
**Rural Development, Agriculture &
Natural Resources Committee**

HB 1395

Brief Description: Ensuring equity in farming.

Sponsors: Representatives Morgan, Ramos, Ormsby, Valdez, Kloba, Simmons, Ortiz-Self, Shewmake, Ramel, Paul, Fitzgibbon, Johnson, J., Sells, Ryu, Peterson, Slatter, Pollet, Berg, Macri, Gregerson, Eslick, Callan and Harris-Talley.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Department of Agriculture (WSDA) to take certain actions to ensure inclusion of historically underrepresented communities in farming and ranching in the development, implementation, and enforcement of food and agriculture laws, rules, regulations, policies, and programs.
- Requires the WSDA to report by October 31, 2022, on the WSDA's progress, identify gaps, and make recommendations to improve outreach to and resources for historically underrepresented farmers and ranchers.

Hearing Date: 2/5/21

Staff: Rebecca Lewis (786-7339).

Background:

Washington State Department of Agriculture.

The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) oversees, manages, regulates, and supports a variety of programs related to food safety and agriculture in the state. Programs include animal and livestock health, commodity inspection, food safety, food assistance,

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pesticide and fertilizer inspection, and business and marketing support.

Food Policy Forum.

Together with the State Conservation Commission, the WSDA convenes the Food Policy Forum (Forum). The Forum is a public-private partnership that must develop recommendations to promote a variety of food system goals including:

- improved coordination and communication between local, state, and regional food policy entities;
- reducing food insecurity and hunger in Washington;
- examining ways to encourage retention of small and mid-scale farmers;
- expand and promote programs that bring healthy and nutritious Washington-grown foods to Washington residents; and
- increase the availability of Washington-grown foods throughout the state.

Office of Equity.

The Office of Equity was established on July 1, 2020, within the Office of the Governor, to promote access to equitable opportunities and resources that reduce disparities and improve outcomes statewide across state government. Duties of the Office of Equity include facilitation of state policy and systems change to promote equitable policies, practices, and outcomes through various means that include:

- assisting agencies in applying an equity lens to agency decision making;
- collaborating with the Office of Financial Management and the Department of Enterprise Services to develop policies and provide technical assistance and training for agencies on maintaining a diverse, inclusive, and culturally sensitive workforce; and
- tracking disparities in public employment.

Summary of Bill:

The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) must ensure the inclusion of historically underrepresented communities in farming and ranching, including in urbanized areas as defined by the United States Census Bureau, in the development, implementation, and enforcement of food and agriculture laws, rules, regulations, policies, and programs.

"Historically underrepresented farmer or rancher" means a farmer or rancher who is a member of a group of people whose members have not been represented in farming or ranching due to prejudice based on race or ethnicity.

As a part of this responsibility, the WSDA must:

- consult with various state agencies, the Office of Equity, the Food Policy Forum, historically underrepresented farmers and ranchers, and organizations that represent historically underrepresented farmers and ranchers to coordinate state programs and opportunities for historically underrepresented farmers and ranchers;

- disseminate information regarding opportunities provided by federal agencies, such as the United States Department of Agriculture, the Office of Management and Budget, and the United States Environmental Protection Agency for historically underrepresented farmers and ranchers;
- work with the Office of Equity to evaluate state boards, committees, commissions, and advisory panels related to farming and agriculture issues; and
- consider ways to increase engagement in agricultural education and workforce development opportunities for youth in historically underrepresented groups.

On or before October 31, 2022, the WSDA must report to the Governor and Legislature on the WSDA's efforts to serve historically underrepresented farmers and ranchers, identify any existing gaps, and include recommendations to improve outreach to and resources for historically underrepresented farmers and ranchers.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 27, 2021.

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