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**HOUSE BILL 2051**

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**State of Washington**

**67th Legislature**

**2022 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Rule, Shewmake, Ormsby, and Ramel

Read first time 01/19/22. Referred to Committee on Appropriations.

1 AN ACT Relating to providing short-term disaster recovery  
2 financial assistance to agricultural producers; adding a new section  
3 to chapter 89.08 RCW; creating a new section; making an  
4 appropriation; and declaring an emergency.

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

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that severe  
7 flooding hit Whatcom county in November of 2021, causing significant  
8 damage and immediate disruption to agricultural production including  
9 crop loss, livestock loss, and damage to facilities. The legislature  
10 finds that financial relief and recovery resources are often  
11 necessary for the survival of farms and ranches impacted by such  
12 destructive natural disasters.

13 (2) The legislature further finds that disaster aid is critical  
14 to farmers and ranchers who may need financing but struggle to access  
15 capital due to a lack of financial documentation, lack of collateral,  
16 credit issues, or a perception of not being bankable. Following a  
17 disaster, farmers and ranchers may deplete their savings, borrow from  
18 family or friends, take out second mortgages, or grow credit card  
19 debt to stay afloat.

20 (3) The legislature further finds that some disaster assistance  
21 is available through programs provided by the United States

1 department of agriculture, but that some farmers and ranchers may not  
2 be aware of the resources available and that it can take time to  
3 secure grant funds.

4 (4) The legislature further finds that short-term aid, or gap  
5 funding, would help retain businesses and jobs in the agricultural  
6 industry, and will help community and food system resilience while  
7 farmers and ranchers wait for longer term financing.

8 (5) Therefore, the legislature intends to establish a grant  
9 program to initially provide short-term financial assistance to  
10 farmers and ranchers in the aftermath of the Whatcom county flooding  
11 that can be replicated in future natural disasters, and to ensure  
12 that farmers and ranchers are made aware of federal disaster  
13 assistance programs and how to access them.

14 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 89.08  
15 RCW to read as follows:

16 (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this  
17 specific purpose, the commission, in cooperation with local  
18 conservation districts, must develop and implement a short-term  
19 disaster recovery financial assistance program for farmers and  
20 ranchers. The program must initially address providing short-term  
21 funding to farmers and ranchers that sustained physical damage or  
22 economic loss due to the major flooding event that occurred in  
23 Whatcom county during November 2021.

24 (2) Under the program, the commission may provide grants to  
25 eligible farmers and ranchers. Grant funds may be used for payroll,  
26 utilities and rent, marketing and advertising, building improvements  
27 or repairs, replacing damaged or lost crops, livestock, and  
28 equipment, and other operations and business expenses.

29 (3) In order to be eligible to apply for a grant under this  
30 section, a farmer or rancher must provide documentation of a  
31 reduction in agricultural income or activity as a result of a natural  
32 disaster such as a flood, earthquake, or wildfire.

33 (4) The commission must coordinate with the department of  
34 agriculture and local conservation districts in conducting outreach  
35 to farmers and ranchers in order to increase awareness and  
36 understanding of the disaster recovery financial assistance program,  
37 and to ensure that farmers and ranchers are aware of other disaster  
38 relief assistance available through the state and federal government.

39 (5) The commission may adopt rules to implement this section.

1        NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 3.**    The sum of \$600,000, or as much thereof as  
2 may be necessary, is appropriated for the fiscal year ending June 30,  
3 2022, from the general fund to the state conservation commission for  
4 the purposes of this act.

5        NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 4.**    This act is necessary for the immediate  
6 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of  
7 the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes  
8 effect immediately.

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