

RCW 89.50.010 Findings—Purpose. (1) The legislature finds that:

(a) Numerous governmental agencies, state programs, and private entities share goals and missions relating to food, nutrition, agriculture, health, education, and economic development through sustained agricultural production and improved access to nutritious foods;

(b) The food and agriculture industry generates fifty-one billion dollars annually, employs one hundred sixty thousand people, and contributes thirteen percent to the state's economy;

(c) Agriculture is a leading employer in the state, produces over three hundred different crops, and is composed of many diverse types of agricultural endeavors;

(d) Small and direct marketing farms are a significant sector in Washington's agricultural industry. Eighty-five percent of farms in Washington state are classified as small farms. Washington is among the top ten states in the nation for the number of farms engaging in direct sales to local and regional markets. Because of their scale, diversity of agricultural products, engagement in value-added processing, and use of local and direct sales channels, these farms tend not to be represented by commodity commissions and traditional agricultural organizations;

(e) The state of Washington continues to lose farmland every year to nonfarming uses;

(f) The state's food system is the network of people and activities connecting growing and harvesting, processing, distribution, consumption, and residue utilization, as well as associated government and nongovernment institutions, regulations, and programs;

(g) More than ten percent of Washington households experience food insecurity or hunger and many public and charitable organizations are engaged in the distribution of food and food benefits to those in need, so there exists an opportunity to build on connections between these organizations and farmers to enhance the delivery of Washington-produced food to various food programs;

(h) The current food system in the state of Washington is complex and directly affected by the activities and policies of multiple federal and state agencies and local governments;

(i) Small and mid-scale farms in Washington provide local food and maintain a vibrant culture of agriculture. Although several programs exist to support small and mid-scale farm operations, there are opportunities to evaluate the effectiveness of these programs to reduce duplication of effort, streamline service delivery, and expand access to the farmers; and

(j) The work done by the regional food policy councils in the state can serve as a model for local efforts to bring together community, government, business, and agricultural interests, and improved communication between these local activities, combined with state efforts, could strengthen the state food policy system.

(2) The legislature recognizes the need to understand the impacts of governmental rules and regulations on the viability of small and mid-scale agriculture.

(3) The purpose of this chapter is to provide for the establishment of a forum to: (a) Increase the sales of Washington farm products through direct marketing and other regional supply chains; (b) reduce food insecurity in Washington; (c) identify opportunities

to improve coordination between local and regional food policy councils and state and federal agencies; (d) identify current rules and regulations impeding the viability of small and mid-scale agriculture; and (e) identify new policies that would improve the viability of small and mid-scale agriculture. [2020 c 246 s 1.]