



EXECUTIVE ORDER 18-02

**ADVANCING OUR POLICIES FOR PRESERVING AND EXPANDING THE AGRICULTURAL
ECONOMY OF SNOHOMISH COUNTY**

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this Executive Order is to establish a **Farmland Expansion and Enhancement Delivery (FEED) Program** (a Farmland Preservation Program by another name) to ensure we maintain and grow Snohomish County's resilient farmland base and to emphasize the urgency of limiting its conversion to ensure sustainable local food production for the region.

DISCUSSION:

Snohomish County agriculture gives life and diversity to our local, regional and international economies, and provides open space for people as well as fish and wildlife habitat. Agriculture also contributes to food security for the region and provides access to affordable and nutritious food and fiber. Yet we are losing productive farmland each year through conversion to non-farming land uses and increased flood events.

Agriculture is vital to the social, economic, and environmental fabric of Snohomish County, generating \$139 million to our economy. As noted in our Comprehensive Plan (Goals LU-7; ED-6) Snohomish County government recognizes that agriculture must be preserved and enhanced to maintain our regional food security, jobs and open space which contributes to the high quality of life experienced and expected by residents and visitors alike. Its continued success and growth is a partnership with local farmers and governmental agencies to find new opportunities and solutions to the many challenges faced by the agricultural community.

Snohomish County is dedicated to achieving outcomes that preserve and enhance agriculture. The County must intensify its effort to ensure that agriculture is included in economic development plans and that economic incentives are identified and pursued for the industry's health and prosperity in the most effective ways possible.

ACTIONS:

In order to activate our FEED Program, Snohomish County departments will collaborate to focus on the following activities to ensure maximum responsiveness to farmers, ranchers and growers. These actions will be completed and maintained to ensure an effective farmland program that strives toward the following goals:

Maintains prime acreage used for growing crops or animals.

1. Through the Rural Resource Project, develop strategies to reduce the conversion of agricultural land and identify opportunities in the rural/urban/agriculture interface to expand land uses that support agriculture and protect rural character.
2. Investigate more aggressive incentives for the success of the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), Purchase of Development Rights (PDR), Conservation Futures and other programs that will permanently preserve agriculture land.
3. Explore opportunities and create flexibility to more effectively benefit farmland conservation.
4. Identify performance measures that can measure success in protecting farm acreage.

Augments production of raw food products, value-added agricultural products, and enhances associated activities.

1. Develop new ways to refine, reduce and eliminate regulatory and economic barriers. Such activities might include improvements to the regulatory process to facilitate permitting, and address flood hazard and infrastructure issues that are unique to the agriculture industry.
2. Educate County staff and department heads about critical agricultural issues through a series of farm tours, workshops, and participation at Focus on Farming. These issues include, but are not limited to: current and future infrastructure needs; transportation; and flood protection.
3. Review and improve programs to promote new and emerging agricultural technologies, industries and markets through Focus on Farming.
4. Review permit and land use categories to improve food production, assist with agritourism and recreation initiatives where appropriate, and other activities either directly or incidentally related to farming.

Increases connections between local producers and regional consumers of agricultural products.

1. Improve outreach and education assistance to increase the level of public understanding and appreciation of local agriculture by creating opportunities for and supporting local farmers to provide locally grown food and products to local restaurants, stores and residents.
2. Seek funding to support outreach and educational efforts for a "Buy Local" branding campaign.

Demonstrates involvement in agricultural communities and incorporates innovative approaches and techniques from that involvement.

1. Continue the "Focus on Farming Conference" to bring non-traditional but related groups, as well as agricultural groups, farm organizations and farmers together to provide educational forums on emerging topics, discuss issues, and formulate policy recommendations to local and state government.
2. Advance Farm, Fish, Flood initiatives through support of the Sustainable Lands Strategy, achieving net gain for agriculture while restoring watershed function.
3. Continue building partnerships between urban and rural communities. Work with local growers, schools, and community organizations to promote opportunities for service-learning and internships, workforce training, and agricultural education. Continue programs that connect farmers with schools and universities in order to increase exposure to the industry and encourage interest in interdisciplinary agriculture professions.

4. Encourage agricultural incubators and accelerator programs that reduce barriers and limit risks for new agricultural endeavors. Pursue opportunities that allow new farmers access to land for production and marketing in real time. Promote and seek funding for programs that connect people from diverse backgrounds with financial resources, technical assistance, mentoring, and training to develop successful small farms.

CANCELLATION:

This Executive Order will remain in effect until cancelled or superseded. Dated this _____ of March, 2018.

APPROVED:



Dave Somers

Snohomish County Executi