

---

**SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5474**

---

**State of Washington**

**69th Legislature**

**2025 Regular Session**

**By** Senate Agriculture & Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Senators Lias, Muzzall, Chapman, Hasegawa, Nobles, and Stanford)

READ FIRST TIME 02/21/25.

1 AN ACT Relating to expanding opportunities for organic,  
2 regenerative, climate-smart, and sustainable producers; amending RCW  
3 15.86.070; adding a new section to chapter 15.86 RCW; creating a new  
4 section; and providing an expiration date.

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

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that Washington  
7 state has the second most diverse agricultural sector in the nation  
8 with over 15,000,000 acres of farmland and 300 different crops in  
9 production. The state's rich soils, diverse microclimates, and  
10 transportation networks support market diversity and the state's  
11 diverse agricultural sector is essential to local community  
12 resilience and prosperity.

13 (2) The legislature further finds that global organic sales have  
14 grown by 10 to 15 percent annually over the past 15 years and that  
15 there is high local consumer demand for organic food. Organic  
16 agriculture offers an opportunity for farmers, ranchers, food  
17 processors, and other businesses to diversify their operations and  
18 participate in higher value markets.

19 (3) The legislature further finds that organic, regenerative,  
20 sustainable, and climate-smart agricultural practices help preserve  
21 the environment, support economic growth, and improve human health.

1 These environmental and health effects result in additional societal  
2 economic benefits not reflected in the direct economic benefits to  
3 producers.

4 (4) The legislature further finds that producers face a  
5 significant expense in achieving organic certification.

6 (5) The legislature intends to identify and remove existing  
7 regulatory and market barriers that are preventing agricultural  
8 producers from integrating organic and regenerative practices and  
9 accessing certified organic markets. This may include developing a  
10 statewide organic action plan, lowering certification costs,  
11 identifying the need for new financing vehicles or additional  
12 wholesale and retail infrastructure and partnerships, and identifying  
13 other policies. The legislature further intends to enact policies to  
14 enable more efficient, more inclusive, more resilient, and more  
15 sustainable agriculture, to effectively contribute to food  
16 availability, accessibility, affordability, and allow our farms to  
17 continue to thrive.

18 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 15.86  
19 RCW to read as follows:

20 (1) The department shall develop an organic agriculture action  
21 plan to help create opportunities for farmers wishing to transition  
22 to organic farming, increase resiliency in agricultural methods, and  
23 build a robust regional food system.

24 (2) When developing the organic agriculture action plan, the  
25 department shall consider and provide recommendations, as  
26 appropriate, on elements including, but not limited to:

- 27 (a) Identifying barriers to achieving organic certification;
- 28 (b) Opportunities to expand organic markets and acreage, which  
29 may include documenting organic market potential for key commodities  
30 and crops;
- 31 (c) Opportunities to support job creation and retention in the  
32 organic sector, with particular emphasis on supporting entry to  
33 organic farming by youth, overburdened communities, and black,  
34 indigenous, and other people of color;
- 35 (d) Inventorying existing extension, training, and technical  
36 resources and identifying gaps in extension, training, and technical  
37 resources to support farmers who are certified and seeking to  
38 transition to organic and regenerative practices;

1 (e) Identifying ways to improve organic infrastructure and  
2 partnerships between organic producers, processors, and distributors;  
3 and

4 (f) Identifying data sources and data collection opportunities  
5 that help quantify the benefits and impacts of organic and  
6 regenerative farming on crop resiliency, soil health, genetic  
7 biodiversity, water quality, greenhouse gas emissions, energy  
8 consumption, minimization of the use of synthetic inputs and  
9 pesticides, and reduction of harmful toxins in the environment.

10 (3) The department, in consultation with the state conservation  
11 commission, shall consider the work and recommendations of the  
12 Washington soil health initiative created in RCW 15.145.020 when  
13 developing the organic agriculture action plan.

14 (4) The department shall include recommendations for legislative,  
15 administrative, or budgetary actions necessary to implement the  
16 organic agriculture action plan.

17 (5) The department shall provide the organic agriculture action  
18 plan to the appropriate committees of the senate and house of  
19 representatives by June 1, 2027, in compliance with RCW 43.01.036.

20 (6) This section expires June 30, 2028.

21 **Sec. 3.** RCW 15.86.070 and 2010 c 109 s 6 are each amended to  
22 read as follows:

23 (1) The director may adopt rules establishing a program for  
24 certifying producers, processors, and handlers as meeting state,  
25 national, or international standards for organic or transitional  
26 products.

27 (2) The rules:

28 (a) May govern, but are not limited to governing:

29 (i) The number and scheduling of on-site visits, both announced  
30 and unannounced, by certification personnel;

31 (ii) Recordkeeping requirements; and

32 (iii) The submission of product samples for chemical analysis;

33 and

34 (b) Shall include a fee schedule that will provide for the  
35 recovery of the full cost of the program. This fee schedule may be  
36 modified to the extent that funds are appropriated to the department  
37 for the specific purpose of reducing fees to decrease the financial  
38 burden to achieve or maintain organic certification and increase  
39 participation in organic agriculture.

1           (3) All fees collected under this chapter shall be deposited in  
2 an account within the agricultural local fund. The revenue from such  
3 fees shall be used solely for carrying out the provisions of this  
4 chapter, and no appropriation is required for disbursement from the  
5 fund.

6           (4) The director may employ such personnel as are necessary to  
7 carry out the provisions of this chapter.

--- **END** ---