



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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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

Gov. Gregoire proclaims Aug. 12-18 as Washington Farmers Market Week *Farmers benefiting from direct sales to public at more than 100 markets*

OLYMPIA – Farmers markets are sprouting up around the state as consumers show increasing interest in purchasing fresh local foods. The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) and Washington State Farmers Market Association (WSFMA) join Gov. Chris Gregoire in proclaiming Aug. 12-18 as Washington State Farmers Market Week—a time to recognize the benefits of local farmers markets.

The number of markets in Washington has doubled in the last decade, increasing from 60 in 1998 to more than 120 in operation today. Statewide, farmers markets reported \$38 million in sales in 2006, up more than 50 percent from the previous year. Most of those dollars go directly to Washington family farmers.

“Farmers markets play a key role in rural and urban locations and are increasing in popularity every day,” said Kira Doley, treasurer of the WSFMA and manager of the Tacoma Farmers Market.

“People come for the welcoming atmosphere to buy the freshest fruits and vegetables available along with other farm products, high-quality processed goods, hand-made crafts, hot prepared food and live music,” Doley said. “I think sales will continue to rise as people become increasingly aware of why it’s so important to support sustainable farming and our local economies. The benefits are immeasurable.”

One of WSDA’s goals is to increase farmer and consumer awareness of the convenience and value of farmers markets. WSDA has provided grants to assist 20 different farmers market projects.

WSDA also helps small farm operators comply with state and local regulations and policies as they market their products. With technical expertise from the WSU Small Farms Program, WSDA is publishing a manual on how to start and operate a farmers market.

“Farmers markets provide family farmers with direct access to the full retail dollar for their products, and provide the public with access to some of the freshest, best-tasting produce available from the Evergreen State,” said Fred Berman, WSDA Small Farm & Direct Marketing program coordinator. “The growth of the farmers market movement is driven by consumer demand and it gives producers more opportunities to sell their products and consumers more flexibility to buy fresh local produce.”

Many farmers markets are hosting special events to celebrate their growth and popularity. For farmers market locations, contact information, and more information on the WSFMA, visit www.wafarmersmarkets.com.

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Note to editors: Click for a copy of Governor Chris Gregoire's proclamation for [Washington Farmers Market Week](#).