

**RCW 15.145.020 Washington soil health initiative—Creation—**

**Report.** (1) The Washington soil health initiative is created as a partnership jointly administered by the collaborating agencies.

(2) The goals and objectives of the soil health initiative are to improve:

(a) Agricultural viability, by improving farm profitability; and by helping agricultural producers implement good soil health practices that build soil organic matter, reduce soil erosion, soil compaction and production costs, and improve nutrient management, soil tilth, moisture infiltration, moisture retention, drought resilience, disease suppression, and the beneficial activity of microbes, fungi, earthworms, and other organisms;

(b) Nutrition, by increasing health-promoting nutrients, micronutrients, and microbial processes of agricultural soils; and by improving nutrient uptake, thereby expanding access to nutritious food and improving human health; and

(c) Environmental function, by reducing soil erosion, runoff, and leaching of nutrients and pollutants, thereby improving water quality; and by promoting strategies to store carbon and build soil organic matter and other beneficial properties, thereby enhancing the environmental functions of agricultural soils.

(3) In addition to the joint responsibilities established for the collaborative agencies in this section and the primary responsibilities established for each collaborating agency in RCW 15.145.030 through 15.145.050, the collaborating agencies may pursue any action designed to improve soil health and promote complementary improvements to agricultural viability, nutrition, and environmental function. The collaborating agencies must jointly:

(a) Support and supplement current Washington soil health advisory committee membership to promote effective implementation of the soil health initiative. Committee members must be qualified and knowledgeable regarding soil health stewardship. Membership may include agricultural producers, soil scientists or specialists, and representatives of governmental, nongovernmental, and tribal organizations interested in soil health as it pertains to agricultural viability, nutrition, or environmental function. The collaborating agencies must convene, staff, and develop agendas for each Washington soil health advisory committee meeting and appoint committee members and subcommittee members as appropriate. No appointment is effective unless all collaborating agencies concur in the appointment;

(b) Assess programmatic needs and build the capacities of the collaborating agencies to fill gaps in scientific research, economic assessment, staffing, technical assistance, grants administration, project implementation, data management, and monitoring tools to improve the reach and effectiveness of the soil health initiative;

(c) Prioritize in-state sourcing of needed soil health initiative resources including, but not limited to, testing resources, seeds, compost materials, supplies, and equipment;

(d) Employ adaptive management to support the improvement and long-term viability of the soil health initiative, including modification of soil health metrics, priorities, and activities to maximize complementary net benefits for agricultural viability, nutrition, and environmental function. To the extent practicable, metrics chosen to assess changes from baseline environmental function must be measured per unit of production;

(e) Submit a biennial Washington soil health initiative progress report to the governor and appropriate committees of the legislature by October 1, 2020, and every even-numbered year thereafter. The report's recommendations must include an assessment of success in meeting the soil health initiative's goals and objectives, a biennial work plan detailing any proposed legislation, budget requests or administrative rules, and a prioritized list of proposed actions needed to fulfill each collaborating agency's responsibilities for programmatic components and advance soil health initiative goals and objectives in the upcoming biennium.

(4) The soil health initiative shall operate within the appropriations provided for the program. [2020 c 314 § 3.]