

A Legacy of Action — King County Food Policy Milestones

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People in Seattle and King County have worked for decades to preserve local agriculture and ensure everyone has access to fresh, nutritious food. Over the years the community has cultivated what Wendell Berry described as the “constituency for a better kind of agriculture,” tackling major challenges such as preserving farmland, expanding marketing opportunities, and linking food with healthcare. Below is a brief timeline of those efforts. This chronology is a work in progress. Please send additions and/or corrections to: mark-musick@comcast.net

1953

Seattle food buying club formed that incorporated as the **Puget Consumers Cooperative** in 1961 and re-named **PCC Community Markets** in 2017. Today it is the nation’s largest food cooperative, with ten current stores (with four more under construction), 58,000 members, and \$300 million in annual sales.

1964

King County Comprehensive Plan identified certain land areas for continuation in agriculture and stated as a goal the “protection of certain agricultural, flood-plain, forest and mineral resource areas from urban type development.”

1971

The Pike Place Market was slated for demolition in the 1960s, but architect Victor Steinbrueck initiated the Save the Market Campaign. On November 2, 1971, Seattle voters approved an initiative to establish the 17-acre Pike Place Market Historic District, preserving Pike Place as the nation’s oldest continuously operating farmers market.

1972

Agricultural land protections in the **King County Comprehensive Plan** were reinforced with a policy stating that “Class II and III soils having agricultural potential and other...land presently being farmed shall be reserved for current and anticipated needs.”

1973

The City of Seattle purchased **Picardo Farm** for the city’s first **P-Patch**. Today hundreds of gardeners maintain plots in 90 P-Patches across the city.

1974

The Puget Sound Governmental Conference Environmental Policy Advisory Committee published a report entitled **Regional Agriculture Land Use Technical Study: Central Puget Sound Region**, documenting that King County was losing nearly 3,000 acres of prime farmland per year. Between 1945 and 1974 farmland decreased to less than 58,000 acres and the number of farms in the county declined from almost 6,500 to less than 1,400.

The report’s lead author, **Leroy Jones**, attended the **Northwest Conference on Alternative Agriculture** in Ellensburg, November 21-23, and participated in land use policy discussions with national leaders. Other participants in the conference included **John Affolter**, founder of Puget Consumers Coop, and **Darlyn Del Boca**, founder of the Seattle P-Patch Program.

1976

The film "**The Last Farmer in the Market**" was released, documenting the impact of rapid urbanization in King County. The film was narrated by **Tony Angell** and included commentary by **Leroy Jones**, Puget Sound Council of Governments.

King County Council placed an 18-month moratorium on the subdivision of designated agricultural "**Lands of County Significance.**"

1977

King County Office of Agriculture established a **Farmlands Study Committee** to develop recommendations for land preservation.

League of Women Voters Resource Committee published their report, ***Farm for Sale: A Study of King County Farmland Preservation***, helping build public support for land preservation programs.

Washington Office of Public Instruction Office of Environmental Education published ***Energy, Food and You*** curriculum guides for elementary and secondary schools. The curricula included activities, games, and information on all aspects of energy flows through food chains and ways to use energy more efficiently.

1978

Seattle Tilth chartered as one of the first local chapters in the Tilth Association. Over the next four decades it grew into one of the nation's leading urban agriculture organizations.

King County put its first farmland bond issue on the ballot. Despite strong support from the **Save Our Local Farmlands Committee**, composed of local farmers and civic leaders, the bond issue was defeated at the polls. It received 59.77% of the vote, but 60% was needed for passage.

1979

King County Office of Agriculture's Farmlands Study Committee published their report "Saving Farmlands and Open Space," which was the basis for an expanded public campaign to preserve farmland.

On November 6, 1979 King County voters approved a \$50 million Farm and Open Space bond issue by a 63% margin to purchase development rights to farm and open space lands, establishing one of the nation's first farmland preservation programs. The final vote tally was 193,763 in support and 113,949 opposed. The bonds enabled King County to purchase development rights on 12,600 acres of agricultural land.

1980

The King County Agricultural Task Force published the "***Report on Local Agriculture: A Joint Project of the King County Office of Agriculture and Cooperative Extension.***"

King County established **Agricultural Production Districts** with zoning requirements including large lot sizes designated for preferred use as agriculture.

1982

The King County Office of Agriculture **Farmlands Implementation Task Force** published **“Preserving Farmlands and Open Space, A Report to the King County Executive and the King County Council.”**

King County Council approved the **Conservation Futures** property tax to fund the **Farmland Preservation Program** and purchase of conservation easements.

