



2009 FARMS Report Appendix D

Community Partners Survey and Summarized Results

As part of the research for the *FARMS Report*, the King County Agriculture Program surveyed about 70 organizations that partner with the King County Agriculture Program. These groups vary significantly and include governmental organizations that the county works with on land use, code and policy; non-profits that the county works with in areas such as marketing, economic development, and educational programming; groups that receive financial assistance; and representatives of farmer groups that are impacted by county regulations and policy.

Thirty responses were returned. Following is a short summary of the results.

Question 1: Please identify the challenges, concerns and services that are the most important for organizations and local governments to be prioritizing in work plans over the next 5 – 10 years in order to help ensure the future of farming in King County and western Washington.

30 responses

- Access to land: cost, protecting land inside and outside the Agricultural Production Districts, farmland preservation programs (77 percent)
- Access to appropriate infrastructure: process, distribution and transportation needs (67 percent)
- Development pressures: incompatible land uses, McMansions, cumulative impacts of growth (43 percent)
- Market Development: new markets and products that provide a fair price—farmers markets, institutional sales to schools, health care, hotels (40 percent)
- Farmer transitions: succession planning for retiring farmers, support for new farmers such as finding land, training, technical and financial support (37 percent)
- Flooding impacts, regulatory issues, and access to capital (all at 33 percent)

There was less consensus about identifying the five least important challenges, concerns and services important to farming viability. Many respondents did not answer this section, stating that all issues were important. Some respondents stated the issues they identified as least important were still important, but less so than those identified as priorities.

- Farm labor issues: finding workers, cost of labor, housing, immigration (37 percent)
- Access to capital (37 percent)
- Food safety issues: understanding and complying with new standards, additional training (37 percent)
- Research to gather essential data to support agricultural activities: land use research, economic impacts of farming, farmers market research (37 percent)
- Cost of doing business: cost of permits, high taxes on agricultural buildings, equipment, insurance (33 percent)
- Marketing and consumer education: marketing about locally grown food, helping to increase demand (33 percent)

Question 2a: Please identify the top five challenges, concerns and services your organization is prioritizing to work on for the next 5-10 years in the first column. (30 responses)

- Marketing and Consumer Education (17 responses)
- Education and Training (16 responses)
- Market Development (15 responses)
- Access to appropriate infrastructure (14 responses)
- Research to gather essential data (11 responses)
- Advocacy (10 responses)

Of the top six priorities surveyed organizations are working on, only two (market development and access to appropriate infrastructure) were identified in the top five priorities to help ensure the future of farming over the next 5-10 years (Question 1).

Question 2b: Please identify which of the challenges, concerns and services you think the King County Ag Program should prioritize in its programming over the next 5-10 years.

- Access to land (22 responses)
- Access to appropriate infrastructure (17 responses)
- Development Pressures (16 responses)
- Regulatory issues (15 responses)
- Flooding Impacts and Cost of doing business (12 responses for each)

Question 3a: We know there are many organizations working on a wide variety of issues facing agriculture. Do you see any gaps in services to farmers in western Washington, specifically King County, that organizations and governments are not responding to, or are responding inadequately? If so, what are they? (20 responses)

Comments about gaps in services fell into several themes:

- Helping farmers sell more products: develop infrastructure, help make farm-institution sales easier, coordinate processing and distribution, develop new products and take to market, King County advocate for strong direct sales sites in cities, policy work to improve farm to institution sales (12 responses)
- Land use issues: wetland mitigation banking is removing farmland, use land for food and fiber not other purposes in APD, policy work on development pressures, farmland preservation (5 responses)
- Flooding: more policy work about impacts, create stable task force for flooding issues, training/research about food safety, more after flood relief support (5 responses)
- Farm labor (2 responses)
- Access to land (2 responses)

Question 4: Are there areas where there is excessive overlap of services to farmers in western Washington, specifically King County? If so, what are they? (17 responses)

Comments about overlap in services fell into several themes:

- No overlaps, farmers need all the help they can get (6 responses)
- Marketing: could back off on consumer marketing in King County because demand for local food exceeds supply; refine message to target institutional purchasing; bundle marketing dollars to cover local, regional, and state efforts to buy local; do not duplicate research (6 responses)
- Government overlap: King County duplicates others' services, too much red tape on some programs, contract out more services (4 responses)
- Partner communications: too many meetings, need more coordination, not clear about who is doing what (3 responses)

Question 5: You and your organization were chosen to participate in this survey because the King County Ag Program partners with you in some way. We would like feedback on how this partnership is working for you and what we could do better. (17 responses)

5a: In what work areas do you partner with the King County Ag Program?

There was a wide range of answers reflecting each organization's unique relationship to the Agriculture Program.

5b: What is the role of King County Ag Program in the partnership?

Most organizations partnerships with the Agriculture Program vary depending on the activity.

- Support role (14 responses)
- Lead role
- Financial
- Partner, colleague
- Advocate

5c: How can King County make the partnership more effective? (21 responses)

- More communications, better coordination, be more proactive asking for partner help, give partners more information (7 responses)
- Fine as is (5 responses)
- More financial resources would be great (5 responses)

6a: We would like you to comment on the current scope of work of the King County Ag Program. What types of programs or work activities do you think the King County Ag Program is most effective at performing? (26 responses)

This was a free form question with several themes that became apparent.

- Farmland Preservation
- Dealing with government regulations, land use and permitting issues
- Interfacing between government and farmers, helping decipher code
- Working on Puget Sound Fresh, farmers market support and marketing

6b: When thinking about the work of the King County Ag Program, can you identify any areas that could be better done by another organization? (17 responses)

- Six respondents stated responded there were not other work areas to improve
- Three respondents mentioned education and research could be better done by other groups
- The rest of the answers covered a wide area. Several mentioned marketing related activities that could be done better by others.

Key Stakeholder Organizations

Attending Community Partners Meeting or providing other input

Acting Food Policy Council of King County
Carnation Farmers Market
Cascade Harvest Coalition
Cascade Land Conservancy
Green River Community College, Small Business Assistance Center
Horses for Clean Water
King Conservation District
King County Farmers Markets
King-Pierce Farm Bureau
Natural Resources Conservation Services
Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance
Northwest Ag Business Center
Partnership for Rural King County
PCC Farmland Trust
Public Health – Seattle & King County
Puget Sound Meat Producers Coop
Seattle Farmers Market Association
Snohomish Conservation District
Sno-Valley Tilth
Washington State Department of Agriculture
Washington State University – King County Extension
Washington State University – Pierce County Extension
Washington State University – Small Farms Program



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