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HOUSE BILL 1188

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State of Washington

63rd Legislature

2013 Regular Session

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

Read first time 01/18/13. Referred to Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources.

1 AN ACT Relating to creating a focused effort on reestablishing a  
2 rural agricultural economy in western Washington by making investments  
3 aimed at returning underproducing land back into a state of active  
4 agricultural production; adding new sections to chapter 43.23 RCW; and  
5 providing an expiration date.

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

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** A new section is added to chapter 43.23 RCW  
8 to read as follows:

9 (1) The department shall, in tandem with the Washington State  
10 University Mount Vernon northwestern Washington research and extension  
11 center, maintain a program with the goal of returning land located in  
12 western Washington that is either not in agricultural production or  
13 that is currently in a state of underproduction back to production.  
14 The focus of this program must be to foster connections among  
15 landowners, potential growers, and purchasers and to help guide the  
16 development of the infrastructure necessary to rebuild a thriving  
17 agricultural economy in western Washington.

18 (2) The program required under this section must initially focus on  
19 the following outcomes and deliverables:

1 (a) An immediate reconnection of growers and producers in western  
2 Washington and with research and outreach originating from Washington  
3 State University and other similar resources;

4 (b) A refocusing of efforts towards filling the need for local  
5 grains and feed for animal producers;

6 (c) A halt to the erosion in farmland loss and the loss of  
7 knowledge of how to farm in these areas along with a concurrent growth  
8 in the economic well-being of these areas in terms of jobs related to  
9 agriculture and processing;

10 (d) A rapid closing of the growing regional grain loop for food,  
11 feed, and malt by adding value to what are considered low-value  
12 rotational crops; and

13 (e) The maintenance of an agronomist and a technician position to  
14 connect growers and producers in all western Washington counties with  
15 the latest varieties, techniques, and knowledge needed to immediately  
16 add value to existing, new, and revitalized farming systems and to work  
17 on laboratory techniques to optimize the feed and food value of locally  
18 produced crops.

19 (3) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this  
20 specific purpose:

21 (a) The department, Washington State University, or both, must  
22 implement this program; and

23 (b) The program directed by this section may provide services to  
24 all counties located in western Washington. However, resources must  
25 initially be focused on those counties located in the central and  
26 southern Puget Sound region.

27 (4) The department and the Washington State University are  
28 authorized to mutually decide the most efficient sharing of duties  
29 towards the implementation of this section based on each agency's  
30 expertise and missions.

31 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 43.23 RCW  
32 to read as follows:

33 (1) To inform the implementation of section 1 of this act and to  
34 assess the viability of expanding the cultivation of organic and  
35 specialty grains in western Washington, the department must develop an  
36 inventory of idle agricultural lands in the following western  
37 Washington counties: Clallam, Jefferson, Mason, Lewis, Thurston,

1 Pierce, Clark, Cowlitz, Pacific, Kitsap, Grays Harbor, Island, and San  
2 Juan. The initial focus of the survey must be land located in the  
3 central and southern Puget Sound region.

4 (2) For the purposes of this section, idle lands are to be  
5 considered lands that have been recently removed from crop production,  
6 lands that have in the past been used to support livestock operations  
7 that are not currently used for that purpose, open spaces not  
8 designated for conflicting use, or other lands suitable for  
9 agricultural operations, such as the raising of organic and specialty  
10 grains.

11 (3) The department shall, during the course of implementing this  
12 section, expand upon the agricultural lands assessment project that the  
13 department has conducted since 2002. The department shall expand this  
14 mapping to include idle agricultural lands suitable for the commercial  
15 growing of organic and specialty grains. Project elements must  
16 include:

17 (a) An initial assessment of idle agricultural lands using the  
18 current database maintained by the department;

19 (b) The identification of potential parcels using a combination of  
20 field mapping, aerial photography, and statewide parcel databases;

21 (c) An evaluation of potential fields using soil layers, wetlands,  
22 and other limiting factors;

23 (d) An assessment of water availability as needed;

24 (e) Field verification of potential fields; and

25 (f) The production of a geographic information system layer and  
26 accompanying database that will identify parcels in western Washington  
27 counties currently idle from agricultural activity and evaluate the  
28 quality of those parcels in terms of growing organic and specialty  
29 grains.

30 (4) The department must consult with Washington State University in  
31 the implementation of this section.

32 (5) This section expires July 31, 2017.

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