1985

The Washington Legislature passed the **Organic Foods Products Act**, a bill introduced by **State Representative Ken Jacobsen** of Seattle (a member of the **PCC Coop Board**) that provided a legal definition for organically grown foods.

1987

The Organic Food Products Act amended to provide the Washington State Department of Agriculture the authority to establish the **Organic Food Program** and to initiate the first state-level organic certification in the country.

1990

The **Washington State Growth Management Act** passed by the Legislature requires state and local governments to manage Washington’s growth by identifying and protecting critical areas and natural resource lands, including farm and forest land of long term significance, designating urban growth areas, preparing comprehensive plans and implementing them through capital investments and development regulations.

1991

The **Washington Legislature** created the **Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources (CSANR)** and the **Food and Environmental Quality Laboratory** within **Washington State University**. CSANR is housed within WSU’s College of Agriculture, Human and Natural Resources. The Center is independent from any department and works to bring sustainable solutions to the citizens and the agricultural industry.

1993

Chris Curtis founded **University District Farmers Market**, Seattle’s first neighborhood market after Pike Place.

1994

The King County Agriculture Commission was established to influence regional policies to preserve and enhance agricultural land; support and promote a viable agricultural community; and educate the public about the benefits of local agricultural products.

King County Council adopted a **Comprehensive Plan** that established urban growth boundaries and agreed upon policies to preserve natural resource lands and retain their traditional uses.

In preparation for Seattle Tilth’s **Sustaining the City Conference a Municipal Food Policy Task Force** was formed to consider comprehensive food policies for our region.

1995

One of the **King County Agriculture Commission’s** first activities was to participate in the development of the landmark **Farm & Forest Report**. Over a five-month period, more than 50

representatives of local farm and forest industries met to develop strategies to preserve the natural resource land base and provide incentives to encourage the continued practice of farming and forestry in King County.

1996

“Farm & Forest: A Strategy for Preserving the Working Landscapes of Rural King County,” published by King County Department of Natural Resources. Report outlined strategies to preserve working farm and forest lands in King County.

Direct outcomes from the ***Farm & Forest Report*** include the creation of **FarmLink**, a program that keeps agricultural land in production by linking retiring and prospective farmers.

1997

King County initiated **Puget Sound Fresh** to encourage consumers and businesses to purchase products grown in the 12 counties that touch Puget Sound. The county has since transferred the program to the **Tilth Alliance**.

1998

Grassroots producer, environmental and consumer organizations united to form the **Washington Sustainable Food & Farming Network**. The Network was influential in persuading WSU to establish its **Small Farm Program** and to include a focus on sustainability throughout its education and research programs. The Network also worked closely with the Washington State Department of Agriculture in the establishment of the **WSDA Small Farm & Direct Marketing Program**.

Also in 1998, a series of food system meetings in Western Washington led to the formation of the **Cascade Harvest Coalition**, which was effective in promoting Harvest Celebrations and the formation of local agriculture commissions in counties throughout the greater Puget Sound region.

King County established the **Agricultural Drainage Assistance Program** to help farmers navigate the drainage permitting and construction process.

Seattle Public Utilities made its first major investment in reducing food waste with an \$80,000 grant to **Food Lifeline** to purchase three refrigerated trucks and food preparation and storage equipment.

1999

PCC Community Markets established **PCC Farmland Trust** as an independent nonprofit to preserve organic farmland forever. The following year the Trust saved Delta Farm on the Olympic Peninsula. Over the next two decades PCC Farmland Trust has conserved 20 farm properties, totaling 2,040 acres of agricultural land.

Activists from around the world gathered in Seattle to protest the **WTO Ministerial Conference**. **Food & Agriculture Day** on December 2nd featured an international summit of farmers and advocacy groups, a march and rally at Steinbrueck Park. Speakers included Anne Schwartz, Speakers included: José Bové, Vandana Shiva, Mark Ritchie, Jim Hightower, Alan Simpson, Walden Bello, AV Krebs, Corky Evans, Peter Rosset, and Anurdha Mittal. Host organizations included the International Forum on Food & Agriculture, Public Citizen, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, ActionAid, and the Western Sustainable Agriculture Working Group.

2000

In January a loosely knit group of food and hunger activists formed the **Food Security Task Force**. Their meetings laid the foundation for hosting the **2002 National Farm-to-Cafeteria and Community Food Security Coalition Conferences** in Seattle.

In March, momentum for the movement was built at the **Farm to Table: Building Healthy Foodsheds and Community Conference** in Olympia.

2001

Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance formed by **Chris Curtis** and **Karen Kinney**. Today the Alliance operates seven Seattle markets with annual sales of more than \$17 million.

