

Future of Farming - Appendix

Washington State's Organic & Local Food Economy

Everyone eats. Yet what we eat and where food comes from is complicated. Today, the sustenance we provide ourselves ranges from a quick grocery or fast-food store purchase of a prepared meal for convenient dining to a farmers market or farm stand visit to obtain fresh ingredients for a home-cooked, locally grown meal. Both choices provide food and engagement between the eater and the agricultural producer of that food. Both choices may include organic food that originated from a Washington farm. Consequently, both choices are important to Washington State agriculture as they may support the organic and local food economy.

Wendell Berry believes “eating is an agricultural act” and that “most eaters [...] think of food as an agricultural product, perhaps, but they do not think of themselves as participants in agriculture. They think of themselves as ‘consumers’.”¹ Whether they consider themselves consumers or active participants in agriculture, more and more Washington eaters are voting with their food dollars in support of local and organic products. Consumers value the connection to local agriculture and by extension, the preservation of farming, farmland and a rural way of life. They appreciate knowing where their food is from and how it is grown, especially desiring organic food products grown without hormones, pesticides or antibiotics. Whether meeting the grower or choosing local food at groceries and restaurants, Washington eaters are supporting our state's agriculture and a healthy, local food economy.

Today, there are many ways in which consumers support the state's farming sector with their food choices. Concern for the health of the environment and themselves is leading an increased number of Washington eaters to choose organic and locally raised foods direct from growers or labeled as locally produced. In turn, many growers are utilizing agricultural practices that remove or limit chemical use, and choosing a local or regional approach to marketing and labeling their products. Farmers and consumers in Washington's local food movement are important components of a fully developed, healthy, sustainable food system. Active participation by policy makers and business will ensure access for all Washingtonians to this organic and local food economy.

A Healthy Food Economy Defined

What is a healthy food economy? How can Washington agriculture play a role in a healthy, fair and sustainable food system? Washington is fortunate to have a vibrant agricultural sector comprised of farms of all sizes and methodologies. Washington's organic food industry is growing quickly and represents a significant percentage of the state's orchards, dairies and vegetable production. State and regional entities such as Cascade Harvest Coalition, Tilth Producers, Washington Sustainable Food and

¹ Berry, Wendell, “The Pleasures of Eating” from What are People For?, 1990

Farming Network, etc. support and encourage environmental stewardship through organic and low input agriculture practices. Furthermore, Washington agriculture has extensive connections to consumers through community supported agriculture (CSA), farm stands, farmers markets, restaurants, etc. Point-of-sale marketing programs like Heart of Washington and Puget Sound Fresh also help to connect Washington's growers and consumers. By better understanding the challenges and opportunities of Washington's local and organic food movement the State will be positioned to ensure a healthy food economy and environment for the future.

- **A healthy food system** is one that provides a wide array of nutritious foods that are grown in such a way that the health of the soil and environment are also maintained.
- **A fair food system** allows for livable wages for farm workers and good prices for the farmer.
- **A sustainable food system** is environmentally sound, economically viable and socially just. It exists in balance with the regional economy so as to nourish the consumers, workers, farmers and communities that it comprises.

Sustainable Seattle's excellent and detailed research on building a healthy local food economy encourages strong local relationships to create economic success for a region's food producers. One finding of the [Sustainable Seattle report](#) is that "the emergence of the local food economy is changing the idea of what makes for healthy economies" and that "buying local is not only feasible but practical and profitable" for food producers and food businesses.² Hence, while challenges exist, a healthy organic and local food economy creates opportunities for success for the community involved.

Support For a Healthy Food Economy

Creating a healthy food economy requires support at the policy level as well as from growers and consumers. While demand may drive changes at the agricultural level, government support may encourage permanent improvements in the local food economy. The Washington Sustainable Food & Farming Network clearly expressed a widely supported vision for Washington's future food system with their detailed set of nine key [Future of Farming Recommendations](#). Additionally, and while not meant to

² Sonntag, Viki, *Why Local Linkages Matter: Findings from the Local Food Economy Study* (April 2008), Researched and Written for Sustainable Seattle, <http://www.sustainableseattle.org/Programs/localfoodeconomy/view?searchterm=local%20food%20economy%20project>

"This report is primarily written for those interested in and committed to growing sustainable local food economies...[including] community-based food businesses...households that support their local food economy through conscious buying...[and] policy makers, civil society organizations and non-profits that are helping to change the economic landscape to nurture local food economy businesses."

be a complete list, the following matrix helps to outline some ideas for possible action:

