



# Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

For immediate release: Feb. 28, 2007 (07-06)  
Contact: Mike Louisell (360) 902-1813

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, Washington 98504-2560  
Visit our Web site at: [agr.wa.gov](http://agr.wa.gov)

## **Growth of organic dairy industry prompts call for local organic feed, hay suppliers** *March meetings set in Ellensburg, Olympia to discuss opportunities*

**OLYMPIA** – The number of organic dairies is growing at such a rapid pace in Washington and Oregon that farmers are finding it difficult to locate enough local suppliers of organic feed and hay to support nearly 30,000 organic milk cows in the two states. Cows must be fed organic feed for their milk to be certified organic.

The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), along with the Washington State Dairy Federation and Washington State University, are hosting two meetings in mid-March for farmers who have an interest in growing and supplying organic feed for dairies.

WSDA licenses more than 550 dairies in Washington state. Twenty-five are certified organic through the agency's Organic Food Program. Another 18 dairies are in transition to becoming organic. The program also certifies operations in certain areas of Oregon, where an additional 20 dairies are either organic or in transition. Six years ago, there were only two organic dairies in Washington.

“Feed companies are telling us that local suppliers are not able to meet the demand for organic feed sources like soybean meal, canola meal and sunflower or safflower meal,” said Jay Gordon, executive director of the Washington State Dairy Federation. “Our area farmers are also having a difficult time finding organic hay. Dairy farmers are concerned about this shortage and we see a real opportunity for Washington crop growers.”

The meetings will provide a forum for crop and hay growers to ask questions about the markets, talk to suppliers and learn how to certify their land for organic production.

Persons who may be interested in the meetings include Northwest farmers, ranchers, dairy farmers, suppliers, bankers and feed dealers. The meetings will be held in:

- **Ellensburg** – 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. March 14, at the Washington Cattlemen's Association Office, 1301 N. Dolarway Rd.
- **Olympia** – 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. March 16, Room 172, Natural Resources Building, 1111 Washington St. SE.

For more information, contact Katherine Withey, WSDA Organic Food Program specialist, at (360) 902-1882 or [kwithey@agr.wa.gov](mailto:kwithey@agr.wa.gov).

###