2002

Seattle hosted the **National Farm-to-Cafeteria and Community Food Security Coalition Conferences**, attended by activists from across the country. The food security included a series of workshops on the formation of Food Policy Councils.

In November the **Western Washington Ag Summit** in Puyallup brought together representatives of all the emerging county agricultural commissions for the first time.

2004

In May WSU King County Extension hosted the first **Farm-to-School Forum**, attended by about 100 people interested in getting farm foods into schools.

A series of five **Growing a Regional Food Economy** forums were held in counties around Washington designed to bring together agricultural professionals, local policy makers, economic development specialists, consumers and farmers to learn about the current status of their local food system and develop strategies to improve it.

Meetings were held in May, June, July, and September to explore the possibility of establish the **King County Food Policy Council**. At these meetings nearly 50 people, including representatives from more than 30 organizations, offered input on vision, mission, goals, geographic jurisdiction, and informational needs, including components of a food system assessment. Attending stakeholders include urban planners, nutrition educators, hunger advocates, food bank directors, sustainable agriculture advocates, faith based community advocates, city, county, state and federal government personnel, fishers, and students.

The King County Food Policy Steering Committee formed in October, 2004. More than 60 endorsements from organizations and individuals were received, demonstrating community support for creating the council.

2005

Stakeholders generated a list of potential food system projects to be addressed or catalyzed by a **Food Policy Council**. This list represents a range of project ideas from simple and no cost to more extensive projects that would require funding.

A letter of support from **King County Executive Ron Sims** was received and presented in May at the **Overweight Prevention Forum** in Shoreline.

UW Program on the Environment and **City of Seattle** are working together to conduct a food system assessment through a Luce Fellowship project.

The King County Food System Atlas was published by the WSU Center for Sustaining Agriculture & Natural Resources and WSU Small Farms Program, with support from the USDA Initiative for Future Agriculture & Food Systems.

2006

Seattle Public Utilities initiated a five-year **Food Recovery Program** to assist hunger agencies with diverting food from the commercial waste stream. Between 2006 and 2010 the utility provided \$395,021 in grants for hunger agencies to purchase equipment to safely transport, store and utilize surplus edible food.

Washington State University established a new Agricultural and Food Systems Department offering the nation's first **Organic Agriculture Systems** degree.

Sound Food Report published. Through a project grant from the Henry Luce Foundation, City of Seattle staff and members of the University of Washington's Environmental Management program spent an academic year working collaboratively on three cross-disciplinary environmentally oriented projects. This project was designed to characterize the Seattle area food system and recommend ways the city could enhance the functions of the food system, particularly with regard to environmental sustainability and social justice. The report included recommendations to: increase neighborhood food access; increase the sale and availability of locally/regionally grown foods; increase urban food production; recover or recycle food from the waste stream; and organize and enhance internal and external City responses to food issues.

Biological Intensive Agriculture and Organic Farming (BIOAG) Fund created: In the Spring of 2006, the Washington State Legislature provided seed funding of \$400k to WSU's Center for Sustaining Agriculture & Natural Resources (CSANR) for the BIOAg Program. This funding represented the first direct funding since CSANR was established by the legislature in 1991. One of the key elements of the BIOAg program is a mini-grant program to support strategic research, demonstration and education projects to improve the sustainability of Washington agriculture.

2007

W.K.Kellogg Foundation awarded a two-year, \$625,000 planning grant to a consortium led by **Washington State University King County Extension** to develop the **King County Food and Fitness Initiative**, which focused on promoting healthy foods and physical fitness in public schools in Delridge and White Center.

The Washington State Legislature directed the state **Department of Agriculture** to conduct an industry-guided evaluation of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to agriculture. The project sought input on present conditions and future challenges of Washington agriculture from as many industry segments as possible (representing input from about 2,000 participants). The study, **Future of Farming: Washington Agriculture Strategic Plan 2020 and Beyond**, included the agriculture community's recommendations to the legislature to keep farming strong for years to come.

2008

The Washington State Legislature passed the **Local Farms-Healthy Kids Act**. Provisions relating to farm-to-school efforts included creation of the first farm-to-school program within WSDA, funding for farm to foodbank pilot grants, \$850,000 for a Washington-grown fresh fruits

and vegetable grant program for schools and procurement provisions to incentivize the purchase of Washington-grown foods for schools and government agencies.

Sustainable Seattle published the report ***Why Local Linkages Matter***, by Viki Sonntag. The report explains why we should care about our spending choices when it comes to food and sustainability, and provides a new approach to analyzing the economics of the food system, new support for developing strong local linkages, and new strategies for taking action to grow the local food economy.

