WSR 26-09-007
PREPROPOSAL STATEMENT OF INQUIRY
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
[Filed April 2, 2026, 9:01 a.m.]

Subject of Possible Rule Making: Chapter 16-470 WAC, Quarantine—Agricultural pests. The department of agriculture (department) is considering establishing a quarantine against sunflower broomrape (*Orobanche cumana*). The quarantine would regulate the movement of regulated articles from, into, and within the quarantine area. The quarantine is intended to prevent the spread of sunflower broomrape by limiting the transportation of potentially infested material into other parts of the state and to limit the pest's reproductive ability by restricting the availability of host material within the quarantine area. The quarantine would include prohibiting the use and spread of bird feed containing sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*) seeds and other similar products which may result in sunflowers growing in the quarantine area.

Statutes Authorizing the Agency to Adopt Rules on this Subject: RCW 17.24.011 and 17.24.041.

Reasons Why Rules on this Subject may be Needed and What They Might Accomplish: Sunflower broomrape is a devastating root parasite of sunflower and other members of Asteraceae (the sunflower family), leading to significant crop losses. Recently, the first-ever North American detection of sunflower broomrape was confirmed in Yakima. This detection is especially concerning due to the aggressive nature of this parasitic weed and its potential to spread rapidly if left unmanaged. Sunflower broomrape poses a serious threat to commercial sunflower production and could cause significant impacts to growers, processors, exporters, and the agricultural economy if not swiftly contained.

Not only does sunflower broomrape pose a risk to sunflower producers in the state, but it could also have wide reaching impacts to the availability of export markets for agricultural commodities grown in the area. This could include seed and hay producers. One reason for the potential impact on export markets is due to the small and sticky seeds produced by the plant, which spread easily. Establishing a sunflower broomrape quarantine will help prevent the spread of this invasive weed and protect Washington's agricultural industries, as well as maintain access to national and international markets.

Other Federal and State Agencies that Regulate this Subject and the Process Coordinating the Rule with These Agencies: None.

Process for Developing New Rule: Department staff will discuss any proposed amendments with affected stakeholder groups. Affected stakeholders will also have an opportunity to submit written comments on the proposed rules during the public comment period and will be able to present oral testimony at the public hearings.

Interested parties can participate in the decision to adopt the new rule and formulation of the proposed rule before publication by contacting Sven-Erik Spichiger, Pest Program Manager, Plant Protection Division, Washington State Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, WA 98504-2560, phone 360-280-6327, TTY 800-833-6388 or 711, email SSpichiger@agr.wa.gov, website https://agr.wa.gov/services/rulemaking; or Alison Halpern, Acting Assistant Director, Plant Protection Division, Washington State Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, WA 98504-2560, phone 360-742-7175, TTY 800-833-6388 or

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April 2, 2026
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