Ideas that benefit the Organic and Local Food Economy	Background to the situation	Initiatives to improve the situation	Actions to support the initiatives	Expected Impact
General Marketing Support	Organic and local food industries have no lobby groups representing them, except where there may be overlap with conventional sector lobby groups	Develop an organic foods commission, a local foods commission, or one that represents both.	Work with legislature to create commission(s).	More dollars spent on brand awareness through marketing and research.
Direct Marketing Support	Direct marketing options for growers have limited marketing support, instead relying on word-of-mouth and visibility.	Coordinated efforts to inform residents of the direct marketing options in their community are needed as well as ideas to help shoppers get to markets.	Develop coordinated marketing campaign for farmers markets, groceries and restaurants. Develop transportation infrastructure to help shoppers get to markets.	Increased awareness of local food options for residents as well as support for reaching those markets.
Develop Intermediaries for Institutional sales	Institutions (schools, hospitals, prisons, etc.) find it difficult to buy locally when it entails multiple purchases and deliveries.	Create entities to ensure the successful movement of local food between farmers and institutions.	Develop infrastructure to support intermediary business entities that facilitate multiple grower sales to institutional kitchens.	Higher consumption of fresh and local foods for institutional populations. Increased sales for local growers and processors.
Develop the Processing Infrastructure for value-added agricultural products	The shelf life of fresh produce makes it difficult to provide local food year round to institutions that would like to support Washington growers.	Support and invest in public-private partnerships and in appropriate technology to develop the necessary infrastructure on a regional basis.	Provide tax incentives and bond options to private entities willing to invest in and develop the required infrastructure.	Greater availability of year-round local products; increased institutional sales. Increased sales for growers.
Mandate that a percentage of institutional food purchases be local	To ensure that fresh produce programs for institutions support the local economy a minimum percentage of local products must be determined.	Programs that increase purchases of local foods for institutions such as schools (all-levels), prisons, seniors, hospitals, etc.	Develop purchasing guidelines and programs, particularly for low-income populations. Provide support to private sector initiatives to meet this goal as well.	Higher consumption of fresh and local foods in low-income populations. Increased sales for local growers and processors.

Food curriculum	Many children lack basic knowledge of nutrition, and of farming and its importance to society.	Implement K-12 food production and nutrition curriculum, including hands-on gardening or farming experience where possible.	Legislation to mandate such curriculum.	Young people will have a better understanding of food and its connection to health.
Food as a Public Resource for all	Everyone eats and everyone requires access to healthy food, similar to how people need access to healthy water.	Protect and promote the local food supply through support for farmers and direct marketing initiatives.	Improve farmland protection, especially near urban areas. Support initiatives that promote direct sales of local food to public institutions such as schools, prisons, etc.	Healthy food is understood to be something everyone has a right to. Healthy food is accessible through many channels.
Food as a good with intrinsic value	Current economy of scale in American agriculture fosters the idea that food should be cheap. In reality, food has unique value similar to other goods.	Re-evaluate the value of food by looking beyond price and considering its nutritional components. Also, consider how raising healthy food protects the environment and preserves farmland.	Government can educate consumers to the true value of food by leading the way as a purchaser of healthy, local food. Goal must be to debunk the myth of cheap food.	Food is considered to have value commensurate with its intrinsic values such as how it was raised, the environment raising it protected, its health properties, etc.
Food security as a right for all	Access to healthy local food is necessary at all times.	Protect and promote the local food supply and reduce vulnerabilities such as development pressures on farmland. Ensure all citizens have access to healthy food.	Improve farmland protection, especially near urban areas. Support initiatives that promote direct sales of local food to public institutions such as schools, prisons, etc. Ensure availability of food through local retail grocers.	All citizens have access to healthy food in their communities, with most food being locally produced.
Mandatory GMO labeling	Consumers wish to know what is in their food and many wish to purchase products that do not contain GMO.	Require all products sold in the state and containing GMO ingredients to be labeled as such.	Develop legislation to support GMO labeling.	Consumers will have knowledge regarding what is in the food products that they are buying.

Location of GMO crop fields	Growers wish to know where GMO crops are planted so as to avoid drift issues.	Make transparent all information regarding location of GMO crops. Support growers with crops affected by GMO drift.	Develop an agreement with USDA to ensure notification of GMO plantings.	Growers will be able to better manage their crops for GMO, therefore providing consumers with better information.
Getting more farmers on the land	A combination of cost and availability makes it hard for new growers to find good land. Many new growers cannot afford or don't need large parcels but are interested in smaller acreage.	Expand programs such as Farmlink to help match new farmers with those retiring. Change land policies to allow smaller parcels to be brought into agricultural use.	Provide support for research and implementation of projects that help keep agricultural land active. Rezone agricultural land to allow for smaller parcels.	Growers will have better access to manageable parcels of land
Getting more farmers intern labor support	Both new and experienced growers need labor support through the farming season. Currently there exists bureaucratic obstacles to obtaining seasonal intern labor.	Intern programs that allow for seasonal help for growers and which in turn gives interns direct and indirect agricultural education and experience.	Improve current L&I and employment policies to encourage the training and housing of interns. Recognize interns as special farm labor category.	Interns receive valuable experience and growers receive needed support. Experienced young growers will lead to a younger farmer population.
Getting more farmers the educational tools they need	New growers need to be educated in modern sustainable farming practices and all should have access to research and new information that will help them succeed.	Strengthen and expand current educational opportunities for growers at WSU and elsewhere. Improve the accessibility of educational opportunities for growers.	Fund educational opportunities for growers and information projects that support new and young farmers in finding land.	Growers will be better prepared to take on the challenges of farming and to keep farming successfully.

