
**Agriculture & Natural Resources
Committee**

HB 1188

Brief Description: Creating a focused effort on reestablishing a rural agricultural economy in western Washington by making investments aimed at returning underproducing land back into a state of active agricultural production.

Sponsors: Representatives Lytton, MacEwen, Haigh, Tharinger, Blake, Wilcox, Morris, Ryu, Morrell, Pike and Van De Wege.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Department of Agriculture, together with Washington State University, to develop a program that is designed to return underused agricultural land in western Washington back into a state of production by fostering connections among landowners, potential growers, and purchasers.
- Directs the Department of Agriculture to conduct an inventory of idle agricultural lands in certain western Washington counties.

Hearing Date: 1/31/13

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

According to the Washington Department of Agriculture (WSDA), rich soils and diverse climates help make Washington one of the most productive growing regions in the world and enables farmers to produce approximately 300 different crops. To support this industry, the WSDA undertakes the following duties:

- protect and reduce the risk to public health by assuring the safety of the state's food supply;
- ensure the safe and legal distribution, use, and disposal of pesticides and fertilizers;

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- protects Washington's natural resources, agriculture industry, and the public from selected plant and animal pests and diseases; and
- facilitates the movement of Washington agricultural products in domestic and international markets.

Washington State University (WSU) also engages the State's agricultural sector through its county extension offices and research centers. According to WSU, its extension educators are a link between science and research generated at WSU and the hands-on work of growing food, fuel, and fiber.

Summary of Bill:

The WSDA, together with WSU, must develop a program that is designed to return underused agricultural land in western Washington back into a state of production. The program must do this by fostering connections among landowners, potential growers, and purchasers to help guide the development of the necessary infrastructure.

Initial outcomes and deliverables are included. These include reconnecting growers and producers to available research, refocusing on efforts towards filling the need for locally-produced grains, and slowing the erosion of local farming knowledge. The program would also maintain an agronomist and a technician to help reach the required goals.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Received.

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