
**Agriculture & Natural Resources
Committee**

SSB 6343

Brief Description: Establishing the Washington food policy forum.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Agriculture & Rural Economic Development (originally sponsored by Senators Jacobsen, Kohl-Welles, Swecker, Haugen, Hatfield and Keiser).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Establishes a Washington Food Policy Forum to better integrate food related policies and programs statewide.

Hearing Date: 2/19/10

Staff: Leslie Ryan-Connelly (786-7166).

Background:

Food policy councils collaborate to address challenges related to a food system. A food policy council is typically comprised of stakeholders interested in a local, regional or state food system. Councils can be formed by executive order, state law, and local ordinance or through community grass-roots efforts. In general, a food policy council may work on issues related to supporting a local, sustainable food system and addressing issues such as food system infrastructure, public health, and local economic development. Examples of food policy council projects might include community gardens, farm-to-school programs, and support for food bank programs. Various forms of statewide food policy councils operate in nine states including Maine, Illinois, and New Mexico. In Washington State, there are food policy councils operating in Clark, King, and Pierce Counties.

In 2008, the Legislature passed the Local Farms-Healthy Kids Act (Act), intended to strengthen links between state agriculture and state food procurement as a method to expand local markets, improve nutrition, and benefit the environment. The Act created four programs:

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- Farm-to-School Program administered by the state Department of Agriculture;
- Washington Grown Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Grant Program administered by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction;
- Farmers Market Technology Improvement Pilot Program administered by the Department of Social and Health Services; and
- Farmers to Food Banks Pilot Program administered by the Department of Commerce.

Summary of Bill:

The Washington Food Policy Forum (Forum) is established. The purpose of the Forum is to:

- increase production, sale, and consumption of Washington grown foods;
- promote healthy Washington grown foods to Washington residents;
- support nutrition programs and avoid burdens of obesity and other diet-related diseases;
- protect land and water resources needed to sustain local food production;
- encourage retention of farmers and economic viability local foods; and
- reduce food insecurity and hunger.

The goals of the Forum include increasing collaboration and communication between local, state and federal agencies, creating innovative public-private partnerships, and suggesting improvements to state and federal laws and programs. The Forum is tasked with developing recommendations with benchmarks and criteria for measuring progress of the Forum's goals.

The Forum is comprised of 25 members. Fourteen of the members are appointed by the Governor. These fourteen members will represent farmers and stakeholders related to food production, marketing and distributions, nutrition and public health, anti-hunger, resource protection, food industry workers, international trade, and retail grocers. Nine of the members are ex-officio members representing state agencies and universities.

The Governor's Office is to convene the first meeting of the Forum. After the second meeting of the Forum, it must report annually to the Governor and Legislature on the progress of the recommendations and goals. The Forum expires July 1, 2015.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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