Journalist Michael Pollan has written extensively about the intersections of food and agriculture and recently outlined a proposal to the next U.S. President that considers the history of food and agricultural policies and the need to return to a regional food economy. Pollan's letter to the next "[Farmer in Chief](#)" strives to initiate action that will improve the environmental and health effects of food and agricultural policy by developing 'sun-food' agriculture, regional food economies with localized food production, and rebuilding America's food culture.³

The need for vibrant and healthy local food systems is recognized at many levels, from local and national government to international, multi-stakeholder efforts such

³ Pollan, Michael, "Farmer in Chief" from *The New York Times Magazine*, October 12, 2008

as the recent International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) intergovernmental plenary session. The [IAASTD report](#) acknowledges that growing consumer awareness and demand for healthy, local foods increases the need for effective agricultural policy that supports local food production. Such support is important because it utilizes and retains the local agricultural knowledge base, positioning growers to successfully adjust to regional challenges such as the affects of climate change. Localized, low-input farming is deemed a key component of healthy, sustainable food systems.

While fifty-eight governments approved the IAASTD Executive Summary of the Synthesis Report, the United States was one of three countries along with Australia and Canada that did not give full support. As noted in the report's Annex, "the United States believes the Assessment has potential for stimulating further deliberation and research...[and] acknowledge[s] the reports are a useful contribution for consideration by governments of the role of AKST (Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology) in raising sustainable economic growth and alleviating hunger and poverty."⁴ However, considering the challenges presented and the suggestions promoted by the IAASTD report as part of a program to develop a healthy food economy will ultimately benefit Washington State's agricultural producers and consumers.

Organic and Transitional Crop Production

Currently, there is consumer-driven demand in Washington State to ensure a food economy that features organic food. While "organic" is specifically defined by the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) [National Organic Program](#), the definition of local food continues to evolve.

- **Organic** is a labeling term that refers to an agricultural product produced in accordance with the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990, as amended.
- **Organic production** is defined as "A production system that ... respond[s] to site-specific conditions by integrating cultural, biological, and mechanical practices that foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve biodiversity."⁵ Organic crops must be grown in accordance with organic standards and have had no applications of prohibited substances (e.g. most synthetic fertilizers and pesticides) for at least 3 years.
- **National Organic Program (NOP)** is the program authorized by the Organic Foods Production Act for the purpose of implementing its provisions. The National Organic Program was implemented in 2002.
- **National Organic Standards Board (NOSB)** assists in the development of standards for substances to be used in organic production.

⁴ Executive Summary of the Synthesis Report Annex, International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) Intergovernmental Plenary Session in Johannesburg, South Africa in April, 2008. <http://www.agassessment.org/>

⁵ National Organic Program Federal Register Section 205.2, [Terms Defined](#)

- **Transitional** products are grown or raised on land that satisfies all the requirements of the NOP except that the three-year period from the date of last use of prohibited materials has not passed.
- **Organic certification** is granted by state or private certifying agencies to operations that adhere to all requirements of the NOP.
- **Certifying agencies** are accredited by the Secretary of Agriculture to certify operations adhering to the requirements of the NOP.

Certifying agencies conduct inspections and monitor compliance with NOP standards. Inspections ensure the integrity of the organic industry, and coupled with the paper trail required from farm to final product, allow consumers to purchase food products they can trust as certified organic. Washington is fortunate to have the highly respected WSDA Organic Food Program (OFP) as an accredited certifying agency for the National Organic Program. The OFP certifies over 95% of the organic acres in the state.⁶

Organics in Washington and Beyond

Washington State's thriving organic industry continues to exhibit remarkable growth. Driven primarily by increases in the milk and fruit sectors, data just released shows that farm gate production grew by 89% from \$112 million in 2005 to \$212 million in 2007, part of a 49% overall increase in Washington organic products sold over the same period [Table 1].⁷ Total number of certified growers and the acreage being farmed organically in the state also continues to climb, with an acreage increase of 144% since 2004 [Table 2].⁸ Considering acreage, Washington State has in organic production 5% each of total apple acreage and of the total dairy cowherd.⁹ However, while many organic growers are small, it is larger farms (with sales greater than \$250K) that account for the majority of total sales.¹⁰

⁶ WSDA Organic Food Program data

⁷ WSDA Organic Food Program data

⁸ WSDA Organic Food Program data

⁹ Granatstein, David and Elizabeth Kirby, *Current Status of Organic Agriculture in Washington State, 2007, Rev. May, 2008*, slide 16 and slide 21.

http://organic.tfrec.wsu.edu/OrganicStats/WA_OrgStats_07.pdf

¹⁰ Granatstein, David and Elizabeth Kirby, *Current Status of Organic Agriculture in Washington State, 2007, Rev. May, 2008*, slide 27. http://organic.tfrec.wsu.edu/OrganicStats/WA_OrgStats_07.pdf Data shows that 84% of total organic sales in 2006 (up from 73% in 2004) were attributable to larger farms (<\$250K in sales).

Table 1: Washington Organic Sales*

	2005 (millions)	2006 (millions)	2007 (millions)	% INCREASE '05 to '07
PRODUCERS (crops & livestock)	\$112	\$149	\$212	89%
PROCESSORS	\$82	\$94	\$129	57%
HANDLERS	\$244	\$261	\$313	28%
TOTAL**	\$438	\$504	\$654	49%

* Not including WSDA certified organic businesses in other states.

