

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5552

As Passed Senate, March 12, 2003

Title: An act relating to the state agricultural commodity commissions.

Brief Description: Increasing the powers of the state agricultural commodity commissions.

Sponsors: Senators Sheahan, Rasmussen, Swecker, Hale and Shin.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture: 2/11/03, 2/27/03 [DP].

Passed Senate: 3/12/03, 49-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Swecker, Chair; Brandland, Vice Chair; Jacobsen, Rasmussen and Sheahan.

Staff: Bob Lee (786-7404)

Background: There are a number of commodity commissions that have been formed under various state enabling laws.

Under the 1955 Commodity Commission Enabling Act, producers of an agricultural commodity may petition the Department of Agriculture to form a commodity commission. A number of functions are authorized to be performed by an activated commodity commission, including production research, providing market information, market promotion, resource conservation, and actions to prevent unfair trade practices. To fund the proposed activities of a commission requires an assessment on the commodity.

A referendum vote of affected producers is required to form or dissolve a commodity commission.

Summary of Bill: Added to functions that can be performed by commodity commissions formed under the 1955 act include to assist in the investigation and control of exotic pests and diseases that could damage or affect trade of the affected commodity.

Commodity commissions formed under the 1955 act may request and audit the records of producers and handlers of the affected commodity during normal business hours to determine whether the appropriate assessment has been paid. These commodity commissions may acquire or own intellectual property rights, licenses, or patents and may collect royalties from commission-funded research related to the affected commodity.

Funds of a commodity commission not required for immediate expenditure may be invested as are other public funds.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: This legislation will help commodity commissions such as the Potato Commission to perform activities related to control of exotic pests and diseases that could affect trade.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Charlie Brown, Washington State Potato Commission (pro).