

Support \$2 million for Sustainable Farms and Fields

The State Legislature should fund the \$2 million in the Governor's budget to launch Sustainable Farms and Fields.

Agriculture is a critical asset in our response to climate change. With the right guidance and support, farming will contribute to our climate goals by building healthy soil and sequestering carbon. Farm practices that conserve water and restore ecological services will help our landscapes adapt to the impacts of climate change. A resilient food system will support community health and economic vitality.

Sustainable Farms and Fields was established in 2020 under the leadership of Senator John McCoy. This program will invest in climate smart agriculture for farmers, ranchers, and shellfish growers who are eager to adopt new practices. Over 200 farmers contributed to the vision and foundation of this program through a survey funded by the Legislature, which identified their needs for resources and technical assistance. In recent recommendations to the Legislature, the Washington Food Policy Forum identified funding for direct support to farmers for climate smart practices as a priority, naming this program as an option for investment.

Not only does this program give farmers the tools they need to be resilient, but it also helps to carry forward the Climate Commitment Act and net zero targets. A report from the University of Washington and The Nature Conservancy showed that, under ambitious scenarios, agricultural lands could sequester 1.3 to 1.5 million metric tons of carbon annually in 30 years.

Sustainable Farms and Fields will provide support for solutions that will help align agriculture with salmon recovery. Priority for funding is designated for farms that incorporate the restoration of riparian buffers and other fish enhancements. The Puget Sound Partnership ranked this funding as its fifth highest priority of all budget requests to the Governor.

We urge your support of \$2 million for the Sustainable Farms and Fields program as an investment in resilient communities across Washington.