** Total includes some double reporting of product both produced and processed through the WSDA Organic Food Program.

Table 2: WSDA Certified Organic Producers & Acreage

	2006	2007	2008	INCREASE '06 to '08
NUMBER CERTIFIED PRODUCERS	586	693	741	26%
ACREAGE	58,000	88,000	107,000	84%

Overall, growth in the organic sector of both Washington State and U.S. agriculture is expanding rapidly, making it difficult to predict what percentage organics will represent in twenty years. Some comparisons:

- In the U.S., the organic industry represented 1% of total sales in 2000 and is estimated to reach 4% in 2011, with 40% of all organic sales currently being comprised of fruit and vegetables.¹¹
- The Organic Trade Association (OTA) reported that organic food sales accounted for 2.8% of total sales in 2006, an increase of almost 21% over 2005.¹²
- The OTA estimates that since 1997, organic food sales have grown 17% to 21% per year compared to 2% to 4% annual growth of total U.S. sales.¹³

¹¹ Granatstein, D., Kirby, E. and H. Willer, *Current Status of Global Organic Temperate Fruit 2008*, slide 7. http://organic.tfrec.wsu.edu/granatstein_world_status_june08.pdf

¹² Organic Trade Association (OTA) web report *Industry Statistics and Projected Growth, 2007*, <http://www.ota.com/organic/mt/business.html>

- By comparison, in 2007, organics represented 5.4% of sales in Austria, 4.6% in Switzerland, and 2.7% in Germany.¹⁴

While still a niche market, the organic industry's national and international growth trends indicate a bright future for organics. As Michigan State University professor Phil Howard has noted "The success of organic... is a striking reminder that we have the power to influence the way food is grown, processed and distributed."¹⁵

The Local Food Movement

For many consumers the desire to connect with their food source, lower their carbon footprint, and reduce the chemicals in their diet has led to a burgeoning local food movement. The issue, however, is exactly how to define local. For some, it's a backyard garden or nearby farmers market. David Lively of the Organically Grown Company in Oregon defines local as food grown within 15 to 20 miles away; beyond that distance he defines as "regional".¹⁶ A current popular concept, which half of consumers understand as the definition of local food, is to consider what is raised and grown within a 100 miles radius¹⁷ as promoted by the [100 Mile Diet](#). Some consider as local all food produced within the boundaries of place – city, county, state or group of states. Still others would consider local food anything within 500 or 600 miles – a day's drive - thereby allowing a western Washington eater to enjoy the full bounty grown within the State.

- **Local (or Regional) Food** is best defined by the individual. (See above)
- **Local Food Movement** is a community effort to create "more locally based, self-reliant food economies in which sustainable food production, processing, distribution and consumption is integrated to enhance the economic, environmental and social health of a particular place".¹⁸
- **Locavore** or Localvore is someone who eats food grown or produced locally as per their own definition, and who participates in the local food movement.

The reality is that demand for local food is uniquely defined by each locality that in turn supports its own food economy. Viki Sonntag of Sustainable Seattle further explains that for consumers and businesses "concerned about food system

¹³ Organic Trade Association (OTA) web report *Organic Food Facts*, 2005, <http://www.ota.com/organic/mt/food.html>

¹⁴ Granatstein, D., Kirby, E. and H. Willer, *Current Status of Global Organic Temperate Fruit 2008*, slide 8. http://organic.tfrec.wsu.edu/granatstein_world_status_june08.pdf

¹⁵ Howard, Phil Ph.D., *Who Owns Organic? From Roots to Suits*, PCC Sound Consumer (January 2007), <http://www.pccnaturalmarkets.com/sc/0701/sc0701-organic-owners.html>
See also Howard's Organic Industry Structure chart and other related charts at <https://www.msu.edu/~howardp/>

¹⁶ Lively, David, *Local? Organic? What's a Consumer to do?* PCC Sound Consumer (June 2007), <http://www.pccnaturalmarkets.com/sc/0706/sc0706-organiclocal.html>

¹⁷ The Hartman Group, *Consumer Understanding of Buying Local* (February 2008), <http://www.hartman-group.com/hartbeat/2008-02-27>

¹⁸ Wikipedia, Local Food definition: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Local_food

sustainability, local defines the possibilities for developing relationships that serve to restore the land and regenerate community.”¹⁹

Not surprisingly, demand for local foods is greatest in urban areas. Consequently, growers from across the state bring their products to the Seattle area to meet Puget Sound consumer demand and specialty foods from western Washington find their way to restaurants and groceries in the Spokane area. So while individual consumers may define local differently, in Washington State it’s safe to say that demand for ‘local’ product is in fact more regional in nature. It is such vagueness in the definition that makes it difficult to fully comprehend the local food movement and understand its place within agriculture in the state.

Agriculture in Changing Times

In Washington, across the country and around the world, agriculture is changing, with several successful aspects of organic agriculture being adopted by the conventional sector and vice versa. As a result, large retailers now purchase tremendous quantities of organic fresh produce and value-added items, thereby providing consumers with a mainstream option for purchasing organic food products. As this trend grows and the percentage of organics bought and sold by large retailers increases, the once niche market of organics will move firmly into the mainstream. Also contributing to this trend is the expansion of organic options through grocery chains’ own labels.²⁰ Similarly, as more conventional outlets such as restaurants and cafeterias (hospital, school, college, hotel, etc.) purchase organic and/or local products, the options for consumers will further broaden into the mainstream. These changes have brought about several impacts to the organic and local food movement:

