
ENGROSSED SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 2238

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2026 Regular Session

By House Agriculture & Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Representatives Reeves, Gregerson, Doglio, Parshley, Ramel, Simmons, Peterson, Obras, Santos, Scott, Thomas, Stonier, Morgan, Ormsby, Berg, Goodman, Thai, Farivar, Fosse, Bergquist, Hill, Pollet, Donaghy, Bernbaum, Wylie, and Zahn)

READ FIRST TIME 01/23/26.

1 AN ACT Relating to statewide food security; amending RCW
2 43.23.030; creating new sections; and providing expiration dates.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature intends to provide for
5 the development of a strategy for statewide food security in order to
6 end hunger, reduce diet-related health disparities, and increase
7 agricultural viability and supply chain resilience.

8 (2) This section expires July 1, 2028.

9 **Sec. 2.** RCW 43.23.030 and 1985 c 457 s 15 are each amended to
10 read as follows:

11 (1) The director of agriculture shall exercise all the powers and
12 perform all the duties relating to the development of markets, for
13 agricultural products, state and federal cooperative marketing
14 programs, land utilization for agricultural purposes, water
15 resources, transportation, and farm labor as such matters relate to
16 the production, distribution, and sale of agricultural commodities
17 including private sector cultured aquatic products as defined in RCW
18 15.85.020.

19 (2) The director of agriculture shall exercise all the powers and
20 perform all duties necessary to monitor food system performance and

1 coordinate statewide food security, including working collaboratively
2 with state, local, and federal agencies; tribes; nonprofit
3 organizations; research institutions; and industry experts with roles
4 and responsibilities pertaining to agricultural resilience and food
5 access. When evaluating food system performance, the director shall
6 consider metrics that, at a minimum, relate to monitoring and
7 quantifying regulatory costs imposed by the state of Washington on
8 fuel, packaging, and labor. Beginning June 30, 2030, the department
9 shall report to the legislature at least once every four years, in
10 compliance with RCW 43.01.036, on the competitiveness of Washington's
11 agricultural regulatory landscape relative to peer state competitors
12 for the commodity types prevalent in Washington's in-state
13 agricultural economy.

14 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) The department shall develop a
15 strategy to enhance statewide food security by recommending measures
16 the legislature could take to make food more affordable, and, only to
17 the extent relevant data is readily available from existing sources,
18 related measures that have the potential to reduce the number of
19 Washingtonians in need of food assistance, in order to end hunger,
20 reduce health disparities, and increase agricultural viability and
21 supply chain resilience.

22 (2) (a) The department shall convene the office of the
23 superintendent of public instruction, the department of health, the
24 department of social and health services, the state conservation
25 commission, the office of farmland preservation, the department of
26 ecology, the University of Washington, Washington State University,
27 members of the food policy forum, and nonprofit hunger relief
28 organizations to develop the strategy. The department must also
29 consult with nonprofit, research, public sector, and private sector
30 experts on agricultural resilience, food access, and poverty
31 reduction individuals who have direct lived experience in a food
32 insecure household with at least one member from the BIPOC community,
33 and small farmers in Washington who are members of the BIPOC
34 community.

35 (b) The department shall notify and engage federally recognized
36 tribes regularly throughout the development of the strategy.

37 (3) At a minimum, the strategy must:

38 (a) Define statewide food security in terms of food access,
39 agricultural viability, and supply chain resilience;

1 (b) Develop metrics and a methodology to monitor food system
2 performance across the three key indicator areas: Agricultural
3 viability, supply chain resilience, and food access. The monitoring
4 system must include a framework for maintaining annually updated data
5 for all state and federal investments across Washington's hunger
6 safety net, including utilization rates and available demographic
7 data. Agricultural viability performance metrics must include, but
8 not be limited to, tracking the cost of fuel and labor using data
9 available to state agencies or supplied from voluntary industry
10 surveys, and must include a calculation of the incremental cost to
11 these key agricultural inputs from Washington state-specific laws and
12 regulations;

13 (c) Build agricultural viability and supply chain resilience by:

14 (i) Identifying opportunities to address state policy and
15 regulatory barriers to food production and supply chain coordination;

16 (ii) Establishing a communication network and clarity of roles
17 across Washington's food system that support effective response
18 during disaster, with prioritized, coordinated outreach to impacted
19 producers and consumers; and

20 (iii) Taking a proproducer, antihunger systems approach to
21 coordinate agency actions and awareness across Washington's food
22 system; and

23 (d) Build long-term food security by:

24 (i) Supporting nutrition education and food system literacy for
25 all;

26 (ii) Ensuring coordinated strategies for assessing,
27 communicating, and addressing gaps in food access due to changes in
28 supply or demand of hunger safety net;

29 (iii) Enhancing nutrition and food security research to support
30 measurable reduction in diet-related health disparities; and

31 (iv) Identifying and addressing the root cause of hunger in
32 Washington, only to the extent relevant data is readily available
33 from existing sources.

34 (4) The department shall provide the statewide food security
35 strategy, in conformance with RCW 43.01.036, to the appropriate
36 committees of the legislature by December 1, 2027.

37 (5) For the purposes of this section, "department" means the
38 department of agriculture.

1 (6) This section expires July 1, 2028.

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