The Seattle City Council established the City's **Local Food Action Initiative** to improve the local and regional food system. The City advanced this goal in a number of ways, including convening the **Food Interdepartmental Team (IDT)** in 2009 to coordinate food system work across departments, updating the land-use code to support urban agriculture in 2010, making more City-owned land available for food production, and hiring a food policy advisor in 2012.

2009

King County Agriculture Commission issued the ***Farms Report***, which described a series of issues critical to the future of local agriculture (water, marketing and economic development, keeping farmers farming, farm succession, farm-city connection, financial and inter-local support) and recommendations for partnerships and funding.

W.K.Kellogg Foundation awarded a three-year \$1.2 million grant to implement the **King County Food and Fitness Initiative** in Delridge and White Center. Under the leadership of WSU Extension and King County, more than 40 organizations collaborated on projects related to school food and fitness, increased access to nutritious foods in retail stores, and promoting increased physical activity.

King County Food & Fitness Initiative Agricultural Assessment published by WSU Small Farms Program, which identified gaps in both our knowledge and in the structure of the food system that inhibit expansion of local food production and distribution.

2010

The City of Seattle launched the **Year of Urban Agriculture** to promote increased food production in the city. Following the year-long campaign, the **City Council** modified Seattle's land use codes to permit urban farms and community gardens in all zones, allow homeowners to sell homegrown produce, increase farmers markets, encourage rooftop gardens, and expand the number of chickens allowed per homeowner.

The Washington State House and Senate passed a bill to create a state-wide **Food Policy Council**, but it was vetoed by Governor Christine Gregoire and replaced with an Executive Order directing state agencies to examine state food policy, food-related programs, and food-related issues.

The Puget Sound Regional Council established the **Puget Sound Regional Food Policy Council** with the mission to develop just and integrated policy and action recommendations that promote health, sustain and strengthen the local and regional food system, and engage and partner with agriculture, business, communities and governments in the four-county region.

2011

Seattle Parks & Recreation appointed **Seattle Tilth** and **Friends of Rainier Beach Urban Farm and Wetlands** to cooperate in developing a demonstration urban agriculture and habitat restoration demonstration on the site of a former 7-acre nursery near in South Seattle.

Seattle City Council commissioned the **Community Food Security Coalition** *Recommendations for Food Systems Policy in Seattle*. Based on a detailed review of current programs and policies, the report makes a series of detailed recommendations to expand food production and alleviate hunger in the city.

2012

Washington Inter-Agency Working Group composed of the Departments of Agriculture (WSDA), Health (DOH), Social and Health Services (DSHS), the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), and the Washington State Conservation Commission (WSCC), issued report in response to Governor Gregoire's Executive Order 10-02 with a key recommendation to convene a **Food System Roundtable** to encourage discussion and information sharing to assist in coordinating efforts to improve the food system.

American Farmland Trust and **University of Washington** released the *Western Washington Foodshed Study*. The study identifies food being produced in the region, food consumed in the region, and the potential of the region's land resources for production with the intent of using this information to inform policy discussions about the potential to develop a local food system by reconnecting local farmers to local consumers.

American Farmland Trust published *Losing Ground: Farmland Protection in the Puget Sound Region*, recommending actions local governments can take to strengthen farmland protection programs.

Puget Sound Regional Council published *Integrating Food Policy in Comprehensive Planning: Strategies and Resources for the City of Seattle*. The report identified several policy areas where there is a clear planning role for the city and an opportunity to holistically address the food system.

The Seattle City Council adopted the **Seattle Food Action Plan** with four key goals for achieving a healthy food system in Seattle: healthy food for all, grow local, strengthen the local economy, and prevent food waste.

2013

King County Farms and Food Roundtable created by King County, the City of Seattle, and the Pike Place Market Preservation & Development Authority, and included thirty-five individuals experienced in local farming, food processing, distribution, marketing, financing and technical assistance. The purpose of the group was to identify options and make recommendations for strategies to preserve additional farmland in King County; and identify options and make recommendations for strategies to increase market and distribution opportunities for local small and mid-sized farmers in King County, looking particularly at food hubs or other means of aggregating local product to expand access to markets.

King County Executive and **King Conservation District** established a multi-jurisdictional stakeholder **Conservation Task Force** that initiated an 18-month process to evaluate natural resource programs and services in King County. Representing 34 cities and King County, the Task Force's recommendations provided the framework for the **King County Council** to

significantly expand the Conservation District's capacity to support the local food economy, expand rural and urban forestry programs, and expanded landowner incentives.