- As organic products have become more readily available, a greater percentage of consumers are making them part of their routine purchases, with 69% of the U.S. population purchasing organics at least occasionally.²¹
- Produce, dairy, meats, and baby food are the organic items most likely to be purchased for the first time²²
- Mainstream grocery stores are the largest single distribution channel, accounting for 35% of organic food sales in 2006.²³

¹⁹ Sonntag, Viki, *Why Local Linkages Matter: Findings from the Local Food Economy Study* (April 2008), Researched and Written for Sustainable Seattle, <http://www.sustainableseattle.org/Programs/localfoodeconomy/view?searchterm=local%20food%20economy%20project>

²⁰ The Hartman Group, *Organics Today: Who’s Buying and What’s Next* (July 2008), <http://www.hartman-group.com/hartbeat/2008-07-23>

²¹ The Hartman Group, *Organics Today: Who’s Buying and What’s Next* (July 2008), <http://www.hartman-group.com/hartbeat/2008-07-23>

²² The Hartman Group, *Organics in the Marketplace* (Fall 2007), presented at the Washington Tilth Producers Conference in November 2007

²³ Organic Trade Association (OTA) web report *Industry Statistics and Projected Growth*, 2007, <http://www.ota.com/organic/mt/business.html>

- Consumers active in the local food economy wish to ensure an availability of local and organic products at locally owned businesses, which in turn supports community food security and access for a wider population.
- Consumers are driving demand for product at local food establishments, neighborhood groceries, natural food stores, farmers markets, and community institutions such as schools, hospitals, and senior centers.

Organics and the Local Food System in Changing Times

To look back at the State's organic roots we find that many Washington growers were at the forefront of the organic food movement in the 1970's and continue to farm organically today. Then, local, organic food was difficult to find for purchase and when found, suffered from perceived quality issues given its less-than-perfect appearance. With improved farming technologies, local and organic foods are now often indistinguishable from the conventionally grown products they're displayed alongside.

Today, demand for organic and local products is growing with supply growing as well through wholesalers at all levels (regional, national and international). Consolidation of the grocery business and its purchasing power, together with the development of the National Organic Program and entry into the field by larger organic producers has made large-volume purchases of organics possible. Parallel demand for organic and local product exists in the local economy, where consumers are choosing to connect more directly with the farmer and purchase local agricultural products within their own communities. In addition to demand, several factors have aided these positive changes:

- Increased number of producers selling into both the wholesale and direct markets
- Improved marketing and promotion
- Growth of farmers markets in Washington State from 60 in 1998 to 125 today, with statewide sales of \$55 million in 2007.²⁴
- Greater interest in healthy, natural foods and growth of stores specializing in such foods
- Support for organic and sustainable food production methods as capable of feeding the world's population without harmful environmental impacts²⁵

The term "organic" continues to be an important "cue" for consumers looking for healthy food choices. As the Hartman Group has noted, "Aside from the most deeply involved organic consumers, many others purchasing organics are picking those

²⁴ Washington State Farmers Market Association (WSFMA) and WSDA

²⁵ Badgley, Catherine, et al "Organic agriculture and the global food supply", (June 2006), University of Michigan, *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems: 22(2); 86-108*

categories that resonate most strongly to cues of freshness or health.”²⁶ The future potential of the organic and local food economy remains bright as consumers continue to preferentially choose these products over their conventional counterparts.

Farmers in the Organic and Local Food Economy

Washington state farmers and ranchers that sell organics and/or participate in the local food economy represent a broad mix of the state’s agricultural producers. Unlike the early days of the organic, local food movement when farms tended to be small, diversified operations, today growers may be of any size and highly diversified or not. Organic growers may farm a variety of crops for direct marketing or only a few sold via contract to larger entities such as the processing sector or wholesalers. Many diversified organic producers sell into all these markets. While there has been an increase in larger organic farms, most are still family operations.

- **Small farms, defined as those generating less than \$250K in annual revenue**, make up the majority (87%) of both Washington growers²⁷ and those producing crops for direct marketing via farmers markets, local stores, community supported agriculture (CSA), U-pick farms, etc. These farms are the face of Washington agriculture and the integrity of their practices and quality of their products help define the sector for many consumers. Growers who direct market and/or participate in the local food economy are a vital component of the state’s agriculture success.

In addition to organic and/or sustainable farming practices, many growers are choosing other certifications and methodologies. Under the USDA National Organic Program (NOP), the term “organic” may only be used by producers certified under the Program’s rules, unless their annual farm revenues are below \$5,000. Some farms choose not to obtain certification and thereby avoid paying fees, being inspected and keeping records. Others choose to certify with both the NOP and an alternative label as several certification options are complementary. Similarly, many agriculture methodologies are compatible with various eco-label certifications.

- **Eco-Label Certification Alternatives to Organic:**
 - **Certified Naturally Grown** strives to strengthen the organic movement through a lower-cost certification program geared to smaller, direct-market farms.
 - **Demeter USA Biodynamic** certifies farms that are managed as a living organism. All requirements of the NOP must first be met.

²⁶ The Hartman Group, *Organics Today: Who’s Buying and What’s Next* (July 2008), <http://www.hartman-group.com/hartbeat/2008-07-23>

²⁷ WSDA Domestic Marketing & Economic Development Data shows that in 2007 there were 25,324 farms in Washington State with farmgate sales of \$250K or less, representing 87% of all farms

- [Fair Trade Certified](#) is a certification system designed to identify products that meet agreed environmental, labor and developmental standards. It is currently only available for coffee, tea and cacao, not for US products.
- [Food Alliance](#) is a non-profit organization that focuses on sustainable agricultural and business practices, fair working conditions and environmental stewardship.
- [Salmon Safe](#) certification ensures protection of urban watersheds by focusing on habitat preservation.

