

RCW 15.145.040 Department's primary responsibilities—Rules.

(1) The department has primary responsibility for the following components of the soil health initiative:

(a) Compiling existing information on agricultural viability and environmental function effects related to agricultural soil management practices and regimes across the state's diverse food production zones, soil types, tillage systems, and cropping methods, and identifying data gaps associated with understanding and quantifying such effects. Agricultural viability effects compiled and assessed must include, but not be limited to, assessments of yields, profitability, costs, and benefits. Environmental function effects compiled and assessed must include, but not be limited to, assessments of water quality and water availability;

(b) Establishing a "state of the soils" baseline assessment of statewide agricultural soil health practices and characteristic soil health indicators, which may include, but is [are] not limited to: Soil type, organic matter, aggregate stability, porosity, temperature, microbiology, and pathogens; carbon storage; nutrient management; crop rotations; cropping techniques; tillage systems; plant biomass input, residue, and cover levels; water infiltration rate; water retention; root exudates; electrical conductivity; soil nutrient, vitamin, and mineral levels including, but not limited to, levels of nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium, magnesium, sulfur, calcium, and micronutrients; and any other indicator of a soil's health, yield, profitability, or ecological function. Baseline assessments must be developed in a stepwise process to incrementally assess the baseline for each of Washington's major food production zones, soil types, tillage systems, and cropping methods, including both conventional and organic food production systems;

(c) Developing standardized methods and diagnostic tools to support accurate and cost-effective measurement of key soil health indicators at a scale and speed that supports broad implementation and verification of improved soil health stewardship across Washington's diverse agricultural landscapes;

(d) Developing and supporting an agricultural product marketing and promotion program that creates opportunities for participating producers to benefit from the emerging market for Washington food products grown under good soil health stewardship; and

(e) Consulting and collaborating with the commission and the university to support all soil health initiative goals, objectives, and components established in this chapter.

(2) In consultation with the commission and the university, the department may adopt rules as needed to carry out the purposes of this chapter. [2020 c 314 § 5.]