



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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Contact: Jason Kelly (360) 902-1815

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

State, federal officials gather to talk agriculture in Seattle

OLYMPIA – The nation’s 50 state directors, secretaries and commissioners of agriculture are heading to Seattle this week to discuss the 2007 Farm Bill, the viability of the food and agriculture industry in the United States and other issues important to consumers, farmers and ranchers.

The occasion is the annual meeting of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA), and Washington agriculture will be putting its best foot forward and showcasing Washington products. WSDA Director Valoria Loveland is this year’s president of NASDA and host of the conference.

“I look forward to showing off the wonderful innovations our farmers have developed here in Washington,” said Loveland. “We’re a national leader or major producer of apples, berries, potatoes, wines, shellfish and a host of other products. Our agriculture economy is much more diversified than much of the rest of the country. We have so many success stories to share.”

The conference will kick off with an agricultural tour of the Skagit Valley, giving this national audience a quick look at some of Washington’s celebrated specialty crops. The group will make stops at Sakuma Brothers berry farm and the Knutzen Family potato operation, as well as Washington State University Extension’s state-of-the-art research facility.

During their visit to Washington, attendees will also have an opportunity to visit Chateau Ste. Michelle winery and Pike Place Market to sample more local farm products.

U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns is delivering the keynote address at the conference. He is expected to share his perspective on the progress on the pending Farm Bill and other federal issues. The conference will also hear from national experts on international border security, opportunities for agriculture producers to participate in solutions to climate change, and issues critical to maintaining consumer confidence in the nation’s food products.

“Food and agriculture is a \$32 billion industry in our state. Not only is farming a critical sector of our economy, it is an important part of our cultural identity,” said Loveland. “This is an opportunity not only to bring Washington agriculture to a national audience, but also to bring key federal officials and recognized experts in the field to Seattle.”

The NASDA conference runs from Sept. 21 to Sept. 26. For more information and a schedule of the conference, visit www.nasda.org.

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