- **Food Safety Certification:**

Also of concern to consumers are food safety issues and social justice concerns as they pertain to food safety.

- [GlobalGAP](#) ensures food in the global marketplace is produced with efforts to reduce environmental impact and chemical use, and ensures the safety of workers and animals.
- **Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs)** and **Good Handling Practices (GHPs)** are a national set of recommendations designed to help improve the quality and safety of produce and agricultural products by focusing on four primary components of production and processing: soil, water, hands, and surfaces.
- [Safe Quality Food \(SQF\)](#) is a national program with certification by the Safe Quality Food Institute, providing independent validation that products comply with international, regulatory and other specified standard(s).

- **Non-certified Methodologies:**

- **Conservation tillage** refers to a broad range of soil tillage systems that leave residue cover on the soil surface to reduce the effects of erosion and nutrient loss. Specific types include Crop Residue Management, Minimum Tillage, Mulch-till, No-till, Reduced-till, Ridge-till, Rotational Tillage, and Zone Tillage.
- **Conventional** agriculture, which is continually evolving, has been the predominant world food production system since World War II, employing synthetic fertilizers and pesticides to produce products.
- **Grass-based** production, also known as pasture-raised or pasture-fed, is used by livestock operations that rely on pasture and hay to provide a natural diet for ruminant animals.
- [Integrated Pest Management \(IPM\)](#) is used in agriculture as a pest control strategy that uses an array of complementary methods:

mechanical devices, physical devices, genetic, biological, legal, cultural management, and chemical management. These methods are done in three stages: prevention, observation, and intervention. IPM is an ecological approach with a main goal of significantly reducing or eliminating the use of pesticides.

- **Low-input** agriculture has been defined as a production activity that uses synthetic fertilizers or pesticides below rates commonly recommended by the Extension Service. It does not mean elimination of these materials. Yields are maintained through greater emphasis on cultural practices, IPM, and utilization of on-farm resources and management.
- **No-till farming**, also known as *zero tillage*, is a type of conservation tillage system. Crops are grown from year to year without disturbing the soil through tillage, thereby decreasing soil erosion, reducing fuel use, and increasing the amount of carbon sequestered in the soil. Weeds are controlled by herbicides. It is becoming more common as researchers study its effects and farmers uncover its economic benefits.
- **Permaculture** emphasizes the role of place in a landscape, using low-maintenance methods to create efficient farms. It typically focuses on perennial crops and the conscious design of the agro ecosystem to reduce inputs, costs, and waste.
- **Sustainable agriculture** is a long-term goal for balancing the economic, environmental, and social dimensions of agriculture through resource conservation and economically sound practices. Growers draw on and integrate the approaches mentioned in this section to determine what's best for the land, environment and workers.

Farm to Consumer Marketing Methods

While the use of the term 'organic' may only be used by those certified under the National Organic Program rules, the spirit of early organic agriculture continues in the State with many small farms promoting organic and/or sustainably raised meat and produce directly to consumers at farmers markets, on-farm stands and U-pick, and through community supported agriculture (CSA). Some CSA projects operate cooperatively with two or more growers, leading to farmer-to-farmer sales of produce. Farmers are also making direct connections with restaurants, grocery and co-op stores, and regional institutions, which in turn incorporate the food products into meals or directly sell to consumers, often passing along information regarding the food products' origin.

A key component of these marketing relationships is the circulation and retention of food dollars within the local economy. The Sustainable Seattle report and other local multiplier studies indicate the value of increasing the amount of dollars circulating

