a grant program to provide funding for meat and poultry processing facilities in conservation districts.

Hearing Date: 3/19/21

Staff: Rebecca Lewis (786-7339).

Background:

Meat and Poultry Processing.

United States Department of Agriculture Authority.

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

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 has delegated to the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) the 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.

Washington State Department of Agriculture Authority.

The Animal Health Program within the 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.

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.

State Conservation Commission and Conservation Districts.

The State Conservation Commission (Commission) was created by the Legislature in 1939 to support conservation districts (districts) through financial and technical assistance, administrative and operational oversight, program coordination, and promotion of district activities and services. The Commission has several duties, including to assist the supervisors of districts, keep the supervisors of each district informed of the activities and experiences of other districts, and facilitate an exchange of advice and experience between districts. Districts work with landowners on a voluntary basis, providing incentive-based conservation help on private lands.

Summary of Second Substitute Bill:

Department of Agriculture.

Meat and Poultry Processing and Marketing Assistance Program.

The Meat and Poultry Processing and Marketing Assistance Program (Assistance Program) is created with the stated purpose of assisting small and midsize farms and processors to explore options to expand capacity for processing meat or meat and poultry for sale and direct marketing. The Assistance Program must perform a variety functions to achieve this end including:

- assisting farms in complying with state, federal, and local rules and regulations that apply to meat and poultry processing;
- assisting in the development of infrastructure such as custom meat facilities, and slaughter facilities inspected by either the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) or the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) under a cooperative agreement with the USDA;
- providing information on direct marketing opportunities for farms;
- identifying and help to reduce market barriers facing farms in direct marketing;
- identify and help reduce barriers facing processors in operating slaughter facilities;
- assist in developing and submitting proposals to grant programs to assist farm direct marketing efforts; and
- perform any other functions that will assist farms in directly marketing their meat and poultry products.

State Meat and Poultry Inspection Program.

The WSDA must work with the USDA to negotiate a cooperative agreement in order to operate a state meat and poultry inspection program.

Reporting.

The WSDA must collect data and report to the Legislature by December 31, 2021, on both the Assistance Program and progress on a cooperative agreement with the USDA to operate a state meat and poultry inspection program. At a minimum, the report must include information related to meat and poultry facility needs and information related to negotiations with the USDA to enter into a cooperative agreement to conduct state inspections of meat and poultry facilities.

State Conservation Commission.

The Conservation Commission (Commission) must develop a grant program to provide funding for conservation districts (districts) for in-district meat and poultry processing and inspection. Grant funding may also be used by districts to establish a mobile slaughter unit or provide other infrastructure necessary to provide for the retail sale of meat or poultry. In developing the grant program, the Commission must conduct outreach to districts, Washington State University and the Food Policy Forum for input. Establishment of the grant program is subject to appropriation.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available.

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