Washington Initiative 522 to label genetically engineered foods was defeated in the November 5th election by 51% to 49%. Opponents spent a record \$21 million to defeat the initiative, a new state record. The major opponents were the Grocery Manufacturers of America, Monsanto, DuPont, Dow Agro Sciences, and Bayer Crop Sciences. Washington Attorney General Bob Ferguson sued the **Grocery Manufacturers of America** for violating campaign finance laws. They were ordered to pay \$18 million in penalties plus \$1.1 million in costs and fees, the largest campaign judgement in US history.

2014

King County Farms and Food Roundtable recommendations were released, including a variety of local policy goals and actions to address food system issues.

King County launched their **Local Food Initiative** and created 36-member **Kitchen Cabinet**. Cabinet members were tasked with producing targets, strategies, and action items for meeting the goals of the Initiative within 10 years to expand the local food economy to ensure job growth and economic viability for King County food businesses and farms; and improve access to healthy, affordable food in low-income communities.

King County Flood Control District awarded a \$250,000 grant to the **King Conservation District** to expand agricultural drainage services in collaboration with **King County Stormwater Services**. More than 5,000 acres of prime farmland across the county are impacted by poor drainage and the program's goal is to put land back into production.

Puget Sound Regional Food Policy Council released their **2014-2017 Action Plan**. The Plan defined the role of the Council, identified strengths and opportunities, strategic priorities, and a plan to implement those priorities.

2015

Washington State Legislature appropriated \$5 million dollars in the 2015–17 capital budget for the **Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction** to administer a new grant program, **Healthy Kids–Healthy Schools**. The program's goal is to remove barriers to increased student health and nutrition.

Washington Food System Roundtable issued its ***Draft Prospectus and Roadmap for Action***. The document laid out a 25-year vision for a healthy, just, and sustainable food system.

Cascade Harvest Coalition, Seattle Tilth, and Tilth Producers of Washington merged to form **Tilth Alliance**.

King Conservation District launched its **Regional Food System Grant Program**, with \$900,000 in annual grants to fund competitive and strategic initiative grants that support the goals of building a more resilient local food economy and realizing the strategies of the **King County Local Food Initiative** and **Regional Food Policy Council's Action Plan**.

King Conservation District, working in partnership with Health Care Without Harm, WSDA Farm-to-School Program, Northwest Agriculture Business Center, King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks, and Seattle Office of Sustainability and Environment, formed the **Local Institutional Food Team (LIFT)**. Partner organizations are working collaboratively to

enhance the sustainability of the regional food system by increasing the amount of local food served in King County schools, hospitals, colleges and other institutions with a goal of building leverage to meet the King County Executive's goal of increasing institutional purchasing from local sources by 10% by 2025.

In early December landowners in the **Snoqualmie Valley** voted by a 94% margin to create a **Watershed Improvement District**. The new district will assist farmers with agricultural drainage projects and securing water rights.

2016

The first \$5 million in **Healthy Kids – Healthy Schools** grants awarded to help 466 schools from 93 districts promote healthy meals, physical activity and water consumption.

The Legislature created **Washington State Food Policy Forum** at the **Washington State Conservation Commission** in coordination with the **Office of Farmland Preservation** and the Washington State Department of Agriculture. The Conservation Commission director appointed members from a wide variety of food-related sectors from across the state. A series of five meetings were held in 2017 and funding continues for 2018.

2017

King County Flood Control District provided **King Conservation District** with continued funding to expand implementation of agricultural drainage projects in collaboration with the **King County Water & Land Resources Division**. Between 2015 and 2017 the **Agricultural Drainage Program** assisted 31 King County farmers with clearing nearly 8 miles of blocked drainage channels. The projects enabled participating farmers to put 151 acres back into production that had been too wet to farm, and enhanced production on an additional 660 acres.

In mid-June the 14-member **Snoqualmie Valley Fish, Farm, Flood Advisory Committee** signed a landmark agreement culminating three years of planning to restore salmon habitat, support the agricultural economy, and reduce flood risks in the valley.

Washington Sustainable Food & Farming Network was re-named **Food Action**.

2018

Sound Food Uprising hosted a summit meeting in early February to kick off a 10-year campaign by Beecher's Foundation and partner organizations to improve the food system in the Puget Sound region.

In early March the **Washington State Legislature** voted to phase out **Atlantic salmon aquaculture** to protect native wild salmon runs.

In mid-March **Food Tank** will bring together local and national leaders in a summit at Seattle University to address the broad spectrum of issues related to food policy.

Washington State University Everett campus will offer **Organic Agriculture Systems** degree starting spring quarter.