

**RCW 89.10.005 Findings.** The legislature finds that maintaining the capacity to provide adequate food and fiber resources is essential to the long-term sustainability of the state's citizens and economy. The nation's population has reached three hundred million and will continue to increase for the foreseeable future. Further, the world population is now over six billion and is projected to reach nine billion by the year 2050.

In Washington state, the population is growing by over one million people every decade with much of this growth occurring in western Washington. This growth is increasing the competition for land not only for housing, but also associated retail, commercial, industrial, and leisure industries.

The legislature finds that many once-productive agricultural areas in western Washington have been overtaken and irreversibly converted to nonagricultural uses. Other agricultural areas in the state have diminished to the point that they are dangerously close to losing the land mass necessary to be economically viable. Further, only a limited number of areas in western Washington still retain a sufficient agricultural land base and the necessary agricultural infrastructure to continue to be economically viable both in the short term and the long term.

The legislature recognizes that because this significant decline has largely occurred in less than a half century, it is imperative that mechanisms be established at the state level to focus attention, take the action needed to retain agricultural land, and ensure the opportunity for future generations to farm these lands.

The legislature finds that history shows that previous advanced civilizations in the world were founded on highly productive agricultural lands and food production systems but when the land or its productivity was lost, the civilizations declined. In contrast, other civilizations have existed for millennia because they maintained their agricultural land base, its productivity, and economic conditions sufficient to maintain stewardship of their land.

The legislature finds that there is a finite quantity of high quality agricultural land and that often this agricultural land is mistakenly viewed as an expendable resource. The legislature finds that the retention of agricultural land is desirable, not only to produce food, livestock, and other agricultural products, but also to maintain our state economy and preferable environmental conditions. For these reasons, and because it is essential that agricultural production be sufficient to meet the needs of our growing population, commitment to the retention of agricultural land should be reflected at the state policy level by the creation of an office of farmland preservation to support the retention of farmland and the viability of farming for future generations. [2007 c 352 s 1.]