

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1311

As Reported by House Committee On:
Agriculture & Natural Resources
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to the small farm direct marketing assistance program.

Brief Description: Continuing the small farm direct marketing assistance program.

Sponsors: Representatives Grant, Hailey, McCoy, McDonald, Newhouse, Chase, Dickerson, Haler, Kenney, Springer and Morrell; by request of Department of Agriculture.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 2/1/07, 2/5/07 [DP];
Appropriations: 2/15/07, 2/21/07 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Removes the expiration date from the statute that creates and prescribes the duties of the Small Farm Direct Marketing Program.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 15 members: Representatives B. Sullivan, Chair; Blake, Vice Chair; Kretz, Ranking Minority Member; Warnick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dickerson, Eickmeyer, Grant, Hailey, Kagi, Lantz, McCoy, Newhouse, Orcutt, Strow and VanDeWege.

Staff: Meg Van Schoorl (786-7105).

Background:

About 89 percent of Washington farms fit the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) definition of small farms: less than \$250,000 in gross annual sales, with the day-to-day labor and management provided by the farmer and/or the farm family that owns or leases the productive assets of the farm.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

In 2001, the Legislature passed HB 1984, creating a Small Farm Direct Marketing Program (Program) in the state Department of Agriculture. The Program is statutorily directed to assist small farms in marketing their products, including helping them comply with government regulations; assisting with infrastructure development that will increase marketing opportunities; and promoting localized food production.

The statute contains an expiration date of July 1, 2007.

Summary of Bill:

The July 1, 2007 expiration date is removed from the statute that creates and prescribes the duties of the Small Farm Direct Marketing Program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This straightforward bill removes the expiration date from the Small Farm Direct Marketing statute. It has become a very effective program. The Department of Agriculture (Department) cut small farm and other marketing programs as a result of agency budget difficulties in the mid-nineties. The needs of small farms never went away, and as they re-emerged, the Department began building back marketing assistance programs. In 2001, small farm advocates proposed a statute that directed the Department to hire a small farms staff person. The program works with about 3,000 people in an average year, many of whom own small family farms whose annual gross revenues are well below the USDA definition of "small farm." These clients know well how to farm, but they need the Program's help with marketing opportunities and dealing with regulatory issues. Fifty percent of the Program's advisory committee are farmers.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Grant, prime sponsor; and Mary Beth Lang and Eric Hurlburt, Department of Agriculture.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 34 members: Representatives Sommers, Chair; Dunshee, Vice Chair; Alexander, Ranking Minority Member; Bailey, Assistant Ranking

Minority Member; Haler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Buri, Chandler, Cody, Conway, Darneille, Dunn, Ericks, Fromhold, Grant, Haigh, Hinkle, Hunt, Hunter, Kagi, Kenney, Kessler, Kretz, Linville, McDermott, McDonald, McIntire, Morrell, Pettigrew, Priest, Schual-Berke, Seaquist, P. Sullivan and Walsh.

Staff: Alicia Dunkin (786-7178).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee On Agriculture & Natural Resources:

No new changes were recommended.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The bill removes the expiration date of a program that provides us with clear direction of what to do to re-build a program that was eliminated in the 1990s due to budget cuts. Approximately 3,000 small farms are served by this program that connects them to markets.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Mary Beth Lang, Department of Agriculture.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.