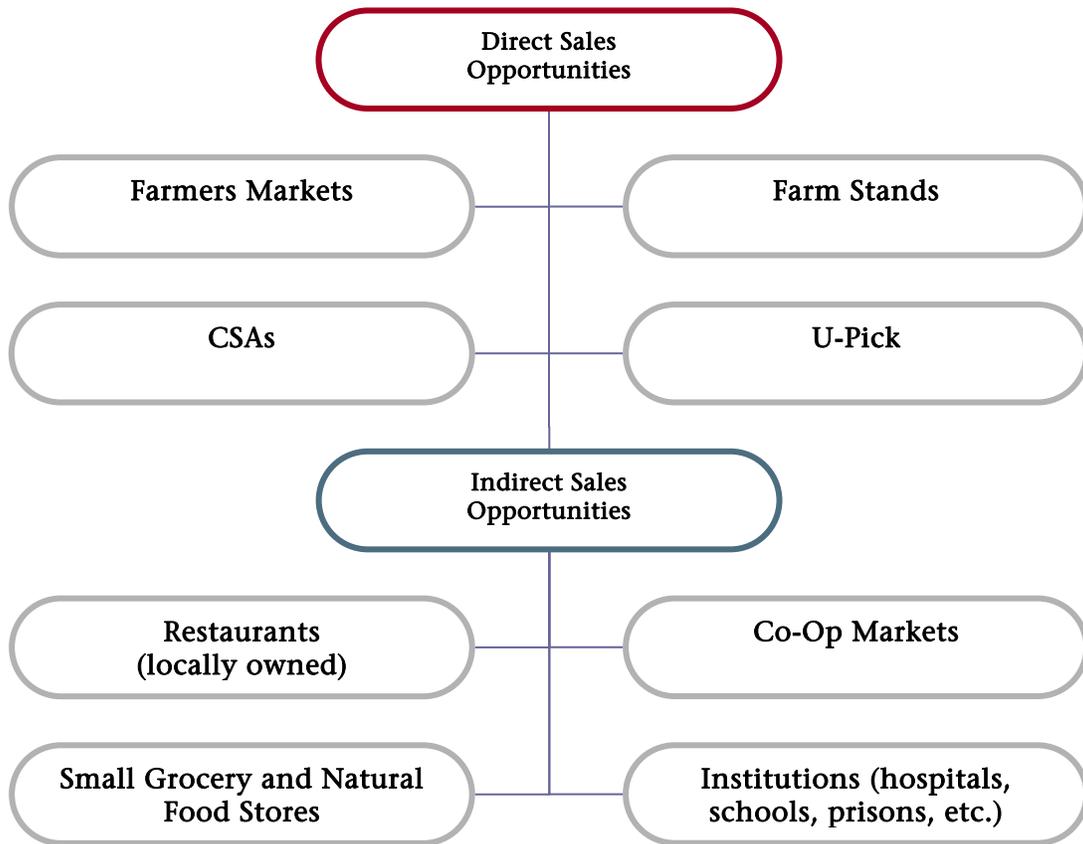
within community and also “show that locally directed spending for food results in substantial increases to the region’s income.”²⁸

- **Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)** creates a direct economic connection between the producer and the consumer. Growers offer a share in the season’s harvest to consumers who pay in advance for a pre-arranged amount of product to be provided during the growing season. Such prepayments provide producers with much-needed income during the growing season, before harvest begins.
- **Consumer Co-ops** have member-owners that provide capital to the co-op through membership fees. Co-ops are locally owned, democratically run businesses that support the local economy. Growers may sell directly to the co-op or through a broker.
- **Farm Stands/Stores and U-Pick** are on-farm point-of-sale options for consumers wishing to purchase directly from the grower. Stands may be staffed or run on the honor system while stores are generally staffed. U-pick opportunities provide consumers with the opportunity to directly select and harvest their own food, further connecting them with their food source.
- **Farmers Markets** may be managed by grower groups or outside entities and provide a specific day, time, and location for several producers to sell directly to consumers. While originally seasonal, some farmers markets now operate year-round.
- **Institutions** such as schools, hospitals, prisons, senior or low-income meal kitchens provide opportunity for **farm-to-cafeteria** sales by growers, with **farm-to-school** connections the most well-known. Growers may sell directly to the institution or through a wholesaler or distributor.
- **Restaurants**, particularly locally owned establishments, often will make direct connections with growers who provide seasonal food for their menus. Growers may sell directly to the restaurant or through a wholesaler or distributor.
- **Small Groceries and natural food stores**, particularly locally-owned businesses without the constraints of multi-store or regional purchasing requirements, often will make direct connections with growers for local products. Home-delivery grocery services are included in this category. Growers may sell directly to the grocery or through a wholesaler or distributor.

Product sold to wholesalers or distributors then may be re-sold within the region, outside the state or internationally. Agricultural product is also sold to processors for the production of value-added goods that may be sold regionally or around the country or world. However, product sales only contribute to the local food economy

²⁸ Sonntag, Viki, *Why Local Linkages Matter: Findings from the Local Food Economy Study* (April 2008), Researched and Written for Sustainable Seattle, <http://www.sustainableseattle.org/Programs/localfoodeconomy/view?searchterm=local%20food%20economy%20project>

when it remains in the originating region after its sale to wholesalers, distributors, or processors.



Labeling Options

In an effort to better position their product in a competitive market, growers will frequently employ labels (including point-of-sale signage or word-of-mouth descriptions) to differentiate their product. Labels may originate from an individual grower or grower group, or may be regional and part of marketing programs administered by government and/or non-profit groups. Others are more descriptive and relate to management practices, though without the benefit of third-party verification. Many consumers choose to purchase directly from the grower so as to ask questions regarding production practices, or purchase from co-ops, small grocers or other businesses that feature products with local or organic labeling.

- **Claims made that animals are raised without:**
 - **Antibiotics**
 - **Artificial Growth Hormones** (also known as recombinant bovine growth hormone or rBGH)
- **Claims made regarding food crops:**

- Natural
- No GMOs (genetically modified organisms)
- No-spray
- Pesticide-free
- **Examples of point-of-sale labeling:**
 - [Heart of Washington](#), a public awareness campaign facilitated by WSDA to promote locally grown Washington products.
 - [Puget Sound Fresh](#) promotes products from counties that surround Puget Sound and is facilitated by Cascade Harvest Coalition, a non-profit organization dedicated to local agriculture in Washington State.

Consumers in the Organic and Local Food Economy

Consumers are attracted to organic food options and the local food economy for many reasons. From the consumer's perspective, purchasing organics and participating in the local food economy meets several lifestyle desires. For many, it is a way to 'vote' with their food dollars and support the local economy overall. While one reason to participate may be tantamount for an individual, most consumers are purchasing organic and/or local food for several reasons so that more than one attribute may define a single consumer. Regardless of individual reasons, consumer demand for local products creates opportunities for Washington state producers who meet these needs through participation in the local food economy.

Entry into the organic and local food economy is oftentimes driven by the desire to feed one's children and family healthy food grown without pesticides, antibiotics and rBGH. Consequently, consumers will change their purchasing habits for dairy and meat products, baby food, and fresh produce. Later they may join the local food movement by buying at a nearby farmers market and requesting local and organic foods at their favorite grocery. As consumers learn more about the organic and local food economy they travel along a learning curve that begins with more obvious attributes of organics and local foods along a continuum to the more political aspects of the local food economy. As The Hartman Group has discovered, there exists "a connection between consumer motivations and beliefs that radiate out from concern for personal and family health and extend through to concern for one's community and finally outward to a larger global or earth concern."²⁹

Examples of consumer reasons for purchasing organic and local foods:

- **Healthy and safe food, grown and/or raised without:**
 - Antibiotics and growth hormones (rBGH)
 - Genetically modified organisms (GMOs)

²⁹ The Hartman Group, *The Sustainability Gap: Bridging the Great Divide Between Consumers and Corporations* (June 2008), <http://www.hartman-group.com/hartbeat/2008-06-04>

- Pesticides and chemical sprays
- **Healthy, fresh food**, for personal well-being and to:
 - Improve overall nutrition
 - Cure or improve current ailments
 - Prevent future illness
- **Convenience and access** through:
 - Availability of organic products and local food at nearby grocery stores, natural food stores, and/or co-ops
 - Farmers markets, farm stands, or CSA located near where they live
 - Favorite restaurants featuring local food
- **Reduce environmental impacts and negative climate change** by:
 - Improving their 'carbon footprint' and energy use
 - Lessening 'food miles' and reducing petroleum use
 - Supporting practices which improve the soil and environment
- **Support social justice and fair trade practices** through:
 - Fair treatment of and wages for farm workers
 - True value of food paid directly or indirectly to growers
 - Food dollars that circulate in the local economy
- **Connection to the local food economy** by:
 - Understanding where their food is from by knowing the farmers and their practices
 - Knowing what is grown in their region and when its available
 - Awareness of the challenges growers face (i.e., access to affordable farm land, availability of labor, etc.)
- **Participation in the local food economy** by:
 - Supporting small businesses (farmers, "mom and pop" stores, etc.)
 - Thinking globally, acting locally
 - Buying local goods that help keep more dollars in the local economy

The Future of Washington Agriculture

Washington agriculture today is diverse enough to support a healthy, fair and sustainable food economy if action is taken to promote and build upon the current benefits and successes of the organic and local food system. A better understanding of what is needed for a healthy food economy coupled with support for actions to fulfill those needs will ensure access to healthy food for all Washington residents and provide secure markets for Washington growers.

As described in this appendix, there currently exists support for a healthy, fair and sustainable food system through:

- Certified and non-certified agricultural practices

- Certified Organic
- Alternatives to certified organic
- Eco-label certification options
- Food safety certification options
- Numerous direct and indirect marketing opportunities

Washington State is very fortunate to have a multitude of organizations actively involved in creating a healthy, fair and sustainable food system that enhances the quality of life for residents while supporting local economies. These groups may work regionally or statewide, and while some are chapters of national or international organizations, all make it their concern to focus on farming issues, food, health and the environment in Washington State. Below is a partial listing of such organizations:

- Government Entities
 - [King County Agriculture Program](#)
 - [Snohomish County Focus on Farming](#)
 - USDA [Natural Resource Conservation Service](#)
 - WSDA [Organic Food Program](#)
 - WSDA [Small Farm and Direct Marketing Program](#)
 - WSU [Biologically Intensive and Organic Agriculture \(BIOAg\) Program](#)
 - WSU [Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources \(CSANR\)](#)
 - WSU [Organic Agriculture Degree Program](#)
 - WSU [Organic Agriculture Research](#)
 - WSU [Small Farms Team](#)
- Non-profit Entities
 - [Cascade Harvest Coalition](#)
 - [Partnership for a Sustainable Methow](#)
 - [Provender Alliance](#)
 - [Rural Roots](#)
 - [Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland](#)
 - [Sustainable Connections](#)
 - [Sustainable Seattle](#)
 - [Tilth Producers](#)
 - [Washington State Farmers Market Alliance](#)
 - [Washington Sustainable Food & Farming Network](#)
- Consumer and Food groups
 - [Chef's Collaborative](#)
 - Food Cooperatives
 - [Central Co-op's Madison Market](#) (Seattle)
 - [Community Food Cooperative](#) (Bellingham)
 - [Olympia Food Cooperative](#)

- [Port Townsend Food Cooperative](#)
- [PCC Natural Markets](#) (greater Seattle)
- [Skagit Valley Food Cooperative](#)
- [Sno-Isle Food Co-op](#) (Everett)
- [Slow Food USA](#)

In addition to the many governmental, non-profit, and consumer groups actively seeking to create a healthy and just food economy, there are many individual eaters seeking a path to healthier lives through foods that support local and organic agriculture. Whether active or passive participants in the local food economy, all consumers – Washington’s eaters – are driving the success of Washington State agriculture and are the future of Washington’s healthy, fair, and sustainable food system.

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