

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1722

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Agriculture & Rural Economic Development, March 24, 2005

Title: An act relating to standards and grades for fruits and vegetables.

Brief Description: Extending an asparagus exception to the standards for fruits and vegetables.

Sponsors: Representatives Grant, Newhouse, Linville, Buri, Clements, Walsh, Haler and Skinner.

Brief History: Passed House: 3/08/05, 97-0.

Committee Activity: Agriculture & Rural Economic Development: 3/24/05 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Rasmussen, Chair; Shin, Vice Chair; Schoesler, Ranking Minority Member; Delvin, Jacobsen and Morton.

Staff: Bob Lee (786-7404)

Background: The Fruit and Vegetable Inspection Program of the Department of Agriculture (Department) inspects fresh and processed produce such as apples, pears, cherries, peaches, asparagus, and potatoes. The produce is inspected according to uniform standards adopted by the Department including maturity, size, soundness, shape, color, condition, and other factors important to marketing. The produce may also be certified as free from pests and diseases in order to meet domestic and international market requirements. The Fruit and Vegetable Inspection Program is self-supporting through fees-for-service.

Under current law, the Director of the Department must adopt rules providing grading standards for some fruits and vegetables, and may adopt rules providing grading standards for others. Asparagus is one of the vegetables for which standards must be adopted. In 2004, the Legislature approved a temporary exception to mandatory grading standards for asparagus shipped out of state for fresh packing. With no grading standards, there are no inspections in Washington. Instead the inspection takes place in whichever state the processing occurs. The exception expires on December 31, 2005.

Summary of Bill: The exception from mandatory grading standards for asparagus shipped out of state for fresh packing is extended and will expire on December 31, 2007.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For (on companion SB 5723): Last year, the need arose due to the closure of the Del Monte plant and asparagus growers were needing additional options to market their crop. The two year extension is needed because the Seneca plant will be closing and there is a desire for shipment of fresh asparagus to California for export markets.

Testimony Against (on companion SB 5723): None.

Who Testified (on companion SB 5723.): PRO: Kevin Bouchey and Charlie Brown, Washington Asparagus Council.