

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1977

*As Passed House
March 13, 1991*

Title: An act relating to agricultural marketing.

Brief Description: Increasing in-state marketing opportunities for small agricultural producers.

Sponsor(s): Representatives Belcher, Prentice, Inslee, Rayburn and Rasmussen.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:

Agriculture & Rural Development, February 28, 1991, DP;
Passed House, March 13, 1991, 97-0.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE & RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

Majority Report: *Do pass.* Signed by 10 members: Representatives Rayburn, Chair; Kremen, Vice Chair; Nealey, Ranking Minority Member; P. Johnson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Grant; R. Johnson; Lisk; McLean; Rasmussen; and Roland.

Staff: Kenneth Hirst (786-7105).

Background: In 1990, the Legislature directed the Department of Community Development to establish a grant program for rural development or sharing economic growth outside of the Puget Sound region. One of the objectives of the program is to develop "urban-rural" links. The Legislature directed the department to consult an advisory committee and the Department of Trade and Economic Development regarding the program.

Summary of Bill: In developing "urban-rural" links, the Department of Community Development must seek to increase instate, direct marketing opportunities for producers of agricultural products. The grants may be used to help small acreage producers pool their products and sell directly to major instate commercial buyers and consumers. The Department of Agriculture and Washington State University's cooperative extension program are added to the entities the department is to consult regarding its grant program for rural development or growth sharing.

Fiscal Note: Requested February 26, 1991.

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

Testimony For: (1) The bill could provide expertise and guidance for overcoming the distribution problems faced by small-scale farming operations. (2) Small-scale farming is losing its economic battles; this bill may help a broad range of small operations. (3) Direct marketing provides the kind of return to the producer that can keep a small-scale operation in business. (4) The bill ensures that the Department of Community Development does not have to stretch interpretations of law to provide this service.

Testimony Against: The Department of Community Development should not duplicate the efforts and programs of the Department of Agriculture.

Witnesses: Michael McGrath, Farmers' Wholesale Co-op (in favor); Mike Schwisow, Department of Agriculture; Michael Posey, Washington State Farmers' Market Association (in favor); Gretchen Hoyt; and Steven Evans, Pike Place Market.