



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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Spotlight to shine on Washington growers during national agriculture conference

OLYMPIA – Washington’s agriculture community is rolling out the red carpet as government and industry leaders descend on the Evergreen State.

Washington plays host to this year’s National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) conference from Sept. 21 to 26. State agriculture leaders from around the country, as well as federal government and national industry leaders, will gather in Seattle to discuss agriculture policy and learn about Washington’s unique food economy.

Valoria Loveland, director of the Washington State Department of Agriculture and conference host, was elected president of the organization last year.

“We’re working closely with our producers to make sure these national leaders understand the issues agriculture is confronting in our state,” said Loveland. “I want to focus on the profitability of farming and the importance of consumer confidence in our nation’s food products. We are going to make a point of highlighting the wonderful variety of Washington’s harvest.”

For the past several years, Washington’s agriculture economy has continued to expand. In 2005, sales by Washington farmers and ranchers exceeded \$6.4 billion. The total value of the state’s agriculture and food processing industry is estimated at \$32 billion. Washington farmers produce more than 300 agricultural products.

One highlight of the conference will be a tour of the Skagit Valley to visit a berry farm, a potato grower and other producers. Participants will explore value-added processing at the farm site and learn about innovative agriculture research at a Washington State University Extension facility. Tours include a visit to the Chateau Ste. Michelle winery in Woodinville to learn more about the state’s burgeoning viticulture and winemaking industries.

This year, Loveland has been working with Congress on national farm policy, immigration reform, food safety and other issues critical to agriculture. The conference business meetings will reflect those priorities and other concerns of consumers, farmers and ranchers across the country.

Congress is currently crafting the 2007 Farm Bill, a sweeping law reauthorized every five years that governs U.S. agricultural policy, rural development and housing, nutrition, agriculture conservation programs and a host of other issues important to the farm economy and rural communities.

NASDA is comprised of the commissioners, secretaries and directors of the 50 state and four U.S. territorial departments of agriculture. The group represents the state departments of agriculture in the development, implementation, and communication of public policy and programs that support and promote U.S. agriculture. For more information, see NASDA’s Web site at www.